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by Carolyn Judson Burnett

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Author: Carolyn Judson Burnett

Illustrator: J. Watson Davis

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\*\*\* START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE BLUE GRASS SEMINARY GIRLS'  
VACATION ADVENTURES \*\*\*



"THE DAM IS GONE!" CRIED THE GIRL. "FLY FOR YOUR LIVES!" *Page 7.*

**The  
Blue Grass Seminary Girls'  
Vacation Adventures**

OR

Shirley Willing to the Rescue

BY CAROLYN JUDSON BURNETT

AUTHOR OF

"The Blue Grass Seminary Girls' Christmas Holidays,"

"The Blue Grass Seminary Girls in the Mountains,"

"The Blue Grass Seminary  
Girls on the Water."

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THE BLUE GRASS SEMINARY GIRLS' VACATION ADVENTURES

## THE BLUE GRASS SEMINARY GIRLS' VACATION ADVENTURES

### CHAPTER I.—THE BROKEN DAM.

"The dam! The dam! The dam has broken!"

Shirley Willing, with flaming eyes and tightly-clenched hands, jumped quickly forward, and with her right hand seized the bridle of a horse that was bearing a strange boy along the road, which ran near the river.

The horse reared back on its haunches, frightened at the sudden halting.

"The dam!" cried the young girl again. "Quick! The people must be warned!"

The face of the rider turned white.

"What do you mean?" he shouted, fear stamped on every feature.

Shirley's excitement fell from her like a cloak. She became quiet.

"The Darret dam has been washed away," she answered, "and unless the people in the valley are warned immediately they will perish. There is one chance to save them. You are mounted. You can outrun the oncoming wall of water and save them. Away with you, quick! There is not a second to spare!"

"But," protested the boy, "the water may overtake me and I shall drown. We can climb to higher ground here and be safe."

He tried to turn his horse's head to the east. But Shirley clung to the rein.

"And leave those people to drown, without warning?" she cried. "You coward! You are afraid!"

"I——" the boy began, but Shirley cut his protest short.

Releasing the bridle of the horse, she sprang quickly to the side of the animal, seized the rider by the leg with both her strong, young hands and pulled quickly and vigorously. Unprepared for such action, the boy came tumbling to the ground in a sprawling heap.

Quick as a flash Shirley leaped to the saddle and turned the horse's head toward the valley. As she dug her heels into the animal's ribs, sending him forward with a jump, she called over her shoulder to the boy, who sat still dazed at the sudden danger:

"Get to safety the best way you can, you coward!"

Under the firm touch of the girl's hand on the rein the horse sped on down the valley.

It was a mad race with death and Shirley knew it. But she realized that human lives were at stake and she did not hesitate.

To the left of the road down which she sped lay high ground and safety, while coming down the valley, perhaps a mile in the rear, poured a dense wall of water, coming as swift as the wind.

For days the Mississippi and its tributaries had been rising rapidly and steadily. Along the lowlands in that part of the state of Illinois, just south of Cairo, where Shirley Willing had been visiting friends, fears that the Darret dam, three miles up one of these tributary streams, would give way, had been entertained.

Some families, therefore, had moved their perishable belongings to higher ground, where they would be beyond the sweep of the waters should the dam break.

Then suddenly, without warning, the dam had gone.

The home where Shirley had been visiting was a farmhouse, and the cry of danger had been received by telephone. Those in the house had been asked to repeat the warning to families further down the valley. But the fierce wind that was raging had, at almost that very moment, blown down all wires.

Shirley, in spite of the fact that she, with the others, could easily have reached the safety afforded by higher ground a short distance away, had thought only of those whose lives would be snuffed out if they were not warned.

She had decided that she would warn them herself. She ran from the house to the stable, where one single horse had been left.

But the seriousness of the situation seemed to have been carried to the animal, and when Shirley had attempted to slip a bridle over his head he struck out violently with his fore feet. As the girl sprang back, he dashed from the stable.

Shirley ran after him and followed him into the road. There she encountered a rider; and the conversation with which this story begins took place.

As the girl sped down the road, she could hear from far behind, the roar of the waters as they came tumbling after her.

A farmhouse came into sight. A man, a woman and several children came out, attracted by the galloping hoofbeats. Without checking the speed of her mount a single instant, Shirley guided the horse close to them.

"The dam! The dam!" she shouted, as she flashed by.

No other words were necessary. Without stopping to gather up any of their effects, they all turned their faces and rushed for higher ground.

A second, a third, and a fourth farmhouse came into view, and as she flashed by, the girl hurled her warning at each.

Half a mile below lay the little town of Stanley. It was for this that Shirley was headed, in her race with the rushing water.

The roar behind her became louder, and Shirley, leaning over her horse's neck, urged him to further efforts with soft and coaxing words.

The noble animal, seeming to realize that he was upon a message of life or death, responded, and it seemed that he must have winged feet, so lightly and swiftly did he fly over the ground.

But the roaring wall of water came closer.

Shirley uttered a cry of relief. Before her she made out the first house in the little town. The sounds of the clattering hoofs on the hard macadamized road drew the residents from their homes. Several had gathered in a little knot as Shirley approached. Evidently they had not heard the sound of the roaring waters.

"The dam has gone!" cried the girl, as she came up to them, and rode by without checking the speed of her horse. "*Fly* for your lives!"

Instantly all became bustle and confusion. The word was passed like a flash and almost as one man the town poured from its homes and dashed for safety.

Clear through the town the young girl rode, calling out her warning. Then, and not until then, did she check her horse and turn his head toward the safety that lay in the east.

A man ran up to her.

"The Hendersons!" he cried. "They left here not five minutes ago in their buggy. The water will catch them on the road!"

Without a word, Shirley turned her horse and would have dashed forward had not the man caught the bridle.

"It's death to you!" he cried.

"It's death to them if I don't make it!" cried Shirley.

She dug her heels into the animal's flanks and the horse shook off the detaining hand with a quick twitch of his head. Evidently he, as well as the girl, realized his responsibility.

Once more, under the guiding hand, he dashed forward as if it were wings that carried him so lightly and swiftly over the ground. And as he flew on, Shirley patted him softly on the neck and spoke low words of encouragement.

The noble animal's ears stood straight and there was fire in his eyes. He seemed to say: "We will

save them if it is possible."

Rounding a sudden turn in the road, Shirley made out a buggy going leisurely along. At the same moment the roar of the water came more plainly to her ears.

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She raised her voice in a shout that rose above the sound of roaring water behind—rose above the sounds of clattering hoofs and above the voices of the occupants of the buggy themselves.

The buggy stopped, the man's face peered out. As he saw Shirley dashing along the road after him, a sudden understanding of what was wrong came to him. Raising an arm, he waved it as a signal that the girl's warning had been understood, and started his horse on a run.

Shirley breathed a great sigh of relief and dashed on after the buggy, which was now going at terrific speed, rocking crazily and threatening every moment to turn over in the road.

Coming suddenly to an open field at the left side of the road, the man sent the buggy dashing across it, and made, as fast as his horse could go, for a point where the ground rose sheer for perhaps a hundred feet.

Shirley sped after the buggy.

Coming to this abrupt rise, they were forced to search for a means of clambering up it. The woman in the buggy, at the man's command, sprang from the seat and dashed hurriedly up the steep hill. The man in the meantime stopped to unhitch his horse, that the animal might have a chance for its life.

Turning in her saddle, Shirley cried out in sudden fear.

10

Behind, so close that it seemed to be right upon her and bearing down with tremendous speed, came a solid wall of water, many feet high.

With a cry to her horse, the girl turned his head squarely to the hill. With his nostrils extended and his eyes dilated with fear, the animal sprang at it. With his light burden he gained a foothold and dashed up as fast as his weary limbs could carry him. Once he came to a place that seemed too much for him; but the noble steed made a last desperate effort and succeeded in getting his forefeet on top of the level ground above.

With a single movement, Shirley flung herself from the saddle to the safety of the high ground, and in another moment seized the bridle of the horse, just as he would have slipped back into the raging flood that now swept by below.

Exerting her utmost strength—and it was by no means slight—she succeeded in helping the animal to scramble to the summit.

The occupants of the buggy had also succeeded in climbing to safety, but the second horse had been carried away by the sweeping waters. Henderson had been unable to loosen the animal, as he was forced to hurry to the support of Mrs. Henderson, who, almost in safety, had fainted and would have fallen back, had her husband's arm not caught her.

From this refuge, the three watched the waters as they swirled by with tremendous force. Kicking animals, sheds, barns and small houses, together with ruins and débris, swept past them, and more than once the young girl cried out in despair, as she realized the damage that had been done by the water.

11

The three had climbed to the very top of the hill, as the water surrounded them on all sides. Gradually it rose, climbing closer and closer to them. Shirley became alarmed and turned to Henderson, who stood near her, still supporting his wife.

"Will it come this high, do you think, Mr. Henderson?"

Henderson shook his head.

"There is no telling," he replied quietly. "All we can do is to hope for the best."

All became silent, but their eyes were riveted upon the water as it closed in on them.

Now there was but perhaps twenty yards of dry ground, then fifteen, and still the water rose. The rise continued until all stood in water, and then it rose no higher.

"Thank God!" said Henderson, calmly, looking at his wife. "We are saved!"

"Thank God, indeed," said Shirley softly, and she turned and stroked the horse, who thrust his cold muzzle into her hand. "But for you," she added, patting him gently, "hundreds would have been drowned!"

## CHAPTER II.—A DARING ACT.

12

Night came on, and still the three—a man, a woman and a young girl—stood ankle deep in the cold water, which showed no sign of receding.

Mrs. Henderson was completely worn out. At Shirley's suggestion, Henderson placed her upon the back of the horse, where she was at least dry.

"There is no telling how long we may have to remain here," said Henderson. "The water may not go down before morning."

"But," said Shirley, "we cannot remain here that long. We must do something."

"What?" asked Henderson briefly.

"Well, we might try shouting," said Shirley. "Some one might hear us."

They both raised their voices to their loudest and shouted long and often. But no reply came.

Shirley glanced carefully about her in the dim light. They stood on the very top of the little hill, and all about them was water. Perhaps a quarter of a mile to the right, however, was another elevation, and this Shirley knew was not merely a similar hill, but high ground that ran back for miles—the land upon which all those in the flooded valley had sought safety.

13

"I have a plan," she said quietly to Henderson.

"What is it?" he asked eagerly.

"It's very simple," was the reply. "I shall mount the horse, and we shall try and swim through the short expanse of water to the dry ground over there," and she pointed across the flood.

Henderson started back aghast at the boldness of this plan. Beneath them the water still swished angrily, although it had lost much of its force.

"I'll not hear of it," he said shortly. "You shall not risk your life."

"But," protested the girl, "we are all likely to become numbed and perish here."

She shivered slightly as she spoke, for the night air was damp, cold and penetrating.

"I think it is the best way," she added quietly. "Besides, what danger is there? Hero," she named the horse in that moment, "can make it all right. All I shall have to do is cling to him tightly."

"But the current may be very strong," protested Henderson.

"Not too strong for us, is it, Hero?" she asked the horse, and patted him gently again.

Hero whinnied in reply, and seemed as eager as the girl to make the trial. He seemed to understand the conversation, and besides, he was anxious to reach a place where there was warmth, dry straw and good oats.

14

"Yes, it is the best way," said Shirley decisively.

Henderson looked at her closely, then turned away with a sigh, for that one glance was enough to tell him that the young girl would have her way.

He lifted his wife from Hero's back, and Shirley immediately climbed into the saddle.

"I'll send a boat for you," Shirley called over her shoulder, as, with a tug of the reins, she headed Hero into the water.

"Good luck!" called Henderson. "Keep your head, and hold tight. Don't be swept off the horse's back."

Shirley did not reply, but kept her eyes straight ahead.

Gradually Hero sank lower and lower into the water, and then went under suddenly. His feet no longer touched the bottom.

Henderson and his wife cried out in alarm as horse and girl sank beneath the water; but they rose again in a moment, and, shaking the water from his eyes with an angry snort, Hero struck out boldly for the distant shore.

The current was still strong and gradually bore them down the valley. But Hero made headway, and every stroke of his mighty legs bore them much nearer safety.

15

Now darkness, thick and intense, descended over the valley, and neither horse nor rider could see five yards ahead. But neither lost heart, Hero plunging straight ahead and Shirley clinging tightly to his neck and uttering low words of encouragement.

For a long, long time, as it seemed to both horse and rider, they continued their cold and wet journey; then, abruptly, Hero's feet struck the rising ground of the high land. A moment later he stood on all feet, the water up to his knees, but with solid ground beneath him. Quickly he drew himself free of the water, and Shirley, soaking wet, and cramped from the one position she had been forced to maintain, jumped stiffly to the ground.

She threw her arms around the horse's neck, and gave him a great hug.

"Good old Hero!" she exclaimed. "I knew you would bring us over safely. Now to find some one and send them after the Hendersons."

She walked quickly along in the darkness, Hero following her like a dog.

At last, in the distance, she made out a dim light and hurried on toward it. Soon she was close enough to make out that she was approaching a little house, through a window of which the light twinkled. She broke into a run, and without stopping to knock, dashed inside.

A man and a woman rose to their feet, and Shirley was also conscious of other figures in the room.

16

A pain shot through her head, she reeled dizzily and toppled over in a dead faint; but before she lost consciousness she heard a voice that sounded many miles away exclaim:

"Why, Shirley Willing! What are you doing here, and in this condition?"

When Shirley recovered consciousness she lay upon a little bed, and several figures were bending over her. One she recognized in a moment, and addressed it in a low voice and with a smile on her face.

"Mabel!" she exclaimed. "Where am I and what is the matter with me?"

But before the other could reply, the thrilling experience she had been through came back to her like a flash; and springing from the bed, unmindful of the sharp pain that shot through her head, she exclaimed:

"The Hendersons! Quick! Have you a boat?"

"There, there," said the girl whom she had addressed as Mabel. "You are a little overwrought. Lie down again, dearie."

Shirley shook off the other's hand.

"The Hendersons," she explained, "are marooned on a little hill in the midst of the raging flood. They must be helped quickly. Mrs. Henderson is ill and unless she is given shelter at once may die from exposure."

17

Immediately all in the room began to ask questions, but Shirley, raising a hand, stopped them. Then, briefly, she explained the situation.

The men in the room leaped to their feet and dashed out of the house. Shirley ran after them.

"You may not be able to find the place in the dark," she said, "but I think I can show you the way. My sense of direction has always been good."

In spite of the protests of the others, she went with the men while they hauled a large rowboat out of a nearby shed and dragged it to the water's edge.

Here, launching it, they all climbed in. Shirley would have followed, but one man objected.

"You are worn out now," he said. "You had better get to bed."

But Shirley was not to be denied.

"This is my adventure," she said warmly, "and besides, I can probably help you locate the Hendersons. My eyes are unusually sharp."

She stepped into the boat in spite of all protests, and soon, under the strong arms of the men, the little craft leaped out over the water.

It was pitch dark, and almost impossible for the occupants of the boat to see their hands before them. A lantern in the prow of the boat only seemed to make the darkness more intense.

After half an hour's rowing the men rested on their oars and listened. There was no sound. They rowed for perhaps another quarter of an hour, and again paused to listen. Just as they were about to go on again, Shirley's ears caught the sound of a distant hail.

18

"Listen!" she cried, and all sat silently.

The hail came again, but at first those in the boat were unable to tell from what direction. They listened and it came again.

"Back and to the right," said Shirley. "We must have passed them in the darkness."

The boat was brought about and headed in the direction Shirley indicated; and still there was no sign of the Hendersons. But the next hail was clearer, and much closer.

"Come straight ahead!" came the cry over the flood.

The rowers now followed the directions shouted across the water, and after what seemed a very long time, made out, directly ahead, the figure of a man and a woman, huddled close together to keep warm. It was Henderson and his wife.

Once inside the boat, Mrs. Henderson promptly fainted. Shirley lifted the unconscious woman's head into her lap and bathed her face with water, and she soon revived.

The boat made rapid progress on the return journey and soon all were in the warm enclosure of the little house. Mrs. Henderson was promptly put to bed, but Shirley had something else to do.

19

Calling one of the men to follow her, she left the house and, after some searching, came upon what she sought.

This was Hero standing at the door of the little stable, nosing it and trying his best to get in. Shirley turned to her companions.

"This," she said, stroking the animal's wet mane, "is the one you all have to thank for your escape from the flood. Had it not been for Hero, I would have been unable to give the warning, and now it seems to me he is entitled to a nice warm stall and some nice fresh oats. Would you like them, Hero?"

The horse whinnied in joy, and one of the men said:

"He certainly shall have both."

He approached and took the animal by the bridle, but Hero drew back.

"Maybe you can lead him," said the man. "He won't come for me."

Shirley laughed. "Come, Hero!" she called and without leading he followed her into the stable, where he was escorted to a clean stall.

"And now you go to bed," said one of the men to Shirley.

"I'll stay and see him fed first," replied the girl.

"All right, have your own way!"

He produced the oats, and soon Hero was nosing and eating them contentedly.

Then, and not until then, did Shirley return to the house. Throwing off her wet garments, she crept into bed when, tired and worn out, she closed her eyes and slept.

### CHAPTER III.—THE BLUE GRASS SEMINARY.

Shirley Willing was a typical product of the little town of Paris, Bourbon County, Kentucky; and at the time this story opens had just passed her fifteenth year. She was the one child of Christopher Willing, a prosperous farmer and horseman, who owned an extensive place on the Bethlehem pike some three or four miles from the little city.

Being an only daughter, she was naturally somewhat spoiled, although she and her father would have resented such an implication. Nevertheless, spoiled she was, as all were aware except these two. Shirley was slight and slender, with a wealth of auburn hair and cheeks like roses. All her life she had been athletically inclined, and for the past two years—ever since she had been attending the Blue Grass Seminary—she had indulged in outdoor sports continually.

The Blue Grass Seminary was one of those schools in which the chief object was to produce not only cultured and educated young women, but physically perfect ones as well. While the course of study was on a par with all first-class schools, the management did not believe that the students should spend all their time over their books.

"Give the girls a practical education," was the theory of the principal, and both he and his assistants endeavored in every way to enable the girls under their care to practice in the open the theories taught in the schoolroom.

Much time was also devoted to athletics in the Blue Grass Seminary, but there were no hard and fast rules as to what branch of athletics each pupil should take up. Shirley Willing's great hobby and chief diversion was horseback riding. She was an expert horse-woman at fifteen and could ride anything, as she had proved more than once.

Besides having a well-kept farm, Mr. Willing also owned a good "string" of blooded race horses, and there was no novelty in one of them being winner in many exciting races. It was this kind of horse that Shirley most enjoyed riding.

Shirley's particular chum and bosom friend was Mabel Ashton, likewise the daughter of a prosperous Kentuckian. Colonel Ashton was easily the most prominent man in many respects in Bourbon County. Mabel, who was a few months older than Shirley, was equally well known among the younger set. The girls had been friends almost since they were babies, which was only natural because of the close relationship between their families.

Another bond of sympathy between the girls was that both had lost their mothers when a few months old.

When Shirley made up her mind that she would attend the Blue Grass Seminary—located in a neighboring town some twenty miles away—there was nothing more natural than that Mabel should decide to go also. At first their fathers both opposed the plan, but after Mr. Willing and Colonel Ashton had spent a day at the Seminary and had seen what an excellent school it was, they were quite willing to let the girls attend.

At the Seminary the girls had been roommates. Their closest friend was Lois Geddis, the daughter of an Illinois farmer. Several times she had gone home with Shirley to spend Sunday and had likewise spent her Christmas vacation in Paris, upon the promise that the two girls should visit her during the summer. Thus it was that we find these three Blue Grass Seminary girls in such close proximity to the great Father of Waters.

The Kentucky girls had been visiting in Illinois some two weeks when this story opens, and it was now the latter part of June. They had only intended to remain a week, but they had been having such a good time that they had overstayed the stated period. Finally they had selected a date upon which they should return and in spite of all influence that could be brought to bear, they were not to be shaken in their purpose.

Then the flood came.

To account for Mabel's presence in the little house in which Shirley is now sleeping, it is

necessary to go back a little in our story.

It was about the time that the girls had set a date to go home that heavy rains set in. The summer had been dry so far and the rain was very welcome. But for days, now, the downpour had continued without any sign of abating. From further up the river news was received of still heavier rain, and these added to the regular June rise from the Missouri caused the Mississippi at Cairo to spread until it threatened to leave its bank.

A short distance above the home of Mr. Geddis, where the girls were visiting, was a small tributary of the Mississippi on which was built a great dam, forming an immense reservoir. This was known as the Darret dam. At this point also, the river broadened into what seemed almost a small bay in which the water was very deep, so that the volume back of the dam was something enormous.

When it became apparent that there was to be no let-up in the steady rains, and as the waters of the Mississippi continued to rise, Mr. Geddis, as well as other farmers in the vicinity, moved all their livestock and household effects to higher ground that they might be safe should the dam give way; for it was a well-known fact that if the dam burst, the valley would be flooded and everything carried away.

Guards were posted near the dam to give the warning, should it threaten to burst. Vigil was kept day and night, while the residents of the countryside were prepared to flee at the first warning of imminent disaster.

But the dam had finally burst so suddenly that the warning came almost too late. Shirley, Mabel, Lois, her father and mother were at supper when the telephone jangled furiously. Lois, who was nearest, quickly put the receiver to her ear, and then turned to the others with a cry:

"The dam is gone!"

Then it was that those in the farmhouse attempted to repeat the warning down the valley, and it was discovered that the wires were down. As has been told, it was then that Shirley made her wild dash, that might have resulted fatally.

When Shirley had disappeared, the others, after seeking in vain for her, had finally given it up as hopeless.

"She is probably safe some place," said Mr. Geddis. "Come, we must hurry."

They started for the highlands, which they reached safely, and from there watched the mountains of water as they swept down, flooding the valley.

"I believe I know what has happened to Shirley," said Mabel quietly.

"What?" asked Lois, eagerly.

"I believe she went down the valley to warn the people."

Lois gave a startled cry.

"She will be drowned!" she cried.

"I'm not sure about that," said Mabel quietly. "You see, I know Shirley a little better than you do. If there is one way by which she can reach safety, Shirley is sure to find it."

"I do hope she will not be harmed," said Lois, beginning to cry.

Refugees fled to the highlands in droves, leaving everything behind. Mr. Geddis and his party advanced, just on the edge of the high ground, down the valley. Here they came upon others who had been forced to flee for safety.

"How did the warning reach you?" asked Mr. Geddis of one of the men.

"Girl on horseback," was the reply. "She came dashing down the road like wind. If it hadn't been for her, hundreds would have perished."

Mabel, who overheard this conversation, cried out in alarm:

"Where is she?"

"I don't know," was the reply. "She was headed straight for the village."

Mabel seized Lois by the arm.

"Come," she cried, "let's go farther. Perhaps we can find Shirley."

With a word to her father, Lois followed her friend. They came, at last, to a part of the ground directly behind the little village of Stanley, now lying beneath the water. Here they plied the refugees with question after question, and finally came upon the man who had seen the girl wheel her horse and dash down the road after the Hendersons.

"There is not one chance in a thousand that she escaped," he said slowly; "nor the Hendersons, either, for that matter."

The girls left him and continued on down the course of the raging water, for they believed that Shirley might possibly have reached safety in that direction.

It grew dusk, and still they walked on, scanning the nearby waters and the ground closely. Night fell.



"Well, we might as well go back," said Mabel quietly. "I am afraid we shall never see her again."

"I know we won't," said Lois, and fell to weeping.

"Come, come," said Mabel, throwing her arm about her friend's shoulders. "Crying will do no good."

"But—but," sobbed Lois, "if it hadn't been for me she would be alive."

"How do you make that out?" asked Mabel, in some surprise.

"Why, she would not have come to this part of the country."

"Never mind," said Mabel. "Shirley wouldn't want you to feel badly about it. I know that."

They turned and began to retrace their steps. It was then that Lois made a startling discovery. They had unconsciously walked further and further away from the water's edge, in among a grove of trees.

"We are lost!" cried Lois.

"Lost!" echoed Mabel.

"Yes. I don't know where we are. I have never been in these woods before."

"Oh, I guess we'll get out all right," said Mabel confidently.

She moved forward, but in the darkness she had no means of telling whether she was going in the right direction. The girls walked quickly this way and that, but they could find no exit from the grove of trees.

Mabel raised her young voice in a cry for help, and Lois added hers to it.

From the distance came a faint response.

Encouraged, the girls renewed their efforts, and keeping it up, were finally rewarded by the sounds of footsteps coming toward them. A moment later the figure of a man appeared before them.

"What on earth are you two girls doing here?" he asked in amazement.

"We are lost," stammered Lois, beginning to cry again, now that she felt she was safe once more.

"Who are you?" asked the man.

The girls told him.

"And we want to get back to father," moaned Lois.

"Well," said the man, "you can't get back to-night. You have come farther than you realize. My name is Thompson, and I have a shack nearby. You shall both spend the night with us. Mrs. Thompson will make you at home."

In spite of repeated requests by both girls that they be set on the road home and assurances that they were not afraid to go alone, Thompson shook his head negatively.

"You'll do as I say," he said. "I wouldn't allow a daughter of mine to go prowling through the woods at this time of night. Come with me."

The girls were forced to obey, for they had no desire to be left in the woods alone.

Mrs. Thompson made the girls comfortable, and showed them a bed in a room at the rear of the house, on the ground floor.

It was while they were sitting talking, that they became aware of clattering of hoofs. A moment later the door flew open and Shirley staggered into the room. Both girls were on their feet in an instant.

"Shirley!" they cried, and rushed forward.

It was then that Shirley had fainted.

#### CHAPTER IV.—A RAILROAD ACCIDENT.

"How long are we likely to be delayed, conductor?"

The speaker was Shirley, and the date was one week from the day on which the girl, by her daring ride, had saved scores in the Illinois town and in the valley from perishing in the flood.

Shirley and her friend Mabel had left their chum's home the day before. In the morning they caught a train out of St. Louis, and now, in the afternoon, they had learned that their train would be held indefinitely in Indianapolis because of a serious wreck ahead.

"There is no telling, miss," was the conductor's answer to Shirley's question. "The wreck is a bad one, and it is impossible to say just when the track will be cleared. If we wait for that, it is likely to be hours. We may, however, be routed over some other line. I shall know within a quarter of an hour."

"Thank you," replied Shirley, and the two girls continued to pace up and down alongside their car.

Half an hour later the conductor approached them.

"The wreck is more serious than at first reported," he said, "and because of some unknown reason we cannot be routed over another line. Therefore, it will be at least six hours before we will leave."

"My gracious," said Shirley, "we can make better time than that by taking the Interurban."

"Yes," said the conductor, "and in that way you can reach Cincinnati in time to catch the 6 o'clock L. & N., which will put you in Paris at ten. If you wait for us you will have to remain all night in Cincinnati."

Shirley turned to Mabel.

"Let's get our things and hurry and catch the trolley car," she said.

The two girls boarded the delayed train and hastily collected their belongings. The conductor was courteous enough to see them to a taxicab, which soon whirled them across the city. Here they found that they could get an electric car in fifteen minutes, which, barring accidents, would get them in Cincinnati in ample time for the six o'clock train south.

The girls climbed aboard the car, settled themselves comfortably, and fell to talking. At last the car started, and soon they were beyond the city and whirling along rapidly.

For an hour they rode, the car stopping occasionally to take on or to discharge passengers; and then, suddenly, slackening slightly to round rather a sharp curve, the car dashed forward again; and there came a sharp cry from passengers in the front seats.

At the same instant the motorman reversed his power, and there was a terrific jolt. Prompt as the motorman's action had been it had not been prompt enough.

A terrible shock followed as the car dashed into another coming along the single track from the opposite direction. There was a crash of splintering wood and then cries of pain and terror from the passengers.

The first outcry had told all on the car that a disaster was about to occur, and the passengers had sprung to their feet even before the crash—all but Mabel and Shirley.

Glancing quickly out the window, Mabel had perceived the other car bearing down on them, and started to rise. But Shirley saw it at the same moment, and throwing out her hand quickly, she grasped her friend by the arm and pulled her back into her seat.

"Sit still!" she commanded.

When the shock came, Shirley, sitting next to the window, was hurled back over her seat with terrible force, while broken glass was showered upon her. Then, as the car crumpled, in some unaccountable manner both girls were hurled through the air some distance away, where they both lay for a moment, stunned.

