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"Your forged document will help you little," said Mr. Grey, triumphantly. "I have torn it into a hundred pieces."—Page 138.

# TOM, THE BOOTBLACK;

OR,

# THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

*Author of "Joe's Luck," "Frank Fowler, the Cash Boy," "Tom Temple's Career,"  
"The Errand Boy," "Tom Turner's Legacy," etc., etc.*

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## TOM, THE BOOTBLACK.

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCING TOM, THE BOOTBLACK.

"How do you feel this morning, Jacob?" asked a boy of fifteen, bending over an old man crouched in the corner of an upper room, in a poor tenement-house, distant less than a quarter of a mile from the New York City Hall.

"Weak, Tom," whined the old man, in reply. "I—I ain't got much strength."

"Would you like some breakfast?"

"I—I don't know. Breakfast costs money."

"Never you mind about that, Jacob. I can earn money enough for both of us. Come, now, you'd like some coffee and eggs, wouldn't you?"

There was a look of eager appetite in the old man's eyes as he heard the boy speak.

"Yes," he answered, "I should like them; but we can't afford it."

"Don't you be afraid of that. I'll go and ask Mrs. Flanagan to get some ready at once. I've earned thirty cents this morning already, Jacob, and that'll pay for breakfast for the two of us. I think I could eat some breakfast myself."

Jacob uttered a feeble remonstrance, but the boy did not stop to hear it. He went down the rough staircase, and knocked at the door of the room below. It was opened by a stout, wholesome-looking Irish woman, who saluted the boy heartily.

"Well, Tom, and how's your grandfather this mornin'?"

"He's weak, Mrs. Flanagan; but he'll be the better for some breakfast, and so shall I. I'll go and buy half a dozen eggs, if you'll be kind enough to cook them, and make some coffee for us. I'll pay you for your trouble."

"Of course I will, Tom. And for the eggs you needn't go out, for I've got the same in the closet; but I'm short of bread, and, if you'll buy a loaf, I'll have the coffee and eggs ready in no time."

While Tom is on his way to the baker's shop, a few words of explanation and description may be in place. First, for our hero. I have already said he was fifteen. Let me add that he was stout and strongly built, with an open, prepossessing face, and the air of one who is ready to fight his own battles without calling for assistance. His position in life is humble, for he is a street bootblack. He has served, by turns, at other vocations; but he has found none of them pay so well as this. He has energy and enterprise, and few of his comrades secure so many customers as he. For years he has lived with the old man introduced as Jacob, and is popularly regarded as his grandson; but Jacob has never made claim to that

relationship, nor has he ever volunteered any information to the boy as to what originally brought them together. Occasionally Tom has tried to obtain some information, but on such occasions Jacob has been very reticent, and has appeared, for some reason, unwilling to speak. So, by degrees, Tom has given up asking questions, and has been much more concerned about the means of living than about his pedigree.

Jacob has done little or nothing for their common support, though at times, greatly to the annoyance of Tom, he has gone out on the street and asked alms. Tom, being high-spirited and independent, has resented this, and has always interfered, in a very decided manner, to prevent Jacob's figuring as a beggar. Though only a bootblack, he has an honest independence of feeling, in which any one is justified who works, however humbly, for his support.

Old Jacob is, moreover, a miser, so far as he can be. Whatever money he may have acquired by begging, he has kept. At all events, he has offered nothing of it for the common expenses. But Tom has not troubled himself about this. He suspects that Jacob may have a few dollars secreted somewhere, but is perfectly willing he should keep them for his own satisfaction. His earnings average over a dollar a day, and with this sum he is able to pay the small rent of their humble apartment, and buy their food.

In ten minutes Tom reappeared with a loaf under his arm. The door of Mrs. Flanagan's room was partly open, and he entered without ceremony. The good woman was bustling about preparing the eggs. The coffee-pot was already on the stove.

"It'll be ready in a minute, Tom," she said. "A cup of hot coffee'll do the poor craythur, yer grandfather, a power of good. So he's fable, is he?"

"Yes, Mrs. Flanagan."

"He won't last long, to my thinkin'."

"Do you think he's going to die?" asked Tom, thoughtfully.

"Yes, poor craythur. It's all he can do to drag himself up and down stairs."

"I shall be sorry to have him die," said Tom, "though I don't believe he's any relation to me."

"Isn't he your grandfather, then?" asked Mrs. Flanagan, in surprise.

"No; he never said he was."

"Then what makes the two of you live together? Maybe he's your uncle, though he looks too old for that."

"I don't think he's any relation. All I know is, I've lived with him ever since I was so high."

And Tom indicated with his hand the height of a boy of six.

"Then he's never told you anything?"

"No. I've asked him sometimes, but he didn't seem to want to speak."

When Tom re-entered the room he found the old man crouching in the corner, as at first.

"Come, Jacob," he said, cheerfully, "get up; I've got some breakfast for you."

The old man's features lighted up as he inhaled the grateful odor of the coffee, and he rose with some effort to his feet, and seated himself at the little table on which our hero placed it.

"Now, Jacob," said Tom, cheerfully, "I'll pour you out a cup of coffee. Mrs. Flanagan made it, and it's bully. It'll put new life into you. Then what do you say to a plate of eggs and some roll? I haven't got any butter, but you can dip it in your coffee. Now, isn't this a nice breakfast?"

"Yes, Tom," said the old man, surveying the coffee and eggs with eyes of eager desire. "It's nice; but we can't afford to live so all the time."

"Never you mind about that; we can afford it this morning; so don't spoil your appetite with thinkin' how much it costs."

"Now," said Tom, after he had helped the old man, "I don't mind takin' something myself. I ain't troubled with a delicate appetite, 'specially when I've been up and at work for two hours."

"Did you make much, Tom?"

"Well, I ain't made my fortune yet. I've earned thirty cents, but I'll make it up to a dollar

before noon."

"You're a good boy, Tom," said the old man, approvingly. "Don't be afraid of work; I'd work, too, if I wasn't so old. It costs a sight to live, and I don't earn a cent."

"There ain't no need of it, Jacob; I can earn enough for the two of us. I'm young and strong. You are old and weak. When I'm an old man, like you, I won't want to work no more."

"I ain't so very old," said Jacob, jealously. "I'm only turned sixty-five. There's a good many years of life in me yet."

"Of course there is, Jacob," said Tom, though as he looked at his companion's thin, wasted face and shaking hand, he felt very doubtful on this point.

"My father lived to be seventy-five," said Jacob.

"So will you," said Tom, though, to the boy of fifteen, sixty-five appeared a very advanced age, and but little younger than eighty.

"I'll be stronger soon," said Jacob. "The weather ain't suited me."

"That's it, Jacob. Now let me give you another cup of coffee. It goes to the right spot, don't it? Don't you be afraid; there's plenty of it."

So he filled Jacob's cup once more, and the old man drank the contents with evident relish.

"Now don't you feel better?" asked Tom. "Why, you look ten years younger'n you did before you sat down. There's nothing like a bully breakfast to make a feller feel tip-top."

"Yes, I do feel better," said Jacob. "I—I think you're right, Tom. If I was rich, I'd always have a good breakfast."

"So you shall now, Jacob. It don't cost much. Now lie down again, and I'll take these dishes down to Mrs. Flanagan."

Tom speedily reappeared, and said, cheerfully:

"If there's nothing more you want, Jacob, I'll go out and look out for work. Mrs. Flanagan will bring you up some toast at noon, and I'll be back at six o'clock."

"All right, Tom. Go to work, there's a good boy. It costs a sight of money to live."

Tom seized his blacking-box and hurried down stairs. He had delayed longer than he intended, and was resolved to make up for lost time.

## CHAPTER II.

### STRUCK DOWN.

No sooner had Tom left the room than the old man rose slowly from his couch, and, walking feebly to the door, bolted it; then, going to a corner of the room, he lifted a plank from the flooring, and, thrusting his hand beneath, drew up a tin box. He opened this with a small key which he wore about his neck, suspended by a cord, and revealed a heap of silver and copper coins, filling the box two-thirds full. Upon this his eyes were fixed with eager and gloating satisfaction.

"It's all mine!" he muttered, joyfully. "Tom doesn't know about it. He mustn't know—he might want me to spend it. I will count it."

He took it out by handfuls, and began to count it for at least the hundredth time, putting together coins of similar value in little piles, till there was a circle of silver and copper about him.

It was a work of time for the old man, and probably half an hour was consumed before he had finished his task.

"Ninety-nine dollars!" he exclaimed, in alarm, at the end of the calculation. "Somebody has robbed me; I ought to have twenty-five cents more. Could Tom have got at the box? Maybe I have made a mistake. I will count again."

With nervous fingers he recommenced the count, fearing that he had met with a loss. He was half through his task, when a knock was heard at the door. The old man started in agitation, and glanced apprehensively at the door.

"Who's there?" he asked, in quivering accents.

"It's I," answered a hearty voice, which Jacob readily recognized as that of Mrs. Flanagan.

"You can't come in," said the old man, peevishly. "What do you want?"

"I only came to ask how ye are, and if I can do anything for ye."

"No, you can't. I'm well—no, I'm sick, and I'd rather be left alone."

"All right," said the good woman, in no wise offended, for she pitied the old man. "If you want anything, jist *stomp* on the floor, and I'll hear ye, and come up."

"Yes," said Jacob, hastily. "Now go down—that's a good woman. I want to go to sleep."

"Poor craythur!" said Mrs. Flanagan, to herself. "It's little he enjoys the world, which is a blessin', as he will soon have to lave it."

"I hope she isn't looking through the keyhole," thought Jacob, in alarm. "She might see my money."

But the footsteps of the good woman descending the stairs came to his ears, and reassured him.

"It's well I locked the door," he said to himself. "I wouldn't want it known that I had all this money, or it wouldn't be safe. It's taken me a long time to get it, and it isn't quite a hundred dollars. If I had seventy-five cents more"—he had by this time found the missing quarter—"it would make just a hundred. If Tom wouldn't mind, I could get it easily by begging. I might have it by to-morrow. I wonder if he would care much," muttered the old man, as he put back the coins carefully into the tin box. "I—I think I'll go out a little while. He'll never know it."

By this time he had locked the box and replaced it beneath the flooring, restoring the plank to its original place.

"I'll lie down a little while till I feel strong," he muttered, "then I'll go out. If I go up on Broadway, Tom won't see me. He ought not to mind my begging. I am too weak to work, and it's the only way I can get money."

He lay down on the bed, and, after his exertion, small as it was, the rest was grateful to him. But the thought haunted him continually that he needed but seventy-five cents to make up his hoard to a hundred dollars, and the eager desire prompted him to forsake his rest and go out into the streets.

After awhile he rose from his bed.

"I am rested enough now," he said. "I think I can go out for a little while. I will get back before Tom comes home."

He took an old battered hat from a nail on which it hung, and with feeble step left the room, grasping the banister to steady his steps as he descended the stairs.

Mrs. Flanagan's door was open, and, though the old man made but little noise, she heard it.

She lifted both hands in amazement when she saw him.

"Shure ye are too wake to go out," said she. "Come, now, go up and lie on the bed till ye are better. Tom'll be mad if he knows ye have gone out."

"Ye needn't tell him," said Jacob, hastily. "I want to breathe the fresh air; it'll do me good."

"Shure you're not fit to go alone; I'll send my Mike wid you. He's only six, but he's a smart lad."

"I'd rather go alone," said Jacob, who was afraid the little boy would report his begging. "I—I am stronger than you think. I won't be gone long."

Mrs. Flanagan saw that he was obstinate, and she did not press the point. But after he had got down stairs she called Mike, and said:

"Mike, dear, go after the old man, and see where he goes; but don't you let him see you. I'll give you a penny to buy candy when you get back."

Mike was easily persuaded, for he had the weakness for candy common to boys of his age,

of whatever grade, and he proceeded to follow his mother's directions.

When Jacob got to the foot of the lowest staircase he felt more fatigued than he expected, but his resolution remained firm. He must have the seventy-five cents before night. Tomorrow he could rest. Let him but increase his hoard to a hundred dollars, and he would be content.

It was not without a painful effort that he dragged himself as far as Broadway, though the distance was scarcely quarter of a mile. Little Mike followed him, partly because his mother directed him to do it, partly because, young as he was, he was curious to learn where Jacob was going, and what he was going to do. His curiosity was soon gratified. He saw the old man remove his battered hat, and hold it out in mute appeal to the passers-by.

It was not long before Jacob received ten cents.

"What's the matter with you?" asked another passer-by, five minutes later.

"I'm sick and poor," whined Jacob.

"Well, there's something for you," and the old man, to his joy, found his hoard increased twenty-five cents. This he put into his pocket, thinking that he would be more likely to inspire compassion, and obtain fresh contributions, if only the ten cents were visible.

He did not get another contribution as large. Still, more than one passer-by, attracted by his wretched look, dropped something into his hat, till the sum he desired was made up. He had secured the seventy-five cents necessary to make up the hundred dollars; but his craving was not satisfied. He thought he would stay half an hour longer, and secure a little more. He was tired, but it would not take long, and he could rest long enough afterward. An unlucky impulse led him to cross the street to the opposite side, which he fancied would be more favorable to his purpose. I say unlucky, for he was struck down, when half way across, by some stage horses, and trampled under foot.

There was a rush to his rescue, and he was lifted up and carried into a neighboring shop.

"Does anybody know who he is, or where he lives?" asked a policeman.

"I know him," said little Mike, who had witnessed the accident, and followed the crowd in. "His name is old Jacob, and he lives in Carter's alley."

"Is there anybody to take care of him—any wife or daughter?" asked the physician.

Mike explained that he had only a grandson, and the physician thereupon directed that he be carried to Bellevue Hospital, while Mike ran home to bear the important news to his mother.

### **CHAPTER III.**

#### **A STREET FIGHT.**

Tom, of course, knew nothing of Jacob's accident. He fancied him safe at home, and was only concerned to make enough money to pay the necessary expenses of both. He felt little anxiety on this score, as he was of an enterprising disposition, and usually got his fair share of business. He stationed himself near the Astor House, and kept an eye on the boots of all who passed, promptly offering his services where they appeared needed. Of course, there were long intervals between his customers, but in the course of two hours he had made fifty cents, which he regarded as doing fairly.

Finally a gentleman, rather tall and portly, descended the steps of the Astor House, and bent his steps in Tom's direction.

"Shine yer boots?" asked Tom.

The gentleman looked down upon the face of the boy, and a sudden expression swept over his own, as if he were surprised or startled. His boots were tolerably clean; but, after a moment's hesitation, he said:

"Yes."

Tom was instantly on his knees, first spreading a piece of carpet, about a foot square, to kneel upon, and set to work with energy.

"How long have you been in this line of business, boy?" asked his customer.

"Four or five years," answered Tom.

"Do you like it?"

"I have to like it," said Tom. "I've got to do somethin' for a livin'. Bread and meat don't grow on trees."

"What's your name?" asked the stranger, abruptly.

"Tom."

"Haven't you got but one name?"

"Tom Grey's my whole name; but everybody calls me Tom."

"Grey? Did you say your name was Grey?" asked the stranger, in a tone of some excitement.

"Yes," said Tom, surprised at the gentleman's tone.

In his surprise he looked up into his customer's face, and for the first time took notice of it. This was what he saw: a square face, with a heavy lower jaw, grizzled whiskers, and cold, gray eyes. But there was something besides that served to distinguish it from other faces—a scar, of an inch in length, on his right cheek, which, though years old, always looked red under excitement.

"Grey," repeated the stranger. "Is your father living?"

"I don't know," said Tom. "If he is, he's too busy to call round and see me."

"You mean that you don't know anything about your father?"

"That's about so," said Tom. "I'm ready to adopt a rich gentleman as a father, if it's agreeable."

And he looked up with a smile in the face of his customer.

But the latter did not respond to the joke, but looked more and more serious.

"That smile," he said to himself. "He is wonderfully like. Is it possible that this boy can be \_\_\_"

But here he stopped, and left the sentence unfinished.

"Are you sure your name is Tom?" asked the stranger.

"Why shouldn't it be?" demanded the boy, in natural surprise.

"To be sure," returned the gentleman. "Only I have a theory that there is a connection between faces and names, and you don't look like my idea of Tom."

This was rather philosophical to be addressed to a New York bootblack; but Tom was smart enough to comprehend it.

"If I don't look like Tom, what do I look like?" he asked.

"John, or Henry, or—or Gilbert," said the gentleman, bringing out the last name after a slight pause.

"I like Tom best," said the boy; "it's short and easy."

"Do you live alone, or have you any friends?" asked the stranger.

"I live with an old man, but he ain't any relation to me."

"What's his name?"

"Jacob."

"What other name?" asked the customer, quickly.

Tom had by this time completed his task, and was standing erect, facing the speaker.

"He's got an inquirin' mind," thought Tom; but, though rather surprised at the questions, he had no objection to answer them.

"I don't know," he said.

"Don't know?"

"He never told me. Maybe it's Grey, like mine. Some call him my grandfather, but he isn't."

"It is he," thought the stranger; "but things are well as they are. He knows nothing, and need know nothing. I am safe enough, since between us there is a great gulf of ignorance, and more than a thousand miles of space."

"Well, my boy," he said, aloud, "I suppose you want to be paid?"

"That's what's the matter," answered Tom.

The stranger put in his hand a half dollar, and Tom, plunging his hand in his pocket, prepared to give change.

"Never mind," said his late customer, with a wave of his hand.

"Thanks," said Tom, and he mentally wished he might be as well paid every day for answering questions.

Tom shouldered his box, and walked a few steps down Broadway. It was some time before another customer appeared, and meanwhile another bootblack came up. The name of the newcomer was Pat Walsh. He enjoyed a bad reputation among his comrades—as one who would take a mean advantage, if he dared, and was at all times ready to bully a smaller boy. He had long cherished an ill feeling toward Tom, because the latter had interfered, on one occasion, to protect a smaller boy whom Pat tried to cheat out of a job. As Tom's prowess was well known, Pat had contented himself hitherto with uttering threats which he hesitated to carry into execution. It was shrewdly suspected by his companions that he was afraid to contend with Tom, and they had taunted him with it. Finding his authority diminishing, Pat decided to force a quarrel upon Tom at the first opportunity. He had no great appetite for the fight, but felt it to be a disagreeable necessity.

Just as he came up a gentleman approached with a valise in his hand. His boots were decidedly dirty, and he was hailed as a prize by the bootblacks.

"Shine yer boots?" exclaimed Tom and Pat, simultaneously.

"I don't know but they need brushing," said the traveler.

Instantly both bootblacks were on their knees before him, ready to proceed to business.

"I don't need both of you," he said, smiling.

"Take me," said Pat; "I'll give you a bully shine."

"I'll give you the bulliest," said Tom, good humoredly. "I spoke first."

"Lave wid yer, or I'll mash yer!" said Pat.

"Better not try it," said Tom, not in the least intimidated. "The gentleman will choose between us."

"I'll choose you," said the traveler, decidedly more prepossessed by Tom's appearance than by that of his competitor.

There was no appeal from this decision, and Pat rose to his feet, his face wearing a very ugly scowl. He remained standing near, while Tom was engaged with his job, watching him with an aspect which betokened mischief.

"Thank you, sir," said Tom, as he received pay for his services.

The customer had no sooner left the spot than Pat strode up to Tom.

"I want that money," he said, menacingly.

"Do you?" returned Tom, coolly, as he thrust it into his vest pocket, for, unlike the majority of his companions, he indulged in the luxury of a vest.

"Yes, I do. It was my job."

"I don't see it."

"I spoke first."

"The gentleman chose me."

"You stuck yourself in where you wasn't wanted. Give me the money."

"Come and take it," said Tom, unconsciously making the same answer that was once returned by a heroic general to an insolent demand for surrender.



"I'll do it, then," said Pat, who had been nursing his rage till he was grown reckless of consequences.

He threw down his box and sprang at Tom. The latter also quickly rid himself of the incumbrance, and the two were soon wrestling at close quarters. Pat, by his impetuous onset, came near upsetting his adversary; but, by an effort, Tom saved himself.

Then commenced a determined contest. Both boys were unusually strong for their ages, and were, in fact, very evenly matched. But at length Tom, by an adroit movement of the foot, tripped his opponent, and came down on top of him. He did not hold him down, for he was fond of fair play, but rose immediately.

"You didn't do it; I slipped," said Pat, in anger and mortification, and he instantly threw himself upon Tom again. But our hero kept cool, while Pat was excited, and this placed him at an advantage. So the second contest terminated like the first.

Cheers from a crowd of boys greeted this second victory—cheers to which Pat listened with mortification and rage. He was half tempted to renew the battle, but a cry from the boys, "A cop! a cop!" warned him of the approach of his natural enemy, the policeman, and he walked sullenly away, breathing threats of future vengeance, to which Tom paid very little attention.

Five minutes later little Mike Flanagan came up, and pulled Tom by the arm.

"What's the matter, Mike?" asked Tom, seeing that the little boy looked excited.

"Your grandfather's been run over wid a horse," said the little boy, not very intelligibly.

"Run over!" exclaimed Tom. "How can that be, when he was at home on the bed?"

"He went out soon after you, and was beggin' on Broadway."

"Where is he now?" asked Tom, quickly.

"He was took to the hospital," said Mike.

## **CHAPTER IV.**

### **AT THE HOSPITAL.**

On a neat bed, at the Bellevue Hospital, old Jacob was stretched out. He had been in considerable pain, but opiates had been administered, and he was in an uneasy slumber.

Tom presented himself at the office below as soon as he could after hearing of the accident.

"Is he much hurt? Is he in danger?" he asked, anxiously, for Jacob was nearer to him than any one else.

"He is now sleeping, and must not be disturbed. Come tomorrow, and we can tell you more," was the reply.

"You can tell me if he was much hurt."

"One leg is broken, but we cannot yet tell whether he has received any internal injury. All depends upon that."

Tom presented himself the next day. This time the physician looked grave.

"We have reason to think that he is injured internally. His life is uncertain."

"Poor Jacob!" murmured Tom, moved by pity for the old man.

"Is he your grandfather?" asked the physician.

"No; but I have lived with him for some years. Can I see him?"

"Yes."

Tom followed the doctor into a long hall lined with beds. About midway, on the left hand side, he recognized the form of his old companion.

"I am sorry to see you here, Jacob," said Tom, gently.

"I'm almost dead," said the old man, peevishly. "The man drove over me on purpose."

"I hope not."

"I tell you he did!" said Jacob, irritably.

"Well, Jacob, it can't be helped. You must try to get well."

"I'm an old man. I'm afraid I shall never get well again," and he looked eagerly into Tom's face.

Having heard what he did from the doctor, Tom was placed in an awkward position. He was too honest to give false hopes, and he remained silent.

"What did the doctor tell you?" demanded Jacob, suspiciously.

"He said he could not tell whether you would get well or not."

"He thought I was going to die?" said the old man, nervously.

"He didn't say that."

"I don't want to die," moaned the old man, terrified. "I'm only sixty-five. My father lived to be seventy-five."

"You may live, Jacob."

"I—I'm not ready to die. Ask the doctor to do all he can."

"He will be sure to do that."

There was a pause. The old man's features were convulsed. He had not till now thought that he was in danger of dying. He was trying to realize the terrible fact. Tom stood by in silence, for he had some idea of Jacob's feelings, and he pitied him.

At length the old man turned his face again toward him, and said:

"Tom?"

"What is it, Jacob?"

"I want you to ask the doctor every day if he thinks I am going to die; and, when he says there is no hope, tell me."

"Yes, Jacob."

"Do you promise?"

"Yes, I promise."

"There is something I must tell you before I die—something important. Do you hear?"

"Yes, I hear."

"It's something you ought to know. Now you can go. I want to sleep."

"Perhaps it is something about my father," thought Tom, with vague curiosity.

It was a matter that he had never troubled himself much about, but now it did occur to him that he should like to know a little more about himself. He determined to keep faithfully the promise he had made the old man.

He was destined to have one more adventure before the day closed.

On leaving the hospital Tom directed his course to Broadway. It was the busiest part of the day, and the street was crowded with stages, drays, and other vehicles, making it difficult to cross.

A hump-backed seamstress stood on the sidewalk, looking helplessly across, but not daring to venture on the perilous passage. There was no policeman in sight.

"I wish I could get across," she said, loud enough to be heard. "Mother won't know what has become of me."

Tom saw her anxious face, and stepped up at once.

"I will take you across, miss," he said, politely.

"Will you?" she asked, her face brightening. "I shall be very much obliged to you. My poor mother is sick at home, waiting for some medicine I went out to get for her, and I have been standing here ten minutes, not daring to cross. I don't know when Broadway has

been so full."

"Take my arm," said Tom, "and don't be afraid."

She had scarcely taken our hero's arm, when a rude street-boy called out, in derision:

"Is that your girl, Tom? Ask her what she will take for her hump."

"I'll lick you when I come back," retorted Tom. "Don't mind what he says, miss."

"I don't," said the seamstress; "I'm used to it," she added with a patient sigh.

"Don't think about it," said Tom.

"You are not ashamed to be seen with a hunchback?"

"There ain't no cause."

By this time Tom had skillfully threaded his way with his companion across the street, and landed her in safety on the other side.

"I am very much obliged to you," she said, gratefully. "You're a gentleman."

With these words she nodded, and walked hastily away.

"A gentleman!" repeated Tom, thoughtfully. "Nobody ever called me that before. My clo'es don't look much like it. Maybe it ain't all in the clo'es. I'd like to be a gentleman, and," he added, impulsively, "I mean to be one, some time. I'll have to change my business fust, though. Gentlemen don't generally black boots for a livin'."

It was a passing thought that came to him by chance, his desire to grow up a gentleman, but he was more than half in earnest. He had not thought much about the future hitherto, but now his ambition was kindled, and he thought he should like to fill a respectable place in society.

What road should he take to the success which he coveted?

## **CHAPTER V.**

### **THE LAST INTERVIEW.**

Two weeks passed away. Tom went about his business, as usual; but every day he made it a point to call at the hospital to inquire how Jacob was getting on. At first the answers were moderately encouraging, but a turn came, and the doctor spoke less hopefully. Finally Tom was told that the old man could not live.

"How soon will he die?" he asked.

"He may live forty-eight hours, but it is possible that the end may come sooner."

"Then I must see him and tell him. I promised him I would."

"It may be well to do so. If he has anything to tell you before he dies, no time should be lost."

When Tom approached Jacob's bedside he saw, from his changed appearance, that the doctors had told him truly. He was not used to the sight of those who were very sick, but soon, to an inexperienced observer, the signs of approaching death were plain. Tom, in the full vigor of perfect health, regarded his old companion with awe and pity.

"How do you feel this morning, Jacob?" he asked.

"I am very weak," said the old man, faintly.

"Are you in much pain?"

"No; the pain has gone away. If I can get stronger I shall soon be out again."

He did not realize that this relief from pain was only a sign that Nature had succumbed at last, and that Death had gained the victory. Tom hated to dispel the illusion, but it must be done.

"Jacob," he said, slowly and sadly, "I have got something to tell you."

"What is it?" said the old man, in alarm.

"It is something that the doctor told me just now."

"He—he didn't say I was going to die?" asked Jacob, agitated.

"Yes; he said you could not live."

A low and feeble wail burst from the old man's lips.

"I can't die," he said. "I'm not ready. I'm only sixty-five. He—he may be mistaken. Don't you think I look better this morning?"

"You look very sick."

"I don't want to die," wailed the old man. "It's only a little while since I was a boy. Did—did he say how long I could live?"

"He said you might live forty-eight hours."

"Forty-eight hours—only two days—are you sure he said that?"

"Yes, Jacob. I wish I could do anything to make you live longer."

"You're a good boy, Tom. I—I'm afraid I haven't been a good friend to you."

"Yes, you have, Jacob. We have always been good friends."

"But I helped do you a great wrong. I hope you will forgive me."

"I don't know what it is, but I will forgive you, Jacob."

"Then, perhaps, Heaven will forgive me, too. I'll do all I can. I'll leave you all my money."

Tom did not pay much regard to this promise, for he did not know that Jacob had any money beyond a few shillings, or possibly a few dollars.

"Thank you, Jacob," he said, "but I can earn enough to pay my expenses very well. Don't trouble yourself about me."

"There's no one else to leave it to," said the old man. "It isn't much, but you shall have it."

Here he drew out, with trembling fingers, the key suspended to a piece of twine which, through all his sickness, he had carried around his neck. He held it in his hand a moment, and a spasm convulsed his pale features. To give it up seemed like parting with life itself. It was a final parting with his treasure, to which, small though it was, his heart clung even in this solemn moment. He held it, reluctant to give it up, though he knew now that he must.

"Take this key, Tom," he said. "It is the key to my box of gold."

"I didn't know you had a box of gold," said Tom, rather surprised.

"It is not much—a hundred dollars. If I had lived longer, I might have got more."

"A hundred dollars, Jacob? I did not think you were so rich."

"It will never do me any good," said the old man, bitterly. "I was a fool to go out in the street that day. I might have lived to be as old as my father. He was seventy-five when he died."

Tom would like to have comforted him, but he would give him no hope of life, and that was what the old man longed for.

"Where is the box of money?" he asked, seeking to divert Jacob's mind, as well as to gain a necessary piece of information.

"It is under the floor of the room. You lift up a board just before you get to the pantry, and you will see a tin box underneath. You will find something else in it, Tom. It is a paper in which I wrote down all I know about you. You said you would forgive me for wronging you."

"Yes, Jacob."

"Perhaps you can get back your rights; but I am afraid not."

"My rights!" repeated Tom, bewildered.

"Yes; I can't tell you about it; I am too weak; the paper will tell you."

The old man began to show signs of exhaustion. The excitement of learning his hopeless

condition, and the conversation which he had already held with Tom, had overtaken his feeble strength, and he showed it by his appearance.

"I am afraid I have staid too long, Jacob," said Tom, considerately. "I will go, now, but I will come back to-morrow morning."

"You won't look for the box till I am gone, Tom?" said the old man, anxiously. "I—the doctors might be wrong; and, if I get well, I would want it back again."

"No, Jacob, I will not look for it while you are alive."

"Promise me," said Jacob, suspicious to the last, where money was concerned.

"I promise, Jacob. Don't be troubled. I would rather have you live than take all the money."

"Good boy!" said Jacob, faintly, as his head sank back on the pillow.

Tom left the hospital ward with one last glance of compassion at the miserable old man, who clung to life, which had so little that is ordinarily counted agreeable, with despairing hope. It was the last time he was to see Jacob alive. The next day, when he called to inquire after the old man, he was told that he was dead. He sank steadily after his last interview with our hero, and, having parted with the key to his treasure, it seemed as if there was nothing left to live for.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE REVELATION.

Tom had already made up his mind upon one point. He would accept the bequest of his old companion, since, in so doing, he was robbing no one better entitled to it. So far as he knew, the old man had no relatives or friends, except himself. But he was determined that, since Jacob had money, he should not be buried at the public expense. He would take so much of the hundred dollars as might be necessary, and place it in the hands of the doctor at Bellevue Hospital to defray the expenses of Jacob's funeral. He would say nothing about it, however, till he had actually found the money. It might be a hallucination of Jacob's, and have no real existence.

"When will he be buried?" he inquired at the hospital.

"Day after to-morrow."

"How much will it cost?"

"Do not trouble yourself about that," said the physician, who judged that Tom was poor. "That will be done at the expense of the city."

"But," said Tom, conscientiously, "he left a little money. At least he told me so. If I find it, I will pay out of it whatever it costs."

"It is not necessary."

"I would rather do it; that is, if I find the money. It didn't do him any good while he was alive, and he lost his life in getting a part of it."

"Then, if you find this money, you may pay the expense of the coffin."

"How much will that be?"

"From ten to fifteen dollars."

"I will bring you fifteen dollars to-morrow," said Tom.

Of course Tom might easily have saved this money, and applied it to his own use; but his feeling was one that did him credit. As he had for years supported Jacob, he had of course spent for him much more than the hundred dollars, and so might have considered himself justly entitled to all the money, but this thought never occurred to him.

After leaving the hospital, Tom went home at once. It was his duty now to ascertain whether Jacob had labored under a delusion, or whether he really possessed the money he had spoken of.

Entering the room, he locked the door from motives of prudence. Then, following the directions of the old man, he went to the part of the room indicated, and, getting down on his knees, soon found the board beneath which the treasure lay. Carefully removing it, he lifted from beneath the box already described. By means of the key he opened it, and there lay before him, bright and glittering, the scanty treasure which had been so dear to the old man's heart. But to Tom it did not seem scanty. Brought up as he had been in the hard school of poverty, it seemed like quite a fortune, and he was filled with surprise at Jacob's having accumulated so much. But the old man had taken advantage of Tom's absence during the day to go out on frequent begging expeditions. Whenever he had obtained enough to amount to a gold piece, he was in the habit of carrying it to a broker's and effecting an exchange. So, little by little, he had obtained a hundred dollars, ninety of which were in gold, the remainder in silver.

