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A. L. Burt Company, Publishers New York

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Author of "A Debt of Honor," "In Search of Treasure," "Ben Bruce," "The Errand Boy," Etc.

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CONTENTS

BERNARD BROOKS' ADVENTURES.

CHAPTER I. BERNARD BROOKS.

You're a bad lot, Bernard Brooks. I don't think I ever knew a wuss boy."

"Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Snowdon. Let me suggest, however, that *wuss* is hardly correct English."

The speaker was fifteen years of age, but as tall as most boys of seventeen. He had a bold, aggressive manner, which he only assumed with those he thought were hostile or unfriendly.

He could be a devoted friend, and a loyal subordinate to one who gained his good will. Mr. Snowdon he did not look upon as a friend, though he had been placed in his charge two months before by a cousin of his deceased father.

Ezekiel Snowdon, a man of perhaps sixty, tall and with stooping shoulders, colored with anger at the boy's sarcastic words.

He claimed to have been educated at a small Western college, and on the strength of it had established himself in the country and advertised for private pupils at a low rate.

These were mostly young, and not competent to see his deficiencies, but Bernard was old enough and well enough educated to perceive and comment on them. This greatly annoyed Mr. Snowdon, who felt that the boy did not treat him with proper respect.

"Quit your impudence!" said Snowdon with a vicious look in his greenish hued eyes. "I don't need no criticisms from a whipper snapper like you."

"I intended it for your benefit, Mr. Snowdon," said Bernard demurely. "Besides, you criticise me. You called me a bad lot."

"And so you are. A wuss—a worse boy I never seen."

"Saw would be more correct, Mr. Snowdon."

"Young man, you'd better look out. I won't submit to your aggravating impudence. Besides, you are ignorant of the fact that Chaucer and Spenser use seen for saw. Them are my favorite poets, so it is not strange that I should occasionally make use of their diction."

"Thank you for the information, Mr. Snowdon. I did not know that you had such high authority. I have read a little of Chaucer and Spenser, and I never observed the word you mention."

"Perhaps you have not read the same works as I," said Mr. Snowdon.

"Very likely," remarked Bernard, struggling to suppress a smile.

"It might be well another time to be sure of your ground before you try to criticise your elders."

"Yes, sir," said Bernard, with a meekness which the twinkle in his eye belied.

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," remarked Mr. Snowdon with dignity.

"I am sure you are a good judge on that point, Mr. Snowdon," said Bernard with demure face, so that his elder did not catch the covert sarcasm.

"I am glad you give me credit for something," rejoined the teacher. "Now you hear what I say. I won't have you goin' round with that Nat Barclay, as you did last evening."

"What's the matter with Nat Barclay?"

"He was once a pupil of mine, and he defied my authority, so I had to discharge him."

"That isn't what he says, Mr. Snowdon."

"What does he say?"

"He says that he found out you didn't know enough to teach him, and got his father to take him away from your school."

"Then the boy lied," said Mr. Snowdon, coloring deeply. "I'd like to thrash him."

"I dare say you would, Mr. Snowdon, but I don't think it would be exactly safe. Nat wouldn't stand it."

"He'd have to stand it, if I took it into my head to chastise him."

"If you had a scrimmage, I'd bet on Nat," said the bold pupil.

"Do you consider *scrimmage* a classical word?" asked Mr. Snowdon with a sneer.

"Well, not exactly. I suppose you know that Dryden uses it," said Bernard with a bold flight of imagination.

Now Mr. Snowdon was not sufficiently versed in English classical writers to know whether this statement was correct or not. So he equivocated to conceal his ignorance.

"Dryden is not always a correct writer," he added. "I never advise my pupils to imitate him. But that is neither here nor there. I have told you that I don't want you to go round with Nat Barclay."

"Why not? I am sure he is of good family. His father is a clergyman."

"It is from respect to his father that I did not chastise him when he was in my school."