Shirley was the first to come to herself, and her thought was of her friend. Although she reeled dizzily, she succeeded in pulling herself (unconsciously) to her feet, and at a first glance about her saw Mabel lying near. Shirley staggered to the side of her chum and bent down.

She raised the girl's head to her knee and rubbed the cold face with her hand.

"Mabel! Mabel!" she called anxiously.

There was no reply, and again Shirley gave her attention to trying to revive her friend. At last her efforts were rewarded.

Mabel's head moved slightly, and Shirley, bending closer, saw a faint color come into her face. At last she opened her eyes, and said feebly:

"What is it? What has happened?"

"Wreck," was the brief reply, "and we are both lucky not to have been killed. How do you feel? Where are you hurt?"

"I feel a little dizzy," said Mabel, making an attempt to get to her feet, but falling back. "I don't believe I am hurt very much, though."

A second time she tried to get to her feet and this time she succeeded. She took one look at Shirley's face and then seized her friend in her arms.

"Shirley!" she exclaimed. "Why didn't you tell me you were hurt?"

"Hurt?" repeated Shirley, starting back.

"Yes, your face is covered with blood."

Shirley passed her hand over her face and it came away red.

"I—I—didn't know I was hurt," she said in surprise.

Looking about, Mabel saw a pool of water nearby. Quickly she ran to it and wet her handkerchief. Then she ran back and proceeded to wash her friend's face.

"It's not bad," she said, after an examination. "Looks like a piece of glass had cut you. It's

stopped bleeding, though."

"Good," laughed Shirley, and would have said more, but that her attention was attracted by a shout from behind.

Turning, she beheld a terrible sight.

There, not twenty yards away, in a tangled heap, lay the two cars, and even as Shirley turned a small tongue of flame crept from the wreckage.

"Fire!" cried Shirley and, turning quickly, she ran toward the cars. Mabel followed her.

Beside the cars men were rushing hurriedly about, grim-faced and silent.

"Half a dozen women are pinioned beneath the wreck," replied one man briefly to Shirley's questioning.

Shirley shuddered, as did Mabel.

"Horrible," said the latter.

The girls drew closer; then stopped to watch the work of rescue.

The flame had now grown from the size of a man's hand to something large, and it was plain even to the girls' inexperienced eyes that it was only a question of minutes until those buried beneath the wreckage would be burned alive, did not help come at once.

A sudden cry of anguish came not twenty feet from where the girls stood and, glancing in the direction of the cry, Shirley beheld the head of a little girl of perhaps ten years protruding from beneath the débris.

"Poor thing," she cried, and dashed forward.

Mabel followed.

In vain did the tot struggle to extricate herself from beneath the wreckage. Crying and screaming, she continued her futile efforts.

At sight of the two girls dashing toward her she cried even more piteously than before.

Shirley caught hold of one arm that was extended, and pulled. Again and again she tried, but in vain; and the harder she pulled the harder the child cried.

Mabel stooped close and made an examination.

"There seems to be a wheel on her foot," she said, "and she is not strong enough to pull herself from under it."

Shirley let loose of the tot's arm, and stooped over the child. Then she rose swiftly, determination written upon her face.

"You pull the child by the arm when I say, 'Ready!'" she called.

"What are you going to do?" asked Mabel anxiously.

"Never mind," was the reply. "Just do as I say, and hurry."

Mabel said no more but, according to Shirley's instructions, took the little one by the arm and stood ready to pull when Shirley gave the word.

Stooping so that her head was under the edge of the wreck, Shirley poked forth a dainty foot and by burrowing a bit with her toe, at last found the child's foot beneath the wheel. Then, leaning forward and straining every muscle of arms and limbs, the heavy iron wheel was raised from the ground.

"Ready!" she called to Mabel.

Mabel pulled, and the little girl, still crying and screaming, came from under the wreck.

But the strain upon Shirley had been terrible, and no sooner had the child been dragged to safety, than Shirley's strength gave out, and the wheel settled down upon her own foot.

She did not cry out, but Mabel's quick eyes detected her friend's plight. She uttered an exclamation of dismay and hurried to her aid.

"Shirley!" was all she could say.

With her foot pinned beneath the wheel, Shirley smiled at her.

"I'm caught," she said simply. "How is the little girl?"

Mabel bent over, and examined her chum's predicament. Then she laid hold of the wheel and attempted to lift it.

"I can't move it," she said, and continued to tug desperately at the wheel and heavy axle.

"You had better call some one to help you," said Shirley calmly.

Mabel gave up her attempt to lift the wheel and hurried to the opposite side of the tangled wreckage, where she could hear men at work trying to pull other victims from beneath the heap.

The heat from the flames that now almost enveloped the wreck was becoming more intense. It was almost unbearable, and Shirley, imprisoned as she was, stretched as far as possible from the fire.

At Mabel's call for aid, one of the men gave up his position with the others and followed her to where Shirley lay. It was but the work of a moment for him to lift the wheel sufficiently for Mabel to help Shirley from beneath it.

Shirley arose and tried her foot. It pained her, but hasty examination showed that it was simply bruised. Painfully, assisted by Mabel, she limped after the man, who had raised the wheel, to the opposite side of the wreck, where rescuers were even at that moment pulling the last of the victims from under the cars, away from the tongues of flame.

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## CHAPTER V.—HOME AGAIN.

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As she walked along, the pain in Shirley's foot became less and less, until finally she was not conscious of it. The girls soon sat down upon the grass, where they watched the men fighting the flames, that the cars might not be entirely consumed.

Shirley suddenly jumped to her feet.

"Where is the girl we pulled from under the car?" she asked Mabel.

Mabel also sprung up.

"I had forgotten all about her," she exclaimed.

They walked to where the little one lay, still moaning with pain. Shirley picked her up gently, and bade Mabel bring some water. This the latter did, and the two girls at length succeeded in soothing the child, until she lay still in Shirley's arms.

Suddenly there was a fluttering of skirts, a glad cry in a woman's voice and the tot was snatched from Shirley's arms.

"Agnes, Agnes!" said the voice.

Shirley arose and faced the woman who had taken the child from her.

"I am Mrs. Johnson," the woman said, "and this is my daughter Agnes. The men told me you saved her from the flames. I don't know how to thank you."

"Never mind the thanks," said Shirley. "We simply pulled her away. That is all."

"Why, Shirley," exclaimed Mabel, "you almost lost your own life."

Shirley frowned at her friend.

"It was nothing," she said.

The little girl's mother looked first at one and then at the other.

"I didn't know you endangered your own life," she said. "I wish I could thank you properly."

"Just say no more about it then," said Shirley, somewhat embarrassed by this conversation.

The woman smiled.

"As modest as you are brave," she said. "Well, then, I shall say no more about it. But remember, if you ever need a friend, just call on me."

"Thank you. I shall remember," said Shirley, and the woman walked away, carrying her daughter in her arms.

From down the track at this moment came the buzz of an approaching car. It was the wrecking train bringing a crew to clear the track, also physicians and nurses.

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Fortunately, the services of none of the latter were needed, for it was found, that besides the little girl Shirley had rescued, none of the passengers had been severely injured.

Half an hour later a car approached from the other direction, and came to a stop a few yards from the scene of the wreck. Passengers disembarked and, upon the instructions of an official, the car made ready to return toward Cincinnati.

Shirley and Mabel climbed aboard with the other passengers and soon were on their way once more. They did not wait to find their hand baggage, nor did any of the other passengers. It was hopelessly lost in the wreckage. Their trunks, they knew, would reach Cincinnati, and eventually home, without trouble.

The wreck had delayed the car for nearly two hours; so when they finally reached Cincinnati, it was too late to catch their train to Paris.

Shirley and Mabel had been in the Ohio city too many times to feel frightened, however. So, after sending a telegram to Mr. Willing explaining their reasons for not being home on time, the two girls made their way from the station to the Sinton Hotel, where they spent the night.

They were up bright and early the next morning, and caught their train soon after eight o'clock. Shortly before eleven they reached Paris.

Shirley, the first to descend the steps, was caught in the arms of a dignified, white-haired old

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gentleman, who squeezed her until she cried out:

"Stop, Dad, or you will squeeze the life out of me."

The old gentleman laughed and, putting a hand on both of her shoulders, held her off at arms' length and looked at her intently.

"Well, well," he said, "so I have you back again. How glad I am to see you, daughter. It seems as though you had been gone ten years."

Again he regarded her earnestly.

"Come, Dad," said Shirley, "you are blocking the way. The people want to get off."

"I'd like to know," said Mr. Willing, looking about fiercely, "who is going to tell me to move."

"I'll tell you, Dad," replied Shirley, smiling.

"Oh, well," said her father, "that is a different matter. You and your mother are alike, both tyrants."

He stepped aside, and thus allowed the first of the passengers who had been held back by this conversation to descend; and as the next one was Mabel, he caught her in his arms and held her also for a moment.

"Where is father?" asked Mabel gently, freeing herself from the elderly man's caresses.

"He's waiting at home for you," replied Mr. Willing.

"Why didn't he come to meet me?"

"Well," said Mr. Willing, "I reckon he wasn't feeling quite as well as he might, so he asked me to do the honors."

"Is he sick?" asked Mabel anxiously.

"I reckon you might call it sick."

"How sick?"

"Well, now, he's not so sick; but if he pays much attention to some of these doctors he soon will be."

Mabel was growing more and more anxious.

"Do let us hurry and get home," she said.

"Now, now, dear, don't excite yourself," said Mr. Willing. "I reckon he will soon be all right again."

On the opposite side of the station a large touring car waited. Mr. Willing pushed the two girls into the back seat and then took his place by the negro chauffeur.

"Home, Frank," he said.

"Yessah," replied the old ducky, and started the car on its way.

Mabel leaned forward and spoke to Mr. Willing.

"You will take me home first, won't you?" she asked.

"Your father," was the reply, "has been staying with me for the last week. He is there now. You see, he was kind o' lonely without his girl, so I just had him come to me."

The automobile quickly covered the three miles to the Willing farm, and stopped before a broad wooden gate. This opened upon a broad blue-grass field on which a fine herd of cattle were grazing.

"I'll open the first," called Shirley, and jumped out of the car.

She threw it wide, and the car passed through. Mabel opened the second one into the paddock, and Shirley the third.

"There," she said, when she was back in the car rolling through the long yard. "I'm always glad when that is done, although I don't believe I mind opening gates now."

"Nor I," said Mabel. "I remember that is one reason I hated to come here sometimes, there were so many gates to open."

"The older you get," said Mr. Willing, who had overheard this conversation, "the less you will mind a little work."

The car now drew up before a big red brick house, surrounded by many shade trees. The two girls jumped out lightly, and Mr. Willing followed slowly.

Mabel needed no directions as to where to find her father and, running into the house, she ran up the stairs and into the front bedroom.

She opened the door with a quick jerk, and then paused. The quiet figure in the bed caught her eye. It was her father, and he was sleeping.

Mabel tip-toed toward the bed, and bent over. Her father's face was pale, but he seemed to be resting easily.

"Poor father," said Mabel. "I won't disturb him now."

She turned and made her way toward the door. As she laid her hand upon the knob and was about to turn it, a voice called:

"Mabel!"

The girl turned. Her father was sitting up.

"Mabel!" he called again. Gladly the girl ran to him and was at once clasped in his arms.

"I didn't want to wake you," she said.

"You know very well," was the reply, "that, after such a long absence, your very presence was bound to awaken me. I was asleep, but I must have felt that you had returned."

Mabel sat down on the edge of the bed.

"Now tell me all about yourself," she said. "How long have you been sick?"

"About a month," was the reply.

"Why didn't you write and tell me about it?"

"I didn't want to spoil your vacation."

"The idea! I would have come home at once to care for you."

"That is the reason I didn't write."

"What does the doctor say is the matter?"

"Well, he has not diagnosed the case satisfactorily, but he says I have some sort of lung trouble."

Mabel sprang to her feet.

"You don't mean——" she exclaimed.

"Yes," interrupted her father. "I am afraid that is what it is. He says that I must go away from here at once."

For a moment Mabel was too stunned to speak. She sat down upon the edge of the bed again.

"Run away now," said her father. "I'll try and sleep some more."

She kissed her father gently, and made her way from the room.

On the porch she met Mr. Willing.

"Why didn't you tell me Father was so very sick?" she demanded.

"Pshaw!" he replied. "I don't think it amounts to anything."

"You know what the doctor believes is the matter with him?"

"Yes."

"Consumption?"

Mr. Willing bowed his head in assent.

## CHAPTER VI.—A PLOT DISCOVERED.

At this moment Mabel heard Shirley calling. Accompanied by Mr. Willing, she made her way around the house, where her friend stood awaiting her.

"Let's go and look at the horses, Mabel," said Shirley.

In spite of a certain sadness caused by her father's condition, Mabel agreed, and the two girls made their way to the large stable a quarter of a mile from the farmhouse.

Shirley flung open the door and dashed inside.

"We'll call on Gabriel first," she called back over her shoulder.

Mabel followed her.

Straight to the stall of the young animal of splendid pedigree Shirley led the way. It had been months since she had last seen this horse, but the noble creature recognized her footsteps and whinnied in delight at her approach.

Unmindful of the possibility that the horse might step upon her, Shirley ran into the stall and, reaching up, threw both arms around his glossy black neck. Gabriel trembled with happiness, and then thrust his nose into her hand.

"See," laughed Shirley, "he wants his lump of sugar. Did you think I had forgotten you?" she asked.

Again Gabriel whinnied.

Gabriel took the lump of sugar from the girl's hand and munched it contentedly. Then he pleaded for more.

"No, sir," said Shirley, stepping back. "One lump is all you get; you should know better than to ask for more. If Dad knew I had given you even one, he wouldn't like it."

She stepped farther back and surveyed the animal with a critical eye.

"And so," she said, speaking to Gabriel, "you are going to win the Derby for Dad and me this year."

She patted him affectionately upon the head and stroked his mane. Gabriel rubbed his head up and down against her arm.

"Come, Shirley," said Mabel at this juncture, "don't stand there talking to Gabriel all day. We must pay our respects to some of the other horses."

"All right," her friend agreed and, giving Gabriel a parting pat, she followed her friend from the stall.

All along the length of the stable the heads of other horses appeared above their stall doors as the two girls passed along, and everywhere they were greeted with whinnies of welcome and delight; for there was not a horse there who did not love the two girls.

But of all the horses in her father's "string," Shirley loved Gabriel most, for he was her own personal property. Descended from a long line of distinguished and powerful racehorses, Gabriel had been presented to Shirley by Mr. Willing when the horse was nothing but a colt. His pedigree was of the best, and now, in the approaching Derby to be run in Louisville the following month, Shirley and Mr. Willing both looked to him to maintain the supremacy of the Willing stable.

Besides Jimmy Smith, Mr. Willing's diminutive sixteen-year-old jockey, none but Shirley had ever sat upon Gabriel's back. Many had tried, but the result had always been the same. A quick leap to the saddle, a few stiff bucks and jumps by Gabriel, and the would-be rider was rolling on the ground.

But now when Shirley decided upon a little run, Gabriel always received her with joy and was as gentle as a kitten while she rode him. They often had long gallops together, and were the best of friends.

Gabriel was now three years old, and had been entered for the Derby. There was no doubt in Shirley's mind that he would be the first under the wire at the end of the mile-and-a-quarter run in Louisville, when the great day, August 31st, arrived.

The two girls spent perhaps an hour in the stable, and as they were about to leave, Shirley decided to see Gabriel once more, and so approached his stall.

Suddenly she halted in her tracks and laid a warning finger to her lips. Mabel also stopped.

"What is it?" she whispered.

"I thought I heard strange voices in there," said Shirley, pointing to Gabriel's stall.

"Impossible," returned Mabel in a low voice. "Gabriel wouldn't allow a stranger in there. He would kick him to pieces."

Silently she approached closer, and stood still, listening intently.

Then only the two girls heard a voice they recognized.

"Jimmy," said Mabel. "You were mistaken, Shirley."

She started to go closer, but Shirley stopped her with a whispered word of caution.

"There is some one else there, too! Listen."

"Yes," came the voice of Jimmy Smith, "he is in fine shape, as you see. He will be in perfect condition for the Derby. He is sure to win."

"Yes, he'll win, all right," was the answer, in a voice that neither Shirley nor Mabel recognized. "He'll win unless something happens."

"But what can happen to him?" inquired Jimmy. "He is being nursed carefully. I am attending to him myself. No other hand but mine touches him, unless it is that of Miss Shirley; and I have promised to have him perfectly fit for the big race."

"That," said the stranger in a hoarse whisper, "is what I have come to see you about."

"What do you mean?" asked Jimmy.

"Well," said the stranger, "I represent a syndicate of bookmakers. You know what bookmakers are, don't you?"

"Yes: a bookmaker is a man who lives by betting on the races."

"Almost that. He is a man who lives by allowing others to bet with him. Now, after looking over all the horses entered for the Derby, we have come to the conclusion that Gabriel is bound to win if the race is absolutely straight."

"Straight," repeated Jimmy. "What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. If Gabriel is allowed to win, we stand to lose considerable money. But if he

should lose—" the stranger paused.

"But he won't lose," said Jimmy confidently.

"He will if you will help us," said the stranger.

"Why should I help you?" asked Jimmy.

"Because," said the stranger, "there will be money in it for you. What would you say to five hundred dollars?"

Both girls heard Jimmy give a slight gasp.

"Five hundred dollars," he repeated slowly.

"Yes," was the reply, "then your sister, who is so ill, may receive the proper medical attention."

"How do you know of my sick sister?" asked Jimmy in surprise.

"Oh, we know many things," was the reply. "For instance, we know that your employer is paying you very little, because he hasn't anything to pay you with. He has lost practically everything playing the races."

"Yes," said Jimmy, "that is true. He told me that everything depended upon Gabriel's winning the Derby."

"But if Gabriel did win," protested the stranger, "what would you get? Not much; and here I am offering you five hundred dollars!"

"But you are asking me to be a traitor to my trust," said Jimmy.

"Not at all. I am simply showing you how to make the money you so badly need. Come, what do you say?"

"I don't know," said Jimmy slowly. "I don't know."

"Here," said the strange voice after a pause, "is my card. I shall give you a week to consider. Write me at this address, and I will tell you where you can meet me, and we will have another talk. You will surely do that, won't you?"

"Yes," said Jimmy. "I will do that."

"Good. Now I am going up to see your boss."

There was a sound of persons moving and, taking Mabel by the arm, Shirley quickly drew her into the nearest stall, where they stooped down to be out of sight.

Footsteps passed along the outside, and a moment later the girls heard the voices of Jimmy and the stranger outside the stable.

"Quick," whispered Shirley, "we must get out of here without being seen."

Making sure that there was no one near, they emerged from the stall and, running the length of the stable, came out at the other end.

Hurrying to the shelter of a magnificent oak tree a hundred yards away, they sat down. For some minutes Shirley was silent, and Mabel did not interrupt her meditations. But at last Shirley spoke.

"And to think that Jimmy Smith would even consider a thing like that," she said slowly.

"It does seem impossible, doesn't it?" replied Mabel.

"After all Dad has done for him," continued Shirley. "Why, I remember the day Dad found him lying beside the pike. He was ragged and dirty, and had fallen from exhaustion. He had not eaten for two days, he said. And it was true. Dad brought him home with us, and when he became stronger, offered him work, although Dad did not need him. That was two years ago, and he has been with us ever since. We have had entire confidence in him."

"I remember how pleased Dad was when he found Jimmy loved horses, and that horses loved him. He has carried our colors to victory more than once. And now to think that he would even consider selling Dad out. What shall we do?"

"I would tell your father immediately," said Mabel.

"It would seem best, wouldn't it?" said Shirley. "But he is so fond of Jimmy that I hate to do it."

She was silent for some moments.

"My gracious!" she exclaimed at length. "I have it."

"Have what?"

"A plan."

"What is it?"

"Well, I haven't had time to work it out yet, but when I do, I shall tell you. Now I want you to promise you will say nothing of what we have overheard to any one."

"I promise, of course," said Mabel, "but I wonder if I should."



The girls were still sitting there half an hour later, when Jimmy Smith ran into them.

"Miss Shirley!" he cried eagerly, and approached with outstretched hand. "Mr. Willing told me you were back, and I have been hunting all over the place for you."

He turned to Mabel.

"And how are you, Miss Mabel?" he asked.

Both girls returned his greeting cordially, not showing in any way that they knew of his talk with the stranger.

"We are so glad to be back, Jimmy," said Shirley.

"Have you seen Gabriel yet?" asked Jimmy. "He has been wanting to see you."

"How do you know that?" asked Mabel with a slight smile.

"Why, he told me so."

"Told you?" laughed Mabel.

"To be sure," said Jimmy quietly. "Gabriel and I have a language of our own, and when I told him Miss Shirley was coming back he just told me how anxious he had been to see you ever since you went away."

"Well, I'm glad he missed me," said Shirley. "Come, Mabel, I want to have a long talk with Dad."

They left Jimmy and sought Mr. Willing. They found him a few minutes later, seated on the big front porch, deep in conversation with a stranger. Both girls felt sure that he was the man who tried to bribe Jimmy only a short time before.

They would have gone into the house but Mr. Willing called them.

"I want you to know my daughter, Mr. Jones," he said to his visitor; "and also Miss Mabel Ashton, the daughter of my old friend, Colonel Ashton, whom you know."

The man called Mr. Jones arose, and extended his hand, but the girls, pretending not to see it, acknowledged the introductions with the briefest of nods.

Jones noticed the unmistakable hostility in their manner, and withdrew his hand quickly. Mr. Willing also noticed it, and scowled slightly. The girls said nothing, and a moment later Mr. Willing said: "You girls run along now."

Shirley and Mabel accepted their dismissal with gladness, and went into the house. Mr. Willing, having disposed of his visitor half an hour later, followed them. He turned to Shirley sharply.

"In the future," he said, "you will treat your father's friends with more respect than you did Mr. Jones."

"I don't like him," said Shirley.

Mr. Willing stepped back in surprise.

"You don't like him?" he said in some amazement. "And because you don't like one of my friends, is that any reason you should not treat him with respect?"

"I wasn't disrespectful," said Shirley, with something like a pout.

"You weren't, eh? I'd like to know what you call it."

"Well, I don't like him," said Shirley again,

"Why don't you like him?" demanded Mr. Willing.

Shirley, mindful of the task she had set for herself, found it difficult to answer this question without arousing suspicion in her father's mind, and for Jimmy's sake she did not wish to do this. So she answered: "I just don't."

Mr. Willing threw up his hands in a gesture of dismay.

"Girls and women are too much for me," he exclaimed.

He would have walked away, but Shirley stayed him.

"I want to have a private talk with you, Dad," she said.

Mr. Willing looked at his daughter in surprise.

"Well, well," he said finally, "you are getting to be quite a young lady, aren't you? Want to have a private talk with me, eh? All right. Come into my sitting room."

He led the way, and Shirley followed, after motioning to Mabel to await her return.

Seated in his big arm chair, with Shirley on the floor at his feet, Mr. Willing drew a cigar from his pocket, lighted it, fell back in the chair and puffed luxuriously.

"Now fire away," he said.

"Dad," said Shirley, coming to the point at once, "is it true that you have lost all your money?"

Mr. Willing came out of his chair with a bound.

"Who has been putting such notions into my little girl's head?" he asked, but his voice was slightly strained.

Shirley was not deceived.

"Is it true that you have lost large sums on horse races?" she demanded.

Mr. Willing looked at his only daughter long and earnestly.

"Would it please you very much if I gave up gambling?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed it would, Dad," said Shirley, rising to her feet.

Mr. Willing considered.

"Then here is what I will do," he said at length. "I promise that after this one time, I will never bet a cent again."

Shirley shook her head.

"No," she said.

"You mean," demanded her father, "that you even want me to let this sure thing go by?"

"Yes."

"But after the comforts you have been used to, think how hard that will make it."

"I can do with less," said Shirley quietly.

"Do you realize," said Mr. Willing, "that if I do as you say, and Gabriel wins, and he must, all we shall have is the prize, when we might have four times that much?"

"Is the farm clear?" demanded Shirley.

"Yes, but I was figuring on raising some money on it to recoup my earlier losses."

"Then," said Shirley, "if the farm is clear, and Gabriel wins, we shall have enough. What more do we need?"

Mr. Willing hesitated, and Shirley continued.

"Come, Dad, promise me before it is too late. Mother would wish it, were she alive. You know that. We'll get along some way. Come, Dad, will you promise?"

She stood tip and threw her arms around her father's neck. Mr. Willing held her in a close embrace for several moments, and as he looked over her head he saw, in memory, another face that also seemed to plead with him.

He stepped back and held Shirley off at arms' length, and for a long time gazed at her in silence.

"You are so like your mother," he said quietly, "I can refuse you nothing."

"Then you will promise?" asked Shirley eagerly.

"Yes," said Mr. Willing slowly, "I promise."

"There never was a better Daddy," exclaimed Shirley.

Laughing happily, she threw both arms around him and squeezed him tightly.

"Stop, stop," laughed Mr. Willing, "or you will make me sorry I promised."

Shirley released him, and he patted her on the back affectionately.

"Run away now," he said, "and leave your old Daddy here to think."

With a parting kiss, Shirley left him, and rejoined Mabel on the porch.

## CHAPTER VIII.—A ROAD ADVENTURE.

The morning following the girls' arrival, Mr. Willing and Mr. Ashton, who was feeling much better, were seated with the girls around the breakfast table.

"Mabel and I are going to town this morning," said Shirley.

"All right," said Mr. Willing. "I'll tell Frank to hitch up. What time will you be ready?"

"Ten o'clock will be early enough, I reckon," said Shirley. "We probably won't be home until late this afternoon."

It was the first time the girls had been in the little town of Paris, except for a few minutes on their way back from Illinois, since school had closed for the summer vacation. Therefore, they called on some of their girl friends, and spent a very pleasant day.

They did some shopping and it was after five o'clock when they started for home.

"It looks as though there was going to be a storm," said the livery-stable keeper, where they had

left their horse.

Mabel glanced at the sky. Huge clouds were gathering in the west.

"They look like wind clouds," said Mabel.

"You had better wait," said the stableman. "You will be caught in the storm."

"Oh, I think we'll make it," said Shirley. "Besides, Dad expects us in time for supper."

"Telephone him," said the man.

"No," said Shirley, "we'll run the risk."

"Well, all right," was the reply, "but you had better hurry."

Shirley shook out the reins, and touched the horse lightly with her whip. The animal started off at a rapid trot.

It was a good three miles home, and Mabel, glancing once more at the sky, urged Shirley to hurry.

"We'll get a good soaking," she said.

"It won't hurt us any," said Shirley. "I'm sure I won't melt, and I don't think you will."

They continued up Main Street, and finally reached the outskirts of the town.

"Guess we can go a little faster now," said Shirley, and touched the horse with her whip.

At that moment there came a brilliant flash of lightning, followed by a terrific peal of thunder. The horse shied and broke into a gallop.

Shirley tightened her hold on the reins, and, with an effort, succeeded in pulling him down to a trot again.

"Well, here's where we turn off, anyhow," said Shirley. "If the rain will hold off for twenty minutes we will be all right."

"And then, just as they turned onto the Bethlehem pike, darkness enveloped them, shutting out the sight of the road ahead. It descended so suddenly and unexpectedly that Mabel cried out in alarm.

"Don't be frightened," said Shirley in a low voice. "I know the road and can drive just as well in the dark."

Nevertheless she was forced to check the horse slightly, and this required great effort, for the animal, badly frightened, was trying to bolt.

Suddenly Shirley's hat went flying from her head, as the wind was blowing a gale. Mabel, her hands free, caught hers as it left her head.

"Mine's gone," cried Shirley.

"Shall we stop and get it?" asked Mabel, raising her voice to make herself heard above the roaring wind.

"I should say not," was the reply. "We'll get home just as quick as we can."

Their horse, at this moment, was puffing up a steep hill. The wind was blowing fiercely. The girls felt a few drops of rain upon their faces.

And then, above the roaring of the wind, came another sound—the sound of a horse coming rapidly toward them. Mabel heard it first, and called to Shirley. Shirley pulled as far to the right as she felt was safe, being absolutely unable to see in the darkness.

A sudden flash of lightning lit the scene before them, and Mabel uttered an involuntary cry of fear.

Not fifty yards away, and bearing down on them, came a galloping horse. The one flash had permitted the girls to see that he was running wild. There was no one in the buggy.

Shirley pulled desperately upon the right rein, turning her horse sharply from the road. Her action undoubtedly saved them from serious injury, but it was not quick enough to entirely avert disaster.