Tom deliberated what he should do with his treasure. He determined, until his plans were formed, to leave it in the box, taking out only fifteen dollars, to be carried to the hospital to defray the burial expenses. But there was something else besides the money to seek. Jacob had mentioned a paper, in which he had written out something of Tom's previous history, including an account of the manner in which he had wronged him. This paper was also easily found. It was folded once, and lay flat on the bottom of the box. It was somewhat discolored; but, on opening it, Tom found the writing quite legible. It may be a matter of surprise that Tom was able to read the manuscript, as many in his position would have been unable to do. But he had, of his own accord, for several winters, attended the city evening schools, and so was not only able to read and write, but also had some knowledge of arithmetic and geography. I do not claim that Tom was a good scholar, but he was not wholly ignorant. He took the paper from the box, and then, locking it, replaced it in its former place of concealment. He then sat down on a chair, and began to read the manuscript:

"Ten years since," it began, "I was a clerk in the employ of John and James Grey, in Cincinnati. They were merchants, in prosperous business; but John was much the richer of the two. James was, in fact, a poor relation who had been taken in, first as a clerk, afterward as a partner with a small interest, but his profits and share of the business were small, compared with those of the senior partner. John was a thorough gentleman, and a liberal and excellent man. I always got on well with him, and I shall never forgive myself for wickedly consenting to do harm to him and his. I would not have done it, if it had not been in a manner forced upon me; but I know that this is not a full excuse.

"James Grey I never liked. He was a more pompous man than his cousin, and he was often mistaken for the senior partner, because of the airs he put on. But John Grey only smiled at this, and often said, jokingly:

"'You ought to have been in my place, James. I am afraid I don't keep up the dignity of the establishment. I am too quiet.'

"To me, who was only a clerk, though an old and trusted one, James was always supercilious and overbearing. He seemed to look down upon me, though, having only a small interest in the concern, I didn't look upon him as very much my superior.

"John Grey was far different. He always treated me with kindness and politeness, and I felt it a pleasure to serve such a man. It was a great grief to me when he died. I knew well enough that I should feel the change, but I did not dream of what actually followed.

"John Grey's death took everybody by surprise. He was a stout, robust man, and seemed the picture of health; but it was in this habit of body that his danger lay. He was found one day on the floor of his chamber dead, his death resulting, as the doctors said, from apoplexy. He left considerable property, besides his share in the business. All this was left to his son, then a boy of five years of age. The boy's name was Gilbert. You, Tom, are that boy! Let me tell you how it happened that you, the son of a wealthy father, and the heir to great wealth, are now a poor bootblack in the streets of New York, with no prospects before you but a life of labor.

"According to your father's will, the whole property was left to his cousin, James Grey, in trust for you. But, in case of your death, your guardian was to inherit the whole of the property. If John Grey had known more of the selfish and worthless character of his cousin, he would never have made such a will. But he had perfect confidence in him, and judged him by himself. He did not see that he had exposed him to a very strong temptation, a temptation which, as it proved, he was unable to resist.

"Mr. James Grey, who was boarding with his wife and son, a boy of about your own age, immediately moved to your father's beautiful house, and installed himself there, taking you under his charge. For several months matters went on quietly, and I began to think that I had misjudged my new employer. But I did not know the trouble that was in store for me. First, my whole property, a few thousand dollars which I had saved, had been intrusted to a gentleman in whom I had confidence, and by him invested for me. He failed,

dishonestly, as I suspect, and so all my savings were lost. Troubles never come singly, so they say, and so I found out. While I was almost crushed under this blow, another fell upon me. One morning some valuable securities, belonging to the firm, were missing. Of course they were sought for, and, as a matter of form—so Mr. Grey said—the desks of all in the establishment were searched. What was my horror when the missing securities were found in my desk! Of course, this was ruin. My reputation, my future, were in the hands of James Grey. I could not account for the discovery, knowing my innocence; but I now feel sure that my employer put the papers in my desk himself.

"Instead of arresting me, he told me to come up to his house that evening. I came. I protested my innocence.

"He asked me pointedly if I could prove it. I told him no. Then he said that he had a plan in view. If I could aid him, he would forgive my offense, and would not have me arrested. Cautiously he unfolded the plan, and it was this: In consideration of five thousand dollars in gold, I was to carry you off by night, and sail with you to Australia, changing your name to Tom, and must agree nevermore to bring you back to America, or let you know who you were. Of course, I knew that this was only a plot to get possession of the property, and I told him so. He freely admitted it to me, but coolly threatened me with the severest punishment of the law for my supposed crime if I disclosed it, or refused to aid him.

"Well, the result of it all was that I agreed to his terms. It was arranged as had been agreed on, and I left Cincinnati, secretly, with you under my charge. Arriving in New York, I sailed for Australia, under an assumed name. But when I arrived, I didn't like the country. After a year, I took passage in a vessel bound for New York. We were wrecked, and all my money was lost. We were saved by a vessel bound for the same port, and, at length, reached it, penniless. How we have lived since, you know as well as I do. It has been a wretched life; but I never dared to write to Mr. Grey, lest he should have me arrested for embezzling the securities. But I have often hoped that retribution would come upon him, and that you might be restored to your rights. I have heard that he closed up the business, and removed farther West, having proved, by a witness whom he bribed, that you had been drowned in the Ohio River. The body of a poor boy was exhibited as yours.

"If you ever meet James Grey, you will recognize him by this description. He is a large man, with a square face, gray eyes, and a scar on his right cheek, an inch long. I don't know where he got the scar, but it is always red, especially when he is excited."

Tom dropped the paper in his amazement.

"Why," he soliloquized, "it must be the man whose boots I blacked one morning before the Astor House. He must have knowed me, or he wouldn't have asked so many questions."

## CHAPTER VII.

### TOM TURNS OVER A NEW LEAF.

The communication which he had just read gave Tom much to think of. Up to this time he knew nothing of his past history. Now a clear light was thrown upon it, and it remained for him to decide what he would do. He knew as much as this, that the man who had wronged him was still living. Where he lived was unknown. That was the first thing to discover. The next was, to make him disgorge the property of which he was in unlawful possession. It seemed wonderful to Tom to reflect that, if he had his rights, he would be heir to a large fortune.

"There's a lot of money lyin' around loose somewheres that belongs to me," said Tom to himself. "Blest if it don't seem like a dream. I'd like to set eyes on that old feller with a scar again."

Tom leaned his head on his hand, and devoted five minutes to reflection. During that brief interval, he made up his mind what to do. He would leave New York, giving up his business into other hands, and set his face westward, in search of his fraudulent guardian and his fortune. He might have been embarrassed about this, but for the opportune legacy of old Jacob. It wasn't very large, but it would, at all events, start him on his journey. Then he must trust to luck and his own exertions for the rest.

He was not in the least afraid but that he could get along. He had supported himself for years, and he knew he could again.

I may as well warn my young readers here that there is no occasion for them to forsake comfortable homes to follow Tom's example. Circumstances alter cases, and, what was right for Tom, would not be right for them. I have in mind the case of two boys who left comfortable homes in quest of adventure, without any good reason, and were very glad to get back again in a few days, without a penny in their pockets, utterly unsuccessful. If fortune drives you out, do your best, but never leave a good home when you are well off, or you will repent it.

"I'll take some of this money," said Tom to himself, "and buy some clo'es. I ain't goin' to travel in these rags. Considerin' I'm heir to a fortune, I'll dress respectable."

Tom withdrew fifty dollars from the miser's hoard, then went to the hospital and left fifteen dollars to defray the expenses of Jacob's burial.

"It's the last I can do for him," thought Tom. "I hope, if I live to be as old as he was, somebody'll do as much for me."

The thought of his old companion made him sad for the moment, but his mind was full of his future plans, and he quickly became cheerful again.

Before going to buy new clothes, it struck Tom that it would be a good plan to take a bath. I should not like to say how long it was since he had washed himself all over, but it is well known that excessive neatness is not a characteristic of street-boys. It had never troubled Tom much to have a spot of blacking on his face, or to see his hands bearing the traces of the business by which he made his living. Now, however, he determined to turn over a new leaf.

"I'm going to set up for a gentleman," he said, "and I must look respectable."

There was a hotel near by, where warm and cold baths were provided to the general public, at twenty-five cents apiece. He made his way thither, and entered the barber shop adjoining. Just before him was a gentleman who inquired for a bath, and was led into the adjoining apartment. When the attendant came back, Tom went up to him.

"Well, boy; what's wanted?" he asked.

"I want a warm bath," answered Tom, boldly.

"You!" exclaimed the attendant, surveying the boy in alarm.

"Yes," said Tom. "Don't you think I need it?"

"I should say you did," returned the other. "How long since you took one?"

"I can't exactly remember," said Tom.

"Did you ever take a bath in your life?"

"That's a leadin' question," said Tom. "I never took any except at the Fifth Avenoo Hotel. They've got bully baths there."

"Have they? Then I think you'd better go there now."

"It's too far off, and I'm in a hurry. I'm invited to dine with the mayor, and I wouldn't like to go dirty."

"If you bathe here, we shall charge you double price."

"How much is that?"

"Fifty cents."

"Well, I am rich. I can afford it."

"Money payable in advance."

"All right," said Tom. "Here's fifty cents. I'm a young man of fortun', though I don't look like it. I've been boot-blackin' for a joke. When I come in to my money, I'll get shaved here regular."

"You're a case," said the attendant, laughing.

"That's so," said Tom. "Now, just show me the bath-tub, and give me a bar of soap, and I'll get my money's worth."

The attendant led the way to the bath-room, first collecting the fifty cents which he had decided to charge. The water was turned on, and Tom went to work energetically to wash off the stains and dirt which, in the course of his street-life, he had contrived to accumulate. Tom never did anything by halves, and he set himself to work with a will,



sparing neither strength nor soap. The result was that he effected a very great change for the better.

"I wish I'd got some better clo'es to put on," he thought, as with reluctance he drew on the ragged attire which had served him for some months, getting more ragged and dirty every day. "I'll buy some as soon as I get out."

He surveyed himself in the mirror and his long, unkempt locks attracted his attention.

"I must have my hair cut," he decided.

On his way out he saw a vacant chair, and seated himself in it.

"Do you want to be shaved?" asked one of the barbers.

"Not to-day," said Tom. "You may cut off some of my wool. Mind you give me a fashionable cut."

"Oh, I'll take care of that," said the journeyman.

"If you do what's right," said Tom, "I'll recommend all my friends on Fifth avenoo to come here."

"Is that the Fifth avenue style of coat?" asked the barber, pointing to several large holes in Tom's most prominent article of dress.

"It's a dress I wore to a masquerade ball last evenin'," said Tom. "I went in the character of a bootblack."

"You made a pretty good imitation," said the knight of the scissors, who had already commenced operations on Tom's head.

"That's what all the ladies told me," said Tom. "They said they wouldn't have knowed me from the genooine article."

In about twenty minutes the task was completed.

"How's that?" said the barber.

Tom looked in the mirror, and hardly recognized his image, so much was it altered by the careful arrangement of his hair.

"If it wasn't for the clo'es," he said, "I would think it was another boy."

He paid his bill and left the hotel.

"The next thing must be some new clo'es," he said to himself; "then I'll begin to feel respectable."

## **CHAPTER VIII.**

### **THE EFFECT OF A NEW SUIT.**

Tom bent his steps in the direction of a large and popular clothing establishment, and, entering, looked about for an unoccupied salesman.

"Well, boy, what's wanted?" asked a young man behind the counter.

"I want some clo'es."

"Then you've come to the right place. Did you buy them you have on here?" asked the salesman, with a grin.

"Young feller," said Tom, "these clo'es were bought before you were born."

"So I should think, from the looks."

"I'd make 'em do for a few years longer, only I'm goin' to be married next week. Have you got any bridal suits?"

"Step this way. I suppose you have got money to pay for them?" remarked the clerk, doubtfully.

"You suppose right. Just lead the way, and I'll see what you've got."

"How high are you willing to go?"

"Anywhere from twenty-five cents to twenty-five dollars."

"Our twenty-five cent suits are all out; but we can give you some for fifteen dollars, and as much more as you like."

"Show me some at fifteen."

Tom looked at some suits at this price. They were well made, but coarse, and did not quite come up to his ideas of what was appropriate for a young man of fortune.

"Show me some for twenty-five dollars," he said. "These ain't good enough to be married in."

Finally, Tom picked out a dark mixed suit, which appeared to be an exact fit. The price was twenty dollars, which he considered reasonable, and at once paid.

"Shall I send them home for you?" asked the clerk, regarding our hero with more respect, now that he had shown himself a purchaser for cash.

"Never mind; I'll take 'em myself," said Tom. "My carriage is waitin' outside, so it's no trouble."

He left the store with the clothes under his arm. But he was not yet wholly provided. He had no shirts, stockings, or under-clothes, which he cared to wear in the new life upon which he was entering. All must be procured. He stopped at a cheap store in Nassau street, and provided himself with half a dozen of each, at a cost of twenty dollars more. By this time he found himself so encumbered with bundles that he thought it best to go home.

He entered the room without attracting attention, and proceeded at once to throw off his old rags, and array himself in the new clothes, including a blue silk neck-tie which he had purchased. When his toilet was complete, he surveyed himself with no little complacency. For the first time in all the years that he could remember, he was attired, from top to toe, as a young gentleman.

"Blest if I couldn't pass myself off for a young Fifth avenoodle," he said to himself. "I'll go down and see Mrs. Flanagan. I wonder if she'll know me?"

He descended the stairs, and knocked at the door of the good-hearted Irishwoman.

She did not recognize him, having no idea that it was Tom the bootblack.

"Does Mrs. Flanagan live here?" asked Tom, slightly disguising his voice.

"Yes, sir. Is it washing ye want me to do?"

"Is there a boy named Tom lives here?" asked our hero.

"He lives up stairs, just over this."

"Do you know him?"

"Shure I do. I know him as if he was my own bye."

"I don't know about that," said Tom, in his natural voice, raising his hat, which he had worn slouched down over his eyes. "You didn't seem to know him when you saw him."

"Shure it's Tom himself!" exclaimed Mrs. Flanagan. "Why, Tom, dear, what's come to you? You're lookin' quite the gintleman."

"Of course I am," said Tom. "That's the new business I've gone into."

"Where did you get them new clo'es, Tom?"

"I bought them with the money old Jacob left me. And now, Mrs. Flanagan, I'm goin' to leave you."

"Where are you goin', Tom?"

"I'm goin' out West, to seek my fortune."

"Shure I hope you'll find it."

"So do I, Mrs. Flanagan. I know it's there, and mean to get it, if I can."

"Are you goin' now?"

"Not till to-morrow. I've got some more things to buy first."

"I'm sorry to lose you, Tom. I'll miss you and old Jacob. I hope the poor man's better off."

"So do I, Mrs. Flanagan. I won't hide it from you—but he left me a paper, tellin' me that there is a man out West that's cheated me out of my fortune."

"What's his name?"

"Grey. He's my father's cousin."

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know."

"Then how will you find him?"

"I know how he looks. He was in New York a little while ago, and I blacked his boots. When I come into my fortune, I'll make you a handsome present, Mrs. Flanagan."

"Shure I hope you'll get it widout the present."

"Now I must be goin'. I've got to buy a carpet-bag and umbrella."

"Come in and bid me good-by before you go, Tom."

"Yes, I will."

Tom went out into the street, when it occurred to him that there was one article he had not yet renewed—his hat. He lost no time in visiting a hat store, where he supplied himself with one of fashionable shape. He could not resist the temptation, also, of purchasing a small, jaunty cane. Being naturally a good-looking boy, I am justified in saying that, in his new outfit, he would have easily passed muster as the son of a man of wealth. In fact, so effectually was he disguised, that he passed some of his old street companions without their recognizing him. Tom was rather amused and pleased at this. As he passed his old rival and enemy, Pat Walsh, it struck him that it would be a good joke to employ him to black his shoes, of which I neglected to say that he had purchased a new pair. Pat was just finishing off a customer, when Tom stepped up.

"Shine yer boots?" asked Pat.

"Yes, boy, and be quick about it," answered Tom, assuming a tone of haughty command.

Pat was at once on his knees, blacking the shoes of his old rival without the slightest suspicion of his identity.

"Humph! do you call that a good shine?" demanded Tom, when the first shoe was finished. "I could black it better myself."

"What do you know about blackin' boots?" said Pat, angrily. "There ain't a boy round here can give you a better shine than that."

"I got my boots blacked yesterday by a boy named Tom. He gave me a better shine."

Just then Pat looked up in his face, and started in surprise.

"You're Tom yourself," he said. "Where'd you get them clo'es?"

"Do you dare to compare me to a bootblack?" said Tom. "My name is Gilbert."

"You look like Tom's twin-brother, then," said Pat, bewildered.

Tom didn't reply, but walked off in a dignified manner, after paying Pat, swinging his cane in the most approved style.

"Don't he look like Tom, though?" soliloquized Pat, bewildered.

Tom enjoyed the joke, but didn't venture to laugh till he was out of sight.

"No wonder Pat didn't know," he thought. "I ain't sure I'd know myself, it I'd gone to sleep a bootblack and waked up as I am now."

Tom made his purchases, took supper at a restaurant, and went to bed early. It was his last night in the city. On the next day he was to start for the West, in quest of fortune.

## CHAPTER IX.

## BESSIE BENTON.

Tom called the next day at the hospital, and left ten dollars, finding this to be the right amount for Jacob's coffin. He took a last look at the old man, so long his companion, and then, feeling that he could do no more, went on his way. He next went to a railroad office, on Broadway, and bought a through-ticket to Cincinnati. This was the city where, according to Jacob's story, his father had been in business, and he himself had been born. His inquiries for the uncle who had defrauded him must commence here.

Having taken his seat in the cars, he was led to make an examination of his pocket-book. He found it, by no means, well filled. A hundred dollars had seemed to him a good deal of money, but he had expended half of it for clothes. His railway ticket, and the money he left at the hospital, consumed thirty dollars more, and he had, therefore, but twenty dollars left.

"That ain't much to set up as a gentleman on," said Tom to himself. "I didn't know it cost so much to get along; I'll have to go to work afore long."

Tom was not in the least daunted, however; he had always been accustomed to earn his living, and didn't doubt that he could do it now.

He had little money, but he had his wits and two strong arms, and he thought he could keep out of the poor-house. No anxious fears for the future marred the pleasure which the journey afforded him. With an eye of interest he regarded the rich and productive country through which the train was speeding at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour.

There is more than one route from New York to Cincinnati, a fact of which Tom knew nothing, and it was only by accident that he had selected that which led through Buffalo. He stopped over a night at this enterprising city, and at an early hour entered the cars to go on to the chief city in Ohio. The passengers were nearly all seated. In fact, every seat was occupied, except that beside Tom, when a stout, elderly gentleman entered the car, followed by an attractive young girl of fourteen.

"There don't seem to be any seats, Bessie," he said.

"Here's one, uncle," said the young lady, indicating the seat of which our hero occupied half.

"Is this seat engaged, young man?" asked the old gentleman.

Tom looked up, and, seeing that a pretty girl was to sit beside him, answered, with alacrity:

"No, sir."

"Then, Bessie, you may as well sit down here. I am very sorry you must take this long journey alone. I thought, till the last moment, that Mr. Armstrong was going."

"Oh! never mind, uncle; I can get along well enough."

"But it don't seem right; I am afraid your father will blame me."

"Perhaps," said Bessie, with a little coquettish glance at Tom, whom she privately thought a very good-looking boy; "perhaps this young gentleman will look after me."

The old gentleman looked dubious, and would have preferred a person of more maturity. Still, there was no choice, and he said:

"Young man, are you going to Cincinnati?"

"Yes, sir," said Tom.

"Then, if it won't be too much trouble, I will ask you to look after my niece a little. I am unable to go with her myself."

"All right, sir; I'll do it," said Tom, in a confident tone.

"There goes the bell, uncle," said Bessie. "You'd better go, or you will be carried along with us."

The old gentleman bent over and kissed his niece. Our hero thought he should have been willing to relieve him of the duty. The young girl beside him looked so fresh and pretty that, though he was too young to fall in love, he certainly did feel considerable pleasure in the thought that she was to be his companion in a journey of several hundred miles. It gave him a feeling of importance, being placed in charge of her, and he couldn't help wondering whether he would have got the chance if he had been dressed in his old street

suit.

"There's a good deal in clo's," thought Tom, philosophically. "It makes all the difference between a young gentleman and a bootblack."

"Would you like to sit by the window?" he asked, by way of being sociable and polite.

"Oh, no! I can see very well from here," said the young lady. "Do you come from Buffalo?"

"No; I am from New York."

"I never was there; I should like to go very much. I have heard that Central Park is a beautiful place."

"Yes, it's a bully place," said Tom.

Bessie laughed.

"That's a regular boy's word," she said. "Miss Wiggins, our teacher, was always horrified when she heard any of us girls use it. I remember one day I let it out without thinking, and she heard it. 'Miss Benton,' said she, 'never again let me hear you employ that *inelegant* expression. That a young lady *under my charge* should, *even once*, have been guilty of such a breach of propriety, mortifies me extremely.'"

Bessie pursed up her pretty lips, and imitated the manner of the prim schoolmistress, to the great amusement of our hero.

"Is that the way she talked?" he asked.

"Yes; and she glared at me through her spectacles. She looked like a beauty, with her tall bony figure, and thin face. Did you ever go to boarding-school?"

"No," said Tom; "nor to any other," he might almost have added.

"You wouldn't like it, though boys' boarding-schools may be better than girls'. I have been two years at Miss Wiggins' boarding-school, in Buffalo. Now I'm going home, on a vacation, and I really hope papa won't send me there again."

"Do you live in Cincinnati?"

"Yes—that is, papa does. Are you going to stay there long?"

"I think I shall live there," said Tom, who fancied it would be agreeable to live in the same city with Bessie Benton.

"Oh, I hope you will! Then you could come and see us."

"That would be bully," Tom was about to say, but it occurred to him that it would be in better taste to say: "I should like to very much."

"Have you finished your education?" asked Bessie.

"There wasn't much to finish," thought Tom, but he said, aloud:

"Maybe I'll study a little more."

"Where did you study?" asked the persevering Bessie.

"I've been to Columbia College," said Tom, after a little pause.

So he had been up to the college grounds, but I am afraid he intended Bessie to believe something else.

"Then you must know a great deal," said Bessie. "Do you like Latin and Greek very much?"

"Not *very* much," said Tom.

"I never went farther than the Latin verbs. They're tiresome, ain't they?"

"I'll bet they are," said Tom, who wouldn't have known a Latin verb from a Greek noun.

"I suppose they come easier to boys. Were you long in college?"

"Not long."

"I suppose you were a Freshman?"

"Yes," said Tom, hazarding a guess.

"Don't the Sophomores play all sorts of tricks on the Freshmen?"

"Awful," said Tom, who found it safest to chime in with the remarks of the young lady.

"I had a cousin at Yale College," continued Bessie. "When he was a Freshman, the Sophomores broke into his room one night, blindfolded him, and carried him off somewhere. Then they made him smoke a pipe, which made him awful sick, and poured a pail of water over his head. Did they ever do such things to you?"

"No, they wouldn't dare to," said our hero.

"You couldn't help yourself."

"Yes, I could; I'd put a head on them."

"I don't know what Miss Wiggins would say if she should hear you talk. She'd have a fit."

"What did I say?" he asked, innocently.

"You said you'd *put a head* on them."

"So I would."

"Only it is a very inelegant expression, as Miss Wiggins says."

"If you don't like it, I won't say it any more."

"Oh! I don't care," said Bessie, laughing. "You needn't be afraid I'll have a fit. I ain't such a model of propriety as that. Perhaps I shall be some time, when I get to be a stiff old maid like Priscilla Wiggins."

"You won't be that."

"How do you know?" said Bessie, saucily.

"You don't look like it."

"Don't I? Perhaps nobody will marry me," she said, demurely.

"If nobody else will, send for me!" said Tom, blushing immediately at his unexpected boldness.

"Am I to regard that as a proposal?" asked Bessie, her eyes sparkling with fun.

"Yes, if you want to," said Tom, manfully.

"I'm sure I'm very much obliged," said the young lady. "I won't forget it, and, if *nobody else* will have me, I'll send for you."

"She's a trump," he thought, but fortunately didn't make use of a word which would have been highly objectionable to Miss Wiggins.

## CHAPTER X.

### TOM ARRIVES IN CINCINNATI.

"You haven't told me your name yet," said Bessie, after a while.

"Gilbert Grey," said Tom.

The name sounded strange to himself, for he had always been called Tom; but his street-life was over. He had entered upon a new career, and it was fitting that he should resume the name to which he had a rightful claim.

"That's a good name," said Bessie, approvingly. "Would you like to know mine?"

"I know it already—it's Bessie Benton."

"Oh, you heard me use it. Do you like it?"

"Tip-top."

"That's another of your boy-words."

"Isn't it good?"

"I like it well enough. I'm not Miss Wiggins."

I am not going to inflict on the reader a full account of all that was said on the journey by

Bessie and her young protector. They chatted upon a variety of topics, Tom taking care not to be too communicative touching his street experiences. He wanted to stand well with Bessie, and was afraid that she would not be quite so pleased and social with him if she should learn that he had been a knight of the blacking-brush.

It was early evening when the train reached Cincinnati.

"I think papa will be here to meet me," said Bessie, looking out of the car window, as they entered the depot. "Uncle telegraphed him from Buffalo that I would arrive by this train."

Our hero was sorry they were already at their journey's end. He had enjoyed Bessie's company, and he knew that he might never meet her again. Though he knew nothing of etiquette, he did what was proper on the occasion, and assisted Bessie to ascend the steps upon the platform.

Bessie looked around to find a familiar face.

"Oh, there's Cousin Maurice!" she said. "Here, Maurice, here I am."

A boy, somewhat taller than our hero, who no doubt considered himself a young man, came forward, and was about to kiss Bessie, but the latter drew back slightly and frustrated his design by giving him her hand instead.

Maurice colored a little, and looked vexed.

"Where is papa? Didn't he come?" she asked, quickly.

"He was busy, and sent me. Won't I do as well?"

"Of course I am glad to see you, but I hoped papa would be here."

"The carriage is outside; let us hurry," said Maurice, taking her arm.

"Wait a minute," said Bessie, releasing her arm. She walked up to Tom, and, taking his hand cordially, said: "Good-by, Gilbert. I'm ever so much obliged to you for taking care of me. We live at 116 B— street. I hope you will call in a day or two. Papa will be glad to see you, and he will thank you, too."

Tom's face flushed with pleasure.

"Thank you, Miss Bessie," he said. "I'd like to do it all over again."

"You'll be sure to come?"

"Yes, I'll come."

Maurice listened to this conversation with impatient annoyance. He liked his pretty cousin enough to be jealous of any one to whom she seemed attentive, and he thought her altogether too cordial with this strange boy.

"Who's that fellow?" he asked, as they were passing out of the depot.

"I don't know whom you mean."

"The boy you spoke to."

"The *young gentleman* I spoke to," remarked Bessie, with emphasis, "was Gilbert Grey."

"And who is Gilbert Grey, and how did you become acquainted with him?"

"Uncle Henry put me in his charge," said Bessie. "I've traveled with him all the way from Buffalo."

"A great protector he is!" sneered Maurice. "He isn't old enough to take charge of a kitten."

"A kitten would be more trouble than I was," said Bessie. "She might scratch. I never do that, you know, Cousin Maurice."

"I should think Uncle Henry might have found some older person to put you in charge of."

"I am glad he didn't. Gilbert was real nice."

"You shouldn't call him by his first name; it isn't proper."

"Pray don't talk about what's proper. I heard enough of that from Miss Wiggins. Besides, he's only a boy, you know, though, to be sure, he looks almost as old as you."

"Don't be so provoking, Bessie. I am much larger than he."

"Are you? I didn't see it."

"I am sorry you invited him to the house, Bessie. He only traveled with you a few hours. There is no need of becoming intimate with him on that account."

"I want to become intimate with him," said Bessie, with provoking frankness. "He's very nice."

"He seemed to me rather a low, common fellow," said Maurice, irritated.

"You needn't like him, if you don't want to," said Bessie. "Let us talk about something else," and she began to make inquiries about home affairs.

We return to Tom, whom we left standing on the platform in the depot.

"Have a carriage, sir?" asked a hackman.

"Where to?"

"Anywhere you like—Burnett House."

"If you know of any nice hotel where they'll board me for the pleasure of my company, you can take me right along."

"They don't do business that way, here."

"Never mind, then. I guess my private carriage is outside."

Tom, of course, knew nothing of Cincinnati; but, picking out a man with a carpet-bag, whose dress indicated limited means, he followed him.

"He won't stop at any of the tip-top hotels," thought our hero. "I can't afford to go first-class any more; my pocket-book ain't so full as it was."

He followed his unconscious guide nearly a mile. The latter finally stopped before a small, third-class hotel, which bore the name Ohio House. After a slight pause he entered, and Tom followed him. After the man had registered his name, Tom went up to the desk.

"What do you charge?" he asked.

"Two dollars a day."

"Is that the lowest price?"

"Where a party stays a week, it's ten dollars," was the reply.

"All right," said our hero.

"Will you register your name?"

Tom took the pen, and would have put down "Gilbert Grey," but, as we know, his education had been neglected, and he was not at all sure as to the proper way of spelling Gilbert. After a little reflection, he put down:

G. GREY, New York.

The clerk wrote the number of a room opposite, and asked our hero if he would go to his room before supper.

Tom decided that he would, and was shown into a stuffy little bedroom, which would never have been mistaken, even by the most inexperienced, for a room in a first-class hotel. However, our hero was not very particular—he had never been accustomed to luxurious accommodations, and he was perfectly satisfied with No. 12.

"You can go," said he to the servant, "I'll be down in a jiffy."

He washed his face and hands—for even in the days of his street-life he had paid more regard to neatness than most of his class—opened his carpet-bag and took out a clean paper collar, which he substituted for the one he wore, and, after brushing his hair, went down stairs. He did not have long to wait for his supper, nor was he wanting in appetite. Though the establishment could boast of no French cook, the table was spread with substantial dishes, which Tom attacked vigorously.

"There's nothing like a good square meal, when a fellow's hungry," he said to himself. "It's more than old Jacob and I often got. I wonder what the old man would say if he knew I was payin' two dollars a day out of his money? I can't foller it up long, that's one sure thing. But it's no use worrying before it's time. I guess I'll find something to do in a big place like this."

Our hero knew little or nothing about geography, or the comparative size of places. He fancied that Cincinnati was nearly as large as New York. At any rate, it was large enough



to afford a living for a young man of pluck and industry. He was no doubt correct in this. Pluck and industry are pretty sure to make their way in any place, whatever its size, and these qualities Tom certainly possessed.

He took up a copy of a Cincinnati daily, and looked over its columns to see if there was any vacant position which he could fill.

WANTED—A gentleman of experience and ability, as Principal of the ——— Grammar School. Salary, \$2,500 the first year.

"The pay would suit me pretty well," said Tom, "and I guess I could lick some of the bad boys; but I could teach 'em all I know in half a day. Here's a coachman wanted. That won't do, either. 'Wanted.—A man with a small capital, to enter upon a light, genteel business.' I've got the small capital, and it's gettin' smaller every day. Perhaps I wouldn't be genteel enough."

After awhile Tom, having exhausted the advertisements, and found nothing to suit him, felt himself growing sleepy, and went up to bed.

## CHAPTER XI.

### BESSIE BENTON AT HOME.

Tom came down to breakfast rather late the next day, but he felt fresh and hopeful, having slept off all his fatigue. He had money enough left to pay his board for a week and a half, and was not under the immediate necessity of obtaining work. He felt curious to see the city he was in, and devoted the day to wandering about the streets. He took pains to find out where B—— street, the residence of Bessie Benton, was. He had made up his mind to call there that evening. It was a quiet, substantial house, in a nice street, indicating, in its appearance, the social position of the family.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, Tom ascended the steps and rang the bell.

"Is Miss Bessie Benton at home?" he inquired of the servant who answered his summons.

"Yes. Who shall I say wishes to see her?"

"Tom—I mean Gilbert Grey," said our hero, who came near forgetting his new name.

"Walk in, sir."

Tom was ushered into a handsome parlor, and took his seat on a sofa.

"This is rather ahead of the room old Jacob and I used to live in," he thought. "I didn't make many fashionable calls then."

He was interrupted by the entrance of Bessie herself, who advanced frankly, and welcomed him with evident pleasure.

"I'm glad you didn't forget to call, Gilbert," she said.

"I wanted to see you again," said Tom, with unconventional frankness.

"I'm glad you did. I want to introduce you to papa."

"Is he at home?"

"No, he won't be home till supper time. But, of course, you'll stay to supper?"

"I don't know," said Tom, awkwardly.

"Papa told me to invite you. He expects you."