"He says his father does not think much of your scholarship."

"It is because he has poisoned his father's mind against me by false and mendacious charges and statements. I can afford to look upon these with contempt since my alma mater bestowed upon me the honorary degree of P. D. at the last commencement."

"What does P. D. stand for?"

"Doctor of Philosophy," answered Mr. Snowdon in a lofty tone.

"Oh, I thought it might mean something else."

"What?" asked Mr. Snowdon suspiciously.

"Oh, it isn't material. I don't want to display my ignorance," said Bernard meekly.

"I am glad you are becoming sensible."

Mr. Snowdon did not press the question, as he conjectured that P. D., as understood by Bernard, would stand for something far from complimentary.

“I am going to the post-office, Mr. Snowdon. Can I do anything for you?”

“You may inquire if there are any letters for me.”

“All right, sir.”

Bernard was about to leave the room, when he turned as if struck by a sudden thought.

“May I inquire, Mr. Snowdon,” he asked, “what authority you have for calling me ‘a bad lot’?”

“I have the authority of Cornelius McCracken, your guardian.”

“Does he say I am a bad lot?” asked Bernard, his brow contracting.

“Yes, he did.”

“When did he say it?”

“In a letter I received last week.”

“May I see the letter, Mr. Snowdon?”

“Yes,” answered the teacher, “if it will give you any satisfaction.”

“It will give me satisfaction to know exactly how he expresses himself in speaking of me.”

Ezekiel Snowdon opened his desk, and took out a letter postmarked New York.

“There is the letter,” he said, handing it to Bernard with a malicious smile. “Out of regard for your feelings I had not intended to show it to you, but since you desire it, I feel that I shall not be responsible for any wound your pride may receive.” Bernard did not answer this speech, but taking the letter tendered him, opened and hastily read it. This was the letter:

“Ezekiel Snowdon, Esq.:

“Dear Sir—I am in receipt of your letter, complaining of my ward, Bernard Brooks. You say you find him disrespectful and insubordinate, and upon this ground you ask me to increase the price I pay for his education. I am quite aware that he is a bad lot. You will do me the justice to remember that in placing him under your charge I did not seek to extenuate the boy’s faults. I told you that he was obstinate, independent, and headstrong. You told me that you had had great success in managing refractory boys, and were willing to undertake him. Under these circumstances I cannot feel that I am called upon to increase the remuneration agreed upon between us in the first place. Should you find him impudent, I shall not object to your inflicting upon him such punishment—even castigation—as in your opinion he may require. More money, however, I cannot pay you, as it draws heavily upon my resources to pay the amount already agreed upon.

“Yours respectfully,

“Cornelius McCracken.”

“Now I hope you are satisfied,” said Mr. Snowdon, as he received the letter back.

“I am satisfied that you have not misrepresented Mr. McCracken.”

“You see he gives me complete authority over you.”

“I see he does,” returned Bernard in a peculiar tone.

“May I ask, Mr. Snowdon,” he added, after a thoughtful pause, “whether my guardian ever told you about how I was situated?”

“In what way?”

“As to money matters. Did he tell you whether or not I had any fortune?”

“He said you had not.”

“Did he tell you that I was wholly dependent upon his charity?”

“He gave me that impression. You ought to feel very grateful to him for his great-hearted liberality in thus defraying the expenses of a destitute orphan.”

“Probably I am as grateful as the occasion requires,” rejoined Bernard gravely. “I will inquire for letters for you.”

As the boy went out Mr. Snowdon looked after him thoughtfully.

“I hate that boy!” he murmured to himself. “It would do me good to flog him. His guardian has given me leave, and I think that I will soon find an opportunity to avail myself of it.”

CHAPTER II. BERNARD'S BOLDNESS.

On his way to the post-office Bernard met Nat Barclay.

"Where are you bound, Bernard?" he asked.

"To the post-office."

"How are you getting on with Ezekiel?"