There was a sudden crash, and both girls felt the left side of the buggy sink and then crash to the ground. The wheel of the other and heavier vehicle had smashed the two left-hand wheels and carried them away. The other buggy had been damaged in the same manner, but the frightened horse did not pause in his wild race, and dashed on down the road, dragging the broken buggy after him. In spite of the accident, Shirley maintained a firm grip on the reins, and when the left side of the buggy went down to the ground she managed to bring her horse to a stop almost at once.

But Mabel was not so fortunate. When the buggy had collapsed she was thrown out, and badly shaken when she came in contact with the hard ground.

She pulled herself to her feet dizzily and stood still. Some distance down the road she could hear the bumping of Shirley's buggy, and she heard it finally come to a stop. She could not see a foot in front of her, but started slowly in the direction she knew Shirley must be.

As soon as the horse stopped, Shirley called to Mabel not to be frightened. Receiving no response, she felt along the seat beside her. Mabel was not there.

Jumping quickly from the damaged buggy, unmindful of the horse, Shirley turned and hurried in the direction from which she had come. Twice she called and received no response. The third time she thought she heard Mabel.

"Here I am," screamed Mabel, trying to make herself heard above the howling wind.

A moment later they found each other.

"Are you much hurt?" Shirley asked her friend anxiously.

"No," said Mabel. "I am pretty well shaken up, but I am all right. And you?"

"Perfectly safe," replied Shirley. "The question now is what to do."

Still the rain held off, only a few drops falling occasionally but the wind blew violently.

"We had better climb up on Cato and ride home that way," said Mabel. (Cato was their horse.)

"A good idea," spoke Shirley. "Come!"

She led the way to where she thought Cato would be standing, but she could not find him.

"Strange," she told herself. "I am sure it was here that I stopped him."

Just then there came another flash of lightning, and far down the road, they saw Cato and the broken buggy making rapidly for home.

In spite of the serious situation, Shirley laughed.

"What do you think of that?" she exclaimed. "Cato has run away and left us. I'll speak to him about it when we get home."

"Well, we must not stand here," said Mabel impatiently. "We can walk home in half an hour. Let's start."

"I suppose that is the best way," said Shirley.

They started down the road, walking rapidly.

And now it began to rain. Lightning flashed and terrific peals of thunder reverberated through the air. By no means of timid dispositions, both girls, nevertheless, became nervous.

"Hadn't we better stop under one of these trees?" asked Mabel.

"No," Shirley decided instantly. "I have heard it is dangerous in an electric storm. Lightning may strike the tree. We are safer in the middle of the pike, even if we do get soaking wet."

The rain fell in torrents, and both girls by this time were drenched to the skin.

They hurried down a steep declivity in the road. There was one more hill to climb, and then the long walk from the pike to the house.

They reached the top of the hill ten minutes later and turned in at the first gate.

"I thought Cato would be here," said Shirley.

But there was no sign of horse or buggy.

The two girls hurried down the road, now muddy from the downpour. It was hard walking, and they made slow progress.

"I'll bet the creek has overflowed," said Shirley. "If so, we will wade part of the way."

"I am very much afraid you are right," said Mabel.

Now they came to the second gate, and passed through it. They descended the little hill toward the creek slowly, for there was no telling how high the water might be.

It was good they had been so cautious. They had hardly walked ten paces when Shirley drew back suddenly. She had come upon water.

"My gracious," she exclaimed. "I had no idea the water could rise so high in such a short time."

"I doubt if we can get across," said Mabel.

Shirley took Mabel by the hand.

"We'll try," she said briefly.

Very slowly they continued their way.

The water rose to their shoe tops, then to their knees, and still they went on.

"It can't be much deeper," said Mabel.

"I don't know," said Shirley. "I have never seen it this high, but I have heard Dad say that forty years ago it rose until it was impossible to cross for two days."

The water had now reached their waists, and was still rising. Fortunately there was no current to speak of, so there was little danger so long as they kept their heads above water.

But when the water reached their armpits and continued to rise, Shirley turned back.

"It's no use," she said.

## CHAPTER IX.—SHIRLEY GETS BUSY.

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"No," Mabel agreed, "it's no use. But what are we going to do now?"

"We'll have to wait, that's all," was the reply.

Shivering and cold, Mabel turned her face to the sky and the rain fell upon it.

"Wait here in this rain?" she demanded.

"What else is there to do?" asked Shirley. "I am just as anxious to get in as you are, and if you will suggest a plan we will act upon it."

"I haven't any plan," replied Mabel mournfully.

In spite of her discomfort, Shirley was forced to smile to herself. Her friend's tone amused her.

"I'm going to sit down," said Shirley, and suited the action to the word.

Mabel also sat down in the mud.

"We can't get any wetter nor any dirtier," said Shirley, "so we may as well make ourselves as comfortable as possible."

"How long do you suppose we shall have to stay here?"

"I haven't any idea. Perhaps all night."

"All night?"

"Yes. Of course, it is possible that Dad will have telephoned to town inquiring about us. If he called up the stable and learns that we have started, he may come looking for us. That's the only thing that will save us an all-night stay in the rain."

"But how would he get across the creek?"

"If Dad starts looking for me," said Shirley, "it will take more than this to stop him."

The two girls became silent, and huddled as close together as they could, for in their wet garments they were chilled to the bone, and the air was very cool, in spite of the season.

How long they sat there they did not know, but they jumped at the sound of a horse's hoofs on the opposite side of the stream.

"Who's there?" cried Shirley, rising to her feet and pulling her chum up after her.

"Is that you, Shirley?" came a shout.

"Dad!" cried Shirley. "Yes, Mabel and I are here."

"I'll be across in a jiffy," called the father.

"Be careful, Dad," called Shirley, "the water is very deep. We tried to get across and couldn't."

There was no reply from the opposite side, but a moment later the splashing of water gave evidence that a horse was floundering into it. A few minutes later, dripping wet, Mr. Willing pulled up in front of the two girls, who had advanced to the edge of the water to meet him.

He dismounted quickly, and caught Shirley in his arms.

"Where is Cato?" he asked.

In a few words Shirley explained.

"You are both soaked," exclaimed Mr. Willing. "You must get home to bed at once."

He turned to Shirley and would have lifted her to the saddle, but she protested.

"Take Mabel first," she said.

Mr. Willing knew his daughter, and therefore he did not question her decision. Without a word he turned to Mabel and lifted her gently to the saddle. Then he swung himself up in front of her.

The horse plunged again into the creek, and in a few moments Mabel was safe on the other side.

"Now you run to the house as quick as you can get there," said Mr. Willing as he handed her down.

Mabel wasted no time, and set out for the house on a run, while Mr. Willing turned his horse's face toward the stream, and went after his daughter.

The second trip was made without incident, and Shirley found herself being borne toward the house in her father's arms. Wet and bedraggled, she snuggled close to him, and though the trip to the house took but a few minutes, she was half asleep when he called to her to jump down.

"Go to bed at once," he commanded. "If you are not careful you will be sick. You are not strong enough for such experiences."

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But Shirley must stop and kiss him first, and then she left him with a word of caution.

"I am just as strong as you are, Dad. You, too, are soaking. Mind, you change your clothes at once."

"Good night," said her father, and Shirley ran into the house. There, at the foot of the steps stood Mabel, waiting for her.

The two girls ran quickly to their room. Later, when Mr. Willing looked in to see them, they were sleeping soundly.

"Poor children," he said softly. "They have had a hard night. I shall let them sleep late tomorrow."

But Shirley and Mabel, in spite of the hardships of the night before, were up bright and early, and down in the kitchen talking to "Aunt" Charlotte, the old colored cook, while she prepared breakfast.

Shortly after breakfast, Shirley, with an air of great importance, drew Mabel back to their room.

"Now," she said, "I shall explain the plan I have formed to save Jimmy Smith."

"What is it?" asked Mabel eagerly.

Shirley seated herself comfortably before she spoke and told Mabel to do the same. Her reply was a question.

"Have you ever noticed," she asked, "how closely Jimmy Smith and I resemble each other?"

"Of course," said Mabel. "Father and I have often spoken of it. Others also have noticed the resemblance. Why?"

"Because," said Shirley, slowly and distinctly, "in that resemblance lies the success of my plan."

Mabel looked at her friend in astonishment.

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

Shirley smiled a little at her chum's very evident surprise.

"I'll tell you," she replied, and settled herself to explain. "You remember, of course, that Mr. Jones,"—she spoke the "Mr." with a touch of sarcasm—"told Jimmy Smith to communicate with him if he considered his proposition favorably?"

"Yes."

"Well, the first thing I want to do is to get the address he gave Jimmy. Then I—not Jimmy—shall communicate with him. I'll tell him I have decided to accept his offer, and that I should like to have another talk with him; and I'll sign the letter 'Jimmy Smith.'"

"But what good will that do?"

"It will do a whole lot of good."

"But I can't see——"

"It will do a whole lot of good," explained Shirley quietly, "because when Mr. Jones has an interview with Jimmy Smith, he will have an interview with me, disguised as Jimmy Smith."

Mabel jumped to her feet in surprise.

"You mean that you—" she began.

"Exactly," interrupted Shirley. "Jimmy Smith will know nothing about the matter."

Shirley sat back in her chair and beamed at her friend.

"Now what do you think of my plan?" she asked.

"I think it's foolish," was Mabel's prompt response. "You are sure to get yourself in trouble. Suppose your identity should be discovered?"

"But it won't. Jimmy and I look too much alike for that. Besides, the very boldness of the plan will work in my favor. In any event, I am going to try it, and I need your help."

"Of course I shall help," said Mabel, "but just the same I think you would do a whole lot better to tell your father the whole business."

"And have Jimmy Smith thrown off the place? I should say not."

"But if he considers doing a thing like that, he should be thrown off the place."

"No," said Shirley gravely. "It is his first temptation, and we should do what we can to save him."

"But," said Mabel, "if you write to Mr. Jones, and he answers, he will naturally address his reply to 'Jimmy Smith,' and Jimmy will get it."

"Goodness gracious," ejaculated Shirley. "I hadn't thought of that."

She was silent some moments and then continued:

"Well, then, when I find the address, I'll simply write and tell him to meet me in a certain place."

"That will be much better," agreed Mabel. "But, honestly, Shirley, I don't think much of the plan. You are sure to get into trouble of some kind."

"Perhaps," said Shirley with a shrug of her shoulders, "but I'll get out all right. Besides, I shall be saving Jimmy; and, after all, the saving of one boy's honor is surely worth the risk."

Mabel was struck with a new thought.

"Perhaps Jimmy has already written."

"I hardly think so," was the reply. "It is too soon."

"But he may write after you do, and thus lead to your discovery."

"I had thought of that," said Shirley, "and for that reason we must manage to get the address away from him at once. He is hardly likely to remember it, and when he cannot find the card he probably will forget all about the matter."

"But——" began Mabel.

Shirley waved her right hand impatiently.

"My gracious," she exclaimed, "don't be looking for trouble all the time. I know there is a risk, but we shall have to take it. Now the first thing to do is to get the card from Jimmy."

"And how do you expect to manage that?"

"Just leave that to me," said Shirley, airily. "I'll get it, and he won't know anything about it."

"All right," said Mabel, doubtfully, "but——"

Shirley cut short these protests.

"Come with me," she said, and led the way from the room.

## CHAPTER X.—SETTING THE TRAP.

They found Jimmy Smith in the stable leaning over Gabriel's stall and talking to him in low tones. The lad stepped back and lifted his cap from his head as the two girls approached.

"Are you telling Gabriel that he must win the Derby, Jimmy?" asked Shirley with a bright smile.

"Yes, Miss," was the reply. "Gabriel and I have many talks, and he always promises me that he will win."

"But, suppose he should lose?"

"He can't lose," said Jimmy decisively.

"Are you sure?" asked Shirley sharply.

Jimmy looked at her queerly.

"Why—I—yes—of course he can't," he stammered.

"But suppose something should happen?" persisted Shirley.

"What do you mean?" asked Jimmy, plainly startled.

"Oh, nothing," said Shirley, and changed the subject abruptly.

"Jimmy," she said a few moments later, "I wish you would go up in the loft and see how much hay there is up there."

"All right, Miss," said the boy, and reached for his coat, which hung over the stall door.

"You don't need the coat," said Shirley. "Hurry up, please. Dad is anxious to know right away."

Without another word, but with a sidelong glance at the coat, Jimmy hastened to obey. He clambered up the ladder quickly.

Hardly had his hand disappeared when Shirley stepped quickly forward and took up the coat. Rapidly she explored the pockets, one after another, and, at last, drawing forth a small piece of paste-board, she gave a little cry of triumph.

"I have it," she whispered to Mabel.

She slipped the card into her dress, and hastily put the coat back where she had found it. She was leaning over the stall door talking to Gabriel when Jimmy came down the ladder.

"Plenty of hay for two weeks, Miss Shirley," said Jimmy.

He reached out cautiously and picked up his coat, which he donned with an audible sigh of relief.

"All right, then," said Shirley. "Come, Mabel, we may as well go."

She gave Gabriel another little pat, and led the way from the stable.

"I feel like I had picked somebody's pocket," Shirley confided to Mabel, as they made their way back toward the house.

"You have," replied her friend, "and I don't know whether you were right or not."

"The end will justify the means," said Shirley quietly. "It's for Jimmy's own good, for my father's good, and for the good of others. I am sure I did no wrong."

They sat down on the porch and talked for some moments.

"Look," said Mabel suddenly, "here comes Jimmy. I wonder what is the matter with him. He seems to be looking for something."

In truth, he did seem to be looking for something. The boy seemed greatly excited, and his eyes roved about the ground as he approached.

"It's the card he misses," said Shirley. "He thinks he has lost it."

"You don't suppose he suspects us, do you?"

"I hope not."

Jimmy was close to them now, and Shirley called out: "What's the matter, Jimmy? Lost something?"

Jimmy, unaware of their presence until then, looked up in confusion.

"No—no, Miss Shirley," he stammered, and disappeared.

"Poor Jimmy," said Shirley. "One evil leads to another. He was forced to lie, you see. Come, Mabel, let's go upstairs and have a look at this card, and figure out a letter to Mr. Jones that will do the work."

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Mabel followed her friend up the stairs, where both sat down, and Shirley produced the card.

"Mr. A. B. Jones," she read, "Fifth Avenue Hotel, Louisville, Ky."

"Very well, Mr. Jones," she said, "we shall attend to your case."

She turned to Mabel. "What do you think?" she asked. "Would it be better to ask him to meet me in Paris, Lexington, or where?"

"I don't know," replied Mabel. "But it seems to me that Paris is pretty close to your home. Besides, Jimmy is well known in Lexington also."

"True," said Shirley. "I think I shall select Cincinnati."

"Goodness," said Mabel, "that is a long ways."

"So it is," said Shirley, "but I can make an excuse to go there. I can tell father we are going to spend a couple of days with Clara Morton. He will not object."

"Suit yourself," said Mabel. "I reckon it might as well be there as any place else. It probably will be safer too. We can stay with Clara while there."

"My idea exactly," said Shirley. "Now let's see if I can write the proper kind of a letter."

She drew forth some paper—and wrote long and earnestly. Sheet after sheet she tore up, but at last, with a little cry of satisfaction, she took the last sheet, upon which she had just written, and passed it to Mabel.

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"I think that will do very well."

Mabel read:

"Mr. A. B. JONES:—Dear Sir:—I have considered your offer. I shall be in Cincinnati, Palace Hotel, Friday. If offer is still open, meet me in the lobby at 6 o'clock Friday night. I am going to Cincinnati on an errand for Miss Willing.

"JIMMY SMITH."

Mabel read the letter over several times.

"I guess it is all right," she said at last. "There is only one thing I would suggest."

"What is it?"

"I would add a line and say, 'Under no circumstances write me!'"

"Good," said Shirley. "I'll do it."

She did, and then addressing an envelope, the two girls walked up to the mail box at the pike and waited the passing of the rural mail carrier. They did not wish the letter to remain in the box unguarded, because some one might see it.

But with the letter in the mailman's hands, Shirley felt more comfortable. The two girls walked back to the house.

"With good luck," said Shirley, "that is, if Dad doesn't object, we should be able to leave here Thursday morning. We will send Clara a telegram from town telling her to meet us. Now we'll go and see what Dad has to say."

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"So you want to go away again, eh?" said Mr. Willing, after Shirley had suggested the trip. "And how long do you want to be gone?"

"Until Sunday or Monday, Dad," said Shirley.

"Well," said Mr. Willing, after a long pause, "I can see no reason why you cannot go if Mr. Ashton doesn't object."



"I am sure he won't," said Mabel.

"Better go and ask him then," said Mr. Willing.

Mabel hurried to obey, and returned in a few moments with her father's consent.

"You want to go Thursday?" asked Mr. Willing. "Why, that's day after to-morrow."

"I know that," said Shirley with a smile.

"All right," said Mr. Willing. "I am going to town this afternoon. I'll send Clara a telegram myself to meet you."

The matter settled, Shirley and Mabel began their preparations for the trip.

"I don't anticipate much trouble," said Shirley. "Of course you never can tell just what will happen, and for that reason I am going to take my little pocket revolver."

"Then I shall take mine, too," said Mabel.

"That is hardly necessary," said Shirley, "for, of course, I shall see Mr. Jones alone." 84

"Aren't you going to let me go with you?" demanded Mabel.

"No," said Shirley, "that might spoil everything. Mr. Jones might suspect something even if he didn't recognize either of us."

"But I can't let you face the danger alone," protested Mabel.

"Who said anything about danger?" demanded Shirley.

"Why, didn't you?" asked Mabel.

"No."

"Then why do you take your revolver?"

"Well," said Shirley with a smile, "it is always best to be prepared for the unexpected."

"Well, I suppose you will have it your own way," said Mabel.

Shirley smiled.

"In this, yes," she replied.

The two days passed slowly for both girls, but at length the time came to go. The first thing in the morning, making sure that Jimmy was in the stable, Shirley made her way to his room and appropriated one of his old suits—one that she was sure he would not miss. This she packed in her suitcase.

"I shall have to buy a wig in Cincinnati," she told Mabel.

Clara met the girls at the train, and they were soon whirled to her Walnut Hills home in a large automobile. There they were to remain until the following afternoon, when Mabel would accompany Shirley downtown. 85

The next day, shortly before five o'clock, Shirley slipped her dress on over her suit of boy's clothes, and leaving Clara behind in spite of many protests, the two girls took the street car down town. On Fourth Street they found a little store where Shirley was fortunate enough to find a wig of the right shade.

In a secluded corner in the railroad station, when there was no one near, Shirley quickly stripped off her dress and stood revealed in her boy's clothing. Donning wig and cap, she handed Mabel the discarded dress to put into the satchel brought for that purpose.

"Now," said Shirley, "go back to Clara's and, under some pretext or other, wait on the porch for me after every one has gone to bed. I'll not come until I am sure they have all retired."

"All right," Mabel agreed, "and, Shirley, be very careful."

"I shall be, never fear," was the reply, and the young girl bade her friend good-bye and started for the rendezvous.

## CHAPTER XI.—THE MEETING. 86

It was fifteen minutes to six when Shirley reached the hotel. At the Vine Street entrance she hesitated a few moments, for now that the time for action was at hand, she grew nervous. It took her but an instant to shake off this uneasy feeling, however, and she entered the hotel boldly.

She took a seat in a far corner of the lobby, where she could see all who came and went without being too exposed, and then she waited. Six o'clock came, but there was no sign of Jones.

"I reckon he is a little late," said Shirley to herself.

A quarter after six; half-past six and still no Jones.

Shirley arose to go.

"I guess he didn't get my letter in time," she said.

She made her way to the door. But just as she would have passed out a hurrying figure bumped into her. Shirley drew back to let the man pass, and cried out suddenly:

"Mr. Jones."

Jones, for it was indeed he, drew back sharply, and looked closely at Shirley. Then he smiled slightly.

"Smith?" he asked.

"Yes," said Shirley briefly.

"Good. Come with me."

Shirley followed the man back into the hotel. At the far side of the lobby was a door leading to the dining-room. Jones led the way inside, Shirley following close at his heels.

He selected a small table at the far end of the dining-room, and the two sat down.

"We can talk here undisturbed," said Jones.

Their orders given, Jones leaned back in his chair.

"I wouldn't have recognized you," he said, looking at Shirley sharply.

"I was beginning to think you would not come," said Shirley.

"My train was late," Jones responded. "I had to hustle to get here as soon as I did."

He was silent for some moments. Shirley said nothing, waiting for Jones to open the conversation.

"So," said the man after the food had been set before them, "you have decided to accept my offer, eh?"

Shirley thought it good policy not to appear too anxious.

"It all depends upon what you want me to do," she replied.

Jones looked at her long and carefully.

"Well," he said at length, "I'll tell you. You understand, of course, that it will not be healthy for you to repeat anything I may say?"

Shirley nodded assent.

"And that if you play me false, you will get the worst of it?"

Again Shirley nodded.

"Good. I don't need to go into details, but what I want is this: I want you to see that Gabriel does not win the Derby. In other words, I want you to 'pull' him."

"Pull him!" echoed Shirley.

This was a language she did not understand.

"Yes. Surely you know what pulling means?"

"Well, no, not exactly," replied Shirley hesitatingly.

"What kind of a jockey do you call yourself?" sneered Jones. "By pulling I mean holding Gabriel back so that some other horse may finish ahead of him."

"I see," said Shirley. "And have you selected the horse that is to win the race?"

"Yes. Jupiter, owned by the bookmakers."

"And that is all you want me to do?"

"That is all."

"And you are willing to pay me \$500 for that?"

"Yes."

Shirley was silent, apparently considering. Jones waited perhaps five minutes for her to speak, and then said:

"Well, what do you say?"

Shirley rose from her chair.

"I'll do it," she said quietly. "When do I get the money?"

"After the Derby."

"Very well," said Shirley, "you may count upon me to do my best."

"That's all, then," said Jones, also rising. "I will make it a point to see you just before the race starts."

He walked to the door with the supposed traitorous jockey. There Shirley stopped for another word.

"One thing," she said. "Send me no messages and do not come to see me. It would be too risky."

"Right you are," said Jones. "Good-bye."

He turned on his heel and left without another word. Shirley also made her way from the hotel. Her eyes fell upon a clock in a window.

"Eight o'clock," she said. "I can't go to Clara's yet. They will all see me. What shall I do to pass the time?"

She debated the point at length.

"I'll stop in this drug store and have an ice cream soda, anyhow," she finally decided.

This refreshment disposed of, Shirley reached for her purse. For the moment she forgot she was dressed in boys' clothes, but in an instant she remembered, and thrust her hand in her pocket; and she drew it out with a cry of dismay.

She had forgotten to put her purse in her pocket, and she had no money, and there was the ice cream soda to be paid for.

The man at the cashier's desk was looking at her suspiciously. Shirley, glancing up, caught the look. Again she made a desperate search of her pockets, but the search was futile. There was no money there.

Shirley turned to the cashier.

"I'm sorry," she said quietly, "but I have misplaced my money. I'll have to ask you to wait till to-morrow."

"Misplaced your money, eh," sneered the man, looking at Shirley's shabby attire. "I suppose, when you came in here, you were sure you had money, were you?"

"Of course I was," said Shirley indignantly.

"Well, I'm not so sure. I've seen your kind before. I guess I had better call an officer."

Shirley became greatly frightened.

"Please don't do that," she said, in great alarm. "I'll pay you to-morrow sure. Honestly I will."

"That's an old one," said the cashier. "Either you will dig up ten cents right now or I shall call a policeman."

"But I haven't ten cents," said Shirley tearfully.

"Then I shall call the officer," said the cashier, and reached for the desk telephone.

Shirley, badly frightened, did not know what to do. She did not know that the cashier, thinking she was trying to defraud him, would not have called the police, but was simply trying to frighten her into paying.

But help came from an unexpected source.

A young man who had been an interested listener to this conversation suddenly stepped forward, and laid a dime on the counter.

"There is your ten cents," he said quietly to the cashier. "Let the boy alone. Can't you see he is honest?"

"About as honest as the rest of 'em," sneered the cashier, picking up the dime.

Shirley turned to her benefactor.

"Thank you, sir," she said earnestly. "I'll see that you get it back."

"Oh, all right," said the young man with a laugh, "but I guess it won't break me if I don't."

It was plain to Shirley that he never expected to have it returned, and upon that instant she decided that he should.

"If you will give me your card," she said, "I shall see that you get it back to-morrow."

The young man smiled at her.

"Well, if you insist," he said, with a smile, and extracted a card from his pocket, and handed it to Shirley.

Shirley stuffed it into her pocket.

"Thank you very much," she said quietly. "Good-bye."

She left the store and walked down the street. It was now half-past eight, as Shirley saw by the street clock.

"I guess I might as well go home and risk being seen," she told herself.

She stopped at the next corner and hailed an approaching car. She was just about to step aboard, when she suddenly remembered she did not have carfare. She stepped back abruptly. The conductor rang the bell angrily, and the car went on.

"My gracious," said Shirley to herself, "it's a long way to Walnut Hills but I guess I shall have to walk it. I wonder if I can find the way?"

She stood still for several minutes.

"Well," she said at last, "I might as well start. There is no use standing here. I'll just have to follow the car line, and ask if I lose my way."

First she made her way to Fourth and Walnut Streets, and then she started off in the direction taken by a Walnut Hills car.

She was forced to ask directions several times before she got very far, but nevertheless she made fair progress. She was just congratulating herself upon her good fortune in getting out of so serious a predicament so easily, when something else happened.

Around the corner, suddenly, came a crowd of boys, their ages ranging from twelve to fifteen. This part of the city was by no means the best, and Shirley thanked her stars that she was attired in boy's clothes.

But her attire was not to stand her in good stead now.

The crowd of boys came on at a run, and when directly in front of Shirley the leaders stopped.

"Look here, fellows," said one of them. "Here is a poor kid all by himself. He looks big enough to fight. Shall we take him along?"

"Sure," came from the rest.

The boy who had first spoken grabbed Shirley by the arm, and shook him.

"Can you fight?" he asked.

Shirley again was almost in tears.

"No," she quavered.

"Well," came the reply, "you'll have to fight. We are going after the Eighteenth Street gang and we need reinforcements. You will help. But if you don't fight, well, you'll get the worst of it anyhow. Come on."

Shirley hung back, but it was no use. A boy grabbed her by either arm, and she found herself being hurried along.

"We'll fix 'em this time," was the cry of the boys.

## CHAPTER XII.—SHIRLEY FINDS A CHAMPION.

Shirley realized that she was in a serious predicament. Guarded as she was, she had no hope of escape, and she realized that the situation was rapidly growing worse. Every step forward took her that much nearer danger. Still she did not wish to betray that she was a girl, so she wiped the tears from her eyes with a quick brush of her sleeve and moved along with the rest without resistance.

Two blocks further on the gang came to an abrupt stop, and the two who seemed to be the leaders conferred. Then, at an order from one, the gang divided into two parts. Shirley found herself under the direction of a boy whom his companions called Dick.

"You go around that way with your fellows, Tom," said Dick, waving his arm to the left, "and I'll go this way. We'll catch 'em between us and pay 'em back for what they did to Ed and Joe yesterday."

The boys moved off in two different directions. Shirley found herself right behind Dick and she eyed him curiously. Young though he was, the girl saw that he was strong and powerful. An athlete herself, she could not but admire the easy swing of his shoulders as he trotted on ahead, his calm assurance and the confidence with which he gave his orders. Shirley decided to stay as close to him as possible.

And now turning another corner, Dick shouted:

"There they are, fellows! At 'em!"

There was a loud cheer, and from far down the street came its echo, as Tom and his crowd attacked the enemy from the rear.

And now Shirley caught her first view of the enemy.

Halfway down the block, caught between two fires as they were, the enemy, perhaps twenty of them, was preparing to give battle. Shirley could see that they had picked up whatever they could lay hands upon, and were awaiting the attackers to come within range.

Shirley shuddered, but kept close behind Dick.

"Look out!" cried Dick, and darted to one side.

Shirley did likewise, and a rock skimmed past her. There was a howl of pain from further back, and Shirley knew that one of the crowd had been hit.

"We'll make 'em pay for that," cried Dick, and in spite of the fusillade of missiles being hurled at them, he bore down upon the enemy at top speed.

For an instant Shirley hesitated. Here, she thought, might be a chance for her to make her escape. She turned, but as she did so the others surrounded her and she was forced to go on whether or not she wished it.

The two factions came together with great force. They were too closely entwined to permit of the hurling of rocks now. It was hard to distinguish friend from foe.