"Then I'll stay," said Tom, promptly.

"How do you like the city? Have you been about much?"

"Yes, I've been goin' round all day. It isn't as big as New York, but I like it."

Just then Maurice Walton entered the parlor. He stopped short on seeing Tom, not over-pleased at the sight of a possible rival.

"This is Gilbert. Mr. Grey, Maurice," said Bessie.

"How d'ye do?" returned Maurice, ungraciously.

"Pretty well," said Tom. "I hope you're the same."

"You found the way up here pretty quick," said Maurice, rather rudely.

"Yes," said Tom. "I wanted to see your cousin—and you," he added, slyly, perceiving the feelings of Maurice.

"Where are you stopping?"

"At a hotel."

"So I supposed. There are several hotels in the city," he remarked, with a sneer.

"Are there?" asked Tom, innocently.

"Are you stopping at Burnett's?"

"No."

"That is the most fashionable hotel."

"That is the reason I didn't go there. I ain't fashionable myself."

"You don't say so?" sneered Maurice.

"Are you?"

"I hope so."

Here Bessie Benton burst into a laugh.

"What a vain, self-conceited boy you are, Maurice," she said.

"I don't call myself a boy at all," said Maurice, with lofty indignation.

"You're a young gentleman, then?"

"Of course I am."

"At what hotel did you say you stopped?" he asked, a minute later.

"I didn't say," said Tom.

Bessie laughed again, and Maurice colored with anger.

"If you'd rather not tell," he returned, "it's of no consequence."

"It's the Ohio Hotel."

"I never heard of it."

"Didn't you?"

"It can't be much of a hotel."

"I've seen better myself," said Tom. "It don't compare with the Fifth Avenue, in New York."

"Did you ever stop there?"

"I've been there often."

Tom did not explain that he once blacked boots in front of the hotel for several weeks. He did not feel disposed to take Maurice too much in his confidence. The fact is, that Maurice was considerably mystified as to Tom's position and claims to consideration.

There was, of course, a certain want of polish about our hero, the result of his early associations, which led Maurice to doubt if Tom was not socially his inferior. On the other hand, Tom's free and easy allusions to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, for instance, tended to combat this view. He became silent, and listened to the conversation between his cousin and Tom, which was altogether too free and animated to suit his taste.

"I wonder how long he's going to stay?" he thought.

"Isn't it most supper time, Bessie?" he asked, at length.

"Why? Are you hungry?"

"Rather," said Maurice, looking significantly at Tom, hoping that he would take the hint

and go. He was ignorant of the invitation which had been given and accepted.

"Mr. Grey will stop to supper, Maurice," said Bessie.

"Oh! will he?" said Maurice; but his manner was far from showing pleasure.

He left the room soon after, and, at six, Mr. Benton came in. He was a stout, pleasant-looking man, with a look of Bessie about the eyes, and he very cordially welcomed our hero.

"My daughter tells me you took good care of her on the way from Buffalo, Mr. Grey," he said.

"I tried to," said Tom.

"Accept my thanks for your attentions. You are not very old for a protector," he added, with a smile, "but, from her account, you answered the purpose."

"There wasn't much to do," said Tom, modestly. "I'd like to do it again."

Bessie blushed a little, and laughed.

"It seems the arrangement was mutually agreeable," said the old gentleman. "Are you going to stay long in Cincinnati, Mr. Grey?"

"Yes, sir—I expect to."

"Then you must come and see us often."

"I should like to." Tom was on the point of adding, "tip-top," but stopped just in time.

Here the bell rang for supper, and the party adjourned to the dining-room. There were seats for four. Bessie sat opposite her father, having on one side Maurice, on the other Tom. The latter, I am bound to say, felt a little embarrassed. He knew that the usages of the family he was visiting must be different from those to which he was accustomed, and he was afraid he might make some blunder. He resolved, therefore, to watch Maurice carefully, and do whatever he did. Eating with a fork, he thought odd, and not nearly as convenient as a knife. Still, he did it to avoid mistakes. Maurice watched him, hoping to detect him in blunders, but to no purpose. He was, perhaps, slightly awkward, but committed no breaches of etiquette.

"This is Mr. Grey, Maurice," introduced Mr. Benton, at the commencement of the meal.

"I have the honor of knowing Mr. Grey," said Maurice, stiffly.

There was a slight emphasis on the word honor, which Mr. Benton did not notice.

After supper Mr. Benton said:

"I am obliged to go out on a little business, but you young people can amuse yourselves without me. Perhaps Mr. Grey would like to hear you play, Bessie."

"Perhaps he plays himself?" suggested Maurice, with a sneer.

"Do you?" asked Bessie.

"I can play on a hand-organ," answered Tom.

"Professionally?" inquired Maurice.

"I never was in the business," said our hero. "Is it profitable?"

"How should I know?" said Maurice, angrily.

They adjourned to a pleasant sitting-room, where there was a piano, and Bessie took her place at the piano.

"I am not much of a player," she said, "but will do my best."

After a while she began to sing. Her voice was pleasant, but not remarkable.

"I don't like singing alone," she said, at last.

"Mr. Grey will sing with you," said Maurice, maliciously.

"Will you?" pleaded Bessie, turning to our hero.

"If you'll play that," said Tom, pointing to one of the popular songs of the day, which he had caught in the street.

"Of course I will."

I don't claim that Tom was a remarkable singer; but his voice was of good quality, and harmonized well with Bessie's. He sang correctly, also, and she was much pleased.

"How well you sing, Gilbert," she said. "Can't you sing something else?"

They sang two other popular songs, to the great dissatisfaction of Maurice, who saw himself quite eclipsed by the new arrival.

"Isn't he splendid, Maurice?" asked Bessie, after Tom had taken leave.

"He's a low fellow!" said Maurice.

"I wish you were half as handsome and agreeable," said Bessie, warmly.

Maurice went to bed in a very unhappy frame of mind. Tom, on the other hand, felt, as he returned to his unfashionable lodgings, that he had never before had so pleasant an evening.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TOM GAINS A LITTLE INFORMATION.

Though our hero was occupied considerably with thoughts of Bessie Benton, he did not lose sight of the two principal objects he had in visiting Cincinnati. One was, to ascertain the whereabouts of his uncle, the other, to obtain something to do. His cash was low, and he must find some employment.

He consulted a copy of the city directory, which he found in the office of the hotel; but, though he found plenty of Greys, he found but one bearing the name of James Grey. This one was a carpenter, and, of course, could not be his uncle.

"He must have left the city," thought Tom. "I wonder where his place of business was? I might find out something there."

"Have you any old directories?" he asked, at the office.

"How far back?"

"Five or six years."

"We have one of six years back."

"Will you let me look at that?"

The volume was found, after some difficulty, and put in Tom's hands. He turned at once to the g's, and, to his great joy, found the name of James Grey, merchant. His place of business was also given.

"That's something," thought our hero. "I'll go there at once."

There was no difficulty in finding the street and number, but there was a new name on the sign:

WILLIAM FERGUSON.

Tom entered, and asked the first clerk he met if he could see Mr. Ferguson.

"What's your business?" inquired the subordinate.

"With Mr. Ferguson," answered Tom, promptly.

"Wouldn't I do as well?"

"How long have you been here?"

"What do you want to know that for?"

"If you've been here five years, I'll tell you."

"I haven't."

"Then I want to see Mr. Ferguson."

"It strikes me you are a young man of some importance."

"I am glad you have found it out," said our hero, coolly. "If you're not too much pressed by important business," (the clerk was leaning back, picking his teeth), "perhaps you wouldn't mind asking Mr. Ferguson if he will see a merchant from New York."

The clerk laughed.

"You're a hard nut to crack, young man," he said.

"Don't try to crack me, then."

The clerk went into the counting-room, and, returning quickly, told Tom he might go in.

Entering, Tom found himself in the presence of a man of about forty.

"Do you wish to see me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. I should like to ask if you know anything of Mr. Grey, who used to be in business in this place?"

"I know a good deal of them—there were two."

"I know that, sir, but one died."

"Yes—it was John Grey."

"My father."

"Your father!" exclaimed the merchant, in astonishment.

"Yes, sir."

"But I thought John Grey's son died?"

"No, sir; that was a mistake. Can you tell me where my Uncle James lives? I don't find his name in the directory."

"No; he moved away, after selling out the business to me. I was head salesman in the establishment under the brothers Grey. Now the business is mine."

"And you don't know where my uncle went?"

"He went to Minnesota, I think; but where, I cannot tell. I don't think it was to St. Paul, or to any large place."

"How long ago was that, sir?"

"About five years since. But I always supposed John Grey's son was lost. You have a strong family look, however."

"Do I?" asked Tom. "I don't remember my father."

"Where have you been all these years?"

"I will tell you, sir," said Tom, "if you have time to hear the story. I didn't know who I was myself till a little while ago."

"Proceed. I am busy, but I have time to listen. Take a seat."

Tom told the story with which we are already familiar. Mr. Ferguson listened with strong intent. When it was finished, he said:

"Young man, have you the confession of this Jacob with you?"

Tom drew it from his inner pocket, and submitted it to inspection. He awaited the merchant's verdict.

"I recognize Jacob's handwriting," he said, at length. "He was a fellow-clerk of mine. I remember, also, that he disappeared at the same time with you. The story is a strange one, but I am inclined to think it is true. What do you intend to do?"

"I want to find my uncle."

"I am afraid you will find that difficult. He has left no clew in this city where he once lived. He sold out all his property, and has no interest here."

"You think he went to Minnesota?"

"Yes; but I cannot tell where."

"I will go to Minnesota, then," said our hero. "Is it far off?"

"It is several hundred miles away, and a large place when you get there. It costs money to

travel. Are you well supplied?"

"I've got about fifteen dollars."

"Fifteen dollars!" repeated the merchant. "And you expect to undertake such a task on that sum?"

"I'd like to have more money; but what's the use of waitin'? I ain't gettin' richer."

"Have you any situation? Are you earning any money?"

"No, sir."

"Then I advise you to find something to do in the city, and postpone your plans of finding your uncle. You are just as likely to hear from him here, while at work, as if you were traveling in search of him," said Mr. Ferguson.

"I'd just as lief go to work," said Tom, "if I could find anything to do."

Mr. Ferguson reflected a moment. Then he turned to our hero, and said:

"I will think about your case. Come round to-morrow morning, about this time."

"All right, sir."

Tom left the counting-room, and was rather surprised to meet Maurice Walton on the main floor of the store.

"What brings you here?" asked Maurice.

"Business," said Tom.

"Important?" sneered Maurice.

"Very important," answered Tom, coolly.

"I wish I knew more about him," thought Maurice. "There's some mystery about him. He's impudent enough for half a dozen."

Some might have thought the impudence on the other side, but Maurice did not see it in that light.

It occurred to Tom that he would call and see the man who advertised for a person "with a small capital to enter a light, genteel business." He found the place after awhile—a small back room, scantily furnished, with a few packages lying on a solitary counter. There was a man of about thirty-five in attendance, who seemed to have nothing particular to do.

"Are you the one that advertised for a man with a small capital?" asked Tom.

"To enter a light, genteel business?" continued the other, briskly. "Yes, I am the one."

"Well, I've got a small capital, and that's just the kind of business I want."

"You're rather young. Have you ever been in business?"

"I should think I had. I've been in business for six or seven years."

"You must have begun young. What kind of business?"

"The boot and shoe business, mostly," answered our hero; "but I was in the periodical business for awhile."

"Well, if you've got experience, you can succeed in our business. How much capital have you?"

"Tell me about the business first."

"Well, it's the perfumery business. We've got up a new and superior kind of perfumery, which we sell by agents. I want to find some one to take charge of the office while I travel and solicit orders. You can take care of the office, can't you?"

"What's the wages?"

"Twenty dollars a week."

"That'll about suit me," said Tom.

"You will receive the money from the agents and take care of it."

"That suits me again."

"But, of course, we expect you to deposit money with us as security."

"How much do you want?"

"Five hundred dollars."

Our hero whistled.

"That's ahead of my pile," he said.

"How much have you got?"

"Fifteen dollars; but I owe part of it for board."

"Then get out of this office! Do you think I can afford to waste my time in talking to you?" said the young man, angrily.

"You'd rather waste my money. You'll have to hook in some other chap, mister. I've been round."

Of course it was only a trap to fleece the unsuspecting out of their money. Tom was posted, and only went in to have a little fun. He meant to wait and hear what Mr. Ferguson had to propose before forming any decisive plans for the future.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### AN ADVENTURE.

The next morning, at the time appointed, Tom called at the establishment of Mr. Ferguson. The first he met was Maurice Walton. Maurice, in fact, was the youngest clerk, having received the appointment six weeks before, through the influence of his uncle.

"Did you come round to see me? I'm busy," said Maurice.

"Haven't you swept out yet?" asked Tom, mischievously.

"Do you think I would demean myself by sweeping out?" returned Maurice, disgusted.

"I thought that might be your business."

"That would be good business for you. Perhaps Mr. Ferguson will engage you."

"All right; I'll accept, if he'll pay me enough. Is he in?"

"Who?"

"Your boss."

"I don't understand such low terms," said Maurice, loftily.

"Then it's time you did. Is Mr. Ferguson in?—if you can understand that better."

"Yes, he is, but he won't see you."

"Why not?"

"Because his time is too valuable."

"Then I wonder why he asked me to come round this morning?"

"Did he?"

"Of course he did; and, if you've got through sweeping out, you'd better let him know I'm on hand."

"Go yourself."

"Thank you for your polite invitation. They didn't examine you in good manners when they took you in here, did they?"

"You're an impertinent fellow."

"Thank you. You ought to be a good judge of impudence. I'll see you again soon—hope you won't miss me much."

Our hero, who, it must be confessed, was not troubled by bashfulness, made a low bow to his opponent, and, advancing to the counting-room, opened the door. Mr. Ferguson looked up from his letters.

"Take a seat, Grey," he said, "and I'll speak to you in a moment."

"Thank you," said Tom, who knew how to be polite when it was proper to be so.

At the end of fifteen minutes Mr. Ferguson looked up.

"Well," said he, "have you formed any plans, Gilbert?—I think that is your name."

"No, sir, except that I'm goin' to try to get a place."

"Have you tried yet?"

"I called to see a man who offered a light, genteel employment to a young man with a small capital. I thought mine was small enough, so I applied."

"Well, what came of it?"

"The man wasn't willin' to sell out for fifteen dollars, so I left."

"You seem to be a smart boy. Suppose I take you into my employment?"

"I'd try to do my duty."

"I really don't need an extra clerk; but you are the son of my old employer, and to him I feel under considerable obligations. I'll take you on trial."

"Thank you, sir. When shall I come?"

"Next Monday."

"All right, sir; I'll be on hand."

"Where are you boarding?"

"At the Ohio Hotel."

"How much board do you pay?"

"Ten dollars a week."

"That is too much. You ought to get board in a private house for four. Between now and Monday, I advise you to look up some decent house that will answer your purpose. You can't expect to live luxuriously at first."

"I ain't used to first-class accommodations," said Tom.

"I see you are a sensible boy. Cut your coat according to your cloth. That is a good maxim. When you get older, you can live better. Now, about your salary. I can't give much at first, or my other clerks might complain. I will give you five dollars, the same that I pay to my youngest clerk."

"Maurice Walton?"

"Do you know him?" questioned Mr. Ferguson, in surprise.

"Yes, sir. I took supper at his uncle's Wednesday evening."

"Indeed! I did not know you were acquainted with Mr. Benton."

"Bessie Benton came on from Buffalo in my charge."

"Really, Gilbert, you seem to be getting on fast. You seem quite able to push your own way."

"I've always done it, sir."

"You are not bashful."

"New York street-boys ain't troubled that way."

"That's well, if not carried too far. Now, tell me how much you know."

"If it's about learning, I can do that in five minutes."

"Your education, I take it, has been neglected."

"I don't know much—I didn't have a chance to learn."

"Can you read?"

"When the words ain't too long."

"And write?"



"Not much."

"Then I advise you to take what leisure time you have to remedy the defects in your education."

"I'd like to, sir. I was ashamed of knowing so little when I was at Mr. Benton's."

"A good feeling, my boy. The more you know the better chance you stand to get on in the world. I am giving you a low place in my employment. If you want to be promoted, you must qualify yourself for it."

"I'll do it, sir," said our hero, manfully. "That's good advice, and I'll follow it."

"Success to you, my boy. You can now go, and come back Monday morning."

"Thank you, sir."

Tom left the counting-room in excellent spirits. He had found a place, and one just such as he liked. Five dollars a week, he foresaw, would not pay his expenses, but he was sure he could earn more in some way. As he was about to leave the store, Maurice, whose curiosity was aroused, came to meet him.

"Did you get through your important business?" he said, sneeringly.

"Not quite. I'm coming here again next Monday."

"Mr. Ferguson must be glad to see you."

"I'm comin' Tuesday, also."

"What, every day?"

"Yes; your boss has concluded to take me into the business."

"You ain't coming here to work?" said Maurice, hastily.

"You've hit the nail on the head."

"We've got enough clerks now."

"I'm comin' to help you sweep out in the mornin'."

Maurice was by no means pleased to hear this. Regarding Tom as his social inferior, he did not like to be placed on a level with him.

"How much pay are you to get?" he asked.

"Five dollars a week."

"The same as I get?"

"Yes."

Maurice was disgusted.

"Then I shall ask for higher pay."

"Go ahead. I don't care."

"Do you expect to live on your salary?"

"No, of course not. I've got private property."

"How much?"

"Go and ask the man that calls for the taxes."

"I don't believe it."

"Why, I'm payin' ten dollars a week for my board."

Finally our hero went out, leaving Maurice dissatisfied and annoyed—first that his rival, as he regarded him, had obtained a place in the same establishment with himself, and next that the new-comer was to receive the same salary. He sent in an application, the next day, for increase of pay, but it was dismissed, with the curt response that when he earned more he would get it.

Meanwhile Tom bent his steps toward the Ohio river. Of course, my readers know that Cincinnati is on the north bank of the Ohio, and that just across is a town in Kentucky.

"I'd like to see Kentucky," said Tom to himself. "I guess I'll go across."

Small river steamers convey passengers across the river for a very small sum. Our hero paid the required fee and went on board.

"It's some like goin' across to Jersey," he thought.

There was the usual variety of passengers—men, women, and children. Tom sat down beside a young man well dressed, but a little strange in his manners. It was evident that he had been drinking too much, and was under the influence of liquor at present. He was perfectly quiet, however, till they were in the middle of the stream, when, all at once, he climbed the railing and threw himself into the turbid waters of the river.



**Tom, being an expert swimmer, jumped in after the man without hesitation.—Page 96.**

The passengers seemed paralyzed by the suddenness of the action. Our hero was the first to recover, and, being an expert swimmer, jumped in after him without hesitation.

## **CHAPTER XIV.**

### **A FASHIONABLE BOARDING-HOUSE.**

When Tom's head emerged from the yellow and turbid waters, he caught sight of the young man, and struck out for him. Grasping him by the arm, he succeeded, with considerable difficulty, in holding him up till a small boat near by picked both up.

"Whew!" sputtered Tom, spitting out some of the water which he had involuntarily taken into his mouth.

The young man rescued looked about him stupidly.

"What made you jump into the river?" asked the boatman.

"I was drunk," said the young man, frankly, upon whom the shock of the falling into the water had produced a favorable effect.

"It's lucky this boy was near and jumped after you, or you might have been drowned before I got to you."

The young man turned and looked earnestly at Tom.

"So you jumped after me?" he said.

"I feel as if I did," answered Tom. "I'm as wet as a drowned rat."

"You're a brave boy."

"Thank you," said Tom, modestly. "But I can swim so well that it didn't take much courage."

"I can't swim a stroke."

"Then you'd better not jump into the water again."

"I don't mean to," said the young man, smiling. "Where did you learn to swim?"

"In the East river."

"Where's that?"

"New York."

"Look here, gentlemen, where do you want to be carried?" asked the boatman.

"Back to Cincinnati. I'll pay you for your trouble," said the young man.

"I was goin' on an explorin' expedition to Kentucky," said our hero.

"You are too wet; you must take another day."

"It ain't any wetter on one side of the river than the other."

"Do you live in Kentucky?"

"No."

"In Cincinnati?"

"Yes; I've lived there a day or two."

"You must change your clothes, or you will get cold."

"I haven't got any clothes except what I've got on."

The young man looked rather surprised at this, since Tom had on a good suit, and appeared to be in good circumstances.

"Then," said he, promptly, "I shall take you home with me, and lend you one of my suits."

"It would fit me too much," said Tom, laughing.

"Never mind. We will stay in the house till your clothes are dry. What do you say?"

"All right," said Tom. "I'm agreeable."

When they came to the Ohio side of the river the two got off. The young man was so well over his fit of drunkenness that he walked quite steadily, showing no trace of it in his gait.

"I live a mile and a half away," he said, "but it will be better to walk, as we shall be less liable to take cold in our wet clothes. Or, do you feel tired?"

"Not a bit," said Tom. "I'm used to walkin'. My coachman don't have much to do."

"You're a genius," said the young man.

"I'm glad to hear it," said Tom. "If I'm a fair specimen, geniuses don't know much."

"At any rate, you are not such a fool as I am."

"Are you a fool?"

"Any man is a fool that gets drunk."

"I don't know but you're right," said Tom. "What makes you do it?"

"Because I'm a fool. That's all the reason I can give. I'm too weak to resist temptation."

"I never was drunk but once," said Tom. "I don't want to be again."

"How did that happen?"

"A sailor invited me into a bar-room, and got me to drink. I felt as if my head would burst open the next morning."

"So you didn't get drunk again?"

"No, I got enough of it."

"What is your name?" asked the young man, interested.

"Gilbert Grey."

"Do you live in this city?"

"I'm goin' to."

"I wish you would come and live with me."

"What for?"

"Because, though you are younger, you know how to take care of yourself. I think you would take care of me, too."

"If you pay me good wages," said Tom, "I'm willin' to be your guardian."

"I am in earnest," said the young man. "It would do me good to have some one help me keep straight."

"How many times a week would you want me to jump into the water after you?" asked our hero, jocularly. "Because I'd want to keep a good stock of dry clothes on hand; or maybe I might wear a bathin' suit all the time."

"I sha'n't try that again," said the other, smiling; "I don't like it well enough."

By this time they reached a handsome brick house, in a fine street.

"This is where I board," said the young man. "Come in."

He rang the bell, and a servant answered the summons. She looked surprised at the appearance of the pair, both showing signs of the wetting they had received.

"We met with an accident, Bridget," explained the young man, "or rather I tumbled into the water and this boy jumped after me."

"Faith you look like it, Mr. Mordaunt," said Bridget. "Will I tell Mrs. White?"

"Yes. Ask her if she can send us up some hot coffee in about twenty minutes. I am afraid, if we don't have some hot drink, we will take cold."

"All right, sir."

A hasty glance satisfied Tom that it was a first-class boarding-house. The hall was handsomely furnished, and when, on reaching the head of the stairs, his companion led the way into a spacious room, with a chamber connecting, our young hero saw a rich carpet, elegant furniture, a handsome collection of books, and some tasteful pictures upon the walls. It was evident that Mr. Mordaunt was possessed of ample means.

"Now—by the way, I've forgotten your name, yet—"

"Gilbert Grey. Some call me Tom, for short."

"Now, Gilbert, make yourself at home. The best thing we can do is to strip at once, and put on dry clothes."

He went to a wardrobe and brought out two suits of clothes, also a supply of under-clothing.

"There," said he, "go ahead and change your clothes."

Tom followed directions obediently, while his companion was similarly employed. Of course, it was necessary to wash, also. The clothes were too large for him, but still not much, as he was a well-grown boy, and Mr. Mordaunt was by no means large.

"How do you like the looks?" asked the young man, as Tom surveyed himself in a handsome mirror.

"I expect it's me, but I ain't certain," said Tom. "It'll take me some time to grow to these clothes."

"They are rather big, that's a fact," said the young man, smiling. "When the servant comes up with the coffee, we'll send down our suits to be dried. Will your friends feel anxious about you?"

"There's one will, I expect," said Tom.

"Who is that—your mother?"

"No; it's my intimate friend, Maurice Walton. He can't bear me out of his sight, or in it, either."

Mordaunt laughed.

"So he's very devoted, is he?"

"You bet he is."

Here there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," called Mordaunt.

Bridget entered with a waiter, on which were a coffee-pot, some cups and saucers, sugar, etc., beside a plate of sandwiches.

"Thank you, Bridget," said Mordaunt. "I see you understood what was wanted. Now, if you'll take down them wet clothes and dry them for us, we will be much obliged."

"I'll do it, Mr. Mordaunt," said the willing handmaiden.

"Now, Gilbert, sit down, and we'll have a good cup of coffee apiece," said Mordaunt. "You're hungry, are you not?"

"Bathin' in such a big tub gave me an appetite," said Tom; "but I wouldn't like to get up an appetite that way every day."

"Nor I. It's too much trouble, not to speak of the danger. How do you find the coffee?"

"Tip-top."

"It's a good deal better than wine, eh?"

"That's so."

"Now, Gilbert, while we are taking lunch I have a little plan to propose to you."

"All right. I'm ready."

## **CHAPTER XV.**

### **TOM CHANGES HIS BOARDING-HOUSE.**

"Where are you boarding?" Mordaunt began.

"At the Ohio Hotel. But I don't mean to stay. I'm lookin' out some first-class boardin'-house, where they don't charge mor'n five dollars a week."

"You haven't found one yet?"

"No."

"Come here and room with me."

"Don't you pay but five dollars?"

"Rather more," said Mordaunt, laughing.

"I only get five dollars a week for my valuable services," said Tom. "I pay that for board, and get my clothes with the balance. If I hadn't a fortune of ten dollars to fall back upon, I'd have to go without."

"Is that really the way you are situated?" asked Mordaunt, seriously.

"Yes."

"Then," said the young man, "come and board with me, and it sha'n't cost you a cent. I'll have another bed put into the bedroom, and we'll make ourselves as comfortable as we can."

"Do you mean it?" asked Tom, incredulously.

"Certainly."

"And you'll pay my board for the sake of my agreeable society?"

"Just so," answered his companion.

"Then you're a tip-top feller, and I won't refuse such a good offer."

"Good! That's settled, then," said the young man, with satisfaction. "Now I'll tell you my reasons for making you such an offer. I am an orphan, and with no near relations, except an uncle in Canada, with whose family I am little acquainted. I inherited from my father, who died just as I reached the age of twenty-one, a fortune of one hundred thousand dollars."

"Whew!" said our hero; "that's a big pile of money."

"It was too large for me. It took away my ambition and energy; and though for two years I have been in a law office, pretending to study law, I have wasted my time in drinking among unworthy companions. The fact is, I am of a sociable disposition, and I found my room lonely. Now I want to turn over a new leaf, give up drinking, and devote myself more to study."

"I want to study, too," said Tom. "I'm as ignorant as a horse. I'll have to study some evenings."

"I'll teach you," said Mordaunt. "We'll spend our evenings that way, instead of in bar-rooms."

"All right," said our hero. "That suits me. But I ought not to let you pay my board."

"I can well afford it. My money is securely invested, and brings me in six thousand dollars a year clear."

"I shall have to work from now till I'm a gray-haired old patriarch before I earn six thousand dollars," said Tom, comically.

Mordaunt laughed.

"I hope it isn't so bad as that," he said. "Well, do you agree?"

"To come here as your guardian?"

"Yes, if you put it in that way."

"You are very kind to me," said our hero, changing his tone and speaking earnestly. "I am a poor boy, and don't know much. I'm afraid you'll be ashamed of introducing me to your friends."

"Friends! I have no friends that care for me. They care for my money, and are jolly enough; but, if I needed help, they wouldn't give it. I don't know why it is, but I like you. You saved my life this morning, and I would rather have you live with me than any one I know. So, when your clothes are dry, go round to the hotel, and bring your trunk here."

"I haven't got any trunk," said Tom. "I wouldn't have any use for one. I've got a carpet-bag."

"Very well. Bring that. Now you must do me a favor."

"All right. Only if it's to lend you a hundred dollar bill, I'm afraid I couldn't do it."

"I hope some time you will be rich enough to grant such favor; but that isn't the favor I meant."

"What is it?"

"You must let me buy you some more clothes."

Tom was about to object, but Mordaunt continued:

"Remember, I've got more money than I know what to do with. I owe you something for the wetting I exposed you to."

"I won't resist very hard," said Tom. "I s'pose you want your guardian to look respectable."

Later in the day, when their clothes were dry, Mordaunt took Tom to a fashionable clothing store, and bought him two suits of clothes, of handsome cloth and stylish cut, and, in addition, purchased him a sufficient stock of under-clothing. He also ordered a trunk to be sent up to the room. Then, it being time, they went home to supper. Mordaunt had already spoken to Mrs. White about receiving our hero as a boarder. Of course she was very ready to do so.

Tom felt, at first, a little embarrassed, but this feeling soon wore away. He was not a guest, but a boarder, and was addressed by the landlady and the boarders as Mr. Grey.

He came near laughing the first time he was called by this name, but soon got used to it.

It was a first-class boarding-house. There were some dozen boarders, all of ample means. As Tom looked around him, and remembered that only a short time previous he had been a New York street-boy and bootblack, he could hardly believe that the change was permanent.

"What would they think if they knowed what I was?" he thought.

Next to him at table sat an elderly young lady, who was not in the habit of receiving attentions from gentlemen of marriageable age, and was therefore inclined to notice those more youthful.

"Do you like the opera, Mr. Grey?" she asked.

"Do you?" asked Tom, who had never heard an opera in his life.

New York bootblacks seldom attend such classic entertainments. They prefer the old Bowery entertainments.

"I dote upon it," said Miss Green, enthusiastically.

"So do I," said Tom, much to Mordaunt's amusement.

"What is your favorite opera?" asked Miss Green.

"I haven't got any favorite," said Tom, who thought this the best answer, as he did not know the name of any.

"I think Trovatore splendid."

"It's tip-top."

"That's a gentleman's word," said Miss Green, laughing. "I am glad you agree with me. Do you sing yourself?"

"A little," said Tom. "Shall I come and sing under your window to-night?"

There was a general laugh at this offer.

"Oh, do!" said Miss Green. "Do you often serenade ladies?"

"I used to, but I had to give it up."

"Why, Mr. Grey?"

"Because it was taken for a cat-concert, and people used to throw bottles at me. I couldn't stand that."

"I'll promise not to throw any bottles at you, Mr. Grey."

"I'll let you know when I'm comin'," said Tom. "My voice ain't in order just at present. When it is, I'll do my best to keep you awake."

"Really, Gilbert," said Mordaunt, when they had left the table, and returned to their room, "you got up quite a flirtation with Miss Green. It will be a good match for you. She's got money, and isn't more than twice as old as you are."

"But when I got to be fifty she'd be a hundred," said Tom. "I guess I'll leave her for you."

"She has tried her fascinations on me already," said Mordaunt; "but she soon concluded there wasn't any chance, and gave it up. She'll be wanting you to take her to the opera, as you dote upon it so much."

"The only opera house I ever went to was in the Bowery."

"That's what I thought. Now, how shall we spend the evening?"

"Suppose we take a walk, and then come and study."

"A good plan. What would you like to study?"

"I can't read or write very well. I don't know much."

"We will stop at a bookstore on our way and buy such books as you want. Then I'll give you lessons."

While walking, a flashily-dressed young man recognizing Mordaunt, stepped up and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Come and play a game of billiards, Mordaunt," he said.

"I can't, Dacres. I've got an engagement with my friend here."

"Sorry for it. Won't he come, too?"

"No; he's young. I don't care to take him among such wild fellows as you."

"The last time I played billiards with Dacres he won a hundred dollars of me," said Mordaunt, as they passed on. "It might have been so to-night; but, now I have your company, I am safe."

On reaching home Tom spent an hour and a half in study, Mordaunt assisting him. The young man became interested in his task, and went to bed much better satisfied with himself.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### MAURICE IS ASTONISHED.

Maurice Walton felt very much annoyed at the prospect of having Tom for a fellow-clerk. He felt jealous of him on account of the evident partiality of Bessie Benton for his society. He suspected, from Tom's style of talking, that he was "low and uneducated," and he would have given considerable to know that his hated rival had been a New York bootblack. But this knowledge he could not obtain from Tom. The latter delighted in mystifying him, and exciting suspicions which he afterward learned to be groundless.

Bright and early Tom made his appearance in front of Mr. Ferguson's establishment. As he came up one way, he met Maurice, looking sleepy and cross, coming from a different direction.

"Good-morning, Maurice," said our hero, good-naturedly. "Have you just got out of bed?"

"No," answered Maurice, crossly. "My name is Walton."

"How are you, Walton?"

"Mr. Walton, if you please," said Maurice, with dignity.

"Don't we feel big this morning, *Mr. Walton*?" said Tom, mischievously.

"Do you mean to insult me?"