"There is no love lost between us. He says I am a bad lot. In fact, he says he never knew a wuss boy."

Both boys laughed.

"What bad things do you do?"

"Associate with you, for one thing."

"Has Ezekiel forbidden it?"

"Yes."

"Then perhaps I had better leave you?"

"By no means. I don't propose to obey Mr. Snowdon in that."

"Thank you, but I don't want you to get into trouble."

"What trouble can I get into?"

"He may undertake to flog you."

"Let him try it," said Bernard in a significant tone. "What do you think I would be doing? Did he ever undertake to chastise you?"

"No. He knew my father would not permit it."

"If he would whip his own son it might do him good. Septimus is a young imp."

"There he is now! I wonder what he is up to." Septimus Snowdon was an ill-favored boy of fifteen with red hair and freckles seeming like extensive patches upon a face in which even the most partial eyes could not have seen a redeeming feature. He was standing a little distance ahead, looking up into the branches of a tree in which a terrified kitten had taken refuge. Standing beside him was a young boy of twelve who seemed to be concerned for the safety of the kitten.

Septimus raised a large stone, and taking aim, sent it through the air, aiming at the cat. It came very near hitting her.

"Don't stone my kitty," remonstrated Frank Fisk, the young boy.

"Stop your noise!" said Septimus roughly. "I shall stone her all I want to."

As he spoke he threw another stone, which just grazed the kitten's face and elicited a terrified cry.

"There, you bad boy, you hit my kitty."

"Who calls me a bad boy?" demanded Septimus, with an ugly look on his face.

"I did, and you are one, or you wouldn't throw stones at my kitten."

"I'll throw stones at you if you like it any better."

"You wouldn't dare to. I'd tell my father, and he'd——"

"What would he do?"

"He'd stop you."

"We'll see if he will."

Septimus took a strong cord from his pocket, and seizing the boy's hands, prepared to tie them together in spite of his cries.

"What are you going to do?" asked Frank in a tone of apprehension.

"I am going to give you a lesson," answered Septimus coolly.

Frank struggled to free himself, but Septimus was too strong for him.

Nat Barclay turned to Bernard.

"Shall we let him hurt little Frank?" he asked.

"Not much."

As Bernard spoke he strode towards Septimus, who thus far had not observed him.

"Stop that, you young brute!" he said in an imperious tone. "Do you hear me?"

Septimus turned quickly, and his scowl became deeper when he saw who had spoken to him; for if there was any boy he hated it was Bernard, who had interfered with him more than once.

"Yes," he said. "I hear and I won't do it."

"You won't, eh?"

"No, I won't, and you'd better be careful what you say or do, or I'll tell pa, and then——"

"And then what?"

"You'll get a flogging."

"That doesn't frighten me much. Are you going to stop?"

"No, I'm not," and Septimus gave an extra twist that made Frank cry out.

Bernard concluded that the time for remonstrance was past. He sprang forward, and seizing Septimus in his powerful grasp, tore him from his young victim.

"I'll pay you up for this!" shrieked Septimus, as he flung himself upon Bernard.

Bernard laid him on his back in less than a minute.

"Do you want any more?" he asked, rather contemptuously.

Just at this moment the kitten saw a favorable opportunity to escape, and ran down the trunk of the tree. As she was running away Septimus caught sight of her, and his cruel instincts were aroused. He seized a rock and flung it at her. Had it struck the kitten she would have been seriously hurt.

Bernard was fond of pets, and his soul revolted at cruelty in any form.

“I see you can’t be trusted, Septimus,” he said composedly. “Nat, come here and help secure him.”

“What shall I do?” asked Nat.

“Hold his hands.”

Nat Barclay complied with his request, and Bernard taking the cord which Septimus had used on Frank, quickly and securely tied the hands of the young tyrant.

Septimus struggled and threatened, but without effect. In less than a minute he was securely bound.

“There,” said Bernard, “you