Shirley found herself in the midst of a struggling, striking mass. Wherever she turned she saw nothing but flying fists. One of the enemy struck her a glancing blow on the arm. Shirley became angry.

Stepping quickly forward she struck the boy a resounding smack with her open hand.

Dick, who happened to be close to her at that moment, noted this with a grin.

"Hit 'em with your fist," he called. "It won't do any good to slap 'em."

But this Shirley could not do. So there she stood while the struggling mass fought around her. How long the street fight continued, Shirley did not know, but it came to an end suddenly.

From far down the street came the single sharp blast of a whistle. Immediately the struggling combatants dropped their fists and took to their heels.

"Police," was the cry that went up.

Three minutes later the street was deserted. Both factions had fled, and when the guardians of the law appeared upon the scene there was nothing to give evidence of the struggle that had raged a few moments before.

Shirley had fled with the others, still keeping as close to Dick as possible. Round corner after corner she followed him, for she was keen enough to know that in this way lay safety, while, should she go her own way, she was likely to fall into the hands of the law; and, in her present attire, she had no desire to do this.

But finally the half a dozen who had fled in the same direction as Dick and Shirley came to a halt. They stood panting and gasping.

Then one boy suddenly came up to Shirley.

"I told you to fight," he said. "You didn't do it. I watched you. Now I am going to make you fight."

Shirley shrank back.

"Put up your fists," called the boy.

The others gathered round to see the fun.

"He's a coward," they said. "He's afraid to fight. Hit him anyhow."

They surrounded Shirley with angry gestures.

It was at this moment that Dick interfered.

"Let the kid alone," he said quietly, moving into the midst of the others. "If he doesn't want to fight, he doesn't have to. Maybe he's not the fighting kind. Let him alone."

There was an angry growl from the others.

"I say he has got to fight," said one.

"And I say he hasn't," cried Dick. "Who is the leader of this crowd, anyhow?"

"We wouldn't have much trouble finding a better one," was the reply.

"Right you are, Ned," said several voices at once.

"Pick on me if you want to," said Dick, "but let the kid alone."

Shirley shrank close to him, for she knew that in him lay her hope of safety. Dick put a hand on her shoulder.

"It's all right, kid," he said. "They won't bother you."

"Won't we?" exclaimed one.

He stepped suddenly forward, and before Dick could prevent him, aimed a blow at Shirley. Unconsciously the girl ducked, and the blow barely grazed her head, carrying away her hat, and worst of all, her boy's wig.

Her long hair came tumbling down.

The boy who had struck at her started back in surprise.

"A girl!" he exclaimed.

Shirley broke into tears.

Dick had taken in the situation at a glance. He stepped quickly forward and with a single blow of his left fist knocked the boy who had struck Shirley to the ground.

Then the others jumped upon him.

Shirley's tears stopped instantly and she watched the fight in wide-eyed amazement. Dick, bigger and stronger than the rest, was giving a good account of himself, but it was plain to Shirley that

the weight of numbers must tell in the end.

Two boys went down before their leader's fists, but they were up again in an instant and fighting back desperately. One attacked him from behind, but with a quick kick Dick shook himself free. Picking his nearest opponent up bodily, he hurled him full in the faces of the others; and they gave ground.

But only for a minute. Then they sprang forward again. Dick found himself hard pressed on all sides. He reeled under a blow that caught him on the point of the chin, and before he could recover, two stinging blows struck him in the jaw.

He made one last desperate effort, throwing himself upon his opponents, but the effort was vain.

Stooping, one of the boys picked up a rock, and waiting an opportunity jumped in quickly and struck him in the back of the head.

Dick uttered a slight groan, stumbled and fell almost at Shirley's feet.

The girl uttered a cry of horror. The other boys, startled for the moment at the outcome, hung back, then advanced toward their fallen leader. Believing that they were about to do him further harm, Shirley took the responsibility upon herself.

Her nervousness, fright and indecision left her instantly. She reached quickly in her coat pocket and whipped forth her little revolver, which she aimed at the crowd of young ruffians with steady hand.

"Stand back!" she cried.

The ruffians hesitated.

"Look here," began one, advancing a step.

"Take my advice and stay where you are," said Shirley quietly. "I don't want to hurt you, but if any one of you come a single step nearer I'll shoot."

The crowd drew back, and stood silently watching her.

Laying the revolver upon the sidewalk close beside her, Shirley raised Dick's head to her knee. Then she sought to stop the flow of blood from the wound with her handkerchief.

Dick stirred slightly, and a faint breath shivered through his lips.

"What's happened?" he gasped.

"Lie still!" commanded Shirley. "Your head is badly cut."

Dick shook off her detaining hand, and rose slowly. He felt his wound, and then said:

"Which one of you fellows hit me with a rock?"

Not a sound came from the crowd. Dick stepped forward.

"Better tell me now," he said, "for I'll find out sometime, and when I do somebody will be well thrashed."

A boy stepped forward.

"I did it," he said. "But now I'm sorry!"

"Well, I'll attend to you later," said Dick.

He turned to Shirley.

"What are you doing out at this hour, and dressed this way?"

In a few words Shirley told him enough of her trouble to satisfy his curiosity.

"The best thing you can do is to get home at once," he said.

"I don't know the way now," said Shirley.

"Where do you live?"

Shirley told him.

"I'll take you home," said Dick quietly, "if you don't mind my walking along with you."

"Thank you," said Shirley. "Of course I don't mind."

Dick turned to his friends.

"I'll see you fellows later," he said significantly. "We'll talk this matter over when there are no girls around. Get out of here now."

With a crestfallen air they obeyed.

Dick turned once more to Shirley. "Come," he said.

It was late when they neared Clara Morton's home. As they approached quietly, a figure ran from the porch to meet them. It was Mabel.

"Shirley," she cried, "I was so afraid that something had happened to you. I have been waiting here for more than an hour."

"Well, something did happen," said Shirley. "I'll tell you about it when we get upstairs."

"Come on, then," said Mabel, "but be careful. I told Clara you probably wouldn't be home until in the morning, and no one here must see you in that costume."

Shirley turned to say good-bye to Dick, but there was no Dick. His duty done, he had not waited for thanks.

Shirley was disappointed.

"I would like to have said good-bye to him," she told herself.

Silently the two girls made their way up the stairs, and reached their room without being discovered.

Mabel insisted upon an immediate account of Shirley's adventures and the latter gave full details.

"You see," she concluded, "it was all your fault. Why didn't you remind me of my purse?"

"That's right, blame me," said Mabel. "I think you've had some jolly fun."

"It depends on how you look at it," drawled Shirley. "Oh, but I'm tired. Let's get to sleep."

The next two days, Saturday and Sunday, the girls spent quietly in their friend's home, only going out twice. One trip was to the theater, and the other to church on Sunday morning.

Early Monday morning found them on the train.

A young man boarded the train at Cynthiana, who attracted Shirley's attention at once. There was something familiar about him, but for the moment she could not place him. Looking in her handbag for her ticket, she accidentally drew forth a card, which she glanced at in surprise.

"Mr. Leonard Wolfe," it read.

"I wonder," she murmured, and then it all came to her in a flash.

"The card of the young man who came to my aid in the drugstore," she said, passing it to Mabel. "That reminds me, I forgot to send the ten cents."

"I reckon he won't miss it," said Mabel, as she returned the card.

The young man who had just gotten on the train, came through the aisle. He dropped his suitcase in the seat across from the girls, and sat down.

Shirley noticed that from time to time he glanced at her. To herself she said, "His face is familiar. Where have I seen him before?"

And then she remembered.

"Mr. Wolfe!" she exclaimed to herself.

She whispered to Mabel, and the latter, of course, glanced across. As she did so she encountered the young man's smiling eyes.

The young man arose directly and spoke to Shirley.

"Surely I have met you somewhere," he said.

"Perhaps it's my twin brother you met," said Shirley, with a faint smile. "We look very much alike."

"Perhaps that's it," returned the young man.

"Yes," continued Shirley, "my twin brother is often getting into scrapes, and I have to help him out. He told me that the other day he almost fell into the hands of the police, because he didn't have money to pay for a soda he bought in a drugstore in Cincinnati. Some stranger came to his aid and paid the dime. I don't believe he returned it, either."

The young man had looked at Shirley in surprise during this recital, and then he said quietly:

"No, he didn't!"

"How do you know?" queried Shirley in well simulated surprise.

"Because I happen to be the fellow who paid it."

Before answering Shirley reached for her handbag and took out a card. She gazed at it long and earnestly.

"Is your name Mr. Wolfe?" she asked finally.

"Why, yes," exclaimed the young man. "Why?"

"Nothing, only my brother, in telling me of the trouble, showed me your card and I didn't give it back."

She drew a dime from her purse and extended it to the young man.

"Here is your ten cents," she said.

Mr. Wolfe protested.

"Let your brother pay his own debts," he said.

"No," said Shirley, "I insist. You see, my brother and I are such close relations that I almost feel I owe you this myself."

"Well, if you insist," said the young man.

He took the dime and dropped it in his pocket.

"May I ask where you are going?"

"Home," said Shirley briefly, for she wished to end the conversation, considering now that she had repaid her debt.

"I see," smiled Mr. Wolfe; "and would you mind telling me just about where that is."

"I'll tell you this much," said Shirley. "It's about three miles from Paris, on the Bethlehem pike."

The young man uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I wonder if you know a Mr. Willing, who must live near you?"

"He is my father," returned Shirley.

"You don't say so! I am in luck, for I am going now to Willing's place."

Shirley felt frightened.

"You are?" she exclaimed.

"Yes."

"On business?"

"Well, no, not exactly. You see, Mr. Willing and my father are old friends. Your father has often asked my father to stop and see him, and as I was near, I felt anxious to call."

Shirley held out her hand.

"I know you now," she said. "At first I didn't associate you with the Mr. Wolfe of whom father speaks so often, his old college friend."

"I am the son of his old friend," said Mr. Wolfe.

"You will be very welcome," said Shirley.

She introduced him to Mabel, who had been much interested in their talk.

Mr. Wolfe said after a few minutes, "I knew, of course, that Mr. Willing had a daughter, but I had never heard of twins."

"Twins!" repeated Shirley.

"Yes; this troublesome brother of yours."

Shirley blushed.

"I—we—he," she stammered.

Mr. Wolfe looked at her for a few moments, then a smile spread over his face.

"I see," he said.

"You see what?" demanded Shirley anxiously.

"The joke," replied young Wolfe drily.

Shirley blushed, and hid her head in her hands.

"Have no fear," said the young man, "I shall say nothing about it. If you care to tell me why you masqueraded, I shall be honored, but I shall not press you for an explanation; and I will never mention it."

"Thank you," said Shirley. "There is no reason why I cannot tell you, if you will promise to keep the secret."

"I promise," said he.

Shirley then gave him an account of her adventures and their cause. When she finished, young Wolfe looked at her in undisguised admiration.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed. "You are plucky. And you are doing all this for the boy you call Jimmy Smith?"

"And my father too," said Shirley.

"Yes," said Wolfe, "you are indeed a brave girl, and I am proud to know you."

The train was now whistling for Paris.

"You will, of course, ride out with us," said Shirley.

"I shall be pleased," returned the young man, with a bow.

Mr. Willing met them as they stepped from the train.



Then he saw the young man. He looked at him long and earnestly, and then before either of the girls could speak, he said:

"Surely this is Leonard Wolfe?"

"I am," said the young man, smiling and extending his hand.

"I thought I could not be mistaken," said Mr. Willing. "You are your father all over again."

He turned to Shirley.

"Mr. Wolfe," he said, "allow me to introduce you to my daughter." He turned to Mabel, "and——"

"We have already met, Daddy," laughed Shirley. "Mr. Wolfe made himself known to us on the train."

"But how——" began Mr. Willing.

"Never mind now, Daddy," said Shirley. "It's a long story."

"Well," muttered Mr. Willing to himself, "all right, but the young people now-a-days aren't like they were in my day."

Then he climbed into the large automobile and Frank started it.

## CHAPTER XIV.—JIMMY DECIDES.

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"Somebody's coming, Dad."

It was Shirley who spoke. Mr. Willing looked up from his morning paper and turned his eyes toward the distant pike. Between the fields of tall hemp, a quarter of a mile away, a solitary horseman was approaching.

"Can't make him out from here," said Mr. Willing, shading his eyes. "I wonder who he is?"

"You'll know soon enough, Dad," laughed Shirley. "What's the use of wondering?"

"Well, set out a box of cigars," said Mr. Willing, "and make a pitcher of lemonade. He'll be thirsty after his ride."

Shirley went towards the pantry, and returned with the lemonade just as the rider dismounted. After a glance she started back in surprise.

"Jones," she exclaimed.

For the rider was indeed Mr. Jones, the man whom Shirley had travelled to Cincinnati to see.

Shirley ran around the house to where Mabel and young Wolfe were swinging in the hammock, in the shade of a giant elm.

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"Jones is here," she cried breathlessly, "what shall we do?"

"There is nothing to worry about," said Wolfe. "He will try no foolishness here, I'm sure."

"It's not that I am afraid of," returned Shirley, "but if he should talk to Jimmy he is likely to find out that he has been fooled."

"We must prevent their meeting," said Mabel.

"But how?" demanded Shirley, in excited tones.

"We'll see what can be done," said Wolfe.

He arose and went quickly to the stable, where he engaged Jimmy in conversation. Jimmy should not leave his sight until Jones had taken his departure, Wolfe said to himself.

Meantime Mr. Willing and Jones were holding a friendly conversation on the front porch. Shirley and Mabel strolled into the parlor, where, through the open window, they could hear all that was being said.

"Yes, sir," said Jones, "it is regarded as a forgone conclusion that Gabriel will win the Derby. I'm backing him myself. Jupiter is the only other entry that has a chance."

"I'm glad to hear you say that," returned Mr. Willing. "I am counting on Gabriel winning. If he loses—well, I don't mind telling you, it will hurt."

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"I suppose you are backing him strong?"

"No," said Mr. Willing, "I'm not. To tell the truth, I am through betting."

"Through betting?" asked Jones, in greatest surprise.

"Yes, I have promised my daughter."

"I see," said Jones, and changed the subject. "I wonder if I could get a look at Gabriel?"

"Why, certainly. I'll have some one call Jimmy, and he will show you the horse."

"Thanks," said Jones, and sat back to wait.

In response to the message delivered to an old negro, Jimmy came to the house. He started a little at sight of Jones, but recovered quickly. Wolfe followed him.

"Jimmy," said Mr. Willing, "Mr. Jones would like to have a look at the winner of the coming Derby. Take him to Gabriel."

"Yes, sir," said Jimmy.

He walked away, Jones following him. Wolfe would have accompanied him, but Mr. Willing hailed him.

"Young man," he said, "I wish you would walk up to the pike and see if there is any mail in the box. I am expecting an important letter."

Wolfe was at a loss what to do. To leave Jimmy and Jones alone might work mischief, but Mr. Willing was not a man who could be put off.

"There's no hope for it," said Wolfe to himself, and set off toward the pike.

Shirley and Mabel had overheard the conversation.

"Come," said the former, "we must at least find out what Jones says to Jimmy."

They left the house silently, and as silently followed the two to the stable. They managed to crawl into the stall next to Gabriel's without being discovered.

"Well, how is everything?" asked Jones.

"All right, sir," was the reply.

"How's Gabriel, in condition?"

"Perfectly fit, sir."

"Good; and do you think you can 'pull' him without causing talk? It must be neatly done, you know, for should the judges suspect anything they will disqualify the winner."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. Surely you haven't forgotten our conversation in Cincinnati?"

"Cincinnati?" and Jimmy's blank look showed surprise.

"Yes; the little talk we had about letting Jupiter win."

"I don't know what you are talking about," protested Jimmy.

Jones stepped back and looked at Jimmy sternly.

"What are you trying to do, make a fool of me?" he asked. "I suppose you'll tell me in a minute you didn't see me in Cincinnati."

"I didn't," replied Jimmy.

Jones gave a long and expressive whistle.

"I see," he said. "Your conscience has troubled you, eh? You are going back on your bargain."

"I made no bargain with you," said Jimmy angrily.

"You didn't? I suppose you didn't write me to meet you in Cincinnati? And I suppose that while there you didn't accept an offer of \$500 to pull Gabriel in the Derby?"

"I did not."

Jones took a step forward and laid an angry hand on Jimmy's shoulder.

"Don't you lie to me, you little shrimp," he snarled. "You have made the bargain, and you'll live up to it or I'll know the reason why."

Jimmy jerked away angrily.

"I don't know what you are talking about," he exclaimed. "I made no bargain with you. I never saw you but once before. Now you had better get out of this stable or I shall call Mr. Willing and tell him all I know about you."

Jones tried to temporize. He could not disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes, and he naturally concluded that Jimmy was feigning ignorance for a purpose.

"I see," he exclaimed. "You are a shrewd little chap. Holding out for more money, eh? Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll make it \$750. What do you say to that, eh? See that Gabriel loses the race and I'll give you \$750. Come, what do you say?"

Jimmy hesitated.

"That's a whole lot of money," persisted Jones.

Jimmy brought his hands together suddenly.

"Not for a million!" he declared stoutly.

Again Jones became angry and, stretching forth a strong hand suddenly, took Jimmy by the shoulder and shook him.

"You little whipper-snapper!" he said. "What do you mean by trifling with me like that? I'll show

you."

He drew back a huge fist, and in another second would have sent it crashing into Jimmy's face.

But, at that, Shirley sprang from the stall. Her eyes flashed, and anger crimsoned her cheeks. In her hand she carried a short whip she had picked up in the stall.

She rushed upon Jones.

"You great big coward!" said Shirley.

Jones, startled, turned just in time to catch the whip across his face. Shirley swung it with all her strength. Jones clapped his hands to his face and uttered a moan of pain.

Then he turned slowly and, as he removed his hand, a huge welt showed where the whip had found its mark.

"You shall answer for that blow," he said through his teeth. "You and your father both. I'll break him, if it takes every cent I have."

Shirley eyed him scornfully.

"Leave here at once," she commanded, "or I shall tell my father and he will have the niggers drive you off the place."

Jones took a sudden step toward her. Shirley leaped back and again raised the whip.

"One step nearer," she said quietly, "and I'll use the whip again."

She drew herself up, and, extending a hand toward the door, cried:

"Go!"

With an evil smile on his lips, Jones bowed to her scornfully, and backed through the door. Then Shirley dropped the whip, and walked over to Jimmy, who was sitting upon the floor, his face in his hands.

"Never mind, Jimmy," she said. "It was a great temptation and you are noble to refuse it."

Jimmy raised his head.

"Then it was you whom Jones saw in Cincinnati?" he asked.

Shirley nodded.

"I knew it," replied Jimmy. "When he was so persistent, I knew that he was not lying. Now I understand. Then you must have overheard our first conversation?"

"Yes, I did."

"And why didn't you tell your father?"

"Because," said Shirley slowly, "I knew that I could save you from yourself. I was sure that you would not fail me, no matter how great the temptation; but I knew father would not believe that, if he once learned you had even considered the offer."

"Miss Shirley," said Jimmy brokenly, "I can never thank you enough. Never will I be tempted again. Never!"

"I am sure of it," replied Shirley, "and for that reason I shall say nothing about it to Dad."

"You will find in the future that I am to be trusted," said Jimmy simply.

"I am sure of it, Jimmy," Shirley answered quietly.

She held out her hand to him.

## CHAPTER XV.—DANGEROUS DAYS.

"Jimmy," said Shirley after supper that evening, calling the boy to one side, "do you think there is any danger of any one tampering with Gabriel?"

"I hadn't thought of that, Miss Shirley," replied Jimmy in some surprise. "What made you think of such a thing?"

"I don't know," returned Shirley. "I just happened to think of it."

"It's certain," said Mabel, who came up at that moment, "that Jones and his friends will take every means in their power to keep Gabriel from winning the race."

"That's just my idea," said Shirley.

"Then, in the future," said Jimmy, "I shall sleep in the stable."

"But what good will that do?" asked Mabel. "You are nothing but a boy. You would be no match for them."

"He shall have my revolver," suggested Shirley. She turned to Jimmy. "Can you use it?"

"Yes," replied the lad.

"Good; then I shall get it for you at once."

She left them, and, returning a few moments later, placed the weapon in Jimmy's hands.

"You will sleep in the stable to-night?" she asked.

"Yes," replied Jimmy. "Jones has not returned to Louisville, and I believe he might come back here in the middle of the night."

"So do I," agreed Shirley.

A clock in the house struck eight.

"I'll go to my room and get a few things, and then return to the stable," said Jimmy.

Coming downstairs, he bade the girls good-night and went away to his unusual quarters.

He went straight to Gabriel's stall.

"I'm going to stay with you to-night, old fellow," he said, patting the horse's head.

He climbed up into the loft and threw down an extra quantity of hay, which he strewed about the far corner of the stall. On this he spread a blanket he had brought with him from the house. Then he extinguished his lantern, and lay down.

He did not know how long he had been sleeping when he was awakened by the sound of the stall door rattling. Jimmy was a light sleeper. He sat up quickly and groped for the revolver he had placed beside him. With the weapon in his hand he felt more secure.

Again the door rattled. Jimmy sat perfectly still. Then there came the sound of low voices outside.

Gabriel, awakened at this hour of the night, whinnied uneasily. Jimmy rose, and slowly and quietly made his way to the animal's side, judging his position by the horse's breathing.

He laid a hand upon the animal's back, and Gabriel grew still.

Again the door rattled.

"Sounds like they were trying to find the lock," muttered Jimmy beneath his breath.

Still he made no sound.

At first he had thought of lighting his lantern, but second thought had shown him the utter foolishness of such action. It might frighten away the men on the outside, or else it would make him an easy target should they be bent upon serious mischief.

"They'll get the door open in a minute," the boy muttered to himself, and he determined to be ready for them.

There was a click, and Jimmy knew that the intruders had succeeded in forcing the lock. A moment later the top of the stall door swung inward.

The light from a lantern flashed into Jimmy's face, and he saw a hand stretched forth to open the catch of the bottom door. He saw two faces, one of which he recognized as that of Jones. The other man he had never seen before.

Without stopping to think, Jimmy raised his revolver and fired, even as Jones, having caught sight of the lad, uttered an exclamation of dismay.

A groan followed the shot and then Jimmy heard Jones cry:

"Quick, Dick! He is armed. Put out the light!"

A moment more and complete darkness enveloped the stable.

Jimmy dropped to the ground, keeping as close to the wall as he could, for he did not want to get in the way of Gabriel's hoofs. Frightened by the shot, Gabriel was rearing and plunging about. Several times his forefeet came down close to Jimmy's head, but fortunately the lad was untouched.

Then, as Gabriel became more quiet, Jimmy again heard a hand fumbling at the catch, and caught a muttered voice:

"If we can get in we'll soon settle him!"

Quickly the lad raised the revolver and fired twice. There came a howl of anguish, and a voice cried:

"I'm hit."

And then in Jones' voice:

"Some one is coming! Run!"

Jimmy heard the two men racing toward the stable door.

Taking care to avoid Gabriel's hoofs, the lad leaped to the door and in a moment was on the outside. He paused, however, to shut and lock the door of the stall.

As he reached the other door, he saw two dark figures spring into the saddles of waiting horses and go galloping toward the pike.

Jimmy sent another shot after them, and turned as he felt a hand upon his arm.

"Here, here, what is the meaning of this?" came Mr. Willing's voice.

Jimmy turned to face his employer.

"Two men just tried to get into Gabriel's stall," he replied.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Willing, starting back in great surprise.

Jimmy repeated his statement.

"It's true, sir," he added. "I frightened them away before they could do any damage, and I think I hit one of them."

"Did you recognize them?"

"One of them," was the lad's reply.

"Who was he?"

"Mr. Jones, sir."

"You mean the man who was here to see me to-day?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come to the house with me," said Mr. Willing sternly. "There is more to this matter than appears on the surface. How did you happen to be sleeping in the stable?"

"It was Miss Shirley, sir, who first thought that Gabriel might come to harm."

"And what does she know about this matter?"

"She knows all about it, sir."

"I'll wake her now and find out," declared Mr. Willing.

But there was no need to call Shirley, nor Mabel, either, for that matter. Both girls had heard the sound of the shots, and had immediately arisen from bed and begun to dress. Mabel's father also had been aroused and now came from the house with them. As Jimmy and Mr. Willing approached, Mr. Ashton called out:

"What's the matter, Willing?"

Mr. Willing explained in a few quick sentences. Then he turned to his daughter.

"Come to my room," he said. "I want to ask you some questions."

Shirley, Mabel, and Mr. Ashton followed Mr. Willing and Jimmy.

"Now, Shirley," said Mr. Willing, sternly, "tell me all that you know about this matter."

Shirley hesitated, but knew well it was useless. So, starting with the first conversation she had overheard between Jones and Jimmy, she told it all. At the conclusion of her story, Mr. Willing turned a grave look upon Jimmy.

"So you thought of selling me out, eh?"

Jimmy hung his head but made no reply.

"Daddy," interrupted Shirley, "he did no such thing. He was just tempted; that's all."

"That he should even listen to the voice of the tempter is enough for me," said Mr. Willing. "Smith, you may pack your clothes and leave the first thing in the morning."

Jimmy bowed his head, and started to leave the room.

But Shirley ran across the room and stopped him. Standing between him and the door through which he would have left, she turned flashing eyes upon her father.

"Shame upon you," she said, pointing an accusing finger at him. "But for Jimmy, there is no telling what might have happened to Gabriel this night. You know as well as I do that Jimmy is perfectly honest. You shan't drive him away."

"This is my business," said Mr. Willing.

"And it is mine, too, when I see you doing an injustice," replied Shirley. "You would be terribly sorry in the morning, and I don't want you to have any such regrets."

"Thank you, Miss Shirley," said Jimmy quietly, "but it is best that I go."

He moved toward the door.

Mr. Willing's manner underwent a sudden change. He turned sharply to Jimmy.

"Didn't you just hear my daughter tell you to stay?" he demanded.

"Why—why—" began Jimmy.

"Don't stand there and stutter at me," said Mr. Willing. "My daughter's wishes must be obeyed. What do you mean by trying to run away?"

In spite of herself, Shirley was forced to smile. Mr. Willing noticed this smile, and his face grew red. He turned again to Jimmy, held out his hand, and with an effort that was apparent, said:

"Jimmy, I beg your pardon. I should have known better. And forgive my last outburst, too. If you know how hard it is for me to admit that I was wrong——"

Shirley cut short the rest of the apology by throwing her arms tightly about her father's neck.

"You are just the best Daddy in the world," she said, and gave him a resounding kiss. "I knew you didn't mean it."

"I wouldn't lose Jimmy for the world," said Mr. Willing.

At this moment a voice was heard in the hall.

"What's the matter?" came Leonard Wolfe's voice. "I thought I heard a shot."

"The shot," said Shirley, trying not to smile, "was fired half an hour ago. You must have been some distance away if it took this long for the sound of it to reach you."

Wolfe's face grew scarlet.

"I——" he began, but Shirley interrupted him.

"It amounts to nothing," she said.

## CHAPTER XVI.—MORE TROUBLES FOR JIMMY.

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Jimmy returned to the stable and the rest went to bed. The night passed without further incident.

"Jimmy," said Mr. Willing the following morning, "I want you to go to town and buy a new strong lock, one that cannot be opened from the outside. We will take no further chances with Jones and his crowd."

"Very well, sir," replied the boy, and a half hour later started on his way, riding one of the horses.

The lock purchased, Jimmy, in an unfrequented part of town, was just preparing to mount for his homeward journey, when a rude hand was suddenly laid on his shoulder. Jimmy turned about quickly and looked into the smiling face of Jones.

"You listen to me, son," said Jones. "We haven't been able to get together so far, but I still think I can make it worth your while to do what I ask."

"I don't want anything to do with you," replied Jimmy.

"Come, now," said Jones, "don't be stubborn. Come with me to where we can talk without fear of being overheard."

Jimmy hesitated.

"Perhaps I can learn something," he told himself. Aloud he said: "All right."

Jones smiled and led the way down the street. He turned in the door of what appeared to be a small hotel, and walked up the steps, Jimmy following.

Jones went into a little room, and drew two chairs up to the table that stood in the center.

"Now we can get down to business," he said.

Jimmy sat down, and at that moment the door opened again and a newcomer appeared upon the scene. He was young, but large and apparently very strong. He took a seat at the table without a word. Then Jimmy noticed for the first time that his hand was tightly bandaged.

"This, Dick," said Jones to the newcomer and indicating Jimmy, "is the youngster who put the bullet through your hand."