"Wouldn't think of such a thing, Mr. Walton. My name is *Mr. Grey*."

Maurice didn't think proper to answer this remark—perhaps because he had nothing in particular to say. He opened the warehouse, and Tom entered.

"I don't know what made Mr. Ferguson take you," he said, amiably.

"Nor I," said Tom; "particularly as he had your valuable services."

"Very likely he took you out of charity," said Maurice.

"Did he take you out of charity?" asked Tom, innocently—"Mr. Walton?"

"How dare you speak of me in that way?" demanded Maurice, haughtily.

"It didn't take much courage," said Tom, coolly. "How dared you speak of me in that way?"

"That's different."

"Why is it?"

"You haven't got much money—you're almost a beggar."

"Where did you find out all that?"

"Anybody can tell by just looking at you."

"That's the way, then? Have you got much money?"

"My uncle has."

"So has my uncle."



"I don't believe it."

"That don't alter the fact."

"How much is he worth?"

"Over a hundred thousand dollars—I don't know how much more."

"Where does he live."

"He used to live in this city, but he's gone farther West."

Maurice was not decided whether to believe this statement or not. He wanted to disbelieve it, but was afraid it might be true. He tried a different tack.

"Where do you board? Are you at the Ohio Hotel? I hear it's a low place—third-class."

"You're about right. It isn't first-class."

"I suppose you had to go there because it was cheap?"

"It was the first hotel I came across. But I'm not there now—I've moved."

"Have you? Where are you now?"

"No. 12 Crescent Place."

Now Maurice knew that Crescent Place was in a fashionable quarter of the city. It astonished him that our hero, whose salary was but five dollars a week, should live in such a neighborhood.

"Twelve Crescent Place?" he repeated. "How much board do you pay?"

"That's a secret between me and the landlady," said Tom. "If you'll come round and see me this evening, you can judge for yourself."

Having a strong curiosity about Tom's circumstances, Maurice accepted the invitation.

"Perhaps there are two Crescent Places," he thought. "I don't believe he can afford to live in a fashionable boarding-house."

"Mr. Mordaunt," said Tom, when they were getting ready for supper, "I've invited a friend to call this evening."

"That's right. I shall be glad to see him."

"It's that boy that loves me so much, Maurice Walton. He's awfully jealous of me—tries to snub me all the time."

"Then why did you invite such a fellow to call?"

"Because he thinks I live in a poor place, and it will make him mad to find me in such a nice room."

"I see," said Mordaunt, laughing. "It isn't as a friend you invite him."

"I'm as much his friend as he is mine."

"What makes him dislike you."

"I don't know, except because Bessie Benton is polite to me, and seems to like my company."

Mordaunt laughed.

"That explains it fully," he said. "So you are rivals for the young lady's hand?"

"Not quite. I ain't quite ready to be married yet. I'll wait awhile. But Bessie's a tip-top girl."

"You must introduce me some time."

"All right. I'll try and get an invitation for you to call with me."

About eight o'clock Maurice reached Crescent Place, and, scanning the numbers, found No. 12.

"He can't live in such a house," thought he. "It's ridiculous."

Still, he rang the bell, and, when the servant appeared, he asked, rather hesitatingly:

"Does Gilbert Grey live here?"

"Yes, sir," said the servant. "Will you go up to his room?"

"I don't know where his room is. Will you ask him to come down?"

"There is somebody to see you, Mr. Grey," said the servant, after mounting the stairs.

"He's come," said our hero, in a low voice, to Mordaunt. "I'll go down and bring him up."

Tom descended the stairs and welcomed Maurice.

"I'm glad you're come, Mr. Walton," he said. "Come up stairs to my room."

Finding that he did, after all, live in this handsome house, Maurice expected that it was on the upper floor, and was surprised when Tom led the way into a handsome parlor on the second floor.

"My roommate, Mr. Mordaunt, Mr. Walton," said Tom, introducing the visitor.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Walton," said Mordaunt. "Take a seat," and he indicated a luxurious armchair.

Maurice sank into its depths, and looked around him with wonder. How in the world could a fellow like Tom, earning a salary of five dollars a week, afford to board so luxuriously? Why, it quite eclipsed even his uncle's rooms. Handsome pictures, books, statuary, and choice furniture, under the brilliant blaze of an argand burner, made a beautiful apartment.

"You've got a nice room," he could not help saying.

"Won't you look at the bedroom?" said Mordaunt, politely.

Maurice looked in, and found it in proportion to the parlor.

"Gilbert and I manage to make ourselves comfortable," said Mordaunt. "We enjoy it ourselves, and are glad to have a pleasant place to invite our friends to."

Maurice was astonished; but such is the influence of wealth, or apparent wealth, upon a disposition like his, that he thawed, and made up his mind that he had better change his manner toward one who was able to afford living in such a style.

"He must have money," he thought. "Perhaps it's his rich uncle. I thought he was lying, but I guess it's true, after all."

Tom saw the change in his manner, and it amused him.

"He thinks I'm somebody, after all," he said to himself. "What would he say if he knowed what I used to be?—how I went round the streets of New York calling out: 'Shine yer boots!' and was glad if I could earn a dollar a day that way? I don't believe Mordaunt would mind. I'm going to tell him some time, and see."

"Do you ever play checkers, Mr. Walton?" asked Mordaunt.

"Sometimes."

"Then suppose we try a game, or perhaps you will play with him, Gilbert?"

"I'd rather look on," said Tom. "I don't know how to play, but maybe I'll learn lookin' at you."

"Very well."

Two games were played, and then a waiter appeared from a neighboring restaurant with some cake and ice-cream, of which Maurice partook with evident enjoyment. His ideas with regard to our hero were quite revolutionized. He was a good fellow, after all. So when he took leave, at the close of the evening, he readily promised to come again, and did not forget to do so.

"He'll take more notice of me now," said Tom, laughing. "He'll think I'm somebody."

"It's the way of the world, Gilbert," said Mordaunt. "We must take it as it comes."

"Maybe," said Tom, looking at his companion earnestly, "you wouldn't like to have me room with you if you knew what I used to be."

"What did you used to be?" asked Mordaunt, not without curiosity.

"A New York bootblack."

"Is it possible?"

"Don't you want me to go?"

"No, Gilbert; my friendship is too strong for that. But I want to hear about your former life. Sit down and tell me all about it."

Mordaunt listened with interest and surprise to the story of his roommate.

"It seems," he said, in conclusion, "that there is a fortune somewhere to which you are entitled."

"Yes," said our hero, "but my uncle will take pretty good care that I don't get it."

"From your description he doesn't seem to be a credit to the family. What are you going to do about it? Have you any plan?"

"Mr. Ferguson advises me to stay here for the present. He says I am as likely to hear of my uncle, if I stay in Cincinnati, as if I travel round the country after him."

"I presume he is right. As your uncle was formerly in business here, he is likely to come here some time on a visit. If he does, he will be likely to call at your establishment. The best thing you can do is to attend to your business, learn as much as possible, and keep your eyes open."

"I guess you're right," said Tom. "I ain't very old yet. I'll try to learn something, so that, when I come into my fortune, I can appear like a gentleman."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SCARRED FACE.

We are now about to pass over a space of three years, partly because no incidents of importance marked their passage, though they wrought an important change in our hero. We leave him an uneducated boy of fifteen. We meet him again a youth qualified to appear to advantage in any society. Of course, this change was not wrought without persistent effort. Tom was, as we know, an unusually smart boy, with a quick wit, and an aptness to learn. But talent avails little unless cultivated. Our hero, however, kept up his habit of evening study, at first under Mordaunt's instruction. The latter was amazed at the progress of his pupil. He seemed to fly along the path of knowledge, and to master difficulties almost by intuition. At the end of a year he was as good an English scholar as most boys of his age. But this did not satisfy him. He induced Mordaunt to join him in securing the services of a native French teacher, and was speedily able to read the language with ease, and to speak it a little. He also found it for his interest to learn something of German, on account of the number of German customers which Mr. Ferguson had. To these solid acquirements he added a couple of quarters at a fashionable dancing-school, and the result of all was, that he not only became a good scholar, but was able to appear to advantage in the social gatherings to which Mordaunt and himself were frequently invited.

Maurice Walton was no longer able to laugh at his rusticity, but, on the other hand, was forced to admit to himself, with a twinge of jealousy, that the rough, uncultured boy of former days had wholly eclipsed him in every desirable accomplishment, as well as in the solid branches. For Maurice spent his evenings in quite a different way from our hero—at the billiard-saloon or bar-room, or in wandering about the streets without object. The result was that Mr. Ferguson, detecting the difference between the two clerks, and recognizing the superior value of Gilbert, for he has now laid aside his street-name of Tom, promoted him much more rapidly than Maurice. The latter received but ten dollars a week, after three years' service, while our hero had been advanced to twenty. This was naturally felt by Maurice as a bitter grievance, and he sometimes complained of it to Gilbert himself.

"Ferguson treats me meanly," he said, just after the last rise of Gilbert.

"How is that, Maurice?"

"He won't raise my salary. He is only going to give me ten dollars a week, the same as last year. How much is he going to give you?"

"Twenty."

"Just twice as much!" exclaimed Maurice, angrily. "He has no business to make any

difference between us."

"I wish he would give you twenty dollars, too," said Gilbert.

"Do you?" asked Maurice, suspiciously.

"Certainly. I am none the better off for your getting small pay."

"If you really feel so, suppose you ask him to give me more."

Gilbert hesitated.

"I am afraid he would think I was interfering in his affairs."

"Just as I thought. You were not in earnest in what you said. You like to triumph over me because I came here the same time you did, and only get half as much."

Maurice spoke in a bitter tone, which might partly be excused by his mortification and disappointment.

"You are quite mistaken, Maurice," said Gilbert.

"I will believe that when you go to Mr. Ferguson and ask him to raise my salary."

Gilbert reflected a moment, and then said, suddenly:

"I'll do it."

"You will?" asked Maurice, surprised.

"Yes. He may be angry with me, but I'll risk it. Only if he refuses, you won't blame me?"

"No, I won't. You're such a favorite with him that he may do it for you. When will you go?"

"Now."

Mr. Ferguson was sitting alone in his counting-room when Gilbert entered.

"May I speak with you a moment, Mr. Ferguson?" he asked.

"Yes, Gilbert. What is it?"

"I hope you will excuse me for interfering in what is none of my business, but I promised Maurice I would speak to you."

"Oh, it's on Maurice's business, is it?" said the merchant.

"Yes, sir. He is very much disturbed because you have raised my salary, and have not raised his. I get twenty dollars a week, and he only ten."

"He thinks it unjust, does he?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you ask him to step into the office, and come back here yourself?"

The two clerks were speedily in the presence of their employer.

"So you think you ought to have a higher salary, Walton?" began Mr. Ferguson.

"I don't think Grey earns twice as much as I do, sir."

"Perhaps you think he does not earn any more."

"I don't see why he does."

"Then I will tell you. You have both been with me about the same length of time, you a little longer, I think, but length of service does not always enhance the value of service. Grey has devoted his evenings to study. He has acquired such a knowledge of German in particular that he can wait upon German customers. He has mastered all the details of the business, which you have not done. You are often late, often inattentive, and are no better clerk now than you were a year ago. That is the reason I am willing to give Gilbert higher pay than you. If you wish to fare as well as he has done, pursue the same course."

"I don't feel like studying in the evening; I am too tired," said Maurice, sullenly.

"Do as you please about that; but there is still another way in which, without any more time, you can make yourself more valuable, and merit increase of pay."

"How is that, sir?"

"Always be on the alert while you are here in the store. Then, in place of an indifferent

salesman, you may become a good one—such as I should be very sorry to lose. At present, I confess I should not feel it to be a great loss if you withdrew to another establishment."

Maurice listened sullenly. It chafed his pride to be thus addressed by his employer, in presence of Gilbert.

As they went back to their duty, our hero said:

"I did the best I could for you, Maurice. You can't blame me."

"No, but I blame him. He has no business to be so partial to you. All the difference between us is, that you can jabber Dutch a little. That isn't worth ten dollars a week extra. He's down on me for something or other; I don't know why."

"I don't make any comparison between us, Maurice," said Gilbert. "I am perfectly willing you should get as high pay as I do."

"You are very kind," said Maurice, sarcastically.

"Now, don't get mad with a fellow," said Gilbert, good humoredly. "I can't help it."

But Maurice was sullen all day, and for some days subsequently. He insisted on regarding Gilbert as a successful rival, and would have injured him if he could.

It was about this time that our hero had his thoughts suddenly recalled to the uncle who had defrauded him of his birthright. Walking in Vine street one morning, he suddenly came face to face with the man whose boots he had brushed, more than three years before, on the steps of the Astor House. He knew him at once by the *peculiar scar upon his right cheek*, of which he had taken particular notice when they first met.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

Our hero stopped short, and, being directly in the path of his uncle, the latter was compelled to stop, too.

"Mr. Grey," said Gilbert.

"That's my name," said the other, who had not yet taken particular notice of the youth who addressed him. But, as he spoke, he looked at him, and instantly recognized him. Gilbert could see that he did by his sudden start, and expression of surprise and annoyance. He couldn't understand how the New York bootblack had been metamorphosed into the well-dressed and gentlemanly-looking young clerk. He regretted so soon acknowledging his name, and marveled how Gilbert could have learned it.

"What business have you with me, young man?" he continued, formally.

"I have wanted to meet you for a long time," said Gilbert.

"Indeed!" said his uncle, with a sneer. "I am rather surprised to hear this, not having, to my knowledge, ever had the honor of seeing you before."

"I am your nephew," said Gilbert, bluntly.

"Then he knows," said Mr. Grey to himself, rather disturbed.

"I confess," he said, in the same sarcastic tone, "I am slightly disturbed at being claimed as a near relative by a stranger whom I happen to encounter in the street. May I ask how you happen to be my nephew?"

"I am the son of your older brother, John," said Gilbert.

"That can hardly be, young man. My brother had but one son, and he died."

"Disappeared, you mean," said Gilbert, significantly.

"There is no doubt that he died," said Mr. Grey, positively.

"Then he has come to life again, for I am he."

"You are an impudent impostor," said Mr. Grey, hotly; "but you have missed your mark. I am not so easily humbugged. I denounce you and your pretensions as alike false. Let me

pass."

As he said this he attempted to pass Gilbert, but our hero had no intention of losing sight of his uncle.

"Of course you can pass," he said; "but I shall follow you."

"You will?" demanded his uncle, shaking his cane angrily. "Then I will put you in the hands of the police."

"I don't think you will," said Gilbert, with perfect composure.

"Why not? What is to hinder me, I should like to know?"

"It wouldn't be good policy for you to do it."

"Why not, you impudent young rascal?"

"Because I should let the relationship be known."

"Well?"

"And why is it that you deny it?"

"Well," said Mr. Grey, his attention caught, "why do I deny it?"

"Because you are in possession of my father's property, which, of right, belongs to me!" said Gilbert, firmly, looking his uncle in the eyes. "It is your interest to deny the relationship."

James Grey saw that his long injustice had come home to him at last. How could this stripling have learned what he had taken such pains to conceal? What was he to do? Was he to admit the boy's claims, and surrender the estate? He could not make up his mind to do it. He must stave off the attack, if he could.

"This is a ridiculous story," he said. "Somebody has been making a fool of you."

"Didn't you have an older brother, named John?"

"Yes," Mr. Grey admitted, unwillingly.

"Did he not have a son?"

"Yes; but, as I told you, he died."

"He only disappeared. He was carried away, for what object, you can tell."

"You are dealing in mysteries. I don't know what you are talking about." Mr. Grey said this, but his troubled look showed that he did not feel as unconcerned as he pretended.

Gilbert continued:

"The man who carried me off was a clerk in your employ. His name was Jacob Morton."

"So he took you to Australia, did he? That's a likely story."

"Yes. He was supplied with money by you for the purpose. But he did not like Australia. After awhile he returned to New York, and there I was brought up in the streets, suffering every privation, while you were enjoying the property my father left."

"Well, have you got anything more to say? The tale does great credit to your invention."

"Three years ago—a little more, perhaps—I saw you in New York. I brushed your boots on the steps of the Astor House."

"Better and better. I am expected to recognize a New York bootblack as my nephew!"

"It was your fault that I was reduced to be a bootblack."

"How happens it that you are not in the same line of business now? Perhaps you are."

"Jacob died and left me a few dollars, with which I came out West. Before he died he gave me a written paper, in which he revealed all the plot into which he entered with you."

"He gave you a paper, did he?"

"Yes. From it I learned that I was born in Cincinnati, and I expected to find you here. But I looked in vain. After awhile I found my father's place of business. I introduced myself to Mr. Ferguson, and he gave me a place in his employ."

"On the strength of your ridiculous story, I suppose?"

"Because he believed me to be the son of his old employer, John Grey."

"I thought Ferguson had more sense than to be duped by such a designing young rascal."

"He tells me that I bear a strong resemblance to my father. Look in my face, Uncle James, and tell me whether it is not true."

Almost involuntarily James Grey fixed his eyes on the frank, handsome face of his nephew, as he stood intrepidly before him, and he was forced, however reluctantly, to admit to himself that the resemblance was indeed very striking.

The case was getting more serious than he had expected. Gilbert had already been recognized as the missing son of John Grey, and that by a man whose testimony would carry great weight. Old Jacob had testified not only to his identity, but to the wrongful compact by which Gilbert had been spirited away to suit his uncle's rapacity. Were this publicly known, his reputation would be destroyed, and he would be deprived of the wealth which he had labored so dishonestly to acquire. Evidently the claim was not to be disposed of so easily as he had at first supposed.

"What do you call yourself?" he asked.

"Gilbert Grey."

"Of course you would take the name of the boy you pretend to be."

"Then you don't believe I am Gilbert Grey?"

"No, I do not. I believe that Gilbert Grey is dead."

"Are you willing to come with me to Mr. Ferguson's, and speak to him about it?"

"No, I am not. I have not time. I must leave Cincinnati at once."

"Then will you tell me where you live?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I see that you intend to follow me up and persecute me about this preposterous claim. I don't choose to be troubled."

"If I am an impostor, you can prove me to be so."

"I don't choose to waste my time in doing it."

"Mr. Grey," said Gilbert, "I might as well tell you that I am determined in this matter. I know that you have an object in keeping me out of my rights; but I am bound to have them. I shall place the matter in the hands of a lawyer, and he can soon find out, by advertising, where you live, even if you try to keep it secret from me."

James Grey realized the truth of this, and he changed his tack.

"You say that you have a paper, signed by Jacob Morton, attesting your identity."

"Not only signed, but written by him."

"I should like to see that paper. Have you got it with you?"

"No, but I can lay my hands upon it immediately."

"Then bring it to me at the Burnet House this afternoon, at three o'clock. I will be in the reading-room of the hotel."

"I will bring it."

The two then separated.

Gilbert went immediately, returned to his place of business, resolved to inform Mr. Ferguson, whom he looked upon as a good friend, that his uncle was found.

## **CHAPTER XIX.**

### **DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.**

"Your uncle in the city?" said Mr. Ferguson, in surprise.

"Yes, sir. I met him, only a short time since, on Vine street."

"How did you know him?"

"By the scar on his cheek. But I think I would have known him at any rate. I have a good memory for faces."

"How did he receive you?" asked Mr. Ferguson, with curiosity.

"He didn't seem very glad to see me," answered Gilbert, smiling. "He insisted that his nephew is dead, and called me an impostor."

"He must have seen the resemblance between you and his brother. You will make just such a looking man as your father."

"I hope I sha'n't look like my uncle."

"Your father and your uncle did not resemble each other. There might have been a slight family likeness, but it was very slight."

"So much the better."

"You don't think you shall like your uncle?"

"I am sure I shall not. First, he cheated me out of my property, and now, because I claim it, he calls me an impostor."

"So that was the way the interview terminated, was it?"

"Not exactly. When I told him I had old Jacob's confession, and threatened to put it into the hands of a lawyer, he said he would like to see it, and asked me to call with it at the Burnet House this afternoon."

"Humph!" said Mr. Ferguson, thoughtfully. "Did you promise to do it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I will give you a piece of advice."

"What is it, sir?"

*"Don't carry the original paper with you."*

"Why not, sir?"

"It is best to be on the safe side. Your uncle is an unscrupulous man. This paper is of the utmost importance to you, since it proves your identity, and lays bare the conspiracy against you. Just in proportion as it is valuable to you, it is also valuable to your uncle."

"I understand," said Gilbert, nodding. "You think he has laid a trap for me, in order to get hold of the paper."

"It looks very much like it. At any rate, it is best to be on your guard."

"I don't think he would find it easy to get it away from me," said Gilbert, with the confidence of youth.

"You are too confident, Gilbert. You are but a boy, and he is a strong man. Besides, he will want to take it in his hands."

"Would you not advise me to carry it then, sir?"

"Not the original. Can you not make a copy of the paper?"

"But I am to call at three."

"You will have time enough. It is not long."

"Then I shall be obliged to neglect my duties here."

"Oh! as to that, in a matter of such importance, I will readily excuse you. You can go home at once, and get to work."

"Thank you, sir."

Gilbert lost no time in availing himself of the permission accorded to him. Reaching his boarding-house—the same one to which the reader has already been introduced—he took the important paper from its secure resting-place in his trunk, and, seating himself at the table, began to copy it rapidly. When he first entered Mr. Ferguson's establishment, he



could scarcely write at all; but he knew how important a good handwriting was, to one who aspired to be a business man, and he therefore soon commenced taking lessons. Now he was master of a handsome hand. Jacob, too, was a good writer, with a handwriting quite similar to his, so that, without any great effort, he succeeded in producing a document very nearly resembling the original.

"Now, Uncle James, I am ready to meet you," he said to himself, with satisfaction, as he compared the two papers, and then carefully laid away the first in its old place of concealment. "You are welcome to destroy this, if you think it will do you any good."

It was still early, for the paper was not long, and Gilbert decided to go back to the store, and resume his duties until it should be time to start for the Burnet House.

"Where have you been, Gilbert?" asked Maurice Walton, crossly.

"I have been home—to my boarding-house."

"I shouldn't think Mr. Ferguson would like your leaving his business to run home in the middle of the fore-noon."

"He advised me to go."

"I suppose you pretended to have a headache, or something of that kind," said Maurice, with a sneer.

"No, I didn't. I was never better in my life."

"What did you go for, then?"

"It seems to me you are very curious, Maurice," said Gilbert, good-naturedly. "If you must know, I went home on a little private business of my own."

"Very important, I suppose."

"Yes, it was important."

"Mr. Ferguson is very partial to you, that's all I can say. He wouldn't let me be away for a couple of hours, in the morning, even if I did have *important* business."

"I have no doubt he would. I hope you won't be disturbed if I tell you that I am going out again this afternoon."

"And you get twice as much pay as I," said Maurice, with dissatisfaction. "I say it's a shame."

"You must remember, Maurice, that I don't fix the salaries. If I could fix it so, your salary should be raised at once, so as to equal mine."

"It's easy to say that," said Maurice Walton, discontentedly.

Gilbert, in spite of the discontent of his fellow-clerk, took his hat at half-past two, and left the store. He reached the Burnet House about ten minutes of three, and went at once to the reading-room, where he was to meet his uncle.

Mr. Grey was already in waiting. He was seated in an arm-chair, looking over a file of the New York *Herald*.

"I have come, Mr. Grey," said Gilbert, "as you proposed."

"Humph! Have you the paper?"

"Yes, sir."

Here Mr. Grey showed signs of satisfaction, as Gilbert was quick-sighted enough to perceive.

"We will go up stairs to my room," said his uncle, rising, and laying down the paper. "We shall be more private there."

"Perhaps he thinks he can get hold of the paper better," thought our hero, though, of course, he kept his thought to himself.

"Follow me," said Mr. Grey. "Give me the key to No. 157," he said, to the hotel clerk.

Gilbert followed him up several flights of stairs till he reached his room.

"Enter," he said, unlocking the door.

Gilbert did so, feeling, at the same time, a queer sensation, as he thought of the attempt that might be made at violence. However, he was not wanting in courage, and did not

deign to give audience to fear.

"Sit down," said Mr. Grey, abruptly.

Gilbert seated himself near the door. His uncle drew up a chair for himself, but, as our hero noted, placed it between him and the door.

"He wants to cut me off from escape," he thought. "Never mind; he'll let me go when he finds he can't make anything by keeping me."

"Well," said his uncle, when they were seated, "let me know all about this precious plot you have been hatching."

"I am engaged in no plot, Mr. Grey," said Gilbert, steadily.

"Of course not. Conspirators are the last to admit the real character of their designs. But that don't alter the fact. You have laid a plot for getting possession of my property, and, to this end, have forged a paper, which you think will help you."

"You are quite mistaken, Mr. Grey. I have Jacob Morton's written confession of his agency in carrying me away from Cincinnati. I knew nothing of it till he spoke to me on this subject, and placed the paper in my hands."

"Have you the paper with you?"

Gilbert didn't answer this question, since he could not have said truly that he had Jacob's confession with him. It was merely his own copy. But he drew the paper from his breast-pocket, and handed it to his uncle.

Mr. Grey took the paper, and ran his eye rapidly over it. His countenance changed, for he saw that it would have great weight in a court of justice, completely substantiating Gilbert's claims to the estate which he wrongfully held.

"Well," he said, looking up, after he had finished reading the paper, "I have read this document, and I have no hesitation in pronouncing it a vile forgery. It shall meet the fate it merits."

So saying, he hastily tore it across the middle, and proceeded to tear it into still smaller pieces.

"Now, young man," he said, sarcastically, "as I have no further business with you, I will bid you a very good-day," and he bowed, mockingly.

"I think you are mistaken about our business being settled," said Gilbert, quietly.

"Your forged document will help you little," said Mr. Grey, triumphantly. "I have torn it into a hundred pieces."



**"Your forged document will help you little," said Mr. Grey, triumphantly. "I have torn it into a**

"It is of no consequence," said our hero, calmly. "*It is only a copy of the original paper.*"

## CHAPTER XX.

### BAFFLED, BUT NOT DISCOURAGED.

The triumphant look on the face of James Grey faded, and was replaced by one of baffled rage and disappointment.

"It's a lie!" he exclaimed, speaking rather what he wished than what he believed.

"You are mistaken," said Gilbert, in the same calm tone. "The paper you have just torn up was in my own handwriting."

"I have no doubt of that. I thought, all the time, that it was an imposture which you had got up."

"I made a copy of it from the original this morning," said our hero.

"Why did you not bring the original, if there is one?"

"Because I was afraid you might be tempted to destroy it. It seems I was right," added Gilbert, with a glance at the torn pieces of paper which littered the carpet at his feet.

James Grey was terribly provoked. He had "shown his hand," so to speak, and gained nothing by it. If his nephew's story was true, the dreaded paper was still in existence, and likely to be guarded more carefully than ever. Gilbert's calmness was a strong indication of the correctness of his story. Were the real paper destroyed, he could not help showing agitation.

"Do you mean to say that you have another paper than this?" he demanded.

"I do," said our hero.

"You must show me that, or I shall not believe you have it."

"I am not quite a fool, Uncle James," said Gilbert. "I know as well as you how valuable that paper is, and I am not going to risk it."

"You seem to be a remarkably prudent young man," said Mr. Grey, with a sneer—"quite an old head upon young shoulders."

"I ought to be," said Gilbert. "I was educated to the streets of New York. There I had to knock about for myself and earn my own living, at an age when most boys are carefully looked after by their parents. I learned to look out for my own interests there. I am indebted to you for that kind of training. You must not complain now if I use it against you."

Mr. Grey sat a moment in deep and troubled thought. This nephew of his turned out to be a decidedly formidable opponent. How could he cope with him?

"Have you told any one in this city about these false claims of yours?" he asked, after awhile.

"I have not spoken to any one about *false* claims," said Gilbert, coldly.

"Call them what you will. Have you spoken of having any claims to my brother's property to any one here?"

"I have."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Ferguson."

James Grey frowned. Mr. Ferguson was one of the last men to whom he would have wished the communication known.

"He must have laughed at your ridiculous story."

"On the contrary, he fully believes it."

"I did not think him so gullible. Have you spoken to him about my being in the city?"

"I have."

"Did he know you were to call upon me this afternoon?"

"I told him before I came."

Things were evidently getting more serious than Mr. Grey had supposed. Not only was Gilbert a young man who meant business, but he was backed by a merchant of standing, whose former connection with the Grey family made his co-operation and favor of no slight importance. James Grey saw that he must temporize. Had he followed out his inclination, he would have sprung upon his obdurate nephew and pounded him to a jelly. But unfortunately he was in a civilized city, where laws are supposed to afford some protection from personal assault, and this course, therefore, was not to be thought of. Since violence, then, was not practicable, he must have recourse to stratagem, and, to put Gilbert temporarily off his guard, he must play a part.

"Well, young man," he said, at length, "I am not prepared at present to pronounce a definite opinion upon your claim. Of course, if really convinced that you were my nephew, I would acknowledge you to be such."

"I have some doubts as to that," thought Gilbert.

"But it does not seem to me very probable that such is the case. Of course, I objected to being duped by an impostor. You cannot blame me for that."

"No."

"At first, your claim appeared to me preposterous, and I pronounced it to be so. Upon reflection, though I strongly doubt its genuineness, I am willing to take time to consider it."

"That is fair," said Gilbert.

"I shall consult with a lawyer on the subject, and institute some inquiries of my own. Then, besides, my time will be partly occupied with other business, on which I have come hither. You may come again, say in a week, and I shall perhaps be able to give you a definite answer."

"Very well," said Gilbert. "Good-morning."

"Good-morning," responded his uncle, following him to the door. "I'd like to kick you down stairs, you young villain," he added, *sotto voce*.

James Grey shut the door of his chamber, and sat down to think. It was certainly an emergency that called for serious thought. Gilbert's claim would strip him of four-fifths of his fortune, and reduce him from a rich man to a comparatively poor one.

"I am not safe as long as that paper exists," he concluded. "It must be stolen from the boy, in some way." But how? He felt that he wanted an unscrupulous tool through whose agency he might get possession of old Jacob's confession. That destroyed, he could snap his fingers at Gilbert, and live undisturbed in the possession of the fortune he wrongfully withheld from him.

Sometimes the devil sends to evil men precisely what they most want, and so it turned out in this particular instance.

That evening Mr. Grey was walking thoughtfully in the street, reflecting upon his difficult situation, when his sharp ears caught the sound of his nephew's name, pronounced by two boys, or young men, in front of him. Not to keep the reader in suspense, they were Maurice Walton and a friend of his, named Isaac Baker.

"I tell you, Baker," said Maurice, warmly, "it's the greatest piece of injustice my being paid only half the salary of that sneak, Gilbert Grey."

"I suppose he's a favorite with Ferguson, isn't he?"

"That's just it. I'm as good a clerk as he is, any day, yet he gets twenty dollars a week, while I only get ten. It's enough to make a fellow swear."

"Did you ever speak to Ferguson about it?"

"Yes, but that was all the good it did. He seems to think there's nobody like Grey."

"How did Grey get in with him?"

"I believe he's a nephew of the man Ferguson used to work for. Besides he's got a way of getting round people. He's a humbug and a hypocrite."

Maurice spoke with bitterness, and evidently felt strongly on the subject. He had another grievance, which he did not choose to speak of, of which our readers have already had a glimpse. His cousin, Bessie Benton, persisted in the bad taste of preferring Gilbert to him. Of course they were too young for anything serious; but, in the social gatherings to which all three were invited, Bessie was, of course, the recipient of attentions from both, and she had, on more than one occasion, shown unmistakably her preference for Gilbert Grey. Only two evenings previous, she had danced with Gilbert, but, when Maurice applied, had told him her card was full. It was not an intentional slight, and, had he come up earlier, he would have been successful in securing her. But he chose to regard it as a slight, and this naturally embittered him still more, partly against his cousin, but most of all against Gilbert, who, both in business and with the fair sex, seemed to have eclipsed him.

"I suppose, under the circumstances, you don't like Grey much?" said his companion.

"Like him!" returned Maurice, with bitter emphasis. "I should think not. He's a mean grasping fellow, and I hate him. He's got the inside track now, but my turn may come some time."

James Grey listened to this conversation with increasing interest. It seemed to open a way for him to success.

"Come," thought he, "here is just the fellow I want. He hates my dangerous nephew, and can easily be molded to my purposes. I will follow him, and, as soon as I can speak to him alone, I will see if I cannot win him to my side."

## **CHAPTER XXI.**

### **A CONSPIRACY.**

James Grey continued to follow Maurice Walton and his companion until his patience was nearly exhausted. At length, just as the city clocks were striking ten, Baker said:

"Well, Walton, I must bid you good-night."

"Won't you walk home with me? It isn't far out of your way."

"Can't do it to-night. The fact is, I want to see the governor before he retires. I'm hard up, and shall try to get a ten-dollar bill out of him."

"I wish you success. As to being 'hard up,' I can sympathize with you. Couldn't you ask him for an extra ten for me?"

"I would if there was any chance of getting it, but I'm afraid my own chance is slim enough."

"If I only got Grey's salary, I wouldn't ask favors of anybody; but how is a fellow to get along on ten dollars a week?"

"Just so. Well, good-night."

"Good-night."

Baker walked off, and Maurice Walton walked on by himself. He had taken but a few steps when Mr. Grey, quickening his pace, laid his hand upon his shoulder.

"Mr. Walton," said he.

Maurice turned quickly.

"You must excuse the liberty I have taken in addressing you, being a stranger; but I heard you, when in conversation with the young man who has just left you, mention the name of Gilbert Grey."

"Yes, sir, I mentioned his name," said Maurice. "Do you know him?"

"I have spoken with him, but I know very little about him. I judge that you do."

"We are in the same store," said Maurice; "but we are not intimate friends."

"I infer that you do not like him?"

"No, I don't."

"Nor do I."

Probably Mr. Grey could not have said anything more likely to win young Walton's confidence than this frank expression of dislike.

"The fact is," continued Mr. Grey, "I suppose I may speak to you in confidence?"

"Oh! certainly, sir," said Maurice, eagerly, for he anticipated hearing something to Gilbert's disadvantage.

"Then," said Mr. Grey, in a low tone, "I look upon him as an impostor."

"You do?" repeated young Walton. "What makes you think so?"

"I don't like to speak openly in the street. Can you give me an hour, or even half an hour of your time, or is it necessary for you to go home at once?"

"Where are you stopping, sir?"

"At the Burnet House."

"I think I can spare half an hour. It is near by."

"Thank you. I will endeavor to make the interview a profitable one for you. I am going to ask a service of you, and I am willing to pay handsomely for it."

Upon a young man "hard up," as Maurice was, this suggestion was not thrown away.

"I shall be glad to help you, sir," he said, quickly.

"Come with me, then. I will defer saying more till we are seated in my room at the hotel."

In less than five minutes they were so seated. By the gaslight Maurice got a fair view of his companion, and was led to wonder who he was.

"Mr. Walton," said the older man, "it is only fair that I should give you an equal advantage with myself. I know your name. You do not know mine. Let me introduce myself as James Grey."

"Formerly in business in this city?"

"The same."

"The uncle of Gilbert Grey?"

"So he says."

It was impossible to mistake the tone in which these words were spoken.

"Is he not really your nephew?" asked Maurice, in surprise.

James Grey shrugged his shoulders.

"He *pretends* to be; but I believe him to be an impostor."

"What makes you think so? Why should he pretend to be related to you?" asked Maurice, excited and eager.

"Because I am rich, and he has entered into a plot to extort money from me. I can make clear his design very briefly. He pretends that he is the son of my elder brother. If this be true, then the property which I possess, or a large part of it, properly belongs to him."

"But, if it isn't true, how can he make such a claim?"

"My brother's only son disappeared when a mere boy, and, though his body was not found, there is reason to believe that he fell into the Ohio river and was drowned. At about the same time, a clerk in my employ purloined a sum of money and fled. This boy has heard of these two incidents, and, cunningly putting them together, comes forward with a trumped-up story to the effect that this clerk, Jacob Morton, was hired to carry off my nephew, in order that, the true heir being out of the way, I might succeed to my brother's money. It is ridiculous, and yet it is cunningly devised."

"I always thought he was artful," said Maurice.

"You are quite right there. He has an astonishing amount of artfulness and unblushing impudence. But I have not told you all. He produces a paper professing to be written by this Jacob Morton, who, he says, is dead, asserting all that he claims."

"Do you think he wrote it himself?"

"Either that, or he has met this clerk somewhere, and they have devised a plan for jointly enriching themselves at my expense. If this is the case, and the paper was really written by Jacob Morton, the man is probably still alive, but keeping himself somewhere in concealment."

"What a bold attempt at fraud!" exclaimed Maurice, who was completely duped by his companion's plausible statements.

"Is it not? Now I want to ask you, who know him well, what your opinion of him is. Do you look upon him as honest and straightforward?"

"No, I don't. He's just artful enough to be up to some such game. He's deceived Mr. Ferguson, and made him think there is no one like him, so that there is no chance for me. He gets twice the salary that I do, although I have been in the business as long as he."

"And yet you look as if you had a good business turn," said Mr. Grey, with skillful flattery.

"I know as much of business as he does. I am sure of that."

"Mr. Ferguson must be a weak man to be so easily duped. If it were my case, he wouldn't find it so easy to impose upon me."

"I don't know how he does it, but he has cut me out entirely. Mr. Ferguson won't hear a word against his favorite."

"You are unfortunate, but we are in the same position there. He has conspired to keep you down, and he is now plotting to extort money from me by his preposterous claims."

"Do you think he stands any chance?"

"No. But if he produces this paper of his, he might bring a suit against me which would be annoying. You know there are some people who are always ready to believe the worst, and I dare say he would convince some that his claims were just, and that I had acted fraudulently. Now that would be unpleasant to me, though I should be certain to win at law."

"Of course. What are you going to do about it, Mr. Grey?"

"To ask your assistance, for which I shall be ready to pay."

"But what can I do?" asked Maurice, in some astonishment.

"I will tell you," said James Grey, hitching his chair nearer that of his young visitor; "but, of course, you will keep my confidence?"

"Certainly."

"The whole strength of his case lies in this forged paper. Let me get possession of that, and he can do nothing."

"I see."

"Now you know where he boards, probably?"

"Yes."

"Can't you contrive to get access to his room, search for the paper—very likely it is in his trunk—and, when obtained, bring it to me? I am ready to give a hundred dollars for it."

"I don't know," said Maurice, slowly. "I am afraid it would be difficult."

"But by no means impossible. I will give you ten dollars now, and that you may keep, whether you succeed or not. If you succeed, you shall have a hundred dollars besides. Do you agree?"

As he spoke he held a ten-dollar bill out temptingly. It was a temptation that Maurice Walton, with but fifty cents in his pocket, could not resist. He wanted money sorely. Besides, he had a chance to win a hundred dollars additional, and this would enable him to gratify several wishes which had hitherto seemed unattainable.

"I will do my best," he said, holding out his hand for the money.

There was a quiet flash of triumph in the cold, gray eye of his older companion, as he placed the bill in Maurice's hands.

"I need not caution you to be secret," he said.

"I shall not say a word to any one," answered young Walton.

James Grey rubbed his hands gleefully, as Walton left the room.

"The scheme promises well," he soliloquized. "My worthy nephew, I may checkmate you yet."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE THEFT OF THE PAPER.

Had Maurice Walton been a youth of strict honor, he could not have been induced to undertake the theft of the paper, however large the sum offered him. But his principles were not strict enough to interfere, and the hope of injuring Gilbert, whom he envied, and therefore hated, made him the more willing to engage in the enterprise.

"A hundred dollars will be very acceptable," he said to himself, complacently. "They couldn't be more easily earned. Now, how shall I set about it?"

Maurice came to the conclusion that Gilbert kept the paper in his trunk. This seemed to be the most natural depository to be selected. Of course, then, he must contrive some means of opening the trunk. He thought of pretending that he had lost the key of his own trunk, and asking Gilbert for the loan of his. But that would draw suspicion upon him when the paper was missed. Another plan, which he finally adopted, was to go to a locksmith, and ask for a variety of trunk keys, on the same pretext, in order to try, with the liberty of returning those that didn't suit. This, and other points necessary to success in his scheme, were determined upon by Maurice, and will be made known to the reader as he proceeds.

A little before ten the next morning, Maurice left his place in the store, and, going to Mr. Ferguson, asked permission to go home.

"For what reason?" asked his employer.

"I have a terrible headache," said Maurice, looking as miserable as possible.

"Certainly you may go," said Mr. Ferguson, who was a kind-hearted man, and who didn't doubt the statement.

"If I feel better I will come back in the afternoon," said Maurice.

"Don't come unless you feel able. I know what the headache is, and I don't want you to come, unless you feel quite able to attend to business."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now for business," said Maurice, as he found himself in the street. "I'll rest my poor head by a ride on the horse-cars."

First, however, he entered a small shop near by, over which was a sign, M. FRINK, Locksmith.

The locksmith, wearing a dirty apron, looked up from his work.

"I have lost the key to my trunk," said Maurice.

"I can make you another," said the locksmith.

"I want to open it now. Haven't you got some already made?"

"Plenty. But how will you know the size?"

"Give me half a dozen to try, and I will bring back those that don't suit."

"All right. Is your lock a large one?"

"Not very. About medium," said Maurice, hazarding a guess.

The locksmith picked out eight keys, of various sizes, and handed them to Maurice.

"I will bring them back safe," said he.

"All right. I don't think you'll run off with them."

"Now for it," said Maurice. "I think one of these keys must fit."



He took the cars to a point only two squares distant from Gilbert's boarding-house, and walked toward it. But, in order to change his appearance, he applied to his upper lip a false black mustache, which he had bought for the purpose, and, a little discomposed by his dishonest intentions, walked up the steps and rang the bell. It was opened directly by a servant.

"I am a friend of Mr. Grey's," said Maurice, putting on a bold face. "He told me I might get his opera-glass."

This he said in an easy, confident manner, which imposed upon the girl.

"Do you know his room?" she asked.

"Yes, I know it," said Maurice. "Never mind about going up."

The servant went back to her work, and Maurice, his heart beating fast, went up stairs on his dishonest errand. He had no difficulty in getting into the room, for the door was not locked. The trunks were kept in the bed-chamber, and he therefore went thither at once. One of the trunks was a handsome one, made of sole-leather. This belonged to Mordaunt. The other was plainer and smaller, and no doubt belonged to Gilbert.

Maurice got down on his knees and began to try his keys. The first did not fit, neither did the second, nor the third. Indeed, it was only the last that proved to be the right one. Maurice had feared the failure of his plans, when success came.

"So far, so good," he said, and began eagerly to explore the contents.

First in order came a pile of shirts and underclothing. These he hastily removed, and peered about for papers. In one corner was a book of deposits on a city savings-bank. Led by curiosity, Maurice opened it. He saw a long line of deposits, covering several pages, for Gilbert had been in the habit of making a weekly deposit, even the first year, for, though his income was small, he had nothing to pay for board, and this was, of course, a great help.

"How much has the fellow got?" thought Maurice.

He made a hurried calculation, and, to his astonishment and envy, learned that our hero had seven hundred and sixty dollars deposited to his credit.

"Almost eight hundred dollars, and I haven't a cent," he muttered, discontentedly. Then there came the thought that if he found the paper, he might count upon a hundred dollars, and his good spirits returned. Underneath the bank-book were two letters, written to him by Mordaunt while absent on a pleasure-trip not long before, and under these was a sheet of quarto paper, which appeared to be written upon.

"That may be the paper," thought Maurice, and he took it in his hands with eager anticipations. Turning to the end he read the signature, "Jacob Morton." A slight examination of the contents satisfied him that it was the paper he wanted.

"Success! success!" he ejaculated, exultingly. "My hundred dollars are safe. Now, Gilbert Grey, your hopes are dashed to the earth, and you won't know who has done it for you."

There was no need of waiting longer. He put back the contents of the trunk hastily, with the exception of the paper, which he folded, and put carefully in his breast-pocket. Then locking the trunk, he went down stairs, and let himself out by the front door, without meeting any one.

"I didn't think I'd succeed so easily," he thought. "Now I'll go round to the Burnet House and get my hundred dollars. It pays to have a headache, sometimes."

Arrived at the Burnet House he found that Mr. Grey was out, and decided to wait for him. He remained in the reading-room, reading the papers, impatient for the return of his employer. As he sat there, Mr. Grey, who had been told at the desk that some one was waiting to see him, entered.

"Ah! my young friend," he said, affably, "well, have you any news for me?"

"Yes," said Maurice.

"What is it?"

"Hadn't we better go up stairs?"

"It may be better. But, in one word, is it success or failure?"

"Success," said Maurice.

"Good!" exclaimed James Grey, his eyes lighting up with joy. "Come up."

Again they found themselves in the same room in which Gilbert and his uncle had formerly had their interview.

"The paper," said Mr. Grey, impatiently.

"You'll pay me the money?" said Maurice, cautiously.

"If the paper is correct, you may be assured of that."

Upon this assurance Maurice withdrew the paper from his pocket, and passed it over to his companion. The latter opened it, and glanced over it triumphantly.

"Is it right?"

"Yes, it is right. It is the forged paper. We have put a spoke in the wheel of that impudent young impostor. He can do nothing now. But you want your money, and you shall have it."

Mr. Grey took out his pocket-book and counted out five twenty-dollar bills, which he put in the hands of his agent.

"Now confess," he said, "you never earned money more easily."

"No," said Maurice; "but I wouldn't like to go through it again. Suppose Grey had come in while I was at his trunk?"

"Tell me how you managed it—I am curious to know."

So Maurice told the story, which amused his auditor not a little, especially when he tried on the mustache in his presence.

"You are a regular conspirator," he said, smiling. "You absolutely have a genius for intrigue."

Maurice felt complimented by this remark, and the fact that he was the possessor of over a hundred dollars, put him in very good spirits.

"When do you think Gilbert will find out his loss?" he asked.

"Very likely not till he calls on me. He will wonder how he met with the loss."

"I must be going, Mr. Grey," said Maurice. "It is about time for lunch."

"I would invite you to lunch with me, but it might lead to suspicions."

"Thank you all the same."

"Now the boy may do his worst," said James Grey, exultingly. "He has lost his proof, and has nothing but his own assertion to fall back upon. *I am out of danger.*"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE TABLES TURNED.

As Maurice Walton left the Burnet House, he fell in with the one whom he most wished to avoid. Gilbert was returning to the store, after his usual midday lunch. He was surprised to see Maurice, supposing him at home, suffering from the headache.

"How do you happen to be here, Maurice?" he asked. "I thought you were at home."

"My head felt so bad that I thought I would come out into the fresh air," answered Maurice, a little confused.

"Do you feel better?"

"A little. I think I'll go home and go to bed."

"I hope you'll be all right to-morrow."

"I guess so."

So they separated, Gilbert, who was not inclined to be suspicious, not doubting his fellow-clerk's statements.

That evening, when he returned to his boarding-house, the servant said:

"Did your friend find the opera-glass?"

"What?" said Gilbert.

"Shure a friend of yours called, and said you had sent him to borrow your opera-glass."

"I sent nobody. Who was it? What did he look like?"

"He was about your size, shure, and had a black *mustash*."

"I don't know who it can be. Did he go up into my room?"

"Yes, he did. He said he knew the way."

"I can't think who it was."

Gilbert went up stairs, and, to increase the mystery, there was his opera-glass on the bureau, where he usually kept it. It was directly in sight, so that the visitor must have seen it.

"I can't understand it," he said, perplexed. "Mordaunt, do you know of any friend of mine who has a black mustache?"

"Frank Oswald."

"He is considerably larger than I am. The servant said it was some one of my size."

"I can't think of anybody else."

"I don't see why he didn't take the opera-glass, if he wanted it, though it would have been rather bold, as I didn't authorize anybody to take it."

As there seemed no clew to the mystery, and as, moreover, Gilbert had no suspicion that the visitor was on an unlawful errand, he dismissed it from his mind.

Two days afterward, Gilbert met his uncle in the street. As the week was not up, he was about to pass him with a bow, when Mr. Grey paused, and appeared inclined to speak.

"Young man," he said, "can you call on me this evening?"

"Yes, sir."

"I shall leave the city to-morrow, and, though it is of no consequence to me, I suppose you would like to know my decision in regard to the matter you broached the other day."

"I will call," said Gilbert, bowing.

"He looks as if he were going to defy me," thought our hero. "Well, I am ready for him."

In the evening he called, and was shown up to his uncle's room.

"Good-evening, Mr. Grey," he said, politely.

"Good-evening, young sir," said the other. "You did me the honor, the other day, of claiming relationship with me?"

"I did."

"Knowing that your claim had no foundation, but was only an impudent fabrication, instigated by cupidity——"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Gilbert, quietly, "but that statement I deny most positively. I have not the slightest doubt that that relationship exists; neither has Mr. Ferguson."

"You have succeeded in duping Mr. Ferguson. You will find it a harder task to dupe me. If you knew me better, you would have hesitated before you attempted to humbug me in that barefaced way."

"If you knew me better, Uncle James——"

"I am not your Uncle James."

"Mr. Grey, then. If you knew me better, Mr. Grey, you would know that I am not capable of making a false claim."

"Oh! no doubt you are very honest—the soul of integrity," sneered James Grey; "but every one has his price, and, as the success of your imposture would make you rich for life, you concluded to leave honesty out of the question."

James Grey might at once have referred to his possession of the paper, but he could not forbear playing with Gilbert, as a cat with a mouse, enjoying meanwhile the power which

he possessed of crushing his claims by a single statement.

"Your charge is entirely unjust," said Gilbert, quietly. "I shall appreciate the money to which I am rightfully entitled, to be sure; but I want to settle my claim, also, to my father's name, of which I was so long ignorant."

"If you choose to call yourself Grey, or Green, or Brown, there is no law to prevent you, I suppose," said Mr. Grey, sarcastically; "but when you, a street bootblack, try to force your way into a respectable family, there is considerable to be said."

"I am not ashamed of having been a bootblack," said our hero, calmly. "I was earning an honest living, though an humble one; and I was not living upon what belonged to another."

"Do you mean me?" interrupted his uncle, angrily.

"You must decide whether you are meant, Mr. Grey."

"Suppose now I decline to consider seriously this very impudent claim of yours, what are you going to do about it?"

"I shall take legal advice."

"How do you expect to pay a lawyer?"

"I shall try to manage it."

"No lawyer will undertake such a discreditable case."

"I happen to be acquainted with one lawyer that will. In fact, I have mentioned the matter to him, and I am acting by his advice now."

"Does he tell you that you have a good case?"

"He does."

"What does he say is the strongest part of it?"

"The statement of Jacob Morton."

"Do you happen to have it with you?"

"No, sir. After the experience of my last call, I prefer not to bring it."

"You can't produce it," said James Grey, triumphantly.

"Why not?"

"Because you have no such document."

"You are mistaken there."

"I have the strongest reason for saying that this forged document, on which you so much rely, is no longer in your possession."

"I should like to know your reason," said Gilbert, struck by his uncle's significant manner.

"Then I will tell you. It is not in your possession, because *it is in mine!*"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Gilbert, somewhat startled.

"Just what I say. I have obtained possession of the paper which you so artfully concocted, and pretended to be the dying statement of Jacob Morton."

"What, did Mr. Ferguson give it to you?" asked Gilbert, amazed.

"Mr. Ferguson? What had he to do with it?"

"It is in his safe. I deposited it there, the morning after my interview with you."

"That is a lie!" exclaimed Mr. Grey, in excitement. "You placed it in your trunk."

"Oh!" said Gilbert, as light dawned upon him, "I understand you, now. Before carrying it to Mr. Ferguson, I made a copy for reference, thinking, also, that you might want to look at it again. *That copy* I left in my trunk; but the original is in Mr. Ferguson's safe."

"I don't believe you," said James Grey, furiously.

"It is perfectly true. I suppose that the young man who I hear called at my room one day in my absence, was your agent, and that he stole the paper."

"Out of my room, you scoundrel!" roared James Grey, whose disappointment was in

proportion to his former exultation. "I defy you!"

Gilbert saw that it would be of no use to prolong the discussion. He bowed quietly, and left the room.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A SUDDEN DEPARTURE.

After James Grey's triumphant feeling that he had spiked the guns of his young adversary, the revulsion and disappointment of defeat were all the more disheartening. He would like to have believed his tale a false one, but that was not easy. On a closer inspection of the paper which Maurice Walton had brought to him, he discovered a water-mark in the paper showing that it had only been manufactured the year previous. As Gilbert had been in Cincinnati three years, this, of course, was sufficient to show that the document could not be genuine.

"Who would have imagined the fellow so shrewd?" ejaculated his uncle, pacing the room with hurried steps. "He lost no time in locking up the paper. I'm afraid he's going to be a dangerous enemy."

Then, contemptuously:

"What a fool I am—a full-grown man, with fifty years' experience of the world, to be afraid of what a boy can do! No, he shall not gain his point. Possession is nine points of the law, and possession is mine. If he undertakes to oust me, he must be careful, for I have not lived in luxury, and grown accustomed to it for years, to resign it quietly now. If it is going to be a fight, it shall be a desperate one."

One of the smaller mortifications which Mr. Grey experienced was that of paying Maurice Walton a hundred and ten dollars, without receiving any benefit from the outlay.

"I'd get the money back, if I could," he thought, but reflection convinced him that this would be impossible. Besides, the best way to secure Maurice's continued silence, was to leave him in undisturbed possession of the money.

"After all, there's one good thing about him," considered Mr. Grey, "he hates my rascally nephew. For that alone I make him welcome to the money, though he has done me no good."

How should he carry on the campaign? That was the first thing to be considered. Evidently his policy was to be passive. He must remain on the defensive, leaving the aggressive part of the conflict to his nephew. First in the programme, he determined to leave Cincinnati at once, so that no legal process might be served upon him.

"Fortunately, the boy does not know where I live, nor can his employer give him any clew, as he, too, is ignorant of it. If he takes the trouble to call upon me again, he will find the bird flown."

James Grey was a man of quick action. He no sooner came to this determination than he proceeded to carry it out. Proceeding to the clerk's desk, he announced his immediate departure. Then, taking care not to order a hotel carriage, lest this should afford a clew to his destination, he left the hotel with his carpet-bag in his hand, and took a cab from the next street. He was driven direct to the depot, and, in a few minutes, was on his way westward.

"How lucky it was that I took the paper from my trunk," thought Gilbert, as he left the hotel. "Probably it would, by this time, have been destroyed, had it come into my uncle's possession. I think I'm a little ahead of him, this time."

Gilbert was not intimidated, nor were his resolutions shaken by the defiant tone in which his uncle had spoken to him. He was a spirited boy, and he meant to stick to his rights, as he understood them. He was not one to be browbeaten or cheated, and he resolved to fight out the battle.

"I will call on my uncle to-morrow evening," he resolved. "He will then have had twenty-four hours to think over the situation, and, if he is a man of sense, he will see that he can't get over my proofs."

When Mr. Ferguson, therefore, asked him how the business progressed, he answered that

nothing definite had been settled upon, but that he was to have another interview with his uncle in the evening.

"It will take some time to bring him round, I think," said his employer. "A man doesn't resign a fine estate without some opposition. If you should need any advice, at any time, you may apply to me freely."

"Thank you, Mr. Ferguson, I certainly will. Perhaps I may need to do it to-morrow."

In the evening our hero walked into the hotel, and, stepping up to the desk, inquired if Mr. Grey was in.

"He has gone away," was the answer.

"Gone!" exclaimed Gilbert, in manifest dismay, for that possibility had not occurred to him.

"Yes—he went away yesterday afternoon."

"Do you know where he went? From what depot?"

"I cannot tell you. He didn't take a carriage, but walked. Probably he went home."

"Will you let me see his name on the register?"

The book was placed before him, and Gilbert, finding the entry of his uncle's name, saw opposite it, "St. Louis, Mo."

"So he lives in St. Louis," thought our hero. "It won't be hard to find him, then. His name is probably in the directory. I must go at once to St. Louis. This business ought to be attended to at once."

Of course, it was necessary to speak to his employer about leave of absence. Probably, also, Mr. Ferguson would be able to give him some valuable advice, and he was likely to stand in need of it, for the undertaking on which he had entered was of no light character. Single-handed, he could hardly hope to overcome so experienced and determined an opponent as James Grey. He sought Mr. Ferguson, and gave him a full account of what had happened thus far. He concluded by stating the departure of his uncle.

"Well, Gilbert," said Mr. Ferguson, after he had finished, "have you thought of anything further, or will you let the matter rest?"

"Never!" exclaimed our hero, with energy. "I will not rest till I have recovered the property of which my uncle has deprived me."

"That will be difficult."

"I know it, but I am not afraid of difficulty. It is not impossible. He thrust me into the streets of New York to earn my living as a bootblack; and I might have been there now, if Jacob had not revealed to me the story of my birth."

"You don't express yourself much like a street-boy now, Gilbert."

"No, sir. I hope I have improved since then."

"I used to be amused, sometimes, by the expressions you used."

"I don't wonder, sir. I must have talked like a young barbarian; but I am grateful to God for having raised me above my former ignorance."

"It is determined, then, that you will prosecute your claims. How do you propose to do it?"

"I must first go to St. Louis and see my uncle again."

"Does he live in St. Louis?"

"Yes, sir."

"How do you know? Did he tell you so?"

"No, sir. But I read it on the hotel register, at the hotel."

"Did he register himself before he first met you?"

"No, sir."

"Where was he before?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Then what reason have you to think that he registered correctly? Why did he change his

hotel? I may be wrong, but it strikes me that it was intended as a blind to deceive you. Your uncle is a shrewd man, and he would understand the importance of keeping his real residence concealed from one who had in his power to prosecute a claim against him involving nearly his whole fortune."

"Then you don't think he lives in St. Louis, Mr. Ferguson?"

"I don't think he does."

Gilbert looked blank.

"That interferes with my plans," he said. "I meant to ask a month's leave of absence from you, and go to St. Louis and see what I could do."

"That would take money."

"I have saved up about eight hundred dollars," said Gilbert.

"Eight hundred dollars?" repeated his employer, surprised. "How was it possible for you to save so much?"

"I have no board to pay. My roommate is rich, and I was the means of doing him a service which he repays in that way."

"I congratulate you, Gilbert. It speaks well for your habits that you have laid aside so much money. I was about to offer you a loan."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Ferguson," said Gilbert, gratefully; "but I don't think I shall need it. I shall have money enough, but that is not all. From what you say, I am afraid, if I went to St. Louis, it would only be a wild-goose chase."

"Stay," said Mr. Ferguson, after a moment's thought; "an idea strikes me. You may gain the knowledge you want with very little trouble. Mind, I say *may*. It is not certain."

"How, sir?" said Gilbert, eagerly.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MAURICE BETRAYS HIMSELF.

"In this way," answered Mr. Ferguson. "Your uncle did not register his name at the Burnet House till after his encounter with you in the street. Probably his reason for changing his hotel was to prevent your examining the register of the one at which he was previously staying, and so ascertaining his real residence. The same motive would lead him to give the wrong address in the new hotel."

"Yes, sir; that seems likely, but how is that going to help me?"

"You must try to ascertain where he formerly stopped. Go to the principal hotels, and examine their registers for a fortnight back. Probably that will cover all the time in which your uncle is likely to have arrived."

"Yes, I see," said Gilbert, brightening up. "It is a good plan, and I think it will succeed."

"I hope so, for your sake."

Gilbert lost no time in following out his employer's suggestion. First, he went to the Gibson House; but he examined the books to no purpose. He looked back as far as twenty days, but could not find the name of James Grey.

"He can't have stopped at this hotel," he said to himself.

Next he went to the Spencer House. It occurred to him that possibly his uncle's name might be recognized, so he asked the clerk:

"Has a gentleman named James Grey stopped with you lately?"

"Grey? I believe so," said the clerk, after a moment's reflection. "He left us about a week since."

"Yes, it is the same," said Gilbert, eagerly. "Was he here long?"

"Only two or three days."

This, of course, made the examination easy. In point of fact, ten days back Gilbert found recorded on the books:

James Grey, Clayton, Illinois.

"Clayton, Illinois," repeated Gilbert; "that's a place I never heard of. I wonder where it is? It can't be much of a place. Can you tell me in what part of Illinois Clayton is?" he inquired of the clerk.

"Never heard of it," said that official, indifferently.

"Clayton, Illinois?" said a gentleman who had just come up to leave his key. "I can tell you where it is."

"Where, sir?"

"It is a small town on the Mississippi river, north of Alton—I should think about thirty or forty miles. I never was there, but I've passed it while ascending the river on a steamboat."

"Thank you, sir," said our hero.

As may be supposed, he was not a little elated at his discovery. In spite of James Grey's prudent precautions, his nephew felt that he had not been shrewd enough. St. Louis had not answered the purpose. The insignificant place where he had supposed himself safe from pursuit, was now known, and Gilbert determined that there should be no cessation of hostilities. He was resolved to follow up the attack, and force his uncle to do him justice.

Meanwhile Maurice Walton could not but observe that something was going on. He noticed Gilbert's absence from the store, and his frequent interviews with Mr. Ferguson, and rightly inferred that they had something to do with James Grey.

"I wonder if he has found out the loss of the paper?" he thought. "He must have discovered it, and that's why he is in such a flutter. If it's spoilt his chances, so much the better. I owe him a grudge, and, if I've put a spoke in his wheel, I shall be glad."

One incident, having its effect upon the narrative, has not yet been recorded.

When James Grey left the hotel, carpet-bag in hand, he chanced to meet Maurice, just before he took a hack to the depot. An idea flashed upon him that Maurice might be useful to him as a spy upon his nephew, and might be engaged to watch and give him timely notice of his movements. He therefore paused, and Maurice perceived that he wished to speak with him.

"Good-day, sir," he said.

"Good-day. I am glad to meet you, for I have something to say to you. That paper you brought me was not the right one."

"Not the right one?" repeated Maurice, in alarm, for he thought Mr. Grey was about to demand back the hundred dollars, which he would have been very sorry to surrender.

"No; the rascal had been cunning enough to put the original in Mr. Ferguson's safe, and leave only a copy in his trunk. The paper you brought me was the copy."

"Does Gilbert say so?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps he lies."

"So I thought; but the date on the paper confirms his story."

"It wasn't my fault. I think I earned the money."

"You can keep it. I have no intention of asking it back; but I shall want to employ you further."

"To get the paper from the safe?"

"Can you do it?"

"I am afraid not. If I were caught doing it, I should be dismissed, and perhaps arrested."

"If you succeed, I will give you another hundred dollars."

"I should like the money."

"Watch for a good chance. You may be able to do it unobserved."



"Are you going to leave the city?"

"Yes, I leave at once."

"Suppose I get the paper—what shall I do with it?"

"Send it by mail to my address."

"Where is that, sir?"

"Can I rely upon you not to communicate it to Gilbert Grey? It would do him a great deal of good."

"Then I certainly won't tell him," said Maurice, decidedly.

Knowing the state of feeling between Maurice and his nephew, Mr. Grey felt satisfied with this assurance.

"I don't want you even to put it on paper," he continued. "Gilbert might get hold of it. You can remember it without."

"Very well, sir."

"It is Clayton, Illinois, to the north of Alton, on the river. Now, can you remember Clayton?"

"I will think of Henry Clay."

"That will be a good reminder. As to the State, you are not very likely to forget that. Now, if you find the paper, inclose it in an envelope, and mail it to JAMES GREY, Clayton, Illinois. As soon as I receive it, I will send you, or bring you, a hundred dollars."

"Very well, sir; I will try, but I am not sure whether I shall succeed. It's harder than the other job."

"Are you suspected of that?"

"I don't think so."

"That is not all. I shall want to learn about the fellow's movements. He may be planning some conspiracy, of which it is important that I should be apprised. Now, you are in the same office, and likely to know what is going on."

"Yes, sir."

"I want you to watch carefully, and, whenever you learn anything worthy my knowing, write me immediately, to the address I have given you. See if you remember it."

"Clayton, Illinois."

"For every letter containing information of value, I will send you ten dollars. I shall not write direct from Clayton, lest the letter be seen, but I will manage to have my letters posted from St. Louis. That is where Gilbert supposes I am living."

"Perhaps you had better direct to my boarding-place, and not to the store."

"A good suggestion. Give me your address."

James Grey took it down in his memorandum book.

"I believe that is all," he said. "Remain faithful to my interests," he added, "and I will take care you do not regret it."

"I shall not regret it, if it interferes with Gilbert Grey."

"If you are his enemy, you cannot harm him more than by devoting yourself to my service."

"I will do it."

James Grey now hurried away, and Maurice went back to the store. He thought himself unsuspected of the theft of the paper, but he did not long remain so, and it was through his own imprudence that it happened.

The black mustache which he had used as a disguise he thrust carelessly in his vest pocket. One day in the store, in drawing out his watch-key, the mustache came too, and dropped on the floor.

Maurice stooped hastily to pick it up, but not till Gilbert had seen it. The latter at once remembered the servant's description of the young man who called for his opera-glass.

"How long have you had that mustache, Maurice?" he asked, pointedly.

"I bought it yesterday," muttered Maurice, in confusion.

"I thought you might have had it longer," said Gilbert, quietly.

Maurice did not answer.

"Now I know who stole the paper," thought our hero. "I must be on my guard against him."

He said nothing further; but Maurice knew that he was suspected, and it only incensed him the more against his fellow-clerk.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### MAURICE AND BESSIE BENTON.

Gilbert could not help wondering how Maurice and Mr. James Grey were brought together, and how it happened that the former became his uncle's agent and accomplice. He knew, however, that Maurice never liked him, and guessed that this had been an inducement.