Dick jumped up.

"Is that so," he cried. "Then I have a score to settle with him."

He advanced toward Jimmy, but Jones stopped him.

"Not now," he said; "at any rate, not if he will do my bidding."

Dick sat down again.

"Now," said Jones to Jimmy, "I am going to give you one last chance to do as I have asked. I am willing yet to pay the stipulated amount. However, in case you refuse, I might as well tell you that I shall use other means. Gabriel must not win the Derby. In offering you the chance I have, I am simply taking the easiest way. If you refuse or I think you will play me false, I shall take other steps. What do you say?"

Jimmy got slowly to his feet.

"What other means could you use?" he said.

"Plenty," was the reply. "I might dope the horse, or shoot him in the leg, or I might even burn the stable."

Jimmy shuddered.

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"You wouldn't do that," he said.

"Wouldn't I?" exclaimed Jones. "Don't try me. I will go the limit to make sure that Gabriel doesn't win. Now, what is your answer?"

Jimmy drew himself up.

"The same as it was yesterday," he said quietly. "You can't buy me."

"I can't, eh?" exclaimed Jones, springing to his feet. "Let me ask you something. Suppose you should disappear; who would ride Gabriel in the Derby?"

Jimmy was frightened.

"Why, I don't know," he replied. "Nobody but me can ride Gabriel. But why do you ask that?"

"Because," said Jones slowly, "you are about to disappear."

"Disappear?" repeated Jimmy.

"Exactly. I am going to keep you out of sight until after the race."

Jimmy had surmised what Jones meant at the other's first words, but he had feigned ignorance, playing for time. He had been edging closer and closer toward the door.

Suddenly he darted toward it and laid his hand on the knob. Jones and his companion were after him with a shout. Unfortunately for Jimmy, the door opened inward, and he was forced to step back to let it swing wide. This caused his undoing.

"You would, would you," exclaimed the villain, as he drew Jimmy forcibly back into the room. "Take that, and that, then, and see if it will teach you I am not to be trifled with."

He cuffed Jimmy's ears soundly. Then he hurled the boy into a chair.

"You sit there until I tell you to get up," he said angrily, "or I'll give you a little more."

Jimmy realized that for the time being escape was impossible, and he sat back in his chair, determined to make the best of a bad situation. He said nothing.

"What are you going to do with him, sir?" asked the youth called Dick.

"Keep him safe until after the race," was the reply.

"But you can't keep him here all that time."

"That's so. I'll have to find some place for him."

"Well," said Dick, "I know where you can put him."

"Good; where is it?"

"I have an old uncle who lives down the creek. He has a little house down there, and for a small sum he'll do almost anything."

"And you think he'll keep this kid quiet until after the big race?"

"Sure."

"Then you go and fix it up with him. Tell him it will mean \$50 to him."

Dick left the room, and Jones turned to Jimmy.

"You see now what a fool you are," he exclaimed. "You might just as well have the money if you had brains. Now you won't get a cent."

"I don't want it," replied Jimmy quietly, "and if you think you can hold me a prisoner till after the race you are mistaken."

"Is that so?" sneered Jones. "And how do you figure you are going to get away?"

"That is my business," said Jimmy.

Jones laughed aloud. He got up from his chair and went toward the door.

"I'm going out for a few minutes," he said, "and I am going to lock you in. You can yell all you please. No one will pay any attention to you."

He went through the door, and Jimmy heard the key turn in the lock on the outside. No sooner had the man gone than Jimmy walked quickly toward a little window in the back of the room and looked out. Then he shook his head gloomily.

Suddenly he was struck with an idea. He drew a piece of paper and a pencil from his pocket, and seating himself at the table wrote rapidly. Then again he approached the window.

A few minutes later a small boy passed along the street below. Jimmy whistled sharply, and the boy looked up. Jimmy gesticulated violently, and the lad below stopped.

Quickly Jimmy drew out his pocket knife, and a silver quarter—all the money he had—and these he wrapped in the paper upon which he had written, and dropped them through the window.

They fell almost at the boy's feet. The latter stooped and picked them up. He glanced at the address Jimmy had written, then looked up and nodded. He pocketed the knife and the quarter and then hurried away.

Jimmy breathed a sigh of relief, and sank into a chair. He was still there when Jones returned.

"Decided to make the best of your lot, eh?" said Jones, noticing that, apparently, the lad had given up.

"I guess I'll have to," was Jimmy's reply.

"I'm glad you are that sensible. I don't want to use force unless it is necessary."

Now Jimmy bethought himself it would be a good plan to temporize with his captor.

"Look here, Jones," he said, not deigning to use the prefix, "Mr.," "I have been thinking. Why can't we get together on this thing?"

Jones laughed amusedly.

"So you are going to try that on me," he said. "It's too late now, son, and I am too old a bird to be caught like that. Think you can fool me, eh, and then go back and tell Willing all about it. No. You had your chance and you refused; and to tell the truth, I am glad of it. I will be money ahead."

Half an hour later Dick returned.

"What luck?" asked Jones.

"The best," was Dick's reply. "My uncle said he would be glad to keep him. And he'll guard him carefully, never fear."

"That is settled then. Now how about getting him there?"

"Well, I would say that the thing to do is to get a closed carriage. It's still light, you know, and if he made a break we might have trouble, for some one would be sure to see us."

"A good plan. Better go now and get a carriage."

Dick again turned toward the door. Jones called after him.

"And do the driving yourself."

Fifteen minutes later Dick returned and announced that the carriage was at the door. Jones turned to Jimmy.

"Now," he said harshly, "I want you to understand that I will stand no nonsense. Make a false move when you go out the door, or utter a sound, and I'll hit you over the head with this," and he displayed an evil-looking cane.

Jimmy made no reply, and went through the door between Jones and his companion.

At first Jimmy had thought of flight, but the nearness of his captors made this impossible. He took his seat without a word, and soon was being driven away.

Before a small frame house, at the far end of town, upon the very brink of the creek, Dick pulled up, and Jones and Jimmy alighted. As they approached the house, an old man came to meet them.

"And is this the boy I am to guard?" he asked.

"It is," replied Jones.

"Well, I'll guard him," was the reply, and the old man bared his ugly teeth in a snarl.

He took Jimmy by the coat collar, and twisted it until the boy gasped.

"Get in the house there, you!" he commanded.

Jimmy obeyed. Jones climbed back into the carriage and was soon being driven away. The old man followed Jimmy closely, snarling at every step.

## CHAPTER XVII.—THE LONG SEARCH.

"I wonder what is detaining Jimmy?"

It was Mr. Willing who spoke. Mr. Willing, Mr. Ashton, young Wolfe, Shirley and Mabel were still seated at the supper table.

"I can't understand why he wasn't back hours ago," declared Mr. Willing. "That's the trouble with boys, you can't depend on them. He has probably stopped to play somewhere."

"I don't believe Jimmy would do that," said Shirley. "Besides, he knows that he will have to guard Gabriel to-night."

"Perhaps," said Mr. Ashton, "that is the reason he is in no hurry to return. The chances are he has had enough of that job, after his experience last night."

"I don't believe Jimmy is that kind of a boy, father," said Mabel.

"Nor I," spoke up young Wolfe. "He strikes me as a brave and true lad. Perhaps something has happened to him."

"And what could have happened to him?" demanded Mr. Willing. "He knows the way home, and if he couldn't get here, certainly he should have sense enough to telephone."



"I don't know what to think," said Shirley.

It was Mabel who finally guessed the answer to the mystery.

"Maybe Mr. Jones has waylaid him," she suggested.

Shirley sprang to her feet.

"My gracious!" she exclaimed. "Why didn't we think of that before? Of course, that is what's the matter. What shall we do?"

"Be quiet, Shirley," said her father. "In the first place, we do not know that that is the reason. And in the second place, even if we did there is nothing we could do to-night. And perhaps Mabel's theory is all wrong. Jimmy is likely to come strolling in any time."

"I believe Mabel is right," said Leonard. "From what I have heard this man Jones would stop at nothing. As Jimmy is not here, I'll volunteer to sleep in the stable to-night."

"But I cannot permit that," said Mr. Willing. "You are my guest. I——"

"Nevertheless," Leonard interrupted, "I am going to sleep there. The chances are that the conspirators will not be active again to-night, but it is always best to be prepared."

"Well," said Mr. Willing, "I won't say no if you insist. I'm sure that I shall rest easier, for if anything should happen that Gabriel could not run in the Derby——"

He broke off. "Thank you," he added.

"Well," said Mr. Ashton, later in the evening, as they still waited for some word from Jimmy, "there is no use sitting up all night. We might as well turn in, so we can get busy early in the morning."

This suggestion was acted upon at once. Young Wolfe, with a lantern, made his way to the stable, where he took up his vigil just outside Gabriel's stall, for the animal would not allow him to enter. The others went to bed.

The night passed peacefully, and all were up bright and early in the morning.

"I am going to town immediately and see if I can learn anything," said Shirley at the breakfast table.

"You'll stay right here," said Mr. Willing decidedly. "I'll do the looking myself."

"I'll go too," said Leonard.

"Then why can't we go?" asked Mabel.

"Well," said Mr. Willing, "I have no objection to your going with Leonard, because he can keep you out of mischief. I am going to start immediately. You can follow as soon you are ready. I'll meet you at Wilson's drug store at noon."

He arose and ordered his horse saddled at once, and before half an hour had passed he was well started on his journey.

It was fully an hour later before the others were ready to start in the large touring car, and by that time Mr. Willing was already in town.

Just as the girls were stepping into the car the distant yard gate opened, and the figure of a little boy came into sight.

Mabel was the first to catch sight of him.

"Who is that?" she asked. "At first I thought it was Jimmy."

"We'll wait and see what he wants," Shirley decided.

The youngster came up to them a few moments later.

"What is it, little boy?" asked Mabel.

"I got a note for Mr. Willing," came the reply.

"Who from?"

"I dunno. A fellow threw it out the winder to me."

"A message from Jimmy," exclaimed Shirley, as she jumped from the car. "Give it to me," she commanded.

But the boy held back.

"It's for Mr. Willing," he protested.

"I am Mr. Willing's daughter," said Shirley. "Come, give me the note."

She took it from his hand, and opened it eagerly.

"Who's it from, Shirley?" asked Mabel. "Is it from Jimmy?"

"Yes," replied Shirley quietly. "Listen." She read:

"Held prisoner by Jones. Am going to be taken to some house on creek and guarded till after race. Don't know where.

"JIMMY."

"I knew it," said Mabel. "I was sure Jimmy was in trouble of some kind."

"But how are we to find the house?" asked Shirley.

"I don't know," replied Mabel.

"We'll have to tackle them all, that's all there is about that," said Leonard decidedly. "And the sooner we start the better, if you ask me."

"Let's hurry, then," said Shirley anxiously.

"Wait a moment," said Mabel. "Are you going to let the little boy walk back to town?"

"Of course not," replied Shirley. "But I was so excited I forgot all about him. Jump in, little boy."

The boy needed no second bidding, and soon the machine was speeding toward the pike.

"Can you take us to the place where the note was dropped?" asked Shirley.

"Yes'm," was the reply.

True to his word, the little fellow directed the car to the exact spot where he had picked up the note.

"You wait here," said young Wolfe, alighting, "and I'll run up and interview this fellow Jones, if he's in."

"I'll go too," said Shirley.

"So will I," declared Mabel.

Young Wolfe hesitated.

"You know what your father said."

"Never mind," said Shirley. "Surely there is no danger."

The two girls followed Leonard into the place. Leonard knocked on several doors before he received an answer, but an old woman finally directed him to the room occupied by Jones and Dick.

Leonard rapped loudly on the door. A moment later the door swung inward, and Jones poked his head out.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I want to see you," said Leonard briefly, and put his weight against the door, as Jones tried to close it.

"You can't come in here," Jones protested.

"But I'm already in, my friend," said Leonard.

"Who are you?" asked Jones.

"Why," said Leonard, "my name is Wolfe, and I am a friend of these young ladies here," he added, as the two girls appeared through the door.

Jones took a step back, surprise in his face.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded.

"We want to know what you have done with Jimmy," declared Shirley, approaching closer and clenching her little fists.

"Jimmy?" repeated Jones, trying to look unconcerned. "And who is Jimmy, pray?"

"You know who Jimmy is," flared Mabel. "Tell us where he is."

"Oh, you mean Mr. Willing's stable boy?"

"Yes," said Shirley.

"How should I know?" asked Jones, throwing wide his arms in a gesture of ignorance.

Young Wolfe stepped close to Jones.

"There is no use pretending ignorance," he said quietly. "Show him the note, Shirley."

Shirley drew the note from her handbag and passed it to Jones, who read it carefully. Then the latter looked up and smiled.

"I don't blame you for suspecting me, in view of this note," he said with a smile, "but just the same I shall have to deny the implication. The boy is fooling you. I know nothing of his whereabouts."

"That," said Leonard calmly, "is a lie."

Jones took a threatening step forward, but Leonard did not give an inch.

"A liar, am I?" said Jones. "I'll show you."

His arm came up from his side, and he aimed a terrific blow at Leonard's head. But quick as he was Leonard was quicker.

With a movement he avoided the blow, and stepping forward seized Jones' arm before the latter

could recover himself. He twisted it quickly and sharply, and Jones stepped back with a cry of pain.

"None of that," said Leonard sternly. "Now, will you tell us where Jimmy is or not?"

"I have told you I don't know," said Jones.

With a sudden wrench he freed his arm and darted through the door before Leonard could make a move to stop him.

"After him quick," said Shirley. "He'll get away."

Leonard and the two girls darted through the door and down the steps after the fleeing man, but when they reached the sidewalk Jones had disappeared.

"We've lost him," she cried.

"Yes," said Mabel, "and he'll hurry to the place where Jimmy is being held, and take him some place else. It was a mistake to show him that note, for he is aware we know that Jimmy is confined some place on the creek."

"Then the best thing to do," said Leonard, "is to get down by the creek. We may be fortunate enough to hit the right direction."

"Let's go at once then," said Shirley.

Quickly the three clambered into the car, and Shirley, who was driving, started it off with a lurch. 143

"Let's hope we shall not be too late," she cried over her shoulder, as the car, setting speed regulations at naught, gathered headway.

## CHAPTER XVIII.—ON THE TRAIL. 144

The little town of Paris stretches out for a considerable distance along Stoner Creek, and for this reason Shirley realized that the chances of picking the locality where Jimmy was held prisoner were slim. Nevertheless, there was always the chance that they might be fortunate enough to find the place.

The car rushed down Main Street, and turned to the right just off the bridge. It was Shirley's plan to get to the extreme edge of the town and then come back along the creek slowly. They had made good time, and it was hardly probable that Jones could have reached the creek before them.

They reached the northern extremity of the town without a sight of Jones, and then turning the car about, Shirley drove south slowly. Several times the girl stopped to ask questions of pedestrians, but the result was always the same. No one seemed to know Jones, and none knew of any house containing a prisoner. 145

Finally Leonard called upon Shirley to stop.

"I'll get out and do a little inquiring at some of the houses along here," he said.

He alighted. At the first house he approached he gained no information, nor at the second nor at the third. At the fourth, however, he came upon a clue.

"Somebody told me," said the woman who answered his knock, "that a closed carriage drove up to old Briggs' house yesterday and that three men were in it. One went into the house with Briggs, and the others drove away."

"Did you hear what he looked like?"

"Well, he was young. That's all I know."

"And where does this man Briggs live?"

"About eight blocks south, in a little shanty. I know his nephew from Cincinnati has been staying with him. Anybody down there can tell you where Briggs lives."

Leonard thanked the woman and returned to the waiting automobile. He told the girls what he had learned, and Shirley drove the car in the direction of Briggs' home.

"Better stop a block away," said Leonard.

Shirley did so, and again Leonard climbed out. Through inquiry he learned which was Briggs' house and hastened to it. An old man answered his knock.

"Are you Mr. Briggs?" asked Leonard. 146

"Yes," was the reply. "What do you want?"

There was something in the man's manner that convinced Leonard he was on the right track. He determined to try a bold shot.

"I want to see your prisoner," he said sternly.

"Prisoner," echoed the old man, taking a step backward. "What prisoner?"

"The boy you are holding for Jones."

The old man recovered himself.

"I haven't any prisoner," he said.

"Oh, yes you have," said Leonard, "and I want him right now. Understand?"

The old man looked at him with an evil leer.

"Get out of here," he shouted, and gave Leonard an unexpected push.

Leonard, taken unaware, stumbled back, and at the same moment the old man stepped inside the house, and closed and locked the door.

Leonard sprang forward again and laid hold of the knob. Then he put his weight against the door, but it would not budge. He walked back to where the girls waited for him.

"He's in there, all right," he said grimly. "But I can't get in."

"Can't you break down the door?" asked Shirley.

"I might," said Leonard, "but if I did I probably would be shot for my pains. You can't force your way into a man's house, you know."

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"Then what are we to do?" exclaimed Mabel.

"Call the police," said Leonard grimly. "They'll go in, all right, whether they have a right to do so or not."

"Let's hurry then," said Shirley anxiously. "There is no telling what may happen to Jimmy unless we make haste."

Leonard climbed back into the machine.

"To the police station at once," he said.

Just as the machine started off, Shirley's attention was attracted by a man who darted suddenly across the street and into the rear of the house Leonard had just left.

"Jones!" she exclaimed.

Leonard and Mabel also had seen the hurrying figure.

"That's who it is, all right," said Mabel.

"There is no doubt about it," declared Leonard. "We'll round them all up together."

At the police station Leonard explained the situation in a few words. Two men were detailed to go with them and investigate. All climbed into the machine, and in a few moments were back before Briggs' home.

Leonard and the two girls approached the door with the two policemen. One of the officers rapped loudly upon the door with his club. There was no answer, and the policeman rapped again. Still there was no answer.

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"Open up, Briggs, or we shall break the door down," called one of the officers.

Again no answer.

"Kick her in, Bill," said the first officer.

He suited the action to the word, and there was a resounding crash as his boot struck the door a hard blow. The second officer also delivered several heavy kicks.

There was the sound of splintering wood, and in a few moments the door gave way, shattered. The officers rushed in with poised clubs, and Leonard and the two girls followed them closely.

Straight through the house they went, but their quest was vain. There was no one there.

Leonard, glancing up, spied what appeared to be an attic.

"Give me a hand up," he called to one of the two policemen.

The latter obeyed and Leonard scrambled up above.

"Be careful," whispered Shirley.

Leonard struck a match and looked around. There was no one there.

"Nobody home," he said, after he had dropped down again.

"Where did they go?" demanded Shirley anxiously.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Mabel. "Why didn't we think of it before?"

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"Think of what?" asked Shirley quickly.

"Why, the creek. They have probably escaped in a launch."

Without pausing to reply, Shirley turned and darted from the house toward the creek, the others following closely. Several rowboats lay idly by, and in one of them, fishing, were two men.

"Did you see anything of Briggs?" demanded Shirley.

"Yes, Miss," said one of the men. "He, and three others, just left in a launch. Is anything the

matter?"

"Yes," said one of the officers. "They are a bunch of crooks, and have kidnapped a boy."

"You don't say," exclaimed one of the fishermen. "Do you want to catch 'em?"

"Yes," said Shirley eagerly, "but how can we?"

"Well, I have a launch about a hundred yards from here," said the man. "She is all ready to move, and can outrun anything on the creek."

As he spoke, he came ashore and started along the bank at a run. Shirley, Mabel, Leonard and the two officers followed close at his heels.

Another moment, and they came upon a large, powerful launch moored to a landing.

"Climb in," said the man.

The others needed no second invitation. Shirley, with the two officers, took their places in the bow of the little craft, while Mabel and Leonard were forced to remain further aft.

The fisherman pushed the launch off, and scrambled aboard. Then he turned quickly to the engine, and a faint sputtering a few moments later gave evidence that the launch was ready for the chase.

Gradually the little craft gathered headway, until she seemed to be flying through the water. Through scores of rowboats and other small boats, she wormed her way at terrific speed, and at last, far ahead, the pursuers could make out the form of a second launch, also chugging along at full speed.

"We'll get 'em," said the fisherman confidently. "The *Sybil* can outrun anything on the creek."

"The *Sybil*, a pretty name for a launch," Shirley thought, excited as she was.

She kept her eyes ahead, and soon it became evident that the pursuers were gaining. They were now far beyond the town, and one of the officers spoke.

"To tell the truth, we really have no authority out of the city, but we'll take a hand just the same. Might makes right, you know."

"We are likely to need you," said Leonard.

Now the *Sybil* had gained sufficiently for those aboard to make out the faces of those in the pursued craft. It was as they had expected. The occupants of the first boat were Jones, Briggs, Jimmy and another young man, whom none recognized.

"Guess that is Briggs' nephew from Cincinnati," said Leonard, remembering the conversation he had had with the woman who told him of Briggs' prisoner.

Shirley glanced at the young man in the other boat curiously.

"I seem to have seen him some place before," she said. "I can't place him, though."

Suddenly Jones was seen to rise up in the other boat, and Leonard, divining his intention, cried out in a loud voice:

"Look out! Duck!"

In spite of their surprise, all obeyed.

From the first boat there came a puff of smoke, followed by a sharp crack. Something whined over the *Sybil*.

"They are shooting at us," said Leonard calmly. "You girls keep down in the boat."

"Two can play at that game," said one of the officers.

He drew his own revolver, and brought it to bear. But before he could fire, Shirley sprang to her feet and seized his arm.

"Careful," she said, "you are likely to hit Jimmy."

The officer lowered his weapon.

At the same moment Jones fired again.

Leonard clapped his right hand to his left shoulder.

Shirley noticed this move.

"What's the matter?" she asked anxiously. "Are you hit?"

"Just a scratch, I guess," replied Leonard quietly. "We'll make them pay for that."

"We will," agreed Shirley through clenched teeth.

"Look out! He's going to shoot again," cried one of the officers. "Down, quick!"

Jones was standing aft in the launch and had levelled his revolver in deliberate aim. But before he could pull the trigger, there was an unexpected move in the boat.

The third member of the party of conspirators—the young man whose face was so strangely familiar to Shirley—suddenly sprang to his feet, and before Jones could realize his intention, had wrested the revolver from his hand with a quick move. Jones turned upon him angrily, and they grappled.

For several moments they swayed unsteadily in the boat, causing it to rock violently; and then Jones, putting forth a strenuous effort, sent his opponent hurling overboard and by another and more strenuous effort, succeeded in regaining his own balance just as it seemed that he, too, must tumble into the water.

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"Slow down!" cried Shirley to the fisherman. "We must pick him up."

The owner of the boat complied, and steered the craft to where the unfortunate youth's head showed above the water at that moment. Leonard stretched forth his unwounded arm, and succeeded in dragging the victim aboard, where he sank to the bottom of the boat panting.

Shirley took one look at the bedraggled youth, and then exclaimed aloud:

"Dick!"

Their erstwhile opponent looked at her in surprise. It was plain that he did not recognize her.

"Don't you know me?" asked Shirley, half laughing.

"No," returned the youth somewhat sullenly.

"Then I'll refresh your memory," said Shirley. "Do you remember a street fight in Cincinnati one night not long ago, when your own friends turned on you because you befriended a strange youth, who later turned out to be a girl?"

Dick's face took on a reddish hue.

"And do you remember escorting the girl home?" continued Shirley, "and disappearing before she had an opportunity of thanking you? Do you remember me now?"

Dick hung his head sheepishly.

"Yes, I remember," he said.

"And how is it," demanded Shirley, "that I find you mixed up in this affair? How do you happen to be on such friendly terms with that scoundrel Jones?"

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"Well, it's a long story," returned Dick in some confusion.

"I didn't think it of you, Dick," said Shirley. "You proved such a valiant champion, that I believed I should always find you fighting on the side of the right."

"And so you shall," responded Dick, lifting his head, "if you have further need of me. I didn't really know who Jones was when I got mixed up with him. And had I known he was plotting against you I would have had nothing to do with the affair. I am ready to help you, if you can make use of me."

"I knew I couldn't be wrong," said the girl with a bright smile, "and I am glad to have you on our side. Perhaps you can tell me why Jones has kidnapped Jimmy?"

"He is planning to keep him from riding in the Derby. He says that without Jimmy, Gabriel cannot possibly win."

"I see," said Shirley. "It's just as I thought. And where is he taking him now?"

"I do not know," was the reply. "He has some safe place in view, though."

While the *Sybil* paused to pick up Dick, the other launch forged ahead, and now had disappeared from view around a bend in the creek.

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Shirley turned to the owner of the boat.

"Can we catch them?" she asked anxiously.

"Just leave it to me," returned the man grimly. "If they stay in the water we'll come up with them before long."

Rounding the bend they again came in sight of the other launch, and as they did so Shirley uttered a cry of dismay.

Close into the shore the pursued launch rode gently upon the water. Her engines had been stopped, and she had been deserted. There was not a soul aboard.

"Where do you suppose they have gone?" demanded Mabel.

"They have taken to the woods," replied Shirley, "and the chances are we have lost them altogether."

Jenkins, for as such the owner of the *Sybil* introduced himself, ran his launch close beside the other, and all stepped quickly ashore. In the soft mud, footsteps leading toward the woods nearby were plainly visible, showing that the fugitives had gone in that direction.

"We'll follow them, if you give the word, Miss Willing," said Dick.

"And Mabel and I will go too," said Shirley.

Dick looked at young Wolfe somewhat dubiously.

"It is hardly girls' work," he replied.

"Right you are," agreed Leonard. "You girls stay here by the boat."

"But we want to go," Mabel pouted. "We are more interested in this than any of you."

"The young men are right," said Jenkins firmly. "Jones must be a desperate man. You girls are safer here."

"We do not wish to be obstinate," said Shirley. "We know that you are doing this for us, and if you tell us to stay here, we shall do so, of course."

Jenkins and the two young men breathed a sigh of relief, as did the two policemen.

"You wait here until we return then," said Leonard. "Come on, men."

The five disappeared in the woods, leaving the two girls beside the boat alone.

"I hope they get them," said Shirley grimly.

"So do I," agreed Mabel.

"I am glad Dick is with us," said Shirley slowly. "Somehow I have a lot of confidence in him. You know I have seen him in action and know what he can do."

"He is a likeable boy," declared Mabel. "It's too bad he has mixed with such bad companions."

"I am going to see if I can't get father to help him," said Shirley. "Maybe he would be willing to work on the farm."

"From the way he looked at you," said Mabel, "I should say that he would be glad to work any place where you might be."

"The idea, Mabel," said Shirley, but nevertheless her face grew red.

Suddenly both girls were startled by a stealthy tread behind them. They wheeled about, and looked into the sneering countenance of Jones.

And beside him was Briggs, and between the two, his hands bound and a gag in his mouth, was Jimmy.

"So," said Jones, with an evil smile, "we have captured two more of the enemy, eh?"

Neither girl replied.

Jones motioned toward the launch.

"Climb aboard, there, quick!" he commanded.

Both girls hesitated.

"You hear me?" demanded Jones, taking a step forward. "I am not to be trifled with. Move now!"

Shirley and Mabel thought better of their hesitancy, and without a word climbed aboard the *Sybil*. Jimmy was shoved aboard after them, and then came Jones. Briggs stopped to shove the boat off and then clambered aboard.

"Straight down the creek," ordered Jones, as Briggs stooped over the engine.

The launch moved off slowly.

"You see we gave your friends the slip," smiled Jones. "Now we'll just leave them behind."

"What are you going to do with us?" demanded Shirley.

"Never mind," returned her captor. "You'll find out soon enough."

At that moment there came a shout from the shore, and turning, the girls saw their friends rushing down toward the water. Jones muttered to himself.

"Why couldn't we have had a little better start?"

Shirley rose in her seat and waved to her friends.

"Sit down there," said Jones harshly, half rising.

Shirley obeyed, for she knew that she had been seen, and felt certain of speedy relief.

Ashore, the five were hurriedly piling into the other boat, the one occupied by Jones when the chase had started, and soon it was coming after them. But the *Sybil* was much faster, as already had been proven, and it seemed that there was little likelihood of the pursuers catching up with them.

The *Sybil* gained rapidly and it was plain she would soon run away from the pursuer.

Jones, sitting a few feet from Shirley, drew a pipe from his pocket, and filled it calmly.

"I hope you young ladies do not object," he said, and struck a match.

Suddenly Shirley jumped to her feet and rushed at Jones, thinking to catch him unprepared and

push him into the water. But Jones was too quick for her. He stood up, stepped aside, and it seemed a miracle that Shirley did not go overboard.