"I wonder," he thought, "if there is any chance of his communicating my plans to Mr. Grey? It will be best for me to keep him in ignorance of my destination."

When, therefore, he was ready to start, he resolved only to tell him that he was going to St. Louis. This was, in truth, his first destination, but, as we know, he intended to go farther.

Maurice, who didn't before know of Gilbert's plans, was surprised when the latter walked up to him and said:

"I must bid you good-by for a time, Maurice."

"Are you going away?" exclaimed his fellow-clerk, staring at him in amazement.

"Yes, I am going away for a short time."

"Where?"

"To St. Louis."

"On business for Mr. Ferguson?"

"No, it is on my own business."

"I suppose it has something to do with his uncle," thought Maurice, but he thought it most prudent not to say this.

"How long do you expect to be gone?" he asked.

"I don't know—it depends on how successful I am."

"Bessie Benton will miss you," said Maurice, sarcastically.

"So she said," answered Gilbert quietly, appreciating his motive.

"When did you see her?" asked Maurice, with a twinge of jealousy.

"Last evening."

This made Maurice feel very uncomfortable. Bessie had grown very pretty, and he admired her more than ever, but with a strange perversity, as he thought, she didn't appear to reciprocate the feeling. On the other hand, she appeared to care a good deal more for Gilbert's society than for that of Maurice. It came to him now, with a feeling of joy, that when Gilbert was away Bessie would naturally turn to him for companionship.

"I think I shall go up there this evening myself," he said. (It must be explained that Maurice no longer boarded at his uncle's.) "If you have any message to send, I can take it."

"Give Bessie my love," said Gilbert, a little mischievously, knowing that Maurice would

never carry such a message.

"I will *remember* you to *Miss Benton*," said Maurice, with dignity.

"Oh! don't take the trouble," said Gilbert, carelessly; "it isn't at all necessary."

"Then I won't."

"Just as you please."

"I never saw such an amount of *cheek* in my life," said Maurice to himself. "I've a great mind to drop a hint to Bessie. She notices him altogether too much."

So Maurice, fulfilling his determination of calling that evening, managed to introduce the subject.

"Gilbert Grey called on you last evening, didn't he?"

"Yes; he is going away. He came to say good-by."

"I sha'n't miss him much."

"Why not? Are you not a good deal together?"

"In the store we are together. Out of it, I don't care to keep his company."

"Why not?"

"He isn't my style."

"If it means that he does not resemble you, Maurice, I think you are right."

"He is very much stuck up."

"Really, Maurice—I hope you will excuse my saying it—I think that charge could be brought against you more justly."

"Do you mean to say I am stuck up?" asked Maurice, indignantly.

"Perhaps it is only your manner."

"But do you think I seem so?"

"More than Gilbert."

"You seem very familiar with Grey, to call him Gilbert."

"Of course I am familiar with him. Why shouldn't I be?"

"It doesn't show very good taste on your part."

"I don't know about that. Gilbert is popular in society. You know that at parties he never has any difficulty in filling up his card."

Maurice did know that at the parties when both were present, Gilbert was received with much more favor than himself, and this was one of the circumstances that made him angry with his fellow-clerk. Few can pardon a wound to their self-love.

"It only shows that humbugs flourish best in the world," he said.

"Do you call Gilbert a humbug?" asked Bessie, her fair face flushed with indignation.

"Yes, I do."

"Then," she said, spiritedly, "it only shows your jealousy and envy of him, because he is better looking and more popular than you. Jealousy is hateful, I think," said the little lady, tossing her head with emphasis.

"I hope when I am jealous it will be of somebody better than Gilbert Grey," said Maurice, angry and mortified because Bessie had referred to Gilbert as better looking and more popular than himself.

"It seems to me you are making yourself very disagreeable to-night, Maurice," said his cousin, pettishly.

"If you knew what an impudent message he sent to you, you might change your mind about him."

"What impudent message did he send? I don't believe he sent any."

"Then you're mistaken. He said, with his own lips, 'Give my love to Bessie.'"

A smile rippled over the face of Bessie Benton, and there was a little blush, too. Evidently she was not at all displeased at the message.

"Was that the impudent message you spoke of?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then I don't see what impudence there is in it."

"What right had he to call you Bessie?"

"Don't you call me Bessie?"

"That's different—I am your cousin."

"Well, I call him Gilbert. So we're even."

"He had no right to send you his love. It isn't proper."

"Really, Maurice, I ought to be very much obliged to you for taking such good care of me, and teaching me what's proper, and what isn't. But, if you don't think the message a proper one, what made you give it to me?" she asked, smiling.

"I wish I hadn't," thought Maurice, who began to see that he had been hurried by his anger into making a mistake.

"I thought you would resent it," he said, aloud.

"You can give Gilbert my love, when you write to him," said his cousin, provokingly.

"I sha'n't write to him; and, if I did, I wouldn't send him that message."

"You are very obliging."

"If you knew as much of Gilbert Grey as I do, you wouldn't think so much of him."

"Do you know anything very dreadful about him?" asked Bessie, incredulously.

"I know why he has gone to St. Louis."

"Is it to commit murder, or robbery, or for any other dreadful reason?"

"It is to commit robbery!"

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Maurice Walton," said Bessie, sharply.

"I don't know what else you can call it," persisted Maurice. "He is going to try to get possession of some property that don't belong to him."

"I don't believe it."

"He knows of a rich gentleman of the same name, and he has forged a paper, and is trying to make out that he is his nephew, though it is well known that the nephew died years ago."

"Is that his reason for going to St. Louis?" asked Bessie, interested.

"Yes."

"How do you know?—did he tell you?"

"I have the best authority for my statements," said Maurice, who, for reasons known to the reader, did not like to tell how he gained the information; "but I am not at liberty to say more."

"You are very mysterious."

"What I have told you is the truth. If you don't call it robbery, I do."

"All I have got to say is, that if Gilbert claims to be anybody's nephew, I have no doubt he is. He wouldn't forge a paper for anything."

"That's where you and I don't agree."

"I think it's rather mean of you, Maurice Walton, to come here to slander a friend."

"He isn't my friend. Perhaps he is yours."

"You are right there," said Bessie, firmly. "He is my friend."

"Perhaps, when he gets that fortune, you'll marry him?" said Maurice, sarcastically.

"He hasn't asked me yet," said Bessie, blushing.

This was too much for Maurice. He began to see that Bessie liked Gilbert more than he suspected, and that, by his blundering, he had only helped matters along. He sulkily bade his cousin good-night, and, returning home, bethought himself of his promise to Mr. Grey, and, though it was late, sat down and wrote him a letter.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### JAMES GREY'S RESIDENCE.

About a mile from the bank of the Mississippi River, in the small town of Clayton, stood a handsome house. It was on a commanding site, and could be seen by the travelers bound up the river, from the decks of the large river-boats. It stood in lonely grandeur, with no other houses very near, and those that were within a respectful distance from it were far inferior. The occupant might be judged to be, in his neighborhood, a person of some consideration.

This was the mansion of James Grey, already introduced to our readers.

What motives had led him to pitch his tent in such a spot, can only be conjectured. He came thither directly from the city of Cincinnati, having lived in a hotel near by while he hurried the erection of this house. He came thither with his son, (his wife was dead), and had lived there ever since, though, from time to time, he absented himself on a trip to St. Louis, or, in rarer instances, Cincinnati. It is not unlikely that, knowing himself to be guilty of a fraudulent appropriation of his nephew's property, he had chosen to withdraw from the busy world, and plant himself in this comparatively obscure place, where he was not likely to be visited by any one cognizant of the manner in which he obtained his money.

Indeed, until his visit to New York, three years before, he had not supposed there was any one living so cognizant. He had seen a rumor that the vessel in which Jacob and his young charge went out to Australia was wrecked, and he imagined, or rather hoped, and so persuaded himself, that his dangerous nephew and his guilty accomplice were dead. But his recognition of the boy who blacked his boots on the steps of the Astor House undeceived him as to this point. Still, it seemed altogether unlikely that the boy would ever become aware of his identity.

"If he does," thought James Grey, "he is not likely to find me here on the banks of the Mississippi, fifteen hundred miles away."

According to the doctrine of probabilities, he was doubtless correct. It was not likely, but then events often bid defiance to the probabilities, and such was the case now.

At the time we introduce Mr. Grey at home, he was sitting at breakfast in a handsome breakfast-room, from the windows of which the river was visible. He held in his hand a copy of a St. Louis morning paper of the morning previous, and was reading its columns, while sipping a cup of coffee at his side.

A boy of seventeen entered the room.

"You are very late, Jasper," said his father, consulting his watch. "Can't you get to breakfast earlier than ten o'clock, sir?"

Jasper was dark and effeminate in appearance, not strong and sturdy, nor had he the look of self-reliance and calm power which characterized our hero, who was his cousin. He was smooth, deceitful, and vain, running to dissipation, as far as he had opportunity.

"I was tired, sir," he answered.

"What made you tired?"

"I didn't get home till late last evening."

"Where had you been?"

"I was at Alton."

"Without my permission," said his father, frowning.

"I am seventeen, sir. I am old enough to go off by myself."

"By heavens, you are not!" said his father, angrily. "It seems to me, sir, you are getting mighty independent."

"There is nothing to do here in this hole," said Jasper, disdainfully. "I get tired of moping here."

"I manage to content myself here," said Mr. Grey.

"I don't see how you do it," said Jasper, shrugging his shoulders.

"Well, what did you do at Alton?"

"Not much. I just went up there in the morning, and came back at night. I didn't have long to stay."

"I missed you at dinner, but thought you were out riding."

"I am going out to ride after breakfast. By the way, father, can you give me a little money?"

"Money! I gave you twenty-five dollars three days since."

"I haven't got a dime left."

"What did you do with it, you young spendthrift? Gambled on the boat, I dare say."

"Well, I had a little game," answered Jasper, coolly.

"And lost?"

"Yes, I lost."

"Of course. You are too green to cope with the sharpers that infest those boats. Haven't I forbidden you to play?"

"There was nothing else to do."

"You appear to pay very slight regard to my commands. In return I shall allow you to know what it is to be penniless for a time."

"Won't you give me any money, father?"

"No, I won't."

Jasper looked dark and sullen. He was an utterly spoiled boy, if one can be called spoiled, who had so few good qualities which admitted of being spoiled. He inherited his father's bad traits, his selfishness and unscrupulousness, in addition to a spirit of deceitfulness and hypocrisy from his mother's nature. He was not as censurable as he would have been had he not possessed these bad tendencies.

He finished his breakfast and went out.

"That's a model son to have—a son to be proud of," soliloquized his father. "He is already a gambler, a liar, and cares for me only as I have it in my power to promote his selfish ends. I have let him grow up like an evil weed, and I am afraid he will some day disgrace me."

Though himself unscrupulous and bad, Mr. Grey would have been glad to have his son better than himself. In his secret heart he felt the superiority of Gilbert to his cousin. Yet Jasper, with all his faults, was his son, and the wily father schemed to secure to him the property which belonged to his nephew.

He was interrupted by the entrance of a colored servant.

Pompey had originally been a slave, as he showed by his language at times.

"Well, Pompey, have you been to the post-office?"

"Yes, sar."

"I suppose you found a paper for me, didn't you?"

"No, massa, didn't see nothing of no paper," said Pompey; "but I found this letter," and he displayed a letter in a yellow envelope.

"Give it to me."

Mr. Grey took it in his hand, and saw that it was post-marked "Cincinnati." The handwriting he did not recognize. His curiosity was aroused.

"You can go, Pompey," he said, waving his hand.

"I'm gone, massa."

James Grey tore open the letter hastily, and turned at once to the signature.

"Maurice Walton!" he repeated. "Why that's my young spy. It must be about my nephew."

He read with eager interest:

"DEAR SIR:—(so it commenced) You asked me to write you if anything happened. I think you will like to know that your nephew, Gilbert Grey, if he is your nephew, which I doubt, has just left here for St. Louis. I suppose, from what I can learn, that he is in search of you. I don't think he has any idea where you really live. He has not learned from me, for I hate him, and I won't tell him anything he wants to know. I didn't know but you might happen to be in St. Louis, so I write to put you on your guard. I hope you will write to me, so that I may know this letter went straight.

"Yours, respectfully,

"MAURICE WALTON."

"He wants me to write to him, inclosing ten dollars," thought James Grey. "Well, he shall not be disappointed. His information is worth that. So my young nephew is on the trail is he? He really thinks he is a match for me. Well, well, we shall see. He mustn't push his inquiries too far, or he may find me dangerous," and Mr. Grey's face assumed a dark and threatening look. "However, he is not likely to find me in this out-of-the-way place."

Mr. Grey went into his library, and penned a short letter to Maurice Walton, commending him for his watchfulness, and inclosing a ten-dollar greenback.

He had scarcely finished the letter when Pompey entered, and said:

"Scuse me, massa, but there's a young gemman below that axes to see you."

"A young gentleman!" repeated Mr. Grey. "Can it be my nephew?" flashed through his mind with sudden suspicion.

"Bring him up, Pompey," he said, aloud.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE GUEST OF HIS ENEMY.

While Pompey was gone to seek Gilbert and invite him to the library, James Grey gave the time to rapid reflection. He saw that our hero was a determined and dangerous opponent. He had not credited him with such courage and perseverance. He thought that, being a mere boy, he would be easily intimidated—that opposition and difficulty would daunt him. But he had hardly reached home, and his nephew was already on his track.

"How could he have found out my residence?" thought he. "Maurice Walton wouldn't tell him. He must be sharper than I supposed."

When intimidation and force fail, a good general has recourse to strategy. James Grey was a man of expedients, and he rapidly decided upon a change of base. When, therefore, Gilbert entered the library, expecting an angry reception, he was astonished by seeing his uncle rise from his chair and advance to meet him with hand outstretched.

"Good-morning," he said, smiling. "How did you find your way here?"

"I accidentally learned where you lived, Mr. Grey."

"Precisely so. I was quite sure I had not mentioned my address to you."

"No, sir, you did not."

"It was an oversight on my part. Did you have a pleasant journey from Cincinnati?"

"Quite pleasant, sir."

"Are you traveling on business?"

"On business with you, sir. That is all."

"So I supposed. Well, I am glad to see you. We are a small family, and lonely. I hope you will stay with us a few days."

"As your guest?" inquired our hero, much surprised.

"Yes. That will enable us to transact this business at our leisure."

"I shouldn't think you would invite me to your house," said Gilbert, in surprise.

"Why not?"

"You think I am an impostor."

"I don't feel sure of that."

"You said so in the city."

"I thought so in the city," said Mr. Grey, with apparent frankness. "Since I returned home I have been turning the matter over in my mind, and I don't feel so certain about it. You may be deceived."

"I know I am not," said Gilbert, firmly.

"Of course, you think so, my young friend. We won't dispute about it. I only want to find out the truth, and if you can prove your claim beyond any question I will do what is right. But there must be no doubt of it."

"Of course, that is fair enough."

"It seemed to me incredible that a son of my brother John should be living, and as he left some property, I thought that you might be playing a sharp game. You mustn't be offended at my plain speaking," he added, with a smile.

"No, sir; certainly not. I am in favor of plain speaking. But I hope you will in time have a more favorable opinion of me."

"I have already, or I would not invite you to become my guest. Have you your luggage with you?"

"Only a carpet-bag."

"Where is that?"

"At the village hotel."

"That is a poor place. You must stay here, and I will send for it."

"I don't know what to say," said Gilbert, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"Then I will say for you that you accept without hesitation."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Grey rang the bell, and Pompey appeared.

"What's wanted, massa?"

"Send Dick to the hotel for this young gentleman's carpet-bag."

"Yes, sar. What name, sar?"

"Gilbert Grey," answered our hero.

"Any 'lotion?" asked Pompey, with the freedom of a favorite servant.

"Mr. Grey thinks there is a relationship," said the uncle. "Now be off, and tell Dick to make haste."

"By the way, though it is early to enter upon business, have you brought old Jacob's confession?" asked James Grey, in an indifferent tone; but he awaited the answer with a good deal of interest.

"No, sir; that is, not the genuine paper. I have with me a copy."

"That will do as well," said the other, but he could not wholly hide the disappointment in his voice. "Let me see it, if you please."

Gilbert drew the paper from his pocket and handed it without hesitation to his uncle.

"If you have no objection I will keep this for a while, and look over it in private."

"Certainly, sir. You may keep it permanently. I have the other."



"Confound you, I know that only too well," thought the uncle, but he only expressed his thanks quietly.

"You probably know nothing of my family," continued James Grey, "though as a possible relation, you should do so. My wife is dead, and I have but one child, a boy of about your own age. Jasper is seventeen."

"I am about eighteen."

"He does not look at all like you, or me either. He favors his mother's family, being quite dark. I think also he is more like his mother in disposition than like me. I hope you will like him."

"I hope so," said our hero, politely.

"I can't say he altogether pleases me," said James Grey. "He is not as obedient and observant of my wishes as he should be. For example, he went to Alton yesterday without permission, and lost all his money on hand by gaming. I hope you never gamble, Gilbert."

"No, sir, I don't approve of it."

"You are quite right. I foresee you will have a good influence on Jasper—I was about to say, on your cousin, Jasper—but I will wait till that is proved."

"I will not call him cousin while there remains a doubt."

"Quite right. I will give my earliest attention to the matter."

"I hope you will, sir, as I wish to return to Cincinnati."

"If you prove yourself to be my brother's son, there will be no need of that, for the greater part of my property will go to you. You will be independent."

"I should be sorry to deprive you of property, sir, though I have no objection to becoming rich."

"Of course not. We all want to be rich. I shall not blame you for being my brother's son, if it appears that you are so. How long can you remain with us?"

"I won't set a limit, sir. Do you think I can get away in a week?"

"That is a short time."

"I can stay longer if necessary."

"I may need to go to Alton, to consult my lawyer. After examining this paper, which, I suppose, is an exact copy of the original?"

"Yes, sir, exact."

"He will give me his opinion, which I will at once communicate to you. Probably it will not be in my power to go to Alton for several days."

"I don't wish to hurry you too much, Mr. Grey. That will be satisfactory to me."

"Very well. Now there is one other thing I wish to speak of. Of course I can't acknowledge you as my nephew immediately."

"I do not ask it, sir."

"It will be better that your claim to be my nephew should not be made public. I will tell my son, Jasper, and ask him to treat you as a cousin. He will, I think, be able to make you pass your time agreeably. But to the servants you will be Mr. Grey, a distant relative."

"Very well, sir, I agree."

"Of course, just as soon as your claim is substantiated, there will be no further need of concealment. By the way, do you ride?"

"Yes, sir, a little."

"I think you will enjoy exploring the country a little with Jasper. You never were in this neighborhood before?"

"No, sir."

"It won't do you any harm to have a little vacation. By the way, how is Mr. Ferguson, your employer?"

"He is well, sir."

"Is he aware of the object of your present journey?"

"Yes, sir. He was in favor of my undertaking it."

"For which I don't in the least thank him," said James Grey to himself.

There was a little more desultory conversation, which was interrupted by the entrance of Pompey with our hero's carpet-bag, which his fellow-servant had brought from the village hotel, if it deserved the name.

"Pompey, you may conduct this young gentleman to his room. He may wish to wash before dinner. Dinner is at one, Mr. Grey."

"Thank you, sir."

"Put him in the blue room, Pompey."

"Yes, sar."

Gilbert followed him up stairs, and into a room finished and furnished throughout in blue. It was comfortable, and even elegant, and our hero saw that he was likely to be well cared for.

"Was you a 'lotion, sar?" asked Pompey, who possessed an inquiring mind, as he put down the bag.

"Yes," said Gilbert.

"A near 'lotion?" asked Pompey, continuing his catechism.

"I can't tell you how near," said our hero, in an equivocal manner.

"You must be 'bout Massa Jasper's age."

"That is what Mr. Grey says. I have not seen Jasper yet."

"He went out ridin'. He's fond of ridin'."

"Is he a good rider?"

"Pretty good, sar. He thinks he's first-rate," added Pompey, laughing. "Do you ride, sar?"

"A little."

"Maybe you'll ride out with Massa Jasper?"

"Has my—Mr. Grey got many horses?"

"Four, sar. Two are carriage horses, and two are for ridin'. But I'm 'ruptin' you, sar. Dinner at one o'clock."

"I will be punctual."

"I like his looks," said Pompey. "He's better-lookin' than Massa Jasper. Looks like he was better-tempered, too."

## **CHAPTER XXIX.**

### **GILBERT AND JASPER.**

Gilbert went to the window and looked out. He was glad to find that it afforded him a prospect of the Mississippi, a mile distant. He could not help speculating on the singular position in which he found himself placed. He had come to this place expecting to receive abuse and defiance from his uncle. On the other hand he had been politely welcomed, and was now a guest. He didn't understand it, but he was glad of it. He was prepared to contend, but he would much prefer to compromise in a friendly manner. His uncle had wronged him, but he was not vindictive.

Meanwhile Jasper, who had been out to the stables, returned to the house and entered his father's presence. He only came in for something he had left in the library, but his father detained him.

"Stop a minute, Jasper," he said. "I want to speak to you."

Jasper turned unwillingly, for he anticipated some remonstrance or criticism upon his conduct.

"I wanted to go out," he said.

"I wish to speak to you on a matter of importance," said his father, seriously.

"Now for a blowing up," thought Jasper. "I suppose I must grin and bear it."

But this time he was mistaken.

"You are going to have company for a few days," said James Grey.

"Who is it?" asked Jasper, in surprise.

"A boy of about your own age. He is up stairs preparing for dinner at this moment."

"Is it any one I know?"

"It is not."

"What is his name?"

"He calls himself Gilbert Grey."

"Is he any relation?"

"He calls himself your cousin."

"Why do you say 'calls himself?'" inquired Jasper, in some mystification.

"Because I do not propose to admit his claim. While he is here, he will pass as a distant relative."

"I don't understand, father. Is his claim a false one?"

"Listen, Jasper, for it is fitting that you should know all, since you are quite as much interested as I am. Do you remember your Uncle John?"

"No. I was too young when he died to remember him."

"It was he that was wealthy, not I. I had a comparatively small interest in the firm, but as he died childless I succeeded naturally to his property. That made me rich, and ever since I have been possessed of large means. But if he had left a son, all this would have been changed. The son would have inherited the bulk of his property, and I should have received an inconsiderable legacy. Do you follow me?"

"Yes, sir, but I don't see the force of it. My uncle left no son."

"Gilbert Grey, as he calls himself, contends that he did leave a son, and he claims to be that son."

"But it is a lie," said Jasper, hastily.

"Of course, but you understand the motive."

"That he may deprive us of the property."

"Precisely."

"Why don't you kick him out of the house?" exclaimed Jasper, indignantly. "Of course he is an impostor, and deserves no better treatment."

"I will tell you why. He is very artful, and has forged a pretended confession, and attached to it the signature of an old clerk of our house, who disappeared about the time my nephew was lost, asserting his identity with the lost boy, and charging that I employed him to kidnap the boy, in order that I might succeed to the property."

Jasper fixed a fierce glance upon his father. He had never loved or respected him particularly, and a suspicion entered his mind that the charge might be a true one. But, if admitted, it would reduce him to comparative poverty, and he had no intention of suffering his suspicion to appear. In this matter, at least, he and his father were in entire agreement.

"But, father," he said, after a pause, "can't you prove that it is a forgery?"

"Possibly, but I don't want the matter to come to trial. There are always people, who out of sentimental sympathy would be led to suspect that the rich uncle was guilty of defrauding the poor boy."

"When did you first hear of his claim, father?"

"A short time since, during my recent visit to Cincinnati. I defied him then, and left the city without letting him know my address. But he is evidently shrewd and determined, and he has managed, in some way which I cannot fathom, to discover it. He has followed me up, and here he is."

"What do you mean to do?"

"I find force won't do. He is full of courage, pluck, and determination, and so is an enemy to be dreaded. I am going to try an opposite course."

"You are not going to give up?"

"No, certainly not. I am going to pretend friendship, and having put him off his guard, to get rid of his claim as well as I can. The property I will never surrender, as long as there is a possibility of retaining it," he concluded, firmly.

"I agree with you there, father. So you have invited him to stop here?"

"Yes, and the better to carry out my designs, I want you to act in a particularly friendly manner."

"I will if I can, but I know I shall hate him."

"If you dislike him, adopt the course most likely to injure him."

"You are right, father. I will follow your advice."

"Of course, anything that I communicate to you in this matter must be kept secret for both our sakes. Have I your promise?"

"You have."

"Then come here."

Jasper drew near his father, and the latter spoke in a lower voice.

"You are a good rider," he said.

"Yes, I can ride as well as any one of my age in the country," said Jasper, proudly.

"Good! Gilbert Grey says he can ride also."

"I am not afraid of his rivalry."

"I am going to send him out to ride with you. You will ride your own horse; he shall ride—Bucephalus."

"Bucephalus, father! He is a vicious beast. I wouldn't dare to ride him myself, and I have no doubt I can ride better than he."

"I would not trust you on him, Jasper. As for Gilbert, I have no particular reason to feel concerned for his safety."

The eyes of the father and son met, and the glance was that of mutual understanding.

"Indeed," added Mr. Grey, "if he should be thrown off, and break his neck, I shouldn't particularly mind. It would rid us both of a dangerous enemy."

"That's so," said Jasper. "It's a capital idea! When shall we ride?"

"To-morrow morning, if it is pleasant. This afternoon you may have the carriage, and drive him round the neighborhood. Be as friendly as you can. Don't let him suspect anything from your manner."

"I won't. You can trust me for that, father."

"Hush! I hear his steps descending the stairs. I will introduce you."

Gilbert, unsuspecting of the wicked plot that had been entered into against him, entered the room at this moment.

"Gilbert," said his uncle, graciously, "let me introduce to you my son, Jasper. He must be near your own age. He has promised to do what he can to make your stay pleasant."

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Grey," said Jasper, advancing with a smile, and speaking in a soft voice. "I have scarcely any companions of my own age, and I shall enjoy your society."

"Thank you," said Gilbert; "I am much obliged to you for your kind reception. I don't think we shall be strangers long."

They talked on various subjects till the bell rang for dinner. No fault could be found with

Jasper's manner, which was extremely cordial; yet Gilbert, he could not tell why, was not attracted to his cousin.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### DECEITFUL HOSPITALITY.

Jasper was now thoroughly enlisted in his father's plans. Almost any boy of his age would have shuddered at the prospect of a violent death which, through the united agency of his father and himself, impended over his young guest. But Jasper was thoroughly selfish, and what his father had communicated to him had inspired in him a feeling of alarm. He could not endure the thought of surrendering his inheritance to Gilbert, and was ready, young as he was, to go to any extremity rather than to do it.

According to the suggestion his father had made, when dinner was over, at which both Jasper and his father had exerted themselves to be particularly agreeable, the former, turning to his cousin, said:

"If you like, I will take you out in the carriage. You might like to see something of the country round here."

"I should like it very much," said Gilbert, "but I hope you won't put yourself to too much trouble."

"It will be no trouble. I shall enjoy driving with some one who is new to the country. It is dull work driving alone."

"I will go with pleasure, then, and thank you for the offer."

James Grey listened with complacent approval.

"Really," he thought, "I didn't imagine Jasper could be so polite and agreeable. He doesn't often show these qualities in his intercourse with me."

When Gilbert went up to prepare for the excursion, Jasper lingered behind.

"If I am going to do the agreeable to your company, father," he said, "I shall need some money. I am cleaned out."

Without a word of remonstrance his father drew thirty dollars from his pocket-book, and placed the money in his son's hands.

"Do it up handsomely, Jasper," he said. "Don't be unnecessarily extravagant, of course, but spend your money like a gentleman."

"Yes, father," answered Jasper, as his fingers closed with satisfaction upon the bills.

The carriage drove up to the door, and the two young men entered. During the drive that ensued, Jasper showed himself very social and communicative. He was unwearied in pointing out objects of interest, and, in fact, by his easy and genial manners almost conquered the antipathy which Gilbert secretly felt.

"I wonder," he said, at length, leaning back in the carriage and surveying Gilbert with curiosity, "I wonder you never visited us before."

"I did not know where you lived."

"Yet we are relations—distant relations, are we not?"

"I have reason to think that we are related."

"I have very few relations—none that I know. I believe there is a brother of my mother living somewhere in New Mexico, but with that exception, I know of no relations except you. Where do you live?"

"In Cincinnati."

"I used to live there. Why did we not meet then?"

"I have only been there for the last three years—that is, lately. I have been in Australia, and later in New York."

"In Australia!" echoed Jasper, in considerable surprise.

"Yes, I was there for a while."

"You have been quite a traveler. How nearly are you related to us?"

"That matter is not settled yet. I am not quite sure whether your father would like me to tell."

Gilbert said this, understanding the embarrassment of intimating to a son that his father had defrauded him of the property that was rightfully his. He thought it best to let his uncle reveal the secret himself.

They drove ten miles, reaching a considerable town, boasting a large hotel.

"Let us go in and have a game of billiards," suggested Jasper.

"Very well, but you won't find me much of a player."

"I must get father to put a billiard table in the house. I like the game, but I get no chance to practice."

They adjourned to the bar-room, in which there was a solitary table. This happened to be unoccupied, and they accordingly played two games, which lasted about an hour and a half. The reader will judge that neither was very expert in the game.

"Now," said Jasper, who paid for both games, despite Gilbert's remonstrances, "we will order a little lunch, and then start for home."

"I don't feel hungry."

"Nonsense! one can always eat. Besides, I want to patronize the hotel."

"Did you have a pleasant drive?" asked James Grey, meeting them on their return.

"Very pleasant," responded Gilbert.

"I hope Jasper was attentive."

"He could not have been more so. I am much obliged to him."

"I am glad enough to have company," said Jasper, with an assumption of frank cordiality. "I don't often enjoy a drive, but I did this afternoon."

"I think I shall have to invite Gilbert to stay here as our permanent guest," said Mr. Grey, pleasantly.

While he spoke Gilbert could not help wondering what had come over him to make him so different from what he was in Cincinnati. There he was rough, insulting, and abusive. Now he was the model of courtesy. It was hard to believe him the same man. Gilbert was not very credulous, but he was thoroughly deceived by his altered manner.

"I suppose he really believed me an impostor when we met in Cincinnati," said he to himself. "Now he begins to think that he was mistaken, and is trying to make it up to me."

Nevertheless, there were one or two things which interfered with this view. Why should his uncle have schemed so eagerly to get dishonest possession of the confession unless he believed it to be genuine, and therefore dangerous? That did not seem honorable. What had happened since to change him?

After reflection, this was the conclusion to which our hero came: His uncle had made up his mind that he (Gilbert) had a strong case, and meant to conciliate him in the hope of a favorable compromise. Otherwise what object could he have in treating him with so much politeness and attention?

Gilbert was a smart boy, or perhaps I should say, young man, but he was not yet acquainted with the "ways that are dark, and the tricks that are vain," to which human craft is often led to resort. Least of all did he suspect any danger to himself from the uncle and cousin, who seemed to vie with each other in ministering to his enjoyment.

"Well, Jasper," said his father, the next morning, as they were seated at breakfast, "what plans have you for the enjoyment of our guest?"

"You ride on horseback, don't you, Gilbert?" inquired his cousin.

"Yes, I can ride a little."

"Wouldn't you like a gallop after breakfast?"

Gilbert responded readily in the affirmative. He had taken riding lessons in the city, and

was accustomed to ride, whenever he had a chance, in the environs of the city. He was, in truth, an excellent rider, having taken lessons of an accomplished teacher, who often referred to him as one of the most proficient of his pupils. But when Jasper questioned him he only answered that he rode a little, having a strong disinclination to boast.

"I should think that would be an agreeable plan," said Mr. Grey. "What horses shall you take?"

"I will ride on my own. I am used to her, and don't like to change."

"How will you mount Gilbert?"

"He might ride on Bucephalus."

"Isn't Bucephalus a little skittish?"

"That is what they say at the stable; but I am not so easily scared."

"Why not use Sidney?"

"Sidney is not very well; he has had a bad cold. Still, if Gilbert is afraid of mounting Bucephalus"—there was an intentional covert sneer in Jasper's tone—"he can try Sidney."

Now Gilbert was not timid, and did not like to be considered so. Had he really known the character of the horse designed for him, his cousin's words would still have decided him to take the risk.

"I am not in the least afraid," he said. "I'll ride Bucephalus."

"Don't you think you had better take the other horse?" urged James Grey, hypocritically.

"No, sir," said Gilbert, with decision. "If Sidney is sick I would much rather try Bucephalus, even if he is a trifle spirited."

"A trifle spirited," thought his uncle. "I wouldn't trust myself on the brute for ten thousand dollars."

"If you're ready, Gilbert, we'll go out to the stable," said Jasper.

They left the house and proceeded in the direction of the stable.

"Ten to one he'll come back hurt," James Grey said to himself, "if he comes back at all," he added, with an evil smile.

## **CHAPTER XXXI.**

### **BUCEPHALUS.**

The stable was a handsome building, very complete in its appointments, for both Mr. Grey and Jasper were fond of horses. Opening the small door at one side the boys saw John, the coachman, washing the carriage.

"John, we want the saddle-horses," said Jasper. "Gilbert and I are going to ride."

"You will ride your own horse, Mr. Jasper?"

"Yes."

"And your friend will ride Sidney?"

"No; he will take Bucephalus."

John shook his head.

"Sidney's better for him," he said. "I wouldn't trust Bucephalus."

"John, you're a fool!" said Jasper, impatiently. "Gilbert isn't a baby."

"I know he isn't, Mr. Jasper, but all the same I wouldn't advise him riding Bucephalus."

"What are you afraid of?"

"He's a contrary brute, while Sidney's as good-natured as a kitten."

"Oh, well, we'd better have a kitten at once. Gilbert, we've got an old cat in the house, warranted safe. If John thinks it more prudent, we'll saddle her for you. A kitten might be too wild and skittish."

Gilbert laughed.

"I think I won't disturb the old cat," he said. "I'll try Bucephalus."

"Better not, sir," said the coachman.

"Of course, if you are afraid," said Jasper, with another covert sneer, "you'd better take Sidney; but in that case I shall probably ride away from you."

"I'll take Bucephalus," said Gilbert, in decided tones. "I am not in the least afraid, and I think I can keep up with you."

"On that horse I am sure you can."

John saw that further remonstrance would be unavailing, and very reluctantly got ready the mettlesome steed. Gilbert jumped on his back and put his feet in the stirrups.

John came to his side, and said, in a low voice:

"Be very careful, sir. Let him have his way, and don't chafe or vex him. I hope you won't have any trouble."

"I don't think I shall. Thank you."

"What could possess Mr. Jasper to be so particular to have his friend ride out on the ugly brute?" thought John, as he watched the two galloping up the road. "He wouldn't trust himself on his back. Maybe he won't mind it so much if the other gets a broken limb or broken neck. I hope there won't be no accident. That Gilbert, as he calls himself, looks like a nice, gentlemanly lad. I think I'd like him much better than Mr. Jasper, who does put on airs, and orders me round as if I was a dog."

John watched the two till a turn in the road concealed them from his view, and then went back to his work. But his thoughts could not help dwelling on the rash youth who had placed himself at the mercy of this ill-tempered steed, and he heartily wished he could be sure of his safe return.

We will now follow the two riders, and inquire how they sped.

Jasper soon found that Gilbert knew how to ride. His position was easy and unconstrained, and his seat was firm. He seemed as much at ease as in a parlor. But then Bucephalus was behaving well. He showed spirit, but was obedient to the rein.

"How do you like Bucephalus?" inquired Jasper.

"I find no fault with him. He is a fine horse. What made your coachman so afraid of trusting me on him?"

"I hope you won't be angry with John," answered Jasper, laughing, "but he doubted whether you could ride. If you didn't know anything about riding, your horse would soon find it out, and take advantage of it."

"Almost any horse would do that."

"Of course."

"I suppose you have ridden Bucephalus, Jasper?"

"Certainly, though not often. I am used to my own horse—General, I call him—and I naturally prefer him."

Jasper did not speak the truth. He had never ridden Bucephalus, nor would he have done so for a considerable sum of money, though he was by no means a poor rider. But Gilbert had no reason, or thought he had not, for doubting his assertion, and readily believed that it was only the coachman's doubt of his horsemanship that had given rise to the fears he expressed.

"How long has your father owned Bucephalus?" inquired Gilbert.

"Only three months."

"Who rides him?"

"Neither of us, much. The fact is, Sidney is father's horse, and this is mine. We don't need Bucephalus, but father took him for a debt, and means to sell him when he has a good opportunity."



This was true. Bucephalus had been taken for a debt, and as, on account of his ill-temper, he was of no use to Mr. Grey, he proposed to dispose of him at the first favorable opportunity.

"You ride well," said Jasper, after a pause. "Have you ridden much?"

"Considerably," answered Gilbert, modestly.

Had he not been so modest he might have added that his teacher had pronounced him the best rider he had ever taught. But Gilbert was no boaster, and, therefore, Jasper remained in ignorance of his really superior horsemanship.

"You don't seem to find any trouble in managing him. I wish John could see you ride. He would see how foolish he was in being afraid for you."

Gilbert was only human, and the compliment pleased him. He knew he was a good rider, and though he was not willing to boast of it, he liked to have it appreciated by others. He could not read the unspoken thought that was passing through his cousin's mind.

"He does well enough now," thought Jasper; "but wait till Bucephalus wakes up. Then he will be like a child in his grasp. I wouldn't like to be in his shoes then."

Yet to this danger from which he himself shrank in dread he had exposed his cousin, when he could easily have saved him from it. It was proof of his cold and selfish wickedness that he could do this without being visited by reproaches of conscience.

For several miles Bucephalus behaved unusually well. But at length he began to show signs of the insubordinate spirit that possessed him. They came to a turn in the road; Jasper took the turn, but Bucephalus preferred to go straight on. He shook his head viciously, and snorted defiantly.

"It's coming," thought Jasper, and for the first time he did feel a little pity for his companion.

"Won't he turn?" he asked.

"He don't want to, but he will," said Gilbert, coolly.

He pulled the right rein in a firm, decided way. Bucephalus reared, and began to dance round.

"Is that your game?" said Gilbert. "We'll see who will be master."



**"Is that your game?" said Gilbert. "We'll see who will be master."—Page 221.**

He sawed away at the horse's mouth with no mercy. Bucephalus was enraged. He could hardly understand the presumption of the rider, who was daring enough to defy him to his worst. He was accustomed to inspire fear in his rider, and his spirit was up. He indulged

in worse antics, when he was astonished and maddened by a terrible lashing from the whip in Gilbert's hand.

He started off like a shot at a break-neck speed down the road which Gilbert wanted him to take. In his fury he was not probably aware that he had yielded that point to his master. On he rushed with the speed of lightning. Terror-struck, Jasper, sitting still on his own horse, followed him with his glance. He saw Gilbert, immovable as a rock, keeping his seat on the maddened steed, never for a moment losing courage or self-possession. He was astonished, but he could not help feeling admiration also.

"He rides magnificently," he said to himself. "Who would have supposed that he could manage that brute?"

But there was one thing that Jasper did not know—which I have not yet imparted to the reader. Gilbert had taken lessons of Rarey, the famous horse-tamer, and that gave him a wonderful advantage. Feeling firm in his seat, he let Bucephalus continue his break-neck speed till his beating sides and labored breath showed that he was exhausted. Then turning him unresisting he rode back. After a while he met Jasper. The latter could hardly believe his eyes when he saw the fierce steed cowed and subdued, while his cousin seemed perfectly cool and composed.

"Thank Heaven, you are safe!" ejaculated Jasper, hypocritically. "I was very much alarmed about you."

"I have given Bucephalus a lesson," said Gilbert, quietly. "I will ride him again to-morrow. I think he is thoroughly subdued now. Did he ever act in this way when you rode him?"

"No," answered Jasper. "I don't see what got into him to-day. You rode him splendidly," he felt forced to add.

"I am not afraid of horses," said Gilbert, quietly. "But suppose we turn back. I think he has had enough for one day."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### AN UNWELCOME RETURN.

"I wish I know'd the boy would come to no harm," thought John, the coachman. "What made Master Jasper so anxious to have him ride the ugly brute? He wouldn't trust his own neck, but maybe it makes a difference when another's is in danger. I ain't sure but I'd rather my frind, Pat Murphy, would break his neck than mysilf. It's human natur to think of your silf first, and Master Jasper is got his shere of human natur' I'm thinkin'!"

Time passed, and still John, as he kept about his work, could not keep his thoughts off the adventurous youth who had ridden Bucephalus.

From time to time he went outside the stable, and shading his eyes with his hand, looked up the road, but still nothing was to be seen of either of the boys.

"If he can manage the ugly baste, he knows how to ride, that's sure," said John to himself. "I wish I was certain of that same, I do, by St. Patrick."

"What are you looking at, John?" asked a voice, near at hand.

John turned suddenly, and perceived that it was Mr. Grey who spoke.

"I was lookin' to see if the boys was comin' back," said John.

"They'll come back in due time. You needn't leave off your work for that."

"I wish I knowed that, sir."

"Knowed what?" repeated his employer.

"That the young man—Mr. Gilbert—would come back safe."

"Why shouldn't he come back?" inquired James Grey.

"He rode on Bucephalus, sir."

"Suppose he did?"

"I'm afraid the ugly baste will do him some harm."

"I am not afraid. Bucephalus is a spirited horse, I am aware, but he is used to riding, and doubtless can manage him."

"So is Mr. Jasper used to riding, but you couldn't hire him to ride Bucephalus."

"He has a horse of his own," said Mr. Grey, impatiently, not liking John's pertinacity. "Of course he prefers to ride on his own horse."

"Would you ride him yourself, sir?" asked John, shrewdly.

"I have had enough of this," said Mr. Grey, sternly. "It is a good rule, John, to mind your own business, and I am forced to remind you of it. Go into the stable, and continue your work. I did not know Gilbert was going to ride Bucephalus, but as he has chosen to do it, I do not feel in the least anxious. I have no doubt he will come back safe."

"There he comes, begorra," exclaimed John, suddenly, swinging his hat in joyous excitement, "alive and kickin', sure, and the ugly brute as make and quiet as a lamb, too."

"Where?" asked Mr. Grey, sharing John's excitement, but feeling a wicked disappointment in the failure of his evil plans.

"Don't you see him, sir? He's jist at the turnin'. Shure he looks like he had mastered the horse, as bowld as a hero."

It was as John had said. Side by side at a walk came the two horses with their riders. The fierce steed had found his master, and looked quiet and subdued. Never till that day had he been broken. Till this time he had felt his power, now he felt the power of another. Gilbert seemed perfectly at home on his back, and from his manner no one would have supposed that he had had a hard conflict with the brute, from which, had he not come forth victorious, the result might have been death or serious injury.

"He's dangerous," thought his uncle. "A boy who can subdue such a horse must have an unconquerable will. *While he lives, I am not safe.*"

To John he said, wishing to keep up appearances:

"I told you he would come back safe. You only made a fool of yourself by worrying."

"Shure he must be a splindid rider, sir," said John, perplexed, "or else he has the divil's own luck, the one or the other."

Mr. Grey waited till the boys came up, and John took the liberty of doing the same, though he had been bidden to go back to his work.

"How did you enjoy your ride?" he inquired, looking to Gilbert. "I see you rode Bucephalus."

"I had a little fight with the horse," answered Gilbert, "but I came off best."

"So he undertook to trouble you, did he?" asked Mr. Grey, with curiosity.

"Yes. He thought he was master, and undertook first to disobey, and afterward to run away with me. But I think he met his match, didn't you, Bucephalus?" said Gilbert, with a laugh, as he stroked the horse's neck.

Bucephalus showed signs of pleasure, and the fierce glance of his eye was softer and more gentle than Mr. Grey had ever known it.

"Shure and I'm glad you come back safe, Mr. Gilbert," said John, earnestly. "I don't see how you did it."

"I don't think you'll find him so troublesome after this, John," said our hero, dismounting. "We are better friends than we were—eh, Bucephalus?"

"Ye must have had a charm," said John, more than half in earnest. "I never saw such a change in a creetur before. He was a lion when he went out, and he comes back a lamb."

"It's a great secret," said Gilbert, laughing.

"Will it last, do you think?"

"I think so. When a horse is once conquered he remembers it."

"Shure, thin, he's worth twice the sum he was before," said John.

"Do you want me to charge Mr. Grey for my services?" asked Gilbert, laughing.

"Shure he could afford to pay you," answered John, "and that handsome."

"How far did you go, Jasper?" inquired his father.

"About eight miles, sir."

"Well, you must be tired and hungry. Come into the house, and the cook shall send you up some lunch."

"I am not in the least hungry, sir," said Gilbert. "We lunched at a hotel in the next town."

Jasper accompanied his father into the house, but Gilbert remained behind five minutes longer. John's good-natured anxiety for his safety had enlisted his good will, and he thought he would like to chat a while with him.

"You seem to be surprised at my coming home safe," he said.

"Yes, sir—shure I am. You're the only one I know that could manage the ugly brute, let alone a horse-tamer."

"But Jasper has ridden on him. Don't you think I can manage him as well as Jasper?"

"Mr. Jasper niver has ridden on Bucephalus."

"He told me he had," said Gilbert, in a tone of surprise.

"Shure, sir, you couldn't have understood him."

"Do you mean to say that he never rode on the horse?"

"No; and he wouldn't for a hundred dollars."

"What did he mean, then, by telling me he had done so?"

"Are you sure he told you so, Mr. Gilbert?"

"Yes; he said he had ridden Bucephalus, but not often, as he preferred his own horse."

"Then, savin' your presince, he told a lie, but you mustn't tell him I said so."

"I won't betray you; but I don't see why he should deceive me," said Gilbert, regarding the coachman with perplexity. "Did Mr. Grey ever ride on him?"

"No, sir, and he wouldn't. He'd be afraid of his life."

"Did you ever ride on him yourself, John?"

"Yes, sir, I did that same. I rid him once too often. Before I knew where I was I found myself lyin' in the road lookin' up to the stars, of which I saw plenty, though it was broad daylight."

"How long ago was that?"

"Two months ago, jist after we got him. I hain't been on his back since."

Gilbert now began to look serious. He was beginning to understand a little better how matters stood.

"I shouldn't think Mr. Grey or Jasper would have let me ride him if he was so dangerous," he said, after a pause.

"Nor I," said John. "Faith, they care less for your neck than their own, I'm thinkin'."

"It is lucky I am a good rider, or you might never have seen me again. I conquered him, but it wasn't easy. Six months ago he would have conquered me."

"All's well that ends well," said John, philosophically. "He won't be up to any more of his tantrums when you are on his back, I'm thinkin'. Horses have a good mimery, and they know their master."

"I shall not be afraid to ride him now. But I must go into the house."

Gilbert entered the house. He did not enter his uncle's presence at once, but went up to his room and seated himself thoughtfully at the window.

"Can it be that he meant to risk my life?" he said to himself. "I am in his way, I know, but is he capable of such a crime?"

He could not decide. He was not prone to think evil of others, yet he felt that it was necessary to be on his guard.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### ANOTHER PLOT.

"So he mastered Bucephalus," said James Grey, when alone with his son. "He must be a splendid rider."

"I had no idea he was so used to horses," said Jasper. "He sat like a rock, and did not seem in the least frightened."

"I begin to think he is more dangerous than I at first supposed. Did he appear to suspect anything when the horse began to behave badly?"

"I don't think he did."

"He may be surprised that we should give him that horse when we don't ride it ourselves."

"He doesn't know that. He asked me if I ever rode Bucephalus, and I told him yes, but not often, as I preferred my own horse."

"That will do, if John doesn't undeceive him."

"John is a meddling fellow," said Jasper, in a tone of vexation. "He tried to persuade him not to ride Bucephalus."

"John makes a fool of himself. I am afraid he will arouse Gilbert's suspicions. If he does, we must do what we can to allay them."

"What shall you do now, father?" inquired Jasper.

"I have not decided. When I have, I may not tell you."

"Why not?" asked Jasper, suspiciously.

"Not from any feeling of distrust, for we are both in the same boat, and equally interested in frustrating your cousin's designs. But it may be necessary to resort to strong—perhaps forcible measures—and it may be well that you should be kept in entire ignorance of them. It is a serious peril for both of us, this claim of Gilbert's, but more so to you. I have already enjoyed the estate for a long time. In the course of nature I have thirty-five years less of life to look forward to than you. Therefore your interest is greater than mine."

"All right, father. Whatever you think best I am ready to agree to; but if you need any help that I can give, just let me know."

"That shall be understood. Now, you had better go out and look for your cousin. It is not best that John and he should be left to themselves too long."

Jasper went out into the stable-yards, but found that Gilbert had already gone into the house.

"That's a mighty foine lad, that Gilbert," said John.

"Yes, he's a clever fellow," responded Jasper, not very enthusiastically.

"He's as smart as a steel-trap," said John, earnestly.

"I didn't know steel-traps were very smart," said Jasper, sarcastically.

He felt instinctively that John considered Gilbert smarter than himself, and his self-conceit was so great that this troubled him.

"Wait till you get into one," said John, laughing. "If you'd get your little finger into one of them things, you'd find it was too smart for ye."

"What did Gilbert have to say to you?"

But John was too smart to be pumped.

"Nothing much," he answered. "He says the ugly brute won't give no more trouble."

"Do you think so yourself?"

"He won't trouble Mr. Gilbert."

"Will he trouble anybody else?"

"Maybe not. He's had a good lesson."

"I wonder whether Gilbert told him what I said," thought Jasper. He didn't like to ask, for,

in so doing, he would betray himself. After a little pause he walked back to the house; but he did not see Gilbert for some time, for the latter was still in his chamber.

When they met at supper, Mr. Grey said:

"I ought to apologize to you, Gilbert, for trusting you to such a horse; but he has never cut up such pranks before, and I did not realize the danger to which I was exposing you. From what Jasper says, you must have been in peril."

"I suppose I should have been, sir, if I had not been so accustomed to horses; but I have ridden a great deal, though I don't think I ever had such a sharp contest before."

"You had better ride Sidney to-morrow—I don't want you to run any more risk."

"Thank you, sir; but I am not afraid. Bucephalus has had a lesson, and won't try to master me again. With your permission, I will try him again, and hope to have him wholly subdued before I go."

"I shall be glad to have him subjugated, I confess, as it will greatly enhance his value; but I don't want you to run any further risk."

"The danger is quite over, Mr. Grey."

This conversation, and the regret frankly expressed by his uncle, did considerable to put to rest the suspicion that had been excited in Gilbert's mind. It did look strange, to be sure, that Jasper should have made a false claim to have ridden Bucephalus, when he hadn't done so; but possibly this was because he did not like to have it supposed that he was inferior in courage or in horsemanship. At any rate, though not quite satisfied, he felt that there might be an explanation.

The next morning the boys went out to ride once more. Bucephalus justified Gilbert's prediction, and behaved as well as could be expected. Once he made a start, but a sudden twitch of the reins recalled to his mind the defeat of the day before, and he quickly relapsed into obedience.

Meanwhile Mr. Grey paced the floor of his library, and thought deeply. To what means should he resort to avert the danger that menaced his estate? He knew enough now of Gilbert to understand that he was resolute and determined. He might be conciliated, but could not be intimidated while he felt that he was battling for his inherited rights. Would it be worth while to conciliate him? Mr. Grey feared that he would require the surrender of the major portion of the estate, and to this he was not willing to accede. While he was thus perplexed, Pompey made his appearance, and said:

"There's a man wants to see you, Mr. Grey."

"A man, or a gentleman?"

"A man. It's Hugh Trimble."

"Bring him up."

Some idea must have been started in Mr. Grey's mind, for his eyes lighted up with a gleam of exultation, and he muttered:

"The very thing. Why didn't I think of it before?"

Hugh Trimble shuffled into the room—a tall, shambling figure of a man, with a generally disreputable look. He was roughly dressed, and appeared like a social outlaw. He was a tenant of Mr. Grey's, living on a clearing just on the edge of a forest. He had a wife, but no children. She led a hard life, being subjected to ill usage from her husband when, as was frequently the case, he was under the influence of liquor.

Such was the man who entered the library, and evidently ill at ease on finding himself in a room so unfitted to his habits, made a clumsy salutation.

"Well, Trimble," said Mr. Grey, with unusual cordiality, "how are you getting on?"

"Bad enough," returned Trimble, "I haven't got no money for you."

"Have you been unlucky?"

"I'm always unlucky," growled Trimble, frowning. "I was born to bad luck, I was."

"Perhaps your bad luck will leave you, after a time."

"I don't see no signs of that."

"Sit down," said Mr. Grey, with continued cordiality. "There's a chair next to you."

Hugh Trimble seated himself cautiously on the edge of a chair, a little surprised at the unexpected attention he was receiving.

"I want to speak to you on an important subject."

"All right, sir," responded the backwoodsman, not without curiosity.

"You say you have been always unlucky?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you don't expect your luck to change, I think you said?"

"Not unless it becomes worse," grumbled Trimble.

"Would you consider it good luck if some one should pay you over a thousand dollars?"

"Would I? I'd think myself a rich man." exclaimed Trimble. "But who's a goin' to do it?" he added, in a more subdued voice.

"I will, on certain conditions."

"You will give me a thousand dollars?" exclaimed the backwoodsman, opening wide his eyes in astonishment.

"On conditions."

"Name 'em."

"First, you must promise that what I tell you shall be kept secret."

Hugh Trimble made the promise.

Mr. Grey now rose and closed the door, which was partially open, and, drawing his chair near that of his visitor, conferred with him, in a low voice, for some twenty minutes. At the end of that time he dismissed him with a parting injunction.

"Remember what I have told you, and, above all things, be secret."

When the visitor had departed, he stood with his back to the fire, and smiled unpleasantly, as he repeated:

"I think it'll work—I think it'll work."

## **CHAPTER XXXIV.**

### **A RIDE THROUGH THE WOODS.**

The next morning, when the three were seated at the breakfast table, Mr. Grey said:

"Jasper, I think I shall leave you to amuse yourself this morning. I propose to invite Gilbert to accompany me on a drive."

"All right, father. Where do you intend driving?"

"I scarcely know, yet. There are many pleasant places in the neighborhood which it is worth while to visit."

"I wonder what the old man's up to?" thought Jasper. "No good to Gilbert, I'll be bound. Well, I've had my turn, and it's no more than right that he should take his. I won't ask any inconvenient questions."

"Will that arrangement be agreeable to you?" asked James Grey, turning to his young visitor.

"I shall be happy to accompany you, Mr. Grey," answered our hero, politely.

"Then it is settled. I will order the chaise round to the door at ten o'clock."

"I will be ready, sir."

Jasper looked at his father curiously, as Gilbert left the room. His look was returned by one equally significant.

"Ask no questions," it said, and Jasper sauntered out of the room, in mute obedience.

Ten o'clock found the chaise before the door. Gilbert was on hand, and so was his uncle.

"Jump in, Gilbert," said Mr. Grey.

Our hero did so, and James Grey followed.

Jasper stood near, and looked on.

"He isn't coming back," he said to himself. "I saw it in my father's eyes. He won't dare to kill him, I wonder?"

The question, which should have produced a feeling of horror, only caused a feeling of curiosity, and he walked away, in the confidence that the dangerous foe to his prospects was to be disposed of somehow.

"It is a pleasant morning for driving," said Mr. Grey, by way of opening the conversation.

"Yes, sir, very pleasant."

"Did you have any more trouble with Bucephalus yesterday?"

"No, sir. He has given up the contest."

"I am glad to hear it."

"How large is your estate, Mr. Grey?"

This was a simple question, but James Grey understood it as implying curiosity on the part of our hero to learn how large a property he could claim.

"There are about two hundred acres," he answered. "By the way, we have not yet spoken of your claim."

"No, sir."

"I have been meaning to go to Alton to consult my lawyer. I have delayed it longer, perhaps, than I should. To-morrow I will attend to it, and report to you the result."

"Thank you, sir. I don't like to hurry you, but a decision is so important to my plans in life that I should like the matter decided as soon as possible."

"Of course, your feeling is only natural. Indeed, I have reason to feel in the same way, for if your claim is sustained it will reduce me to comparative poverty, and my poor boy also."

James Grey spoke with affected feeling, and Gilbert responded, quickly:

"Don't think so meanly of me, Mr. Grey, as to suppose that I should be willing to reduce you and Jasper to poverty. I can not give up my rights, but I will take care that you are saved from any pecuniary want."

"Will you, indeed?" said Mr. Grey to himself, with a sneer. "Thank you for nothing, young man; I intend to provide against that contingency myself."

What he said aloud was something very different.

"I feel sure that in any event I can rely on your forbearance," he said. "But the decision may be in my favor, and in that case I will not be behind you in generosity. I will do what I can to further your interests, though I do not promise to do as much for you as an own son."

"Of course not, sir. I thank you for your offer."

Mr. Grey spoke so frankly and fairly—he was one of those who could assume a virtue though he had it not—that Gilbert was partially deceived—so far, at least, as to question the correctness of his former impressions of his uncle. Nevertheless, he could not help calling to mind that this man, fairly as he now spoke, had in all probability conspired against him, dooming him to privation and penury for nearly ten years, while he and his son had been living luxuriously. On the whole, his uncle was a puzzle to him. He exhibited such a contrariety of character and disposition, that he knew not to what decision it would be right to come respecting it.

"I am going to avoid the village, Gilbert," said his uncle, "and drive you along a very charming road, or rather cart-path, threading the woods. The trees are now looking very beautiful with their changing foliage, and I think you will like it better than the ordinary road."

"You are right, sir, I should," answered Gilbert.



"It will give you an idea of our Western forests. I suppose you are only familiar with those in the East?"

"I am not familiar with any. I have always lived in the city—first in New York, and afterward in Cincinnati."

Gilbert would have mentioned his residence in Australia, but he thought that the reference to it might be construed by his uncle into a tacit reproach, and therefore forbore.

They turned from the main road into one not much frequented, and speedily entered the forest. Not a suspicion of his uncle's bad faith, or of any conspiracy against himself, entered the mind of our hero. He had not yet fathomed the depth of his uncle's wickedness.

"Jasper never cares to ride in this direction," said Mr. Grey. "He has no love for Nature."

"He has told me that he would rather live in the city."

"Yes, he would; but I am attached to the country. I suppose when he grows older that he will insist upon leaving me. That will leave me indeed solitary."

They kept on till they were in the heart of the woods. As Mr. Grey had said, the road was now but a cart-path, bordered on either side by tall, straight trees. Suddenly, from a covert of underbrush, a ruffian sprang out, and seized the horse by the bridle.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### HOW GILBERT IS DISPOSED OF.

"What do you want, fellow?" demanded James Grey, sternly, in order to keep up appearances, for he recognized his confederate. "Let go that bridle."

"I want money," said Hugh Trimble, for, of course it was he.

"Is this the fashion in which you ask it?" said Mr. Grey. "Let go my bridle, and come round to my house. Then I will listen to your application, and, if I find you deserving, I will grant your request."

"That don't go down," said Hugh, roughly. "You rich men take good care of your money. I shouldn't stand no chance at your house."

"As much there as here."

"Maybe not," said the man, significantly. "There you'd be master. Here, I am master."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that I want five hundred dollars, and I mean to have it."

"Do you dare to threaten me?"

"Yes, I do. You are a rich man—I am poor. You can spare five hundred dollars without feeling it."

"I don't intend to be forced into giving you money. Let go that bridle, or I will run over you."

"I will stand by you, Mr. Grey," said Gilbert, speaking for the first time. "Don't submit to that man's demands."

"Young man," said Hugh, "you'd better not interfere. You can't help your father."

"He is not my father."

"No matter what he is, you'd better keep out of the affair. That's the advice I give you."

"I shall stand by him," said Gilbert, spiritedly. "You've got two against you."

"And you've got two against you," said Hugh, drawing a pistol from a side-pocket. "What do you say to that?"

"My friend, what is it that you demand?" asked Mr. Grey.

"So I'm your friend now, am I?" retorted Hugh, with a mocking laugh. "It's the pistol that's done it, I reckon."

"I repeat it—what do you want?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"I left my pocket-book at home. I will go back and get the money."

"Do you take me for a fool? You would come back with an officer of the law."

"I promise you that I will lay no trap for you."

Here Hugh seemed to hesitate.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said, finally. "Leave the boy with me as a pledge, and I'll let you go."

"Suppose I don't?"

"I'll shoot you on the spot!"

James Grey turned to Gilbert.

"You hear what he says? Are you willing to remain with him while I go back and get the money?"

Gilbert did not fancy the plan, and hesitated.

"If there is no other way," he said, at length.

"My friend," said Mr. Grey, "I will stay with you, and send the boy home."

"I won't trust him," said Hugh, who had learned his lesson well. "Besides, he cannot get the money as well as you."

"There seems no help for it, Gilbert," said James Grey, turning to his nephew. "He insists upon retaining you, but it shall not be for long. I will at once obtain the money, and come back and release you. He is armed, and we are not. We cannot resist him."

"If you think it best," said Gilbert.

"I am afraid there is no other way. My friend, suppose I give you my promise to come back, will you excuse this young man from stopping?"

"No!" said Hugh, shortly.

"Say no more," said Gilbert. "I will remain."

He jumped lightly from the chaise, and Hugh released his hold of the bridle.

"When shall you be back?" he asked.

"At three o'clock this afternoon."

"I will be on hand with the boy."

"Keep up your courage, Gilbert," said Mr. Grey, as he drove away.

Out of sight, a smile of triumph overspread his face.

"I didn't think Hugh would do his part so well," he soliloquized. "Really he is quite an actor. So I am rid of my troublesome responsibility at last. I hope never again to set eyes upon him."

On reaching home he stated that Gilbert had suddenly received a telegram summoning him to St. Louis; that he had carried him to a landing-place for the river boats, and agreed to dispatch his luggage to the Planters' House in that city by express. To keep up appearances he did so dispose of Gilbert's carpet-bag, directing it to

"GILBERT GREY, Planters' House, St. Louis, Mo."

"Pears like he left mighty suddint," said Pompey.

"Yes; he has a friend very sick in St. Louis," explained Mr. Grey.

"I'm sorry he's gone," said John, who suspected nothing. "He was a right fine lad, and he managed Bucephalus beautiful."

Jasper said nothing, but wondered whether Gilbert had suffered violence at his father's hands.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### HUGH BETRAYS HIS PRINCIPAL.

"Follow me!" said Hugh Trimble to Gilbert.

"Where are you going to lead me?"

"Never you mind. Come along."

Gilbert saw that resistance would be useless, and he obeyed. His companion plunged into the woods, looking back occasionally to see that he was following. He kept on for about half a mile as near as Gilbert could judge, when they came to a small clearing, in the midst of which was a dilapidated log hut. It was no longer occupied, but had been deserted by the former occupant, who had gone across the Mississippi to regions yet unexplored years before.

"Go in there," said Hugh.

Gilbert entered.

He saw nothing but bare walls, all furniture having been removed when it was deserted.

Our hero looked around him curiously, and then at his conductor inquiringly. He was not long in doubt as to his intention.

Hugh drew a strong cord from his pocket, and drew near him.

"What are you going to do?" asked Gilbert.

"Tie your hands and feet," was the reply.

Gilbert shrank back.

"Don't do that," he said.

"I ain't goin' to have you run away," growled Hugh.

"I won't run away. I shall be released this afternoon at any rate, and I can stand captivity till then."

"How do you know you will get free this afternoon?"

"You promised to let me go when my uncle brought the money."

"Your uncle?" repeated Hugh, exhibiting surprise, fixing his eyes keenly upon our hero.

"Yes, he is my uncle, but he does not acknowledge me yet."

"Humph!" said Hugh, thoughtfully to himself. "Suppose he does own you, what then?"

"It is a secret."

"You'd better tell me. I have a reason for asking."

"I have a claim to the property which my uncle possesses."

"That's it. I understand it now."

"What do you understand?"

"Suppose you was to die, what then?"

"There would be nobody to disturb my uncle in the possession of his property."

"He wouldn't cry much if you was to die."

"What do you mean?" asked Gilbert, unpleasantly impressed by the man's tone.

"He wants you dead—that's the long and short of it."

"I can't believe it," said Gilbert, shuddering. "You can have no cause to say this. He can't be so wicked."

"Look here, young one," said Hugh, "I'll tell you a secret. You take me for a robber, don't you?"

"Yes."

"In course you do. Now I'm going to surprise you. My stopping your mouth to-day was all

a put-up job."

"You don't mean that my uncle engaged you to do it?"

"Yes, I do."

"What was his object?"

"He don't mean to come back for you. He wants me to kill you."

"You don't mean that?" said Gilbert, horror-struck.

"Yes, I do. He's goin' to give me a thousand dollars."

"And you agreed to do it?"

"Yes, I agreed to do it."

"Would you stain your hands with murder for a thousand dollars?" asked Gilbert, solemnly.

"What can I do? I'm a poor man. Fortune has gone agin me all my life. There ain't no other way I can get money. If I was well off I wouldn't do it."

"Good Heaven! To think my uncle should be capable of such wickedness."

"It's just as bad for him, ain't it? He hires me to kill you for the sake of money. What's the odds?"

"He is worse than you. He knows that I would not strip him of everything, even if I succeed."

"What's your chances, young one? Have you got a good case?"

"If I hadn't, he wouldn't conspire for my death."

"That's so. Now, young chap, shall I kill you or not?"

"Of course I don't want to be killed, but you are too strong for me. I am in your power."