Jones smiled.

"I wouldn't try it again if I were you," he said quietly. "I am not to be caught napping."

He sat down again, and Shirley resumed her seat.

Now the *Sybil* lost sight of her pursuer around a bend in the stream. From this point on the creek wound about more frequently, and it was plain to Shirley that the pursuers were hopelessly outdistanced.

Then Jones spoke to Briggs.

"Run ashore," he commanded.

Briggs obeyed without a word, and a few moments later, they all stepped out upon the bank.

"Come," said Jones, "let's get out of sight before our friends arrive."

He motioned the two girls to precede him along what they found to be a narrow path.

"Briggs," said Jones, "you go back and start the launch down the creek by itself. Then they won't know where we are."

Briggs hastened to obey, and a moment later the *Sybil* was moving out of sight around another bend.

"They won't find us now," said Jones.

Taking advantage of a moment when Jones was not looking, Mabel quietly hung her white handkerchief upon a bush. It was in plain view of the creek.

Shirley saw her friend's action, but dared not show she had, by even the slightest change of expression.

## CHAPTER XX.—APPARENT VICTORY.

Meanwhile, where was the second launch and crew? Even going at full speed, it was plainly evident to all on board that there was little prospect of overtaking the *Sybil*.

When the party had returned to the bank of the stream after an unsuccessful search of the little woods, it had not needed the wave of Shirley's hand from the *Sybil* to tell them what had happened. It was Dick who spoke first.

"They have doubled back on their tracks and captured the girls and the launch," he exclaimed when he noticed Shirley and Mabel were nowhere to be seen.

The others cried out in alarm. In the distance they could see the launch speeding down the stream. It was at that moment Shirley rose and waved to them. Leonard's keen eyes caught the signal, and he cried out:

"Into the other launch quick and after them!"

Hastily jumping aboard, the second launch was put into motion and they gave chase at full speed.

But the *Sybil* gained steadily.

"It's no use," said Jenkins. "We can't catch them. As I told you, the *Sybil* can outrun anything in these parts."

"We'll keep after them anyhow," said Dick. "You never can tell what will happen. They may meet with an accident."

And so the five continued their apparently hopeless pursuit. An hour later, Leonard, who stood in the extreme bow of the launch, straining his eyes ahead, exclaimed aloud. The others looked at him eagerly, and he pointed straight ahead.

"There's the *Sybil*," he cried. "She's run ashore. They must have landed."

A few minutes later the launch ran up alongside the *Sybil* and all jumped out.

"If we only knew which way they went," said Leonard.

Dick had been looking at the ground carefully. In the soft mud there was not a single footprint. Dick looked at the engine of the *Sybil*. It was still running.

"They didn't land here," he said quietly.

"What?" exclaimed Leonard.

"I say, they didn't land here."

"How do you make that out?"

"Well, if they had landed here there would certainly be footprints. They couldn't have walked



through this soft mud without leaving tracks.”

“The lad is right,” murmured Jenkins.

“Then how do you account for the launch being here?” asked one of the policemen.

“Easily,” said Dick. “They started the engine and let her go. See, the engine is still running, and if she had not been caught in this bunch of weeds she would still be going down stream.”

“You are right,” Leonard agreed. “And there is no telling how far back they deserted her. What shall we do?”

“First,” said Jenkins, “we’ll reoccupy the *Sybil* and leave the other launch here.”

“After which,” said Dick, “we’ll turn back, and go slowly, keeping as close to shore as possible. We may be able to find where they landed.”

This plan was adopted. Jenkins turned the *Sybil’s* head upstream once more, and they started off slowly, keeping close in-shore.

For half an hour they moved along, and then Dick’s keen eyes caught sight of a piece of white fluttering from a bush fifty feet ahead. He looked at it steadily for a few moments, and then gave a start.

“Run in here,” he commanded Jenkins.

The latter did as he was told. Dick leaped lightly ashore and approached the fluttering piece of white, which he now saw was a handkerchief. He picked it up and returned to the boat. 165

“Do you recognize this?” he asked, passing it to Leonard.

Leonard glanced at it carefully. In one corner were two small initials.

“M.A.,” he read. “Mabel Ashton,” he exclaimed. “How do you suppose that got there?”

“It’s plain enough,” said Dick simply. “She dropped it there in the hopes that we might find it, and so learn where they had landed.”

“Then,” said Leonard, “there should be footprints.”

“Not here,” said Dick. “You will notice that the ground is very rocky. Evidently that is the reason Jones selected this spot to land.”

“By Jove!” said Leonard.

Dick spoke again. “They must have gone this way. We might as well get out and look around a bit.”

Accordingly all stepped ashore.

“Now,” said Dick, “I would suggest that we all spread out, keeping about a hundred yards apart, and go straight ahead.”

Leonard, who had been scrutinizing the ground carefully, uttered an exclamation. The others hurried to him.

“A path!” exclaimed Leonard. “They probably went this way.” 166

“We’ll see where the path leads at any rate,” said Dick. “Nevertheless I suggest that we spread out just the same. They may not have stuck to the path.”

This plan was acted upon, and the five spread on either side of the path. Leonard took the path, while on his right were the two officers, each a hundred yards apart, and on his left Jenkins and Dick, also the same distance apart.

They started forward.

For half an hour they walked on, and gradually the woods became more dense, making progress difficult. Suddenly it began to grow dark.

Leonard glanced at his watch.

“Great Scott!” he exclaimed. “It’s after six. I had no idea it was so late.”

He gave a shrill whistle, a prearranged signal, and the others came toward him.

“We must try and do something before dark,” he explained. “We don’t want to stay here all night, and we can’t give up the chase until we have found the girls.”

“We shall have to go more swiftly, then,” said Dick. “Back to your places, men.”

All spread out again, and the advance continued.

Suddenly Leonard spied something white in the path ahead of him. He stooped and picked it up. It was a second handkerchief. Leonard looked for some mark of identification. In a corner he found the initials “S.W.” 167

“We are on the right track,” he muttered to himself.

And then he stopped still.

Two shrill whistles split the air.

A moment more and the others gathered around him.

"What's the matter?" they asked.

Dick, the last to appear, came up at that moment.

"I've found them," he whispered.

"Where?" demanded the others.

"There is a little shack a short distance ahead," Dick explained. "I could see smoke coming from the chimney. I feel sure that Jones, thinking he has given us the slip, has ordered a halt."

"Well," said Leonard, "what are we going to do about it? We can't stand here all night."

"The thing to do," said Jenkins, "is to surround the place, and then close in on them. There are only two of them."

"You'll find there will only be one when it comes to a fight," said Dick grimly. "My uncle Briggs won't take a hand."

"So much the better," said Leonard. "Then we have only Jones to contend with."

"Right," said Dick, "and Jones is for me to handle."

Leonard looked at him peculiarly.

"Oh, all right," he said. "If that's the way you feel about it I won't interfere unless you have need of me."

"I won't have any need of you," was the reply. "But come, let's get busy."

It was quite dark now, but the stars already twinkled and there was promise of bright moonlight. The five made their way forward stealthily.

Ten minutes later they came within sight of the shanty, and they stopped for a moment. Suddenly Dick pointed straight ahead.

"Look," he whispered.

The others gazed in the direction he pointed. There, lying upon the ground, they recognized the figures of Jones, Briggs and Jimmy.

"Guess they have let the girls sleep in the house," said Leonard. "Now is a good time to advance. The men are asleep."

Cautiously they advanced again, and then, when they were perhaps twenty yards from the sleepers, Jones suddenly sat up and looked around.

His eyes fell upon the cautiously-approaching figures, and he jumped to his feet with an exclamation of dismay, and turned to run. But Dick was too quick for him.

Dashing forward at top speed, he hurled himself forward and caught Jones by the legs. Jones came to the ground with a crash.

He was up in a moment, however, and grappling with his assailant. But this time Dick was prepared for him, and with solid ground under his feet, he was more than a match for the older man.

Backward and forward, backward and forward they swayed, each trying to gain a hold by which he might throw the other. And Dick got his first.

Exerting his utmost strength, he heaved as hard as he could, and Jones, large though he was, went crashing to the ground, where he lay still.

In falling his head had come in contact with a sharp stone, and he was temporarily stunned.

In the meantime, the others had subdued Briggs, and then had stopped to watch the struggle between Jones and Dick. That over, Leonard stooped and unbound and ungagged Jimmy, and then turned toward the shanty.

"Might as well let the girls out," he said.

He knocked upon the door. There was no response and he knocked again. Still no response.

Leonard burst the door in with a single kick of his foot and stepped over the threshold. Then he started back in amazement and uttered a low cry.

"What's the matter?" demanded Dick, approaching and peering over his shoulder.

"Matter!" repeated Leonard. "Matter enough! The girls are not here!"

## CHAPTER XXI.—AN UNPLEASANT SITUATION.

Dick pushed by Leonard and entered the shanty. It was true. There was no sign of either Shirley or Mabel.

"What on earth can have happened to them?" asked Leonard anxiously.

"I haven't the slightest idea," returned Dick. "We'll ask Jones."

They stepped outside again.

Upon Leonard's first cry of surprise, Jenkins and the two policemen had moved toward the house, and for the moment Jones had been left unguarded. The prisoner was not slow to take advantage of his opportunity and no sooner had his captors' backs been turned than he took to his heels and soon disappeared in the darkness.

Consequently, when Leonard and Dick came from the shanty there was no Jones to be found.

Dick turned upon Jenkins and the officers angrily.

"You are a fine bunch, you are," he said with withering scorn. "A nice lot of guards I must say. Jones has gone."

The three looked from one to the other sheepishly, and Jenkins opened his mouth to speak.

"Never mind," said Dick. "There is no use talking about it now. The first thing is to find the girls."

"And where are we to look for them?" demanded Leonard.

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"You know as much about it as I do," he replied.

"Then," said Leonard, "I suggest that we go first to the launch, to make sure that it is all right. Jones is likely to steal it again."

"I guess you are right," said Dick. "Come on."

He stooped for a moment to lift up Jimmy Smith, who still sat on the ground. The latter arose slowly and stretched his cramped limbs.

"My, but it feels good to be loose again," he said.

He followed the others toward the creek.

The party made rapid progress for they did not wish Jones to get there ahead of them. But their fear was unnecessary, for Jones, once out of sight, had sat down, feeling safe in the darkness.

A short time after, the party of searchers arrived at the bank of the little stream.

"Great Scott! where's the launch?" exclaimed Leonard.

The others also uttered exclamations of astonishment. There was no sign of the *Sybil*.

"Jones must have arrived ahead of us," said Jenkins.

Dick was struck with a sudden idea. He uttered a low chuckle. The others turned upon him, and one of the officers said:

"This is no laughing matter. What's so funny, anyhow?"

"Well," said Dick, "I believe I have solved the disappearance of the *Sybil*. I am sure that it was not Jones who took it, and Uncle Briggs is still where we left him, so it could not have been him."

"Then who was it?" demanded Leonard.

"The two young ladies," replied Dick.

The others gazed at him in surprise.

"What do you mean?" asked Jenkins.

"Just what I say. In some manner they succeeded in escaping from the shanty before we arrived. Then they must have made their way back here, and finding the launch, appropriated it for their own use. You must remember that Jones, not we, came here in the *Sybil*. The last the girls saw of us we were in the other launch. It was impossible for them to tell we had recaptured the *Sybil*."

"I believe you are right," said Leonard.

"I'm sure of it," replied Dick.

"Then what are we to do? We are marooned here for the rest of the night."

"Well," said Dick, "we might walk down stream. It's possible we may be able to find the other launch, which we abandoned."

"There is no use staying here, that's certain," agreed Leonard. "But the chances are we won't find it."

"There is nothing like trying," said Dick briefly. "Come on."

He led the way and the others followed.

Dick's solution of the disappearance had been correct. Left alone in the little shanty early in the evening, the two girls had succeeded in forcing the door. Peering out and seeing Jones and Briggs fast asleep, they had decided to make a break for liberty.

Accordingly they slipped quietly from their prison and were soon lost in the darkness. They made their way to the bank of the creek with little difficulty, and there came upon the *Sybil*, tied up to a tree.

"We are in luck," said Mabel. "But how does it come that the launch is here. This looks like the

place we landed, and I saw Briggs start the boat down stream."

"Then it can't be the place we landed," returned Shirley. "We must be further down stream than we thought."

"But some one has tied the boat up," protested Shirley. "Who do you suppose it was?"

"I haven't any idea; and I don't see that it makes any difference. We'll get aboard and start upstream immediately. Our absence is likely to be discovered, and unless we hurry, we may be recaptured."

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"Let's hurry then," said Mabel.

She untied the launch while Shirley stepped aboard and started the engine. Then giving the boat a shove, Mabel leaped aboard.

The engine sputtered once or twice, and then began to whirr regularly. The launch moved away from the shore.

Under Shirley's firm hand, it came about in a wide circle and started upstream. Five minutes later they were rounding a curve that hid the starting point.

As the boat went round the bend, Mabel looking back, thought she made out several figures standing upon the bank. She told her discovery to Shirley.

"I guess Jones has discovered that we have escaped," said Shirley. "However, we are safe enough now."

She increased the speed of the little craft, and it rushed on through the dark and murky water, both girls keeping a keen lookout ahead.

Neither had any idea how far they were from Paris, for their course had been changed so often.

"We'll just have to keep going until we get there," said Shirley.

"I expect your father will be terribly worried," said Mabel.

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"I know he will," was the reply. "Poor Dad, he will think I have fallen into the hands of the conspirators. He probably has the whole town out looking for us."

"What do you suppose has happened to Leonard, Dick and the others?"

"I don't know. They have probably gone further down stream. It isn't likely that they noticed the *Sybil* so close to shore."

For hours, it seemed to the two girls, they continued their journey, and at last the first faint signs of dawn appeared in the east.

"I am glad day is coming," said Mabel. "We can see where we are going."

At that moment there came a faint sputtering from the engine, and then it came to a dead stop.

"What's the matter?" asked Mabel anxiously.

Shirley made a hasty examination.

"Fuel supply exhausted," she said. "No more gasoline."

"My gracious!" ejaculated Mabel, in dismay. "What shall we do?"

"We'll have to wait until it's a little lighter," replied her friend, "and then we'll see if we can't paddle ashore. There is no telling how far we may be from town, but I reckon we shall have to walk it."

"I suppose there is no help for it," said Mabel. "However, we are out of danger."

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The boat stood still in the middle of the stream for perhaps half an hour, and then both became conscious of a faint chugging far down the stream. "Some one coming," said Mabel, "maybe they will give us a lift."

"Perhaps it is Jones," said Shirley uneasily.

"Dear me! I hope not!" sighed Mabel.

"So do I. We have had enough trouble for one day."

They continued to gaze down stream.

A few minutes later a second launch came into view around the bend in the creek. The girls were able to make out several figures. It was apparent, also, that the men in the boat had seen them.

One stood up, and a faint hail came across the water.

"It must be Jones," said Mabel. "And he has seen us, too. What shall we do?"

"We'll try and get ashore," said Shirley quietly.

In the far end of the boat she had seen a pair of oars. She got these out hurriedly, and set to work with a will. The *Sybil* moved shoreward, slowly at first, and then more swiftly as Shirley settled herself to her task.

Both girls kept close watch on their pursuers. They could not make out the faces of its occupants—it was still too dark—nor did they recognize the voices that hailed them frequently. It was plain, however, that the pursuing launch was gaining.

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"It must be Jones," cried Shirley. "Be ready to jump the minute we run aground, Mabel."

Mabel signified that she understood, and gathering up her skirts, she stood up in the prow of the launch.

A moment later the little craft grounded with a shock. Mabel leaped lightly ashore, and turned to lend Shirley a hand. But this was unnecessary, for the moment she realized the boat had struck bottom, Shirley dropped the oars and also sprang ashore.

Quickly she grasped her friend by the hand.

"Run!" she cried, and suited the action to the word.

Swiftly the two girls sped over the uneven ground toward shelter of a dense clump of trees not far away. And they disappeared among these just as the second launch grounded and several figures leaped ashore.

The first of the pursuers caught a glimpse of the two figures disappearing in the woods, and immediately gave chase. The others followed him.

Hearing pursuing footsteps, the girls redoubled their efforts and were soon, they believed, safe from pursuit. They sat down quickly, to take a much-needed rest.

There came the sound of footsteps crashing through the underbrush. Shirley glanced about.

"Up in this tree, quick, Mabel," she exclaimed

She lent her friend a hand, and a minute later they were high up among the branches, where they could peer down without being seen. And at that moment a voice called out:

"Shirley! Mabel!"

"My gracious!" exclaimed Mabel. "It's Leonard."

The girls looked at each other somewhat sheepishly.

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## CHAPTER XXII.—SAFE.

"Shirley! Mabel!" came Leonard's voice again.

"Here we are, Leonard," shouted Mabel.

There was a moment's silence, and then the footsteps came nearer and Leonard halted directly under the tree in which the two girls clung.

"Where?" he shouted.

"Right up here," replied Mabel, with a giggle.

This time Leonard placed the sound of Mabel's voice. He glanced up. Far above the ground he could just make out what he knew must be the two girls.

"Bless my soul!" he exclaimed. "What on earth are you doing up there?"

"Trying to get away from Jones," replied Mabel.

"Well, you are safe enough now. Come down."

"All right," said both girls at once.

While Leonard turned back to hail the other searchers, the two girls slipped from the tree. Leonard seized the hand of each.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, "you gave us an awful scare. If it hadn't been for Dick, there is no telling when we might have found you."

"What did Dick do?" asked Shirley eagerly.

"Why, he saved us a futile search in the woods. He figured that it was you who had taken the *Sybil* and it was upon his suggestion that we came up stream again."

"And did you capture Jones?" demanded Mabel.

"Yes; but he got away again."

"And Jimmy?" asked Shirley eagerly. "Is he safe?"

"Yes. He's around here some place looking for you."

"Then," said Mabel, slowly, "it must have been you we saw on the shore just as we escaped."

"It must have been," replied Leonard. "I thought I saw a dark shape going up the creek, but I wasn't sure, so I said nothing about it."

"And where did you get the other launch? We saw nothing of it when we left."

"We found it a mile down stream, about where we left it when we recaptured the *Sybil*."

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"So that's the way it was," said Shirley, half to herself. "Had we only met you after we escaped we all would have been saved a lot of worry."

"But why didn't you stop when I hailed you in the creek?" asked Leonard, fatigue and anxiety beginning to tell on his nerves.

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"We thought it was Jones coming after us," Mabel explained.

"I see," replied Leonard.

At that moment, Dick, Jimmy, Jenkins and the policemen came running up.

"Well, I see you have found them," said Jenkins.

He wiped beads of perspiration from his brow—for he had been running.

"I'm glad of it. I must get home at once, or my wife will have the entire police force on the lookout for me."

The others laughed.

"Well, that's what I get for being married," said Jenkins. "But come, hustle back into the launch and we'll hurry back to town."

"There is no gasoline in the *Sybil*," said Shirley.

"Is that so?" said Jenkins. "Then I'll have to hitch her on behind and tow her home."

This was done and the little party was soon turned toward home.

They were closer to Paris than the girls had realized, and half an hour later they came in sight of the point from which they had started upon the long chase the day before.

As the boat drew close to the little landing, a woman with fiery red hair, her sleeves rolled up and a frown on her face, came hurrying toward them, and just as Jenkins leaped ashore and tied the boat up, she seized him by the ear with her right hand.

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"Tom Jenkins," she cried, "it's about time you were getting home. What do you mean by running away from me and not coming back?"

"But, Martha," protested Jenkins, his face turning red in confusion, "I was only helping these young people out. One of 'em had been kidnapped, and——"

"And you had to go along and see the fun, I suppose."

"Well, not exactly," said Mr. Jenkins. "I——"

"You come with me," said Mrs. Jenkins decisively.

She gave Jenkins' ear a sharp twist, and the latter howled with pain.

"Ow! Leggo my ear!" he screamed.

He twitched about, and with effort freed himself and stepped back.

"Let me explain," he said to his wife.

"You can explain when you get to the house," said Mrs. Jenkins angrily. "If you ain't there in three minutes, I'll be back after you."

She strode majestically away.

Mr. Jenkins rubbed his ear and grinned ruefully.

"You see how it is," he exclaimed. "A man always gets the worst of it somehow when he gets mixed up with somebody else's business."

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"We certainly appreciate your aid, Mr. Jenkins," said Shirley, offering her hand, which Jenkins grasped heartily.

The others also shook hands with him.

"Well," said Mr. Jenkins, "you know I'm glad to have been of—— All right, Martha, I'm coming!"

This last as the voice of his wife once more rang out with the demand:

"Are you coming, Tom Jenkins? Or do I have to come after you?"

He broke off suddenly and hastened toward the house to meet his spouse, who was coming toward him with rapid strides.

The girls laughed and the others joined them.

"Poor old Jenkins," said Leonard. "I'll bet he has a tough time."

"It looks that way," said Dick, with a faint smile.

He turned to Shirley.

"Now that you are safe at last," he said quietly, "I guess I may as well be going. There is nothing more for me to do."

Shirley was startled.

"Surely you will wait and let my father thank you?" she said.

Dick shook his head.

"It's enough for me to know I have been of service to you," he said. "I want no thanks."

"But," protested Shirley, "where are you going?"

"I don't know exactly," replied the boy. "Back to Cincinnati, I guess."

"Do your father and mother live there?" asked the girl.

"I have no father and mother," was the slow response.

"Forgive me," said Shirley impulsively. "I didn't know. What are you planning to do?"

Again the lad shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "I guess I shall find a job of some kind, though."

"Surely you will not get mixed up with Jones again?" asked Shirley anxiously.

"No," replied Dick. "I am through with Jones and his kind forever."

Shirley breathed a sigh of relief.

"I am glad to hear that," she said. "How would you like to go home with us? I am sure Dad can find something for you to do on the farm."

"Thank you," replied Dick. "I am sorry, but I must decline."

Shirley gave it up.

"Well," she said, "you must decide for yourself. But I do want to thank you for the aid you have given us, and I shall always be glad to see you."

Dick bowed. The others approached and shook hands with him, and then he turned to go.

"Come and see us when you can, or at least let us hear from you," Shirley called after him.

Dick turned and bowed once more. Shirley waved her hand to him, and a moment later he disappeared.

"Well," said Leonard, "there is no use standing here. Let us get home."

They started up town. At Main Street the two officers left them.

"I guess we are due for a wiggling from the chief," said one.

"Well," said the other. "It was worth it."

Leonard, Jimmy and the two girls bade the officers good-bye and made their way to Wilson's drug store. Mr. Wilson himself came running to the door as they approached.

"Where have you been?" he demanded. "Your father has been scouring the town for you. He is almost frantic."

"We have been rescuing Jimmy," replied Shirley. "Where is Dad now?"

"I guess he is at the police station."

"Then he'll be back in a few minutes," said Shirley. "The officers will tell him where we are."

Her prophecy proved correct, and five minutes later Mr. Willing dashed breathlessly into the store.

"Shirley," he cried, and clasped his daughter in his arms.

"You almost frightened your father to death," he said, releasing her at last. "Where have you been?"

"Didn't the officers tell you?" demanded Shirley.

"They tried to tell me something," was the reply, "but I didn't wait to hear them when I learned that you were safe."

Shirley related their adventures and Mr. Willing listened attentively.

"I must put the police after this man Jones," he said, when Shirley had concluded.

"I wouldn't do that, Dad," said Shirley. "It's all over now, and there is no use causing more talk."

"I don't know but what you are right," agreed Mr. Willing after a pause. "Besides, I guess we shall hear no more of him."

"I am sure we shall not," agreed Shirley.

But in this, as we shall see later, all were mistaken.

## CHAPTER XXIII.—TREACHERY.

Young Leonard Wolfe, returning from town two days later, approached Mr. Willing with visible

excitement.

"What's the matter?" demanded the latter, eyeing the young man curiously.

"Matter enough, sir. I saw Jones in town."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Willing. "I didn't think he would have the nerve to show his face in these parts again."

"Nevertheless he was there, sir."

"Did he see you?"

"No, sir. I'll warrant he is up to some mischief."

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Willing. "We shall have to be watchful. Gabriel must be guarded every moment of the day and night."

"My idea exactly, sir," replied Leonard.

Shirley approached, and noticing the uneasiness of Leonard and her father, she asked what was the trouble. Leonard explained.

"He is surely planning more mischief," exclaimed Shirley. "Gabriel must be guarded closely."

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"Exactly what we had decided upon," declared Leonard. "Somebody, armed, must be near him all the time. I am willing to stand one watch."

"Good," said Mr. Willing. "Jimmy, too, is ready. Now I believe the best thing to do is to split the day and night into three parts—each watch eight hours."

"But who will stand the third watch, Dad?" asked Shirley.

"Frank," declared Mr. Willing.

"But Uncle Frank is so old," protested Shirley.

"He's not too old to use a shotgun," replied Mr. Willing significantly. "Besides, I feel sure I can trust him."

"I am sure of that," replied Shirley.

"Call him for me, daughter," said Mr. Willing.

Shirley went on this errand, and a few moments later "Uncle Frank," an old negro, stood before them.

Mr. Willing explained the situation in a few words and Uncle Frank announced himself as not only willing but eager to stand one of the watches.

"Leonard," said Mr. Willing, "you stand the first watch, from six o'clock in the morning until two. Jimmy can watch from two until ten, and Frank, you stand guard from ten until six in the morning."

Mr. Willing glanced at his watch.

"It is now almost noon," he said. "Leonard, you go to the stable and relieve Jimmy until two o'clock. In the meantime, I'll get out my double-barreled shotgun and clean it up a bit."

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Leonard did as Mr. Willing requested.

The next two days passed quietly, and every one had about come to the conclusion that there was nothing more to be feared.

Gabriel was being given a short workout every day now, to prime him for the great Derby. Each morning and afternoon Jimmy put him through a stiff run along Willing's trial track, and Mr. Willing, after examining the racehorse carefully, announced that he was in fine condition.

"He's on edge right now," he declared. "We mustn't train him too fine, but we must give him enough work to keep him from growing stale."

The date for the big Derby was fast approaching. Experts and racing men from all over the country came to the Willing farm almost daily, seeking to have a look at Gabriel, who had been picked almost unanimously to win the big race.

In spite of the fact that Gabriel had never been entered against horses of such class before, his fame had gone before him, for in some manner, in spite of the fact that an effort was made to keep his time in trial runs secret, it had leaked out, and there was little question that Gabriel would be the favorite upon the day of the Derby.

But to the experts and racehorse men who pleaded to look at the great black horse, Mr. Willing turned a deaf ear.

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"You'll see him in action in the Derby," he said.

With this the visitors had to be satisfied.

"Monday," said Mr. Willing to Shirley and the others, "we must start for Louisville. We want to be on the ground at least a week before the day of the race. Besides, Gabriel must have that time to recover from the effects of the trip."

"Have you made your arrangements for stabling at the track?" asked Leonard.



"Yes. I shall have the same quarters as in years past. This year, however, I shall take no other horses, as has been the custom heretofore. I do not feel that I have another horse in my string that is sure to win a race, so I shall content myself with winning the Derby."

"And Gabriel will win," declared Shirley.

"Let us hope so," said Leonard sincerely.

This conversation took place the Wednesday morning before the Monday set for the departure.

"Daddy," said Shirley the following afternoon, "I haven't ridden Gabriel for a long time. Can't I work him out to-day?"

Mr. Willing hesitated.

"Why, I see no reason why you cannot," he said finally. "I know Gabriel loves you, and perhaps will do more for you than he will even for Jimmy."

Shirley clapped her hands and ran toward the stable, where she informed Jimmy of her father's decision. 191

"All right, Miss Shirley," smiled Jimmy. "I know Gabriel will be glad to have you ride him."

"I wish I were going to ride him in the Derby," declared Shirley.

"If you did," said Jimmy, "the result would never be in doubt. With you on his back, Gabriel would be the first under the wire if he dropped over dead a moment later."

Leaning forward upon Gabriel's neck, Shirley patted the horse gently. Gabriel did not respond to this loving touch with a whinny of pleasure, as was his wont.

Instead he shook his head angrily, and stamped his feet. His jaws worked up and down violently and he champed at the bit.

"What on earth ails him?" demanded Shirley in surprise.

"I guess he is just anxious to be on the go," was the lad's reply.

"I never saw him act like that before," said Shirley.

"Nor I. But I guess he will be all right after he gets out on the track and gets to going."

Jimmy walked ahead of Shirley and opened the gates for her.

"Don't let him out too much," he warned her. "Just a nice even walk-out is all he needs. Don't run him too hard." 192

Shirley nodded that she understood. Jimmy stepped back, and Shirley, leaning forward once more, again patted the noble animal's head. A moment later they were off down the track at a swift trot.

They had hardly disappeared around the first turn when a man appeared suddenly from behind a big tree and laid his hand on Jimmy's arm. Jimmy whirled about.

"Jones!" he exclaimed in the utmost surprise.

"Yes, Jones," said the other with a smile. "I just came out to have a look at Gabriel. Before I go back I just wanted to tell you that I do not need your services for the success of my plan."

Jimmy stepped close to Jones and doubled up his fists.

"You get off this place immediately," he said angrily.

Jones laughed at him.

"I suppose you will put me off if I don't," he sneered. "Oh, well, I am going, so don't worry."

He turned on his heel and stalked away.

And at that moment Shirley flashed by on Gabriel. Down the track she had seen Jimmy in conversation with a stranger, and as she whirled by she caught sight of Jones' face, and recognized him. 193

"Strange," she muttered. "What can he be talking to Jimmy about?"

And as she continued around the course Gabriel's actions steadily became more peculiar. Twice Shirley urged him to renewed efforts, but after a short spurt he slowed down quickly. And as he ran he shook his head violently from side to side and champed more fiercely at his bit.

"Something wrong," thought Shirley. "One more round and then back to the stable."

On this last round Gabriel slowed down considerably and in spite of all Shirley's urging he refused to increase his pace. At the gate this time Shirley turned out, and made for the stable.

Jimmy had preceded her there, and was waiting as she rode up. Mr. Willing, Leonard, Mr. Ashton and Mabel also stood near.

"Well, how does he go, daughter?" demanded Mr. Willing, as Shirley flung herself to the ground.

"There is something the matter with him," said Shirley.

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Willing quickly, and stepped forward.

He glanced searchingly at Gabriel, and just then the noble horse staggered.

Mr. Willing sprang forward with a cry of alarm.

"Help me get this bridle off immediately," he shouted.

Jimmy and Shirley sprang to do his bidding.

The bridle came away in Mr. Willing's hands a moment later, and the latter examined it carefully. Gabriel, in the meantime, walking very slowly, made for his stall.

Mr. Willing turned from his examination of the bridle. He held the bit in his hand.

"I was sure I could not be mistaken," he said quietly. "I have seen too many such cases."

"What do you mean, Dad?" said Shirley in alarm.

The others also turned to him anxiously.

"Gabriel's bit," said Mr. Willing calmly, holding it aloft, "has been painted."

"Painted!" cried Shirley.

"Yes. That is the reason you noticed there was something wrong with him. That is the reason he staggered a moment ago. He is sick. Now, who is responsible for this piece of treachery?"

For a moment there was no reply. Then Shirley, taking a long breath, stepped forward.

"Jimmy," she said quietly, "did I not see you talking with Mr. Jones a few moments ago?"

"Yes, Miss Shirley," replied the boy, realizing what was coming.

Mr. Willing stepped forward with a cry of anger.

"Jones on my place again?" he demanded. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want to worry you, sir," replied the boy.

"Didn't want to worry me, eh?" Mr. Willing's face grew red with anger. He pointed sternly toward the pike. "You," he said to Jimmy, "get your clothes right now and get off this place before I throw you off."

Shirley buried her face in her hands.

## CHAPTER XXIV.—AN ACCIDENT AND A CONFESSION.

Jimmy opened his mouth to speak, then bowed his head and turned away.

"Don't be too hard on the boy, Willing," said Mr. Ashton, taking a step forward.

"Hard on him!" repeated Mr. Willing. "How can I be too hard on him? The little scoundrel has sold me out."

"Perhaps he is not to blame," said Leonard.

Mr. Willing turned upon him.

"There have been too many of you trying to run my affairs," he said angrily. "In the future, I shall attend to them myself."

He turned and strode rapidly toward the house where he immediately telephoned for a veterinary to come out and look at Gabriel. Then he went to his own room, where he sat down, pulled out a cigar, and smoked in silence.

"I wish I hadn't spoken," moaned Shirley, as her father walked away. "Poor Jimmy! Perhaps he is not to blame, after all."

"Still," said Mr. Ashton, "appearances are much against him, particularly after what has gone on before. Certainly Jones would not have approached him again unless he had reason to believe that Jimmy would accept his offer."

"It does look that way," agreed Leonard.

But Shirley refused to be comforted.

"It's all my fault," she cried, and ran to the house, where she threw herself down upon her bed and gave way to tears.

There Mabel found her half an hour later and tried to soothe her.

"There, there," she said, stroking her friend's head. "It will all come out right in the end. If Jimmy is guilty he should be put off the place. If he isn't, it will be proven."

"I know he isn't!" cried Shirley. "I knew it the minute I spoke. Oh, why did I say anything?"

"You did perfectly right," declared Mabel.

Suddenly Shirley sprang to her feet.

"Has Jimmy gone yet?" she asked, drying her tears as she spoke.

"I don't know," replied Mabel.

Shirley hurried out the door.

"I must see him before he goes," she exclaimed. "Come, maybe we can find him."

The girls left the room hurriedly, and made their way to the front of the house. There, trudging slowly toward the pike-gate, with a bundle over his shoulder, they made out the slight form of Jimmy Smith.

"Jimmy!" called Shirley, but the boy did not look back.

Shirley ran after him, and Mabel followed her friend.

Hearing footsteps behind him, Jimmy turned and looked back. Perceiving Shirley, he faced about again and would have gone on had not the girl called to him.

"Wait a minute, Jimmy."

Jimmy halted and waited until Shirley came up to him.

"Jimmy," cried the girl, "can you ever forgive me? I know you are not guilty."

"No," said Jimmy quietly, "I am not guilty. It is true I talked to Jones, but he did not even suggest treachery to me."

"I know it! I know it!" declared Shirley. "And it is my fault that Dad has acted so."

"It was your duty to your father, Miss Shirley," declared the lad.

"It is good of you to say so," declared the girl, "but what shall we do?"

"I shall find employment in town," said Jimmy. "Some day, perhaps, your father will learn that he has misjudged me."

"I'll make him see it," declared Shirley. "You shall yet win the Derby with Gabriel."

Jimmy smiled sadly.

"I am afraid it is impossible," he replied. "Should you ever need me, Mr. Wilson will tell you where to find me. I shall leave my address with him. Good-bye."

He turned again, and before Shirley could protest, had continued on his way. For long minutes the girl looked after him, and then, stifling a sob, she made her way back toward the house.

A sudden cry of anguish came from the direction of the stable. Shirley listened intently, and heard another scream.

Shirley dashed in the direction from which it had come.

Reaching the stable she paused for a moment, listening. Nothing but silence. But as she was about to move on again, a low groan caught her ear. Again she listened. It came from Gabriel's stall.

Shirley hastened forward.

From Gabriel's stall protruded Gabriel's black head. His eyes flamed angrily and he uttered snorts of rage.

"What's the matter, Gabriel?" asked Shirley, and ran forward.

Gabriel gave a low whinny, and the fire left his eyes. Shirley opened the stall door and stepped inside. And she drew back with a cry of fear.

In the far corner of the stall lay a human form, twisted and out of shape. Shirley ran quickly toward it, and started back with a cry:

"Uncle Frank!"

There was no reply from the silent form. Stooping hastily, Shirley laid hold of the shoulders and dragged the body from the stall, closing the door behind her. Then she bent over the still figure.

The face was caked with blood, and the arms and limbs hung limp. A moment and Uncle Frank's eyes opened and he gave vent to a feeble groan.

Shirley laid him down gently, and ran toward the house.

"Dad!" she cried. "Dad! Gabriel has killed Uncle Frank!"

Mr. Willing roused from his reverie with a start and hurried to the stable. Others who had heard Shirley's words followed him. Soon every human being on the place was crowding around the stable.

Mr. Willing arrived first, and bent over the form of his old servant.

"What's the matter, Frank?" he asked gently.

"Gabriel," gasped the old negro, whose senses had now come back to him. "Gabriel! He dun kill me!"

"Oh, it's not as bad as all that," replied Mr. Willing hopefully. He turned to the crowd of negroes gathered about. "Telephone for Dr. Thompson, quick, one of you. Here," motioning to two others, "help me carry him to the house."

Gently the old darky was picked up and carried to the house, where Mr. Willing laid him upon a sofa on the porch.

Uncle Frank was perfectly conscious now.

"How did it happen, Frank?" asked Mr. Willing. "Surely you knew Gabriel wouldn't allow you in his stall."

"Yessah. But I went—I went in anyhow."

"Why?"

Uncle Frank did not reply. He began to cough.

"Take off his coat, Dad," exclaimed Shirley.

Gently they raised the old negro, and Mr. Willing took hold of his coat. Uncle Frank protested vigorously, but Mr. Willing drew the garment off anyhow, and threw it to a chair across the room.

It left a trail of greenbacks upon the floor.

Greatly surprised, Shirley stooped and picked them up, and, unthinkingly, counted them.

"Five hundred dollars," she exclaimed. "Where in the world did he get all this money?"

She considered the point for some minutes, and then exclaimed aloud.

"Look, Dad," she said, and handed him the roll of bills. "These dropped out of Uncle Frank's pocket."

Mr. Willing looked at his daughter in astonishment.

"Where on earth did he get that money?" he exclaimed.

Shirley smiled slightly.

"Unless I am greatly mistaken," she said, "this is the same five hundred dollars Mr. Jones offered Jimmy Smith if he would 'pull' Gabriel in the Derby."

Mr. Willing seemed staggered.

"Impossible!" he exclaimed. "Why, Frank has been with me for years. He is as faithful as the day is long."

"Will he get well?" asked Shirley abruptly.

Mr. Willing shook his head.

"There is no chance," he replied. "I knew enough to see that. Hardly a rib in his body but is broken. Also, he is badly crushed internally. No, he will not live."

"Then," said Shirley, "he must be made to clear Jimmy before he dies."

Mr. Willing was silent for a long time.

"It is hard to believe," he said at last, "but you must be right."

He approached the bed.

"Frank," he said quietly, "why did you sell me out?"

The old negro rolled his eyes but did not reply.

"Frank," said Mr. Willing again, "you are going to die."

"No! No!" cried the old negro.

"It is true," continued Mr. Willing. "Now, Frank, haven't I always treated you all right?"

"Yessah!"

"Then tell me why you sold me out."

Still the old negro was silent.

"Frank," said Mr. Willing, "did you put the painted bit in Gabriel's stall?"

The old negro nodded.

"Yessah."

He turned his head and sobbed.

"Don't question him any more, Dad," said Shirley, also with tears in her eyes. "It is enough that we know Jimmy is innocent. Let him die in peace."

Suddenly Frank half rose in the bed, and a fit of coughing shook him.

"The end is near," said Mr. Willing quietly. "The doctor will be too late."

The old negro drew himself up high in the bed, and gazed at Mr. Willing. Then, slowly, hesitatingly, he extended an old and wrinkled hand.

"Good-bye, suh," he said, in a low voice. "I'se sorry."

Mr. Willing took the hand without a word. A smile lighted up the old negro's face. Then, suddenly, he fell back.

Mr. Willing bent over him.

"He is dead," he said, and his voice broke.

Shirley turned quietly toward the door.

"Where are you going?" demanded Mr. Willing, in a low voice.

"I am going to bring Jimmy back."

## CHAPTER XXV.—SHIRLEY SAVES JIMMY FROM HIMSELF.

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Arrived in Paris, Shirley went at once to Mr. Wilson's drug store.

"Yes," said Mr. Wilson, in response to Shirley's question. "Jimmy left me this address."

He drew a card from his pocket and passed it to Shirley. The young girl glanced at it and then uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The address was the same hotel as that in which Jones had stopped when Jimmy fell into his power.

"There was a man with him when he gave me the card," Mr. Wilson continued.

"Please describe him," said Shirley anxiously.

Mr. Wilson did so, and Shirley maintained her composure with difficulty.

"Jones," said Shirley to herself as she made her way from the store.

For a moment she hesitated, but for a moment only. Then mounting her horse, she set out resolutely for the address given. She climbed the dark stairs and went at once to the room Jones had occupied the last time she had been there.

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Just as she was about to knock she caught the sound of voices from the inside. One she immediately recognized as Jones' and the other was Jimmy's. Shirley listened.

"Well," said Jones, "I am glad to see that you have come to your senses at last. It's about time."

"I guess you are right," said Jimmy, and to Shirley the voice sounded somewhat listless.

"You will find," said Jones, "that in the long run the only friend you have is yourself. You see how quick Willing jumped onto you—also his daughter. No matter how honest you may be, at the first sign of dishonesty you are kicked out, guilty or innocent."

"You're right," said Jimmy. "I guess I might as well have the game as the name. Now what is it you want me to do?"

"Well," said Jones, "we worked the painted bit trick too soon. The horse will have recovered in time for the race. We must find some other way of getting at him. Do you know when Willing will move him to Louisville?"

"Yes. He will be driven into Paris Monday morning, and shipped that night."

"Good. Then it will be your work to try and slip into the car unobserved. I shall give you a certain powder which you can give the horse. I'll guarantee a dose of it will lay him up for a month."

Jimmy shuddered slightly.

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"It seems a shabby trick to play on Gabriel," he said.

"Well, it's a shabby trick Willing played on you."

"So it is," agreed Jimmy. "But suppose there is another guard with the horse? I may not be able to get in."

"In that event I'll take you to Louisville. A chance will turn up there sooner or later. You see the trouble is that no one but you can go close to him."

"Then how will Mr. Willing race him?"

"Oh, he'll find a jockey some place. They'll bridle the horse some way, and once on his back one jockey will ride him as well as another."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Jimmy, "but maybe you're right."

"I know I am. It has been done many a time. Well, how does the plan strike you?"

"And you say," said Jimmy, "that if I am successful, you will pay me \$500?"

"Yes; as soon as the race is over."

"Then I accept."

"Good. I thought you would come to your senses."

Shirley had listened in horror to this conversation. She could scarcely believe her ears. She had never dreamed that Jimmy would come to this. And she scolded herself roundly, for she believed

it was all her fault.

"I brought him to this," she told herself. "Now I shall have to save him."

With a sudden movement she pushed open the door and stepped inside.

Jones, who had sat with his back to the door, jumped to his feet and faced the intruder. Jimmy, at first sight of Shirley, had turned white; but he kept his seat.

"Jimmy," cried Shirley, rushing up to him, "surely you do not mean what you have said."

Jimmy did not reply.

"Of course, he means it," declared Jones, striding forward. "Why shouldn't he, after the way you people have treated him?"

Shirley ignored Jones, and again spoke to Jimmy.

"We have done you a great injustice," she said simply, "and Dad and I are both as sorry as we can be. I have come to take you back home."

Jimmy looked at her in great surprise.

"Take me home?" he repeated. "Has Mr. Willing discovered his error?"

"Frank has confessed," said Shirley quietly. "He is dead."

"Frank dead!" echoed Jimmy, springing to his feet.

"Yes. Gabriel killed him."

Jimmy bowed his head.

"It is retribution," he said slowly. "The same thing might have happened to me."

Shirley now drew a roll of bills from her purse—the five hundred dollars she had picked up in her father's bedroom when it fell from Uncle Frank's pocket. She had brought it with her unconsciously.

She threw the roll of money on the table, and turned to Jones scornfully.

"There," she said, "is your blood money. Come, Jimmy."

Slowly Jimmy rose to his feet.

But as the lad started to follow Shirley through the door, Jones sprang forward.

"No you don't," he said. "I have had enough of this foolishness." He stepped back quickly, and from his hip pocket produced a revolver.

"Now," he said, "you sit down in this chair, or I'll use this."

Jimmy was a lad of discretion. He sat down.

Shirley turned back from the door.

"Now," said Jones, "I want you to understand that I am not to be trifled with. You are not going to ride Gabriel in the Derby, not if I have to shoot you. Is that plain enough?"

"It's plain enough," said Jimmy.

Jones leaned back in his chair and laughed; then he laid the revolver on the table.

"Good," he said. He turned to Shirley and waved his hand. "You see," he said, "Jimmy elects to remain here."

"I don't believe it," declared Shirley.

"No, Miss Shirley," said Jimmy, "I don't want to remain here, but it looks as though I should have to."

"You don't want to, eh?" said Jones angrily. "Well, I'll make you want to remain."

Leaning suddenly forward, he threw out his right hand and clutched Jimmy by the collar. With a violent jerk he pulled him from his seat clear across the table.

Jimmy squirmed and wriggled, but he could not shake himself free. His kicking feet sent the revolver from the table to the floor, but Jones did not notice it.

Holding Jimmy high in the air with his left hand, with his right he deliberately struck him three heavy blows in the face. Then he let him drop to the floor, where the lad lay unconscious.

"There," said Jones, "I guess that will settle you."

"And I guess this will settle you," came Shirley's low voice.

Turning suddenly, Jones stepped back. Shirley stood facing him with one outstretched arm, and in her hand she clutched the revolver, which she levelled directly at Jones' head.

Jumping quickly around the table just as Jones had dropped Jimmy to the floor, Shirley pounced upon the revolver and rose with it in a steady hand, as Jones turned.

"Now," she said quietly, keeping the weapon levelled squarely at the man's head, "pick Jimmy up and walk out of here ahead of me."

Jones hesitated and Shirley's finger tightened upon the trigger.

"I would advise you to do as I say without delay," she said.

Jones hesitated for only a second longer; then, stooping over, he lifted the boy up in his arms and walked out the door.

Keeping the revolver ready, Shirley followed him.

Shirley had left the horse just outside the hotel. Jones stopped near the animal.

"Put him across the saddle," Shirley commanded.

Jones obeyed.

"Now," said the girl, "take yourself away from here just as quick as you can."

Without a word Jones turned and walked rapidly down the street.

Shirley climbed to the saddle, and taking the reins in her right hand, she clutched Jimmy's inert body with her left.

The girl had no means of telling how badly the lad was hurt, and her one thought was to get him to a doctor as quickly as possible. It was getting late now, and dusk was coming on.

"I guess I had better take him to Mr. Wilson's," said the girl to herself.

She turned her horse in that direction.

Mr. Wilson himself came running out of the door as Shirley dismounted, and lent a hand to carry Jimmy's unconscious body into the store, where they laid him down gently on a sofa in the rear.

Shirley bent over Jimmy anxiously.

"Is he badly hurt, Mr. Wilson?" she asked.

"I am afraid he is," was the slow reply. "His face is badly battered, as you can see. He must have been struck a terrible blow. How did it happen?"

Shirley explained.

"I'll call a doctor immediately," said Mr. Wilson and hastened to the telephone.

The physician arrived a few minutes later.

"He must be taken to the hospital," he declared. "His condition is serious."

"Can I do anything, doctor?" asked Shirley.

"No, not now," was the reply.

"Then I shall go home immediately," said the girl.

She left the store quickly, mounted her horse, and headed homeward through the rapidly gathering darkness.

## CHAPTER XXVI.—OFF TO THE DERBY.

Mr. Willing's anger at the manner in which Jimmy had been injured knew no bounds. It was late when Shirley reached home, but her father wanted to go to town at once and put the police on Jones' trail.

"I don't think it is necessary, Dad," said Shirley. "I feel sure he will trouble us no more."

"But who will ride Gabriel in the Derby?" demanded Mr. Willing.

"Perhaps Jimmy will be well enough to ride when the time comes," suggested Mabel.

"I shall call up the doctor the first thing in the morning and ask the extent of his injuries," promised Mr. Willing.

"If possible," said Shirley, "I think it would be best to take Jimmy to Louisville with us. We can attend to him carefully there, and help to get him in condition for the race."

"A good idea," agreed Mr. Willing, "if the doctor will consent."

"I am sure Jimmy will be all right," said Shirley hopefully. "By the way, Dad, how is Gabriel?"

"Better than could be expected," was the reply. "The veterinary said he would be perfectly fit in a day or two."

After a few further words, all retired with the exception of Leonard, who made his way to the stable, where he was to stand watch, for Mr. Willing had not selected a man to take old Frank's place.

In the morning Mr. Willing learned that Jimmy's condition was not as serious as had been feared. The doctor did not oppose the plan of taking the lad to Louisville on Monday.

"The trip will not hurt him," he declared. "But keep him perfectly quiet after you arrive. With careful nursing he should be in shape to ride Gabriel to victory."

The days passed slowly, but at last the time for departure came. Besides packing her own clothes, Shirley also packed Jimmy's things, and on Monday afternoon Mr. Willing, Mr. Ashton, Leonard, Mabel and Shirley, with Gabriel tied to the rear of the double carriage, were driven to Paris.

Mr. Willing had already shipped his large touring car to Louisville, for he believed he would have need of it there.

Leonard had asked to travel with Gabriel and Mr. Willing, after some hesitancy, had accepted his offer.

The party went first to the freight depot, where Gabriel was led into a car that had been reserved for him. He was tied up at one end, and Leonard took up his position at the other. Besides Mr. Willing's shotgun the young man was armed with a brace of heavy caliber revolvers.

"The first man that sticks his head in this car is likely to get it shot off," said the young man grimly, as the others prepared to leave.

"I am glad that you are here," said Mr. Willing slowly. "I am glad to have some one I can trust in charge of Gabriel. We will be waiting for you when you reach Louisville."

They shook hands all around and left Gabriel and Leonard alone. Immediately the car door was closed, and a few moments later a switch engine hooked onto the car and soon it was coupled to a long train. Half an hour later the train began to move.

In the meantime the others had made their way to the hospital where Jimmy lay. The boy was much better than they had expected to find him, and the doctor, who was at the bedside, assured them that he was well on the road to recovery.

"Just be careful with him," he told them.

Jimmy was carried to the depot on a stretcher and made comfortable in a Pullman car; and soon the party were on their way.

At Lexington there was a long delay, and it was nearly midnight before the train pulled out. Shirley and Mabel took turns watching over Jimmy during the night, but their vigilance was unnecessary. For the lad, once he had closed his eyes, did not open them again until the train was nearing Louisville the following morning.

"Where shall we stop, Dad?" asked Shirley, as they prepared to leave the train.

"Guess we may as well go to the St. Charles," was the reply.

On the platform he summoned a porter, who picked Jimmy up and carried him to a taxi. Mr. Willing climbed in alongside him, and Mr. Ashton and the two girls occupied another.

At the hotel Mr. Willing engaged a suite of six rooms, where all could be comfortable.

"I'll stay here until Saturday," he told the others. "Then I shall stay at the track."

This was Tuesday morning, and the Derby would not be run till the next Monday. In the days that followed, the two girls, when they were not caring for Jimmy, spent their time sight-seeing around town.

Leonard and Gabriel arrived Wednesday afternoon, and Mr. Willing immediately quartered them in his stable at the track, Leonard announcing that he had determined to maintain his watch until the last moment. Shirley and Mabel made several trips to see the horse, and, of course, so did Mr. Willing. There was no doubt in the minds of any that the animal was in perfect condition for the race.

"If Jimmy only gets well in time," said Mr. Willing.

The youngster was improving steadily and there seemed little doubt that he would be well enough to ride by Monday.

As Shirley and Mabel were walking along Market Street Thursday afternoon, the former suddenly caught sight of a familiar figure in the crowd. She took Mabel by the hand and hurried forward.

"What's the matter?" demanded her friend.

"I see some one I want to talk to," was the reply, and the girl quickened her steps.

And then Mabel saw the reason for her chum's haste. At the same moment Shirley called:

"Dick!"

A young man, a few yards ahead of them, turned. As his gaze rested upon the two girls he stopped, and lifted his cap.

Shirley approached quickly and extended her hand, which Dick grasped warmly. Then he shook hands with Mabel.

"It's good to see you again," he said warmly.

"And I'm glad to see you again," said Shirley. "What are you doing in Louisville?"

"I'm working here," was the reply. "I'm office boy in one of the large newspaper offices. Some day," he added, "I hope to be a reporter."

"And I am sure it will not be long before you are," declared Shirley. "How is it that you are not



working this afternoon?"

"I work all night," was the reply. "I go to work at six o'clock."

"Have you seen anything of Jones?" demanded the girl, after some further talk.

"I thought I saw him on the street the other day," was the reply, "but I am not sure. However, I suppose he is here. Have you had any more trouble with him?"

"Yes," replied Shirley, and told him everything that had happened since Dick had left them.

"Well," said Dick, "I should advise that Gabriel be carefully guarded. Jones is a desperate man. There is no telling what he may attempt."

"I do not believe he will be able to do much damage now," declared Shirley. "Leonard is with Gabriel all the time."

"I wouldn't take any chances."

"We won't."

"And you say Jimmy will be in condition to ride?"

"Yes."

"Good; but I must be leaving you now. I hope I shall see you again before you return home," and lifting his hat, Dick turned away.

"Will you go to the Derby with us?" Shirley called after him.

Dick hesitated a moment before replying.

"I shall be glad to," he said at length.

"Then come to the hotel at 10 o'clock Monday morning," said Shirley.

"I'll be there," said the boy, and with another bow he was gone.

Shirley and Mabel returned to the hotel.

"How is everything at the track, Dad?" asked Shirley when her father came in a few moments later.

"First rate."

"Have there been any attempts to injure Gabriel?"

"No. Leonard thought he caught sight of Jones out there yesterday, but he is not sure. I think he must be mistaken. I reckon we are through with Jones."

"I hope so," replied both girls.

"I'll take you all out to-morrow and let you have a look at Gabriel," said Mr. Willing.

"What are we going to do to-night?" asked Shirley.

Mr. Willing smiled at her.

"What would my little girl like to do?" he asked.

"Well, I would like to go to the theater, but there is no one to leave with Jimmy."

"I'll stay behind, and you can go with Ashton," declared Mr. Willing.

And this plan, after some discussion, was followed.

It was late when the three returned to the hotel, and knowing that they must be up early in the morning, they all went to bed immediately.

"Don't you think Jimmy should have a little exercise, Dad?" asked Shirley, just before telling her father good-night.

"I had thought of that," was the reply. "If he is feeling strong enough to-morrow afternoon, I shall take him out to the track for a few minutes. Besides, he should have a look at the course before the race."

"He is certainly getting along splendidly," declared Shirley. "I feel sure a little outing will do him good."

Jimmy, who had overheard this conversation, smiled.

"I should like to see Gabriel," he said quietly. "I want to tell him that we must win this race."

"Oh, he knows that now, I'm sure," said Shirley with a laugh. "I've told him all about it myself."

"Then there is nothing to be feared," said Jimmy. "Gabriel will do anything for you."

"Well, young people," said Mr. Willing, "you have talked enough. It's time for you to get to bed."

And soon all were sleeping soundly.

The following afternoon, in the touring car, the entire Willing party was driven to the track. They went immediately to Gabriel's quarters in the training field, where, after a sharp knock upon the door, Leonard admitted them.

"Anything new?" asked Mr. Willing, as he entered.

"Not a thing," replied Leonard with a smile. "Everything's quiet and serene."

"Good. I've brought you some visitors."

Leonard stepped back, and Shirley, Mabel, Mr. Ashton and Jimmy stepped inside.

Although somewhat weak and a trifle pale Jimmy seemed to be almost himself again. He walked slowly, but said he was feeling splendidly.

"Where is Gabriel?" he asked.

Leonard pointed and Jimmy hurried forward as fast as his weakened condition would permit.

Gabriel received him with a whinny of delight, and throwing his arms about the big black horse's neck, Jimmy talked to him long and lovingly.

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Then he rejoined the others.

"Gabriel has promised he will win the race," Jimmy whispered to Shirley.

"Then it is just as good as won," declared the girl.

"Jimmy," called Mr. Willing at that moment, "would you like to have a look at the course?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, and went forward.

"I'm going too," declared Shirley.

"And I," said Ashton.

"I'd like to have a look myself," said Leonard. "I haven't had a chance to get out and look about since I have been here."

"But who will stay with Gabriel?" asked Mr. Willing.

"I'll stay," Mabel volunteered.

Mr. Willing hesitated for a moment, then consented.

"I think it will be all right for a few minutes," he said.

"Mabel, don't go too near Gabriel," said Shirley. "He might not like it."

"Don't worry," was the laughing rejoinder. "I won't go in his stall. I know as well as you do that he wouldn't permit any one but you and Jimmy in there."

Mabel sat down in a chair to await the return of the others, who now went out the door.

Gabriel, with his head out of his stall door, eyed the girl searchingly; and looking up suddenly, Mabel caught his eye and smiled. Gabriel's ears twitched, and he didn't seem half as ferocious as usual.