"Swear, if I spare your life, will you see that I don't lose by it?"

Gilbert caught his meaning and snatched at the chance of safety.

"If you let me go, you shall have the same amount my uncle promised you, and will have no stain of murder on your hands."

"Have you got the money?"

"Nearly all. The rest I can raise. But I will do better than that, on one condition."

"What's that?"

"If you will let me call you as a witness, to prove that my uncle engaged you to kill me, I shall be sure to recover my property, and the day I come into possession I will pay you over *two thousand dollars*."

Hugh's eyes sparkled, but he answered cautiously:

"Won't there be no risk? Can't they shut me up?"

"No; you can say that you entered into the plan in order to entrap my uncle."

"Will you swear to do that?"

"I will."

"Then it's a bargain. Now, what shall we do first?"

"I want you to go with me to St. Louis, but my uncle must not know that I have escaped. How can we manage that?"

"We can go up north afterward and take the boat from there. When we pass this place on the river, we'll stay down below."

"That is a good plan. When we get to St. Louis I will see a lawyer at once, and put the matter in his hands."

"I don't like to come before the court," said Hugh, reluctantly, "but I will if you say so."

"I don't think it will be necessary. When my uncle learns that his conspiracy is likely to be made known, he will be glad to compromise without a contest."

"You know best. If you'll come round with me to my hut, I'll tell the old woman what's up, and then we'll strike for the river. You won't go back on me?"

"No—that isn't my way; besides, your testimony is too valuable for me. I'll stand by you if you'll stand by me. Give me your hand."

"I'll trust you, young one," he said.

Before the sun set they were passengers on a river steamer, bound for St. Louis.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A FINAL SURRENDER.

James Grey waited at home in anxious suspense to hear from Hugh Trimble. He felt that it would not be prudent to seek him out, lest suspicion attach to himself, in case his nephew had been murdered. From time to time he realized the risk he had run, and wished he had never entered into a conspiracy against Gilbert's life.

Twenty-four hours passed, and still Hugh Trimble did not appear to claim the thousand dollars promised him for the crime he had consented to perpetrate. James Grey began to grow nervous. His nervousness increased when another day passed and still no tidings.

On the third day he was about to set out for the woods, in defiance of prudence, bent on terminating his suspense, when he received a letter post-marked St. Louis. It was addressed in a strange hand. He opened it curiously, but, as he read it, he turned pallid, and, when he had mastered its contents, he sank into a chair, overcome.

This was the letter:

"ST. LOUIS, October —, 185—.

"MR. JAMES GREY: I write you as the attorney of Gilbert Grey, claiming to be the son of your deceased elder brother, and as such entitled to the large property of which you took possession at your brother's death, and which you still hold, to his prejudice. He is prepared to prove his identity by the written death-bed confession of the clerk whom you employed to abduct him, the genuineness of which document he is also in a condition to prove. It will not be necessary to go into further particulars, since he tells me that he has already conferred with you freely on the subject, and put you in possession of all that he is able to prove.

"He is also prepared to show that you so far recognized the strength of his claim, that in Cincinnati you endeavored to destroy the written confession alluded to, and that on a later occasion you entered into a conspiracy with one Hugh Trimble to murder him, promising the said Trimble one thousand dollars for so doing. To this Hugh Trimble is ready to swear, having repented his wicked compact, and enlisted himself on the side of my client. *Though we feel that exposure and punishment for this wicked plot should justly be visited upon you, we agree to keep it secret provided you interpose no obstacle to the immediate surrender to my client of the property at present unjustly withheld from him.* It is desirable that you come to St. Louis at once, and settle this matter.

"Yours, respectfully,

"ANTHONY BATES."

When James Grey reached the conclusion of this letter he realized that his plot had completely failed. His tool had turned against him, and he was in the power of his nephew. There was but one answer to make to this proposition. *He dared not refuse it!*

He started immediately for St. Louis, and wended his way to the lawyer's office. He feared he should find his nephew there, but was relieved to find himself alone with Mr. Bates.

"To what decision have you come, Mr. Grey?" asked the lawyer.

"What terms do you offer?"

"Silence, provided you surrender the estate at once."

"It will render me penniless."

"At what do you estimate the value of the estate?"

"One hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"This is about the figure at which my client estimated it. I am authorized by him to offer you ten thousand dollars in hand, and an annual income of two thousand dollars upon the acknowledgment without delay of the rightfulness of his claim."

It was more than Mr. Grey hoped for. He judged his nephew by himself, and doubted, especially after his attempt upon his life, whether he would not leave him to the bitterness of utter poverty.

"I accept the terms," he said, briefly.

"Then the proper papers shall be made out at once."

Now that Mr. Grey offered no further opposition, there was no further cause of delay. An hour later, Gilbert had in his possession the legal document which restored him to his rights, and made him a rich man.

His uncle received in exchange a paper, assuring to him the provision which Gilbert had generously made. Armed with this, he went home without seeing his nephew.

He was ashamed to face the lad whom he had so basely defrauded, and still more basely sought to slay.

When Jasper, to whom he had said nothing of the motive of his journey, met him, he at once detected the trouble in his father's manner.

"What is the matter, father?" he inquired.

"All is lost, Jasper," said his father.

"What do you mean?"

"Gilbert has triumphed, and I am a comparative beggar."

"Then what is to become of me?" demanded Jasper, thunder-struck.

"Always yourself!" repeated his father, bitterly. "You have no feeling for me. All your anxiety is for yourself."

"I never pretended to be an affectionate son," said Jasper, coolly. "It's my belief that you've mismanaged this matter somewhat. You'd better have left it in my hands."

"I did the best I could, but Gilbert is sharp and no baby. You might know that from the way in which he tamed Bucephalus."

"I wish the brute had broken his neck."

"I don't know," said James Grey, slowly. "I believe Heaven is on his side, and we can't fight against Heaven."

"Perhaps you are content to be a beggar. I am not."

"We are not beggars. Your cousin leaves us ten thousand dollars, and assures us an annual income of two thousand dollars."

"That is not bad," said Jasper, with a sigh of relief. "I hope you don't mean to stay in this dull hole."

"No, it would be disagreeable. When money matters are fairly settled, I propose that we shall leave the country, and settle in Europe."

Jasper's eyes sparkled.

"The most sensible thing you could decide upon, father. It isn't so bad after all. We can live comfortably on our income abroad."

"Not as we have done."

"I don't care. I shall get out of this hole, and this life."

A month later Jasper and his father sailed for Europe. They are still living there—not happily, for Jasper is not a model son, and his ingratitude and want of ordinary feeling, affect his father the more that he is thrown upon his society chiefly for companionship.

When Gilbert had settled his affairs he removed to Cincinnati. He was received with a warm welcome by Mr. Ferguson, who heartily rejoiced in his success. Maurice Walton was filled with envy and disappointment. His rival had been lifted so far above him that there could be no longer rivalry. Gilbert was a young man of fortune, while he was a poor clerk on a small salary. The worst of it was, that there was no hope now of winning Bessie Benton. But, had Maurice been wiser, he might have seen long ago that he had no hope there. Bessie knew him too well, and though she felt a friendly interest in his welfare there was no chance of any warmer feeling. She had a partiality for Gilbert, while he was still poor. As years passed it became further developed, and I am sure my readers will not be surprised to learn that she now writes her name Bessie Grey.

But I have not yet done with my hero. As may be supposed he resigned his clerkship in Mr. Ferguson's establishment, generously asking that Maurice be appointed his successor, and privately agreeing that if Mr. Ferguson would pay him the same salary he had himself received, he would make up any part that he might not earn. But I am glad to say that Maurice turned over a new leaf, and stimulated by the double pay now received, became so much more efficient that Gilbert was not called upon to make good any deficiency. As for Gilbert himself, at the suggestion of Mordaunt, his roommate, he decided to study law, entering the office of the latter, now in successful practice. In due time he was admitted to the bar. He spent a year in Cincinnati, but was led then to remove to Wisconsin, Bessie Benton accompanying him as his wife. Here he soon began to win reputation, and at this moment he holds a position of high official trust in his adopted State.

We take leave of "Tom, the Bootblack," trusting that the record of his struggles and final success may inspire all boys who read it to emulate him in bold and manly effort.

#### THE BURIED TREASURE.

Davie Cameron was only a poor peasant, and the cottage or *sheiling* where he dwelt was a humble one, even for that wild Scottish valley; but though he had a small habitation, and was poor in worldly goods, he had a large heart, and was rich in that contentment which is better than gold. He often averred that he envied not the king on his throne, though, considering what very poor luck the Scottish monarchs have had, you may think that wasn't saying much.

Davie was gardener to the Laird of Lanarkville, just as his father had been gardener to a former Laird of Lanarkville, and his grandfather to one still more remote.

If the testimony of Davie's old grandmother was to be trusted, the ancient glories of the house of Lanark had dwindled away from generation to generation, so that nowadays there was nothing to be compared with the splendors she had seen when she was a lassie. She was greatly scandalized because the present laird not only superintended the affairs of his estate, but had even been known to labor with his own hands.

"His forbears wad hae scorned to do the like," she would exclaim, adding, with a mysterious shake of the head, "but gin the young laird had a' that belanged to him, he wad na need to dicker and delve like ane o' his ain sarvants, forsooth!"

The story which lay concealed in these words was this:

In the year 1745, when the then existing laird forsook his home to follow the fortunes of Prince Charles Edward—for he was a staunch Jacobite—he enclosed his treasure in an iron box and buried it in the earth. The sole witness and aid to this transaction was his faithful follower, Hugh Cameron.

At the battle of Culloden Lanark was killed, and Hugh received a wound which proved mortal. Before he died he confided the secret of the buried treasure to his younger brother, Archie, and would fain have directed him to its hiding-place, but when he had uttered the words "under the Rowan tree in" —, his spirit departed, and the sentence was left forever unfinished.

Years passed before Archie returned again to his home, and when he did return there Lanark estate had been partially laid waste by English soldiers. Rowan trees there were in plenty, but some had newly sprung up, and many old ones had been laid low, so that where in all those broad lands the iron box lay concealed, it was impossible to determine.

Diligent search was made for it, from time to time, but without success; and when that generation had passed away the tradition came to be regarded as doubtful, if not fabulous.

But old Mrs. Cameron, who, although not born at the time of the battle of Culloden, had heard the story in her childhood from her grandfather, who was no other than Archie himself, believed it as she believed the truths of Holy Writ.

But then the "auld gudewife" believed in many other things which her posterity had grown wise enough to reject,—such as wraiths, witches, spunkies, and the like; and if rallied on the subject she would reply, indignantly, "And did na I my ain sel', see the fairies dancing in the briken-shaw, one Halloween?"

Moreover, Mrs. Cameron held fast to the Jacobite principles of her ancestors, for one of whom she claimed the honor of having once sheltered the young chevalier in the days of his perilous and weary wanderings. In acknowledgment of the act the prince had given him a gold buckle from his hat, and promised to bestow upon him the order of knighthood, whenever he should come to the throne. The order, of course, was never received, but the buckle was still carefully preserved.

So Davie gave no more heed to her family traditions and wild border tales than to her stories of witches and fairies, but just classed them all together, and when she said to him, as he was going to his daily labor on the laird's land,—

"Ah, Davie, but there's a mickle treasure hid there, and wha kens but you'll be the lucky finder?" he replied, with a laugh,—

"Nae doubt, nae doubt, a mickle treasure o' kale and potatoes, and who so likely to find it as the laird's gardener?" and then he shouldered his spade and went off whistling:

"Contented wi' little, and canty wi' mair."

But one day, long to be remembered, as he was hard at work, without a thought of grandmother and her legends, his spade struck against something hard, which proved to be the root of a tree.

"You're an auld tenant, but ye'll have to quit," quoth Davie, tugging away manfully at the offender.

It obstinately refused to yield, and, laying open the earth with his spade, he discovered that it had twined itself again and again round some object which he at first supposed to be a stone. A closer examination, however, showed that it was not a stone, but *a rusty iron box!*

Then the dying words of Hugh Cameron rushed to Davie's mind, and he had no difficulty in completing the sentence which death had cut short, "Under the Rowan tree in—*the garden!*"

That it had stood there—the only tree of its kind—in the days of the rebellion, was afterwards shown by consulting an old plan of the estate.

Davie's first impulse was to summon a witness to the spot, but remembering that the laird had gone to Edinburgh for a few days, he changed his mind, and decided to impart the secret to no one till he came back. To leave the box where it was, or anywhere else on the premises, would be the same thing as to proclaim his discovery, as the servants would be sure to find it; so he concluded to take it home and conceal it in his own barn.

Now Davie was an honest man—at least he had always supposed himself to be—and if you, or I, or another, had insinuated aught to the contrary, he would have been highly indignant. And yet it is a fact that as he went out of the garden with the chest on his wheelbarrow along with the garden tools, the whole carefully concealed with oat straw, he felt like a thief!

Meeting some of his cronies, with whom at ordinary times he would have held a *jolly crack*, he now hurried by with a mere "Gude-e'en, neebor," and when he saw the minister coming that way he crossed the road rather than speak to the godly man.

As he turned into the lane which led to his own cottage, little Jamie, who had been on the watch for him, came running out to beg for a ride on the wheelbarrow; and instead of catching him in his arms for a kiss, as was his wont, he angrily bade him "gang hame to his mither."

The disappointed child looked up in his father's face, and then, without saying a word, but sobbing bitterly, trotted back to the house.

There was in the barn a closet where Davie kept his garden tools, and which was seldom entered by any one save himself. There he deposited the chest, which had already begun to exercise a baleful influence, and which was destined to work him still further woe.

He had intended—or he had made himself believe that he intended—to restore the box to its owner without opening it; but now that it was in his own possession, he felt an almost irresistible desire to see what it contained.

"Belike it's nae treasure, after a'," said he to himself; "but only some auld trash not worth a groat."



With that he placed his hand on the lid and shook it gently, scarcely dreaming that it would yield without hammer and chisel; but both the rust-eaten lock and hinges gave way at once, and the cover fell to the floor with a startling crash.

Enclosed within the box were the gold and silver plate of the Lanark family.

Forth from their long burial they came to glitter once more in the sunlight, though the eyes that looked upon them last were years since closed upon all earthly scenes, and the soul of him who placed them there had gone, let us trust, to find a better treasure, where neither moth nor rust corrupts, nor thieves break through and steal.

From the time that Davie Cameron found the buried treasure he was a changed man. He who was once so genial and light-hearted was now moody and sullen. Once home had been to him the pleasantest spot in all the world; but burdened with a consciousness of guilt, he could not bear to look in the faces of his unsuspecting family, and by degrees he fell into the habit of passing his evenings at the ale-house.

At first he took no part in the carousals of the place; but in the nature of things this could not last, and in the end he became as reckless and as riotous as any of his companions.

It was thus he formed an intimacy with Andy Ferguson. That he was a wild and dissipated young man was well known, and much was darkly hinted, which never came to light.

This man soon discovered that Davie had something on his mind, and taking advantage of the confiding mood produced by liberal libations of Scotch whiskey and strong beer, he succeeded in drawing the secret from him. He at once proposed that they should dispose of the treasure and divide the proceeds, ridiculing the scruples and laughing at the fears of his more timid companion. He avowed his readiness to take all the risk, and threatened, if he were thwarted in his plans, to make the matter public.

So Davie, feeling that he was fairly caught within the toils, yielded. But though tempted, weak and erring, he was not hardened, and the thought of the crime he was about to commit weighed heavily on his spirits. He became more irritable than ever, and when his wife asked, in her cheery way:

"What ails ye, Davie? Prithee, why sae doure, gude man?" he answered, fretfully:

"Whisht, woman, and dinna fash me wi' questions."

But one there was whose presence and whose playful ways never seemed to vex him, and that was his pet bairn, Nannie, his *wee lammie*, as he often called her.

Nannie had been well taught in books, as the Scottish peasantry, unlike the same class in Ireland, usually are. She was regularly seen in her place at kirk, and knew the Assembly's Catechism by heart. She could repeat whole chapters from the Bible, and, better still, had ever ordered her simple life according to its precepts. In addition to all these merits, she had a sweet, innocent face, a guileless, loving heart, and was named by the youth of the neighborhood the Bonnie Shepherdess.

It is needless to say that Nannie had many admirers. Among others, Andy Ferguson had not failed to notice her beauty and winning ways.

He had sometimes given her a bunch of flowers, or assisted her in finding a stray lamb, attentions which she had received with sweetness and modesty, as she would have accepted the same from any other of the shepherd lads. But of love he never spoke or hinted, until one summer evening he joined her as she was driving home her sheep to the fold.

After addressing to her all the pretty, flattering things, which, I am told, are common on such occasions, he plainly asked her to be his wife.

"I'm but a wee lassie, ower young to think o' wedding this mony a day," she replied.

"And so ye might be, gin I were a feckless laddie, like Rob Ainslee, or Tam o' the Glen; but I hae riches, ye ken. Ye'll never need to fash yoursel' wi' wark, but just sing like the lane-rock, fra morn till e'en."

"Little care I for your riches," said Nannie, who, for reasons of her own, was vexed at this allusion to Rob Ainslee. "Does na the Scripture say a gude name is better to be chosen than gold?"

"And wha says aught against my gude name?" exclaimed he, with lowering brow.

"Andy Ferguson," said Nannie, pausing and looking him in the face, "it grieves me to gi' you or ony creature pain; but ye maun speak to me nae mair o' love or marriage—no, never. Ye maun gang your ain gait an' leave me to gae mine. As to your gude name, does na everybody ken—an' sorry I am to say it—where your evenings are spent, and what sort

o' company ye keep?"

At this Andy laughed a loud, scornful laugh. "Nae doubt everybody kens that for the maist part my evenings are spent at the 'Twa Dogs'; and as to the company there, there is nae sae frequent guest as your honored father."

"And wha led him into sic ways but your ain sel'? Weel does the Bible say a man canna touch pitch and not be defiled therewith."

"Just to hear her quote Scripture! Ane wad tak her for the minister, or a holy elder, at least. But leuk you here, lassie, say it was I that put the cup to my neebor's lips, for you see I can quote Scripture, too. Wha was it taught him to be a thief?"

"Gang awa, Andy Ferguson, awa, for I will na listen to sic words anent my ain dear father. Awa, I say," she repeated, waving her little hand, as he seemed inclined to follow her.

"Sin' ye will na believe me, gae ask him what he has done wi' the laird's siller and gowd. Just speir him that," called Andy after her, and then he strode away down the glen.

She hastened on, and leaving her few sheep to wander at their will, she sought her father. She found him sitting on a knoll behind the byre, leaning his head on his hands. Throwing herself on the grass beside him, she told him of her interview with Andy, his offer of marriage and her refusal.

"I hope ye did na anger him," said he, hastily.

"Why, father, what ill can his anger do us? Ye wad na ha'e me marry a ne'er-do-weel, like Andy. And, father, I ha'e na told ye all. He called ye a thief, father, a thief. I knew it was a lee, a wicked lee. Dinna think your little Nannie believed it. And then he bade me speir what ye had done wi' the laird's siller and gowd."

To her great grief and surprise, her father sunk his face in his hands again with a low groan, but answered not a word.

"Winna ye speak to me and tell me what it a' means?" said she, twining her arms over his shoulder.

"Sin' ye maun know, then, it is true; a' true that he tauld ye. O, my bonnie bairn!" said he, in a tone of ineffable sadness. And then he told her how he had found the treasure, and of the sinful compact he had made with Andy.

"But ye ha'e kept it a' safe, dear father?" cried Nannie, joyfully.

"A' safe. I ha'e not sae much as ta'en it frae the box."

"Then there is naught to do but take it back to the laird and tell him here is his treasure, safe and sound."

"And then he'll speir me how I came by it, and wherefore I kept it sae lang, and a' about it. And then, belike, he'll shut me up in prison. O, lassie, ye dinna think what ye're saying. Could ye bear to see your puir father shut up in a prison? Could ye ever hold up your head again for the shame o't?"

"Better, far better be innocent and in prison, than guilty and go free. O, for my sake, for your wee lammie's sake, take back the laird's siller and gowd."

"Or, if he should na imprison me," he continued, "he will take frae me the place that has been mine, and my father's, and my grandfather's afore me. I shall na ha'e where to lay my head, na shelter for you, my bairn, an' Davie Cameron's name will be cast out as evil. Ha'e ye weel considered a' that, Nannie?"

"The future nane can foresee," replied she; "but this I know, that it is always safe to do the thing that is right. Then will the gude God care for us as He cares for the wee birdie that is lilting sae sweetly on yonder thorn. And of this be certain, dear father, that come honor or shame, come weal, come woe, your little Nannie will cleave to you as long as life shall last."

"Then, my blessed bairn, it shall be as you say." And even as Davie uttered these words, the clouds lifted. All the misery and uncertainty were gone, to be succeeded by calmness and resolution.

Rising up from the ground, he paused only for a kiss from Nannie, and went without delay to restore the chest to its rightful owner.

Simply and truthfully he told his story from first to last; adding, "And now I ha'e brought back wi' me the treasure I wrangfully took. Do wi' me as ye list."

The laird was overjoyed to recover this ancient and valuable family relic, and instead of

greeting Davie with anger and threats of punishment, as he had expected, came near overwhelming him with gratitude, addressing him as "my good man."

"But ye dinna understand," said the bewildered Davie. "I ha'e na been gude. I e'en had it in my heart to be a thief, a wicked, pawkie thief."

"What you *intended* to do matters less to me than what you have really done," answered the good-natured laird.

"Are ye na going to put me in prison, or turn me out o' my place?"

"On the contrary, I am going to reward you for the service you have rendered."

"That maun na be," cried Davie, drawing back. "Dinna ask me. I seek na reward but to feel that I can once mair look my fellow-creatures in the face, *an honest man*. An' the story o' what I ha'e suffered shall aye be a warning to me, and to my bairns after me, *to flee frae temptation*."

A happy circle was that which gathered round Davie's ingle that night, the ingle from which the ale-house never again had power to allure him.

Jean, the gudewife, with her sewing in her hand, and the old gray cat at her feet, shall be the central figure. Grandmother sits on one side of the fireplace, spinning flax—ever and anon bursting out into some old Jacobite song—and Davie himself in the arm-chair, on the other side, with Jamie on his knee. On a low seat close by him is Nannie—now looking into her father's face, and now glancing beyond—for there sits Robbie Ainslee.

And so we drop the curtain.

#### LLOYD'S FIRE ON THE BEACH.

Lloyd and Jem were squatted up among the rocks, watching a vessel out to sea.

It was a cold evening,—Christmas eve,—the night coming on fast. No vessel had any business to be out there among the breakers, running in straight on the bar; that is, if any man aboard of her knew what he was about.

So Lloyd and Jem said, at least, and they had a right to know, as they had been born and bred on that bit of rocky island, and knew every foot of the sea within a mile, as well as they knew their own crab-boats and drag-nets.

The vessel was a small schooner, such as ran down to the island from town in summer with flour, and took back crabs and fish.

"But what can she want now?" said Jem.

"She don't know the coast," said Lloyd. "She'll be on the rocks in an hour, if she don't tack."

Jem went to school over on the mainland in winter. There was no need for him to work so hard, either. The money he made by gunning or fishing he spent for tops and kites. But Lloyd's mother, Mrs. Wells, who lived in a little brown cottage back of the rocks, was not able to keep him and herself without his help. For two or three years he had worked as hard as any man on the island. There had been another son of Mrs. Wells, older than Lloyd, a young man called John. But he had been mate on the *Swallow*, that was wrecked on the Irish coast four years ago, when all the crew were lost—never heard of again.

So there was nobody left but Lloyd. In winter, when there was no fishing, he whittled crosses and paper-knives out of the cedars, trimming them with lichen, and sent them over to town for sale.

In the evenings he would go out for a run and whiff of fresh air. He and Jem were cruising about when they spied the schooner.

They sat quite still a good while, watching her beating about, going out to the open sea, and then turning as often, and heading toward the coast on which they sat.

"It's plain that she's trying to make this island," said Jem.

"Yes, sir. She'll go to pieces if she tries it," answered Lloyd, taking off his cap and putting it on again, emphatically. "Yes, sir; she'll go to pieces."

"If there was anybody aboard that knew of Cook's Crack!"

"How could anybody aboard *that* schooner know of Cook's Crack?" said Lloyd, contemptuously.

"That's so. How could they? Sure enough."

Then the boys blew on their fingers to keep them warm, and hustled in closer under the rocks, clasping their hands about their knees.

Now, to make you town boys understand, I must tell you that the schooners in summer landed at the village, which was a couple of miles from the point where the boys were. The shore off from where they sat was full of hidden rocks and sand bars running out under the froth and swirl of the waves, against which no ship could run without having her bottom ripped up.

But through these rocks there was one narrow opening, through which the sea ran clear and deep, making a safe channel to the shore. This was Cook's Crack. Very few of the fishermen knew of it. It was not likely, therefore, that anybody on board of the schooner would be able to pilot her through it.

"She's bound to run ashore," said Jem. "What'll we do, Lloyd?"

All the boys asked Lloyd what to do whenever there was any trouble. He did not answer at once, being busy considering.

"Go down to the village, Jem, and let some of the men go out with a boat to them!"

"That will be too late to do any good. It will be dark before I reach the village, and there's no moon. Nobody could go out after night in that sea. Besides, she's putting in so fast, she'll be on the rocks in half an hour."

"Do you go to the village, Jem!" said Lloyd, quietly. He was in dreadful doubt himself as to whether he was right. But a captain, he knew, never should let his crew see that he was in doubt; and Lloyd knew he must be captain in this case. Jem had legs to run and a tongue to give a message, but he had no head to plan or execute.

"All right!" said Jem, good-naturedly. "I'm off."

When he was gone on the full run, Lloyd stood thinking. There were no men nearer than the village. Whatever he did, he must do alone. He was tired of acting a man's part and doing a man's work, though the other boys often envied him. His head and bones ached most of the time, and he was getting a sober, old, wizened face.

He wished often that he could have a month of downright play and idleness; and no doubt it would have been the very best thing for him. However, now he had to manage all alone.

"I'll go up to supper, or mother will be uneasy," he said at last. He would be back in half an hour, and before that he could do nothing. The wind drove the schooner back, so that she could not reach the rocks under an hour. Lloyd's eyes were sharper than Jem's.

He did not tell his mother about the schooner. She was a little woman, not strong, and she was easily frightened.

Lloyd tried to keep all trouble from her, as he knew his brother John had done when he was living.

She was waiting for him. "Come, sonny, boy. Here's fish for supper, and good corn bread."

Lloyd laughed, and washed his hands. He joked and talked all the time he was eating, though he was terribly anxious about the schooner. He would have liked, too, to have some nourishing tea for his mother, or a warmer dress than the thin one she wore. But John had been a hearty, cheerful fellow, keeping up everybody's heart.

"There's no use shoving trouble on to mother," thought Lloyd.

After supper he heaped up the fire, put her chair in the warmest corner, and brought her knitting all ready. She had a great basket full of socks and stockings, big and little, ready to send for sale down to the town.

"Are you going out again, Lloyd?" when he kissed her. "It's a bitter night."

"Down on the beach a bit, mother. You go to bed early. I'll be in all right and safe."

He seemed to have forgotten that it was Christmas eve. His mother had not. She looked after him sorrowfully. In old times, when his father was alive, Christmas had been a great holiday for his boys. Afterward, John had made it so for Lloyd. Now, she had not a penny to spare to buy him a book or a toy, such as other boys had down in the village, even the poorest. Even the new shoes which she had hoped to be able to buy, to take the place of his broken boots, she had to give up.

She thought it was but a dull, poor life coming for Lloyd. He was too young to be put to hard, hard work with neither chance for learning nor play. But, as she sat looking in the fire, she suddenly remembered how God, who held the great, moaning sea and the starless night in the hollow of His hand, held her, too, and her boy.

In the meantime, Lloyd was down on the beach. It was growing dark fast. The schooner was beating about uncertainly, yet evidently determined to reach the island.

Lloyd had made up his mind. There was no way to give her warning. All he could do was to guide her, if possible, into the safe channel.

He went down to the landing opposite Cook's Crack, and began making a half-circle of bits of rock and sand, to keep off the wind from the fire he meant to make.

Then he began collecting sticks, dried grass, and bits of old wrecks, with which the beach was strewed.

Now, making a bonfire no doubt appears to you, boys, to be only fine fun, and you think Lloyd a very lucky fellow to have the chance. But a bonfire in the street, on a summer night, or down in a vacant lot, is a very different matter from Lloyd's work, alone, on a December night, with the salt water plashing about his legs, and his breath freezing about his mouth. Besides, he knew that the lives of the ship's crew depended on what he did, or left undone. And he was not a man, to be sure he was right, but a boy, only thirteen years old.

He heaped up the wood on the light pile of drift, struck a match and put it to it, and in a minute the big flames flashed out all over the dark rocks, and the black, seething plane of the sea, and the wedges of ice that lay along shore. It was very cheery at first. Lloyd gave a grand hurrah! and capered about it. But one does not care to hurrah and caper alone. He thought the schooner would be in, now, in half an hour.

"They'll make straight for the fire," he said.

But half an hour, an hour passed, and, strain his eyes as he would, he could see nothing but inky darkness, and hear nothing but the dull swash, swash of the tide upon the sand. The fire was dying down. He went groping up and down the beach for wood, and built it up again.

Two hours. Three.

It was terribly cold. Overhead there was neither moon nor star, only a flat of black fog descending lower and lower. Surely the schooner had gone. Suddenly he heard a cry.

It was Jem.

"Why, Lloyd! Are you crazy? Do you know this is the coldest night this year on the island? My father says so."

"It's not so very cold," said Lloyd, beginning to hop about the fire, and sing. "That schooner's due now, I should say." It heartened him so to hear anybody's voice.

"The schooner's gone hours ago, I dare say. You'd have heard from her before now if she meant to run in."

"Did the men go out?"

"No. It was dark when I reached the village. Too late. I say, Lloyd," clapping his hands to keep warm, "come home. This is nonsense. I am going."

Now Jem was older than Lloyd, and though Lloyd was always captain of the two, still he was half frozen, and very willing to be tempted.

"Do you think it's nonsense?" pushing the logs with his foot, doubtfully.

"Of course I do. I'm going."

"Don't go yet, Jem," Lloyd begged. It was horribly lonely here in the cold, and dark, and storm.

"I'll wait while I count ten," standing first on one leg and then the other.

Lloyd looked out to sea. Nothing there but blackness and the dreadful, incessant moaning. The fire was nearly out. What was the use of working all night for people who were away out on their homeward journey, knowing and caring nothing for him? Up at the cottage his mother had a nice fire for him; a warm bed.

He began kicking the embers apart. "It does seem like folly," he said.

But on the other hand, what if the schooner were there still, with nothing but his fire to guide her to safety? There was a chance of that; the merest chance. But there was one.

"I'll stay, Jem. You can go home."

Jem hesitated a moment, and then started at a quick run for home. His steps sounded very

dreary, beating along the shore.

Lloyd went to work to collect more wood. He had to grope among the icy mass along shore to find his way. The tide was rising and the frozen spray half blinded him. Besides, he was not warmly clothed.

Now I am not going to tell you a painful story, so I will not dwell on this long night; the longest in Lloyd Wells' life, perhaps, though he lived to be an old man.

No sound came to him from the sea to show that the schooner was there or that his work was of use. But still he did not once give it up.

All night he groped and tugged at the scattered bits of wood, piled them up, keeping himself in motion, not daring to close his eyes, knowing that if he did he would never waken. All night long.

But at last he stumbled and sank, and did not rise again. The cold and weariness were too much for the lad, if his heart was that of a man.

As he fell he heard a grating sound on the beach—voices—shouts. Was it the schooner? Had he saved them?

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He woke in his mother's bed. She was leaning over him, crying, laughing at once. There was a man beside her with his arm about her waist, stooping over Lloyd, patting his pale little face; a tall, bronzed man; but the eyes and mouth were those of the little photograph framed in black that hung over his mother's bed.

Lloyd tried to raise his head. "John," he cried, "O, John."

John took him in his strong arms and cried over him, big man as he was.

"Yes, I've got back, Lloyd. I've had a rough time of it these three years. But I'm home now, with plenty of money in my pocket, thank God! And I'll take the load off of your shoulders, my boy, and mother's. You're going to have time to live like other boys, Lloyd. And we'll begin to-morrow, by keeping such a Christmas as was never known. We'll buy out half the stores in the village."

It was his old way of rattling on, but he could not keep the choking from his throat. Lloyd's mother sat down and held her two boys' hands in hers, and said nothing.

"Were you in the schooner?" asked Lloyd, when he found strength to speak.

"Yes, your fire saved us, Lloyd."

"I am glad of that. I wonder what Jem will say now," laughed Lloyd.

But his mother was thinking how God had held both her boys in the hollow of His hand that night.

THE END.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TOM, THE BOOTBLACK; OR, THE ROAD TO SUCCESS \*\*\*

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