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"Strange," mused Mabel. "He never let me get that close to him before."

At that moment the door behind her slammed with a bang. Turning quickly Mabel started back with a cry. She was face to face with Jones.

"So," said Jones with a sneering smile, "we meet again! Now you listen to me, and do as I say. I haven't much time and I don't want to waste any. You get out of here just as fast as you can. Do you hear?"

Mabel made no reply, but backed toward Gabriel's stall. Jones took a step forward.

"Do you hear me?" he cried angrily.

Mabel was badly frightened, but tried not to show it.

Raising her hand, she pointed to the door.

"Leave here at once," she commanded. "Mr. Willing will be back here in a few minutes and he will attend to you."

Jones smiled again.

"I have plenty of time to do what I came for," he said. "Get away from that stall."

Mabel only shrunk back closer.

Gabriel, his head protruding from his stall, watched this scene with dilated eyes and quivering nostrils. He stamped angrily, and uttered several snorts.

223

As Jones took another step forward, Mabel advanced, as though to meet him. Then, as Jones halted, she put her hand behind her and opened the catch to Gabriel's stall. Quickly she pushed the door back, and leaping suddenly inside, she closed it again.

Jones, with a cry of rage, leaped forward, but as he did so Gabriel tossed his head angrily and the man stepped back in fear.

"Now," said Mabel quietly, "unless you leave here immediately I shall open this door and let

Gabriel at you.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” sneered Jones.

He glanced quickly about him, his face alight with an evil smile. He took a few steps back, and stooping, came up with a gun in his hands.

“You had better get down out of the way,” he said. “I’ll take a shot at Gabriel with this. It won’t kill him, but I guess it will do enough damage to keep him out of the race.”

He brought the revolver to his shoulder and took deliberate aim.

“Get down quick!” he commanded. “You might get hurt!”

Mabel glanced about her.

Hanging on a nail from the side of the stall she saw a curry comb and brush. With a quick leap she seized them, and then, running forward, she threw them with all her strength.

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Her aim was perfect, and true to its mark the heavy brush shot forward, catching Jones squarely in the forehead.

Jones staggered back and dropped his weapon.

But the blow was not hard enough to knock him down, and he sprang up again with a cry of rage and stooped to pick up the gun.

At that instant Mabel opened wide Gabriel’s stall.

With an almost human cry, Gabriel, who had been jumping about angrily, charged through the door straight at Jones. The latter saw him coming, and leaped aside, and Gabriel, striking out with his forefeet, missed.

Jones ran quickly toward the door and laid hold of the knob.

But before he could turn it the horse was again upon him. Snorting, he shoved out his head, and his teeth met in Jones’ arm.

Jones shrieked with the pain of it.

Mabel, cowering down in the stall, began to cry.

Three times Jones, his arm dripping blood, dashed around the place with Gabriel in pursuit. The man was badly frightened, but fear lent fleetness to his feet. He avoided Gabriel’s teeth narrowly several times and so far had succeeded in dodging the flying hoofs.

But such a struggle could have but one outcome.

225

Suddenly Jones found himself in a corner from which there was no escape.

Gabriel reared high in the air, and his forefeet, in their descent, struck Jones squarely upon the head. The man went down in a heap. Gabriel, seeing his foe prostrate on the floor, stood off and made ready to leap upon him again.

But at that moment the door opened and Jimmy dashed inside, closely followed by Shirley and the others.

Jimmy leapt for Gabriel’s halter, but missed.

Once more the animal reared high in the air, and his heavy feet would have crushed out Jones’ life had it not been for Shirley’s prompt action.

She jumped in front of Gabriel and into the air, caught him by the halter; then, springing aside, she drew herself clear of the heavy hoofs just as they came down with a crash.

But she had succeeded in her object, and Gabriel’s feet missed Jones’ head by the fraction of an inch.

Shirley clung tightly to the halter.

For an instant Gabriel’s eyes continued to flame, but after one quick glance at the girl who had him, he became quiet. His nostrils still quivered with anger, but the fire had left his eyes. He stood perfectly still.

Leonard bent over the still form of Jones. Stooping, he lifted the man’s head to his knee, and at the same moment Jones’ consciousness returned.

226

He took in the scene before him, and staggered to his feet, blood covering his face. He glanced once at the faces about him, and then made for the door.

Mr. Willing intercepted him.

“I have had enough of you. The next time you cross my path I shall turn you over to the authorities. I have a notion to do it right now. Get out of my place, and stay out!”

Without a word, Jones slunk to the door and disappeared.

“Where is Mabel?” demanded Mr. Ashton in great anxiety, at this juncture.

Mabel was not in sight.

All glanced about, and then, from the direction of Gabriel’s stall, came a faint moan.

Shirley ran forward ahead of the others, and in an instant had her friend’s head in her lap.

"Water quick!" she commanded.

Leonard hastened forward with a bucket of water.

"Is she hurt?" asked Mr. Ashton, excitedly, pushing the others away.

Shirley made a careful examination of her friend.

"No," she replied. "I don't see a mark. She must have fainted."

Mabel moaned again, and a moment later opened her eyes. Seeing Shirley, she threw her arms around her friend's neck and broke into tears again. The excitement had been too much for her.

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A few minutes later, however, the flow of tears ceased and Mabel sat up.

"Tell us all about it," said Shirley, stroking her chum's hair.

In a few words Mabel complied.

"You are a brave girl," Shirley told her. "Gabriel might have killed you when you entered his stall."

"No, he wouldn't do that," was Mabel's reply. "We had already become friends."

She rose, walked over to the big horse and threw her arms about his neck. Gabriel submitted to the caress.

"Well," said Mr. Willing, "let's get back to the hotel."

Shirley led Gabriel back to his stall, and leaving Leonard once more on guard, the others set out for their hotel.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.—THE JOCKEY.

228

It was the day of the great race.

Shirley jumped out of bed eagerly, and shook Mabel, who was still sleeping soundly.

"Mabel! Mabel!" she called.

Mabel turned sleepily.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Time to get up," was the reply. "It's almost eight o'clock. This is Derby day."

"So it is," exclaimed Mabel, awake in an instant now.

She jumped out of bed and the girls dressed quickly.

Mr. Willing and the others were already up and dressed when the girls came from their rooms, and they all went down to breakfast together.

It was during the meal that Mr. Willing was suddenly called by a page.

"Gentleman to see you sir," said the boy.

Mr. Willing excused himself and left the dining room. He was back in a few minutes, however, and said to Shirley:

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"The rest of you will have to come to the track by yourselves. I have some business to attend to. I'll meet you there. I'll leave the car for you."

Mr. Ashton spoke up.

"I have some business matters to see about also," he said. "I'll go with you, and Jimmy and the girls can use the car."

This plan was agreed upon.

"By the way, Dad," said Shirley suddenly, as her father rose to go, "Dick is going with us."

"Dick!" repeated Mr. Willing. "Who in the world is Dick?"

Shirley explained.

"Bring him by all means," said her father. "I shall be glad to see him."

At the door he turned.

"Meet me in our quarters at 1 o'clock," he said; then to Jimmy: "Jimmy, you had better dress here in the hotel."

Jimmy answered that he would do so, and Mr. Willing and Mr. Ashton took their departure.

The girls waited impatiently for Dick to arrive. He was announced sharp on the stroke of ten, and was shown to their suite.

"We had better leave here about noon," he said. "The crowd will be immense and it may take us

some time to get to the track.”

This was agreed upon.

The four strolled about the street until eleven o'clock, when they returned to the hotel for lunch.

Jimmy partook of a very light meal, for he wished to be in exact condition for the race. He left the table before the others, announcing that he would go upstairs and change to his jockey clothes.

Fifteen minutes later the others followed him.

There was not a sound in the room when the three entered and a peculiar feeling came over Shirley.

“Jimmy!” she called suddenly.

There was no answer, and again the girl called.

Still no answer.

“What in the world can be the matter?” asked the girl anxiously. She turned to Dick. “Will you go into Jimmy’s room and see what is wrong?” she asked.

Dick disappeared into the other room and the two girls waited nervously.

They heard Dick’s voice raised in an exclamation, and he came dashing back.

“Don’t be alarmed,” he said quietly, as the girls rose and ran to him.

“What’s the matter?” demanded Shirley, wringing her hands. “Where is Jimmy?”

“He is in there,” said Dick. “But he has been hurt.”

“Hurt!” exclaimed both girls in one voice.

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Well,” said Dick quietly, “he was struck over the head with a club.”

The girls cried out in dismay.

“He is still unconscious,” Dick continued. “I found him on the floor. I tried to revive him, but it was no use. I laid him on the bed.”

“What are we to do?” said Mabel. “Gabriel will not be able to run.”

“Never mind the race now,” said Shirley. “Let’s call a doctor for Jimmy. His life is more important than the race.”

She stepped quickly to the telephone and summoned the hotel physician. Then all went into Jimmy.

The lad had not had time to change into his jockey costume. Apparently he had been struck down the moment he entered the room.

As Shirley bent over him, he moved restlessly and opened his eyes. He saw Shirley, and smiled slightly.

“What’s the matter, Jimmy?” asked the girl gently. “How did it happen?”

“I don’t know,” came the weak reply. “Something hit me as I stepped in the door.”

Dick came up to the bed at this point. In his hand he held a short cudgel.

“Here is the weapon,” he said quietly.

“But who did it?” asked Shirley.

“It’s some of Jones’ work, I should say,” said Mabel.

“Of course,” agreed Dick.

At this moment Jimmy tried to sit up.

“What time is it?” he asked in a feeble voice.

Shirley looked at her watch.

“Quarter after twelve,” she said.

“Then I must get up,” declared Jimmy. “I must get to the track.”

A knock sounded at the door, and the hotel physician entered. He made a quick examination.

“Can I ride in the Derby this afternoon?” asked Jimmy eagerly.

The doctor shook his head.

“You’ll stay in bed for a week,” he said quietly.

“But I must get to the track,” said Jimmy. “Mr. Willing is depending on me! I must go.”

“It is impossible,” said the physician.

“Then what shall we do?” cried the boy. “Who will ride Gabriel?”

"I guess Gabriel will not run," said the physician quietly.

"But he will," cried Shirley, "and he shall win too."

The others looked at the girl in surprise.

"What do you mean?" demanded Mabel.

The girl took a long breath, then said quietly:

"I will ride him!"

The others uttered exclamations of surprise.

"But you can't, Shirley," protested Mabel.

"But I will," came the firm reply.

"Your father would never hear of such a thing."

"He doesn't need to know anything about it. But the rest of you must help me. I'll dress here in Jimmy's clothes. No one will know the difference. I have played Jimmy once and I can do it again. But you, Mabel, and you, Dick, must keep between me and father as much as possible."

"What will your father say when he fails to see you at the track? He will want to know what has become of you."

"Then you must tell him something that will satisfy him for the time."

Shirley looked at her watch again.

"Twenty minutes past twelve. I shall have to hurry," she said.

Quickly she went to Jimmy's trunk and pulled forth his jockey clothes. Then she hastened to her own room.

The others waited her return without a word.

"How do I look?" came a voice from the doorway at last.

Jimmy, Dick, Mabel and the doctor took one look and cried out in surprise.

"Great Scott! I wouldn't have believed it possible," declared the physician.

In her red and blue costume—the Willing colors—Shirley indeed made a pretty picture. Her cap was pulled down well over her face and her thick hair was coiled up under it. In her hand she held Jimmy's short whip.

"Will I do?" she asked.

"You look enough like this lad to be his twin," said the physician quietly. "You'll do."

"We must hurry," declared Shirley. "Ready, Mabel? Ready, Dick?"

"Yes," they answered.

Shirley approached Jimmy.

"I'll try not to lose your reputation," she said gently. "I'll do the best I know how, and I am sure that Gabriel will try for me."

"There is no doubt about that," replied Jimmy. "With you on Gabriel's back, I feel more certain of the outcome of the race than I would if I were there myself."

Shirley held out her hand and the lad grasped it warmly.

"Be very careful," he warned her. "Watch the others closely. They will probably try some crookedness, for they must all be in it together. Keep as clear of the field as possible, and let Gabriel run his own race."

"I shall remember," said Shirley. "And now good-bye."

She pressed Jimmy's hand gently and stepped toward the door. The physician stopped her.

"I want to say," he declared, "that you are the bravest girl I have ever seen. I am sure that you will win."

"Thank you, doctor," replied Shirley with a slight smile. "Take good care of Jimmy."

"I shall stay right here until you return," said the doctor, knowing this would make Shirley less worried about Jimmy during her absence.

Shirley nodded and passed out of the room ahead of her friends.

The Willing touring car stood in front of the hotel, and the chauffeur—a man Mr. Willing had hired because he knew the town—was waiting.

Shirley stood aside while Mabel and Dick climbed in, and then she got in after them.

"To the race track," she commanded, "and hurry."

Mabel looked at her watch.

"Twenty-five minutes to one," she remarked.

"Good," replied Shirley. "We'll make it."

All Louisville, it seemed, was at the Derby that day.

From early in the morning until after the races started, crowds continued to pour into the grandstand and overflow into the paddock. Thousands of women, in brilliant costumes, gave a picturesque touch to the scene. It was indeed a gala day.

Gaily decked in bright colors, the grandstand presented an attractive appearance. Everywhere happiness and light-heartedness prevailed. It was the day of the year when Louisville gave itself over to frolic.

The races were scheduled to start at 2 o'clock, and as the winner of the first event flashed under the wire the crowd cheered. But in spite of these first events—good races though they were—the crowd waited impatiently for the superb horses that were to fight for the Derby.

It was a few minutes after 1 o'clock when Shirley, Mabel and Dick reached the track, and hurried to the Willing quarters. Mr. Willing was pacing up and down anxiously when they appeared, and Mr. Ashton and Leonard were beside him.

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Gabriel, all ready for the race, stood quietly nearby.

"Well, here you are at last," said Mr. Willing as the three approached them. "Where is Shirley?"

"Oh, she will be here soon," said Mabel. "Don't worry about her. Let me introduce Dick Stanley, Mr. Willing, the boy who came so nobly to our aid."

Mr. Willing extended his hand and the lad grasped it.

"I am glad to know you," said the former. "Allow me to thank you for the service you rendered me."

"It was nothing," said Dick and stepped back.

All this time Shirley had contrived to keep her back to her father, for she was well aware that if he should recognize her he would not permit her to ride.

At that moment Leonard approached.

He looked sharply at the supposed jockey, and then stepped back suddenly and opened his mouth to speak.

Shirley laid a finger to her lips in a quick gesture, and Leonard closed his mouth without a word. Nevertheless he continued to stare at her in amazement.

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Mr. Willing, not suspecting anything of this nature, did not glance closely at the jockey, which was fortunate. Shirley kept her cap pulled well down, and thus avoided detection.

"The Derby will be called a few minutes after three," said Mr. Willing. "Are you ready, Jimmy?"

"Yes, sir," replied Shirley, imitating Jimmy's voice as nearly as she could.

"Are you feeling perfectly fit?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good."

He led the way to the scales, where Shirley was weighed.

"Ninety-eight," said Mr. Willing, stepping back. "Good."

The time came at last, and Shirley, seated firmly upon Gabriel's back, rode slowly toward the barrier. Mr. Willing followed, giving last advice.

"Get away as well as you can," he told her, "and give Gabriel his head. Under no circumstances use the whip. Let Gabriel run his own race."

Shirley nodded her understanding of these orders, but made no reply. Mr. Willing stepped back and joined the others.

"I wonder where Shirley is?" he said.

"Oh, perhaps she stopped to talk to some one," said Mabel quietly.

"Well, I guess she is safe enough," said Mr. Willing. "Come."

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He led the way to the paddock and the others followed.

After some trouble they succeeded in gaining advantageous places, and turned their eyes toward the track. And at that moment a familiar voice near Mabel said:

"Great Scott! Gabriel is going to run."

Mabel turned and glanced at the speaker. It was Jones, and even as Mabel looked he turned upon the man beside him.

"I thought you told me you had fixed the jockey!" he exclaimed.

"I did," he declared. "I knocked him cold."

"Then how is it that he is in the race?"

"I don't know. I don't see how it is possible. Maybe they got another boy at the last minute."

Jones looked long through his field glasses.

"No. It's the same," he declared.

Again he whirled upon the man angrily.

"You have betrayed me," he cried.

"It's a lie," said the other.

Jones moved toward him, and the other turned and ran. Jones ran after him.

In the meantime, Shirley, hunched almost on Gabriel's neck, had ridden forth with the others. The reins she held in her right hand with the whip, while with the other she stroked her horse's neck.

"You know me, don't you, Gabriel?" she whispered.

Gabriel's reply was a low whinny.

Shirley patted him gently.

"And we are going to win, aren't we, Gabriel?"

Again the big horse whinnied.

At the post Shirley turned in alongside the others. Upon her right, nearest the rail outside, was another great black horse, and Shirley did not need to be told that this was Jupiter, the animal upon which the bookmakers were depending to win the race.

He was a wicked-looking brute, and his eyes were fiery red.

"I'll have to watch him," thought the girl.

She gazed at the other eight entries. Noble-looking animals they were, the best of Kentucky stock. She noticed several of the jockeys eyeing her queerly.

"Yes, I shall have to be careful," she said.

The signal to line up at the barrier was given.

The high-strung horses moved about nervously. A pistol cracked, and they were off down the track. But the starter called them back. It was a false start.

Shirley showed superb horsemanship. She maneuvered for position as well as any of the rest, and just before the pistol cracked the second time, she was but two removed from the inside rail.

Next to her, closer to the rail, was Jupiter.

"They're off!"

The cry came from the grandstand, and was followed by a prolonged cheer.

Shirley found herself slightly behind the leaders at the first jump, but she did not worry. She knew what Gabriel could do, and she was perfectly satisfied with her position.

In a bunch the field swept down the track. Shirley found herself wedged in between Jupiter and a powerful sorrel on her other side. In this way they continued for the first half-mile.

Gradually the three leaders, Jupiter, Gabriel and the big sorrel forged ahead of the field, and at the three-quarter mark the sorrel dropped behind. He was unable to keep up the terrific pace.

Jupiter was still running slightly ahead and going easily. Not once had his jockey used his whip or urged him to greater effort. Nor had there as yet been any attempt at unfairness.

Shirley held a tight rein upon Gabriel, and the animal had not yet let himself out. In spite of her father's instructions, Shirley was riding her own race. She believed that she knew more about Gabriel than either her father or Jimmy.

And now, with the finish a quarter of a mile ahead, Shirley let Gabriel out slightly, and he came up on even terms with Jupiter in a few strides.

Then Jupiter's rider got busy. He loosened his reins and began to coax. But Gabriel remained on even terms. Jupiter's jockey stopped coaxing and began to ply his whip, and at the first smart blow, Jupiter leaped ahead.

Shirley let Gabriel out another notch, and then another, and once more the two big black horses were neck and neck. Try as he would, Jupiter could not shake Gabriel off.

Glancing ahead, Shirley saw that the finish was close in front. The crowd had gone wild. With the horses rushing for the wire, bedlam had broken loose. Flags and pennants waved and men and women shouted hoarsely.

But of this Shirley neither heard nor saw anything. Her eyes were fixed upon the wire and she knew nothing but that Gabriel must be the first under it.

And now, as the two great horses thundered down to the finish, Shirley leaned forward on Gabriel's neck and whispered to him. The noble animal responded, and with a tremendous leap forged ahead of his rival.

At the same moment, Jupiter's rider, realizing that he could not overtake his opponent, lashed out



with his whip.

The blow caught Shirley squarely across the face, and she reeled, and for a moment Gabriel was almost thrown off his stride. But the gallant horse recovered quickly, and with a last desperate effort, leaped forward under the wire—a winner by a neck.

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Shirley, in great pain, still had the presence of mind to pull Gabriel in, and sick and faint, she headed him quickly for the Willing stable.

But Mr. Willing and the others, as well as the rest of the crowd, had seen the cowardly act, and a great cry of anger rose in the air. Mr. Willing made for his stable at top speed, the others following.

At his stable, Gabriel stopped.

Shirley swayed in the saddle and toppled over; and Mr. Willing, running up at that moment, arrived just in time to catch her in his arms.

Gently he laid her on the ground. Her cap fell from her head, and her long hair came tumbling down.

Mr. Willing stood still in his surprise.

“Shirley!” he cried, and gathered her up in his arms.

## CHAPTER XXX.—THE PUNISHMENT OF JONES.

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“Shirley!” cried Mr. Willing again, and looked at his daughter in alarm.

At this moment Mabel and Leonard came running up, having outdistanced Mr. Ashton.

Mr. Willing turned to them quickly.

“Dr. Thompson is back there in the paddock,” he said, pointing. “Hurry! and see if you can find him.”

Mabel hurried away in response to this command. She was fortunate enough to find the physician after a brief search, and she conducted him back to where Mr. Willing still held Shirley in his arms.

The doctor laid her gently on the soft ground and bent over her.

“Nothing serious,” he said rising at last. “She seems to have fainted more because of the excitement than anything else. She’ll come to presently.”

Dr. Thompson proved a good prophet. Five minutes later Shirley opened her eyes and smiled up at her father.

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“Did we win?” she asked somewhat feebly.

“Yes, you won,” replied Mr. Willing in a low voice. “But, Shirley, why did you do it?”

“Somebody had to do it, Dad,” was the reply. “I knew I was the only one that could ride Gabriel outside of Jimmy.”

“But I would rather have had Gabriel scratched than to have you take such a risk,” said Mr. Willing.

“I know that. That’s why I didn’t tell you.”

Mr. Willing turned to Mabel, as Shirley fell back, tired out, and closed her eyes.

“What is the matter with Jimmy?” he demanded.

Mabel explained.

Mr. Willing grew very angry.

“I have had enough of this,” he declared. “I shall notify the police as soon as we get back down town. I’ll see that Jones answers for his actions. I’ll prosecute him to the full extent of the law.”

Half an hour later, with Shirley lying in the rear seat, the car, also bearing Mr. Willing, Mr. Ashton, Dick, Mabel and Leonard, was speeding down town.

By the time it reached the hotel Shirley had so far recovered that she was able to make her way to their apartments unassisted. True to his promise, the hotel physician had remained with Jimmy all this time.

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“And did you win the race?” was his first question, as Shirley entered the room.

“Yes,” was the girl’s smiling rejoinder. “We won.”

“Good,” cried the physician. He rose from his chair. “You have no further need of me,” he said, “I shall be going.”

He bowed and made his departure.

After a few words with Jimmy, Mr. Willing announced his intention of going immediately to the police station and swearing out a warrant against Jones. Shirley tried to turn him from his purpose, but in vain. Then she declared that she would go with him.

All Mr. Willing's objections went for naught, so the two started out together. As they were driving along the street, Shirley cried out suddenly and caught her father by the arm.

"What's the matter now?" he demanded.

"There is Jones," said Shirley, pointing to the sidewalk.

Mr. Willing followed the direction of her finger. Sure enough, there was Jones, deep in conversation with another man.

Mr. Willing ordered the chauffeur to stop the car, and he leaped out.

"What are you going to do, Dad?" called Shirley, in alarm.

Mr. Willing vouchsafed no reply.

He walked directly up to Jones, who at that moment was looking the other way. He took him by the arm and swung him about, so that they stood face to face.

As Jones, greatly surprised, would have stepped back, Mr. Willing raised one arm, and deliberately slapped the man across the face.

"Perhaps that will teach you, sir," he exclaimed, "to let me and mine alone in the future."

Jones was no coward. He wiped a few drops of blood from his lips, and stepping suddenly forward, aimed a heavy blow at Mr. Willing.

But the latter, in spite of his age, was still agile and strong. He sprang to one side, and avoided the blow, but then, stepping in close, sent his fist into the other's face with all his power.

Jones struck the sidewalk like a log. His companion took to his heels.

A crowd, attracted by the scuffle, began to gather.

Presently Jones pulled himself together and scrambled to his feet. Mr. Willing still stood with clenched fists and set lips.

"Have you had enough?" he asked. "Or shall I give you another dose?"

For one moment it seemed that Jones would renew the fight; but after a look at the rapidly gathering crowd, he turned and walked away.

"Three cheers for the old boy," shouted a youngster in the crowd.

The cheers were given with a will.

At that moment a hand was laid on Mr. Willing's shoulder. The latter turned to face a policeman.

"You are under arrest," said the officer. "Come with me."

In vain Mr. Willing protested. The officer was firm. Finally Mr. Willing consented to go without trouble.

"If you'll step into my car, I'll drive you to the station," he said.

The policeman accepted this offer.

Shirley, perceiving her father in the hands of the law, was frightened. Mr. Willing reassured her, however, when he stepped into the car, and ordered the chauffeur to drive to police headquarters.

As they continued down the street, the crowd gave three more ringing cheers. Mr. Willing was forced to smile.

At the police station Mr. Willing had little difficulty explaining matters satisfactorily to the sergeant, and he was allowed to go.

"You did perfectly right," declared the old sergeant.

He shook hands with Mr. Willing and his daughter, and wished them good luck. The latter then returned to their hotel.

"I guess that was enough punishment for Jones," said Mr. Willing cheerfully in relating the occurrence to Mr. Ashton a short time later.

"Indeed it was," was the reply, "and it also saved you a lot of court trouble and notoriety."

"Right you are," agreed Mr. Willing.

Two days longer the party stayed in Louisville, and then set out for home. Jimmy's injuries were getting along nicely and no serious results were anticipated. The mark on Shirley's face, caused by the blow of the whip, was also rapidly disappearing.

An hour before it was time for their train to leave, Dick was announced. Shirley welcomed him warmly, as did Mr. Willing.

"My daughter has told me of you," said the latter, "and I should be glad to have you go home with us. I can offer you work on my farm."

"Thank you, sir," replied Dick, "but, for the present, I prefer to remain here."

"But," protested Mr. Willing, "surely you have not such a remunerative place here that makes you so anxious to stay?"

"No, sir. I am only an office boy in a big newspaper office, but some of these days, sir, I hope to climb. Within the year I expect to be on the reportorial staff of the *Star*."

"Well, you know your own mind best. However, I should be pleased to have you go with us."

"And I should be pleased to go, sir."

"Perhaps he will come and spend Christmas with us," suggested Shirley.

"I certainly shall, if it is possible," replied the lad. "But you know, Miss Willing, a newspaper man works holidays as well as others. However, it may be that I can get off."

"You must get away," declared Shirley. "We shall expect you."

"I will do my best," the lad promised.

"Well," said Mr. Willing, "we shall have to be getting down toward the station. It is getting late."

Dick shook hands all around and bowed himself out

"A very manly and likeable boy," said Mr. Willing, as he disappeared through the door.

"Indeed he is," replied Shirley.

An hour later the party was speeding along in the direction of Lexington.

Gabriel already had been shipped home, and they knew that they would find him there, safe and sound, when they returned. Shirley had not seen the horse since just after the race, and was anxious to call upon him in his own home.

So, the first thing after their arrival at the farm, she, Mabel, Leonard and Jimmy made straight for Gabriel's stall. The racehorse received them with whinnies of joy.

"Good old Gabriel," said Shirley, dashing into the stall and throwing her arms around the animal's neck. "I knew you would win for us. And think what you have accomplished. You have saved the farm for Dad and me."

The others now approached, and Gabriel put aside his customary unfriendliness toward strangers, and allowed all to pat him to their hearts' content.

"Well," said Leonard, "I have had the time of my life here, and I am sorry to say that I shall have to leave you to-morrow."

"Leave us?" exclaimed Shirley in surprise.

"Yes. I start home to-morrow night."

Both girls heard this piece of news with regret, for both had become greatly attached to young Wolfe.

At this juncture Jimmy, who was now able to get around, turned to Shirley.

"And had it not been for you, Miss Shirley," he said seriously, "there is no telling what might have happened to me. Certainly you saved me from myself."

Shirley extended her hand, and the boy grasped it warmly.

"I could never have rested in peace had you gone away, Jimmy Smith," she said with a faint smile. "I shall never forget that it was a few unthoughtful words of mine that almost sent you on the wrong road."

"Don't talk like that, Miss Shirley," said Jimmy. "You know better."

"Of course, she does," said Leonard and Mabel in the same voice.

"Well," said Shirley, laughing, "we won't argue about it. Everything has turned out all right, and I am sure that each of us has had a good time."

"Indeed we have," exclaimed the others.

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Here for the time being, we shall take our leave of the girls, their fathers and friends. But we shall meet them again before long, in a second volume entitled "The Blue Grass Seminary Girls' Christmas Holidays" or "A Four-Weeks' Tour with the Glee Club."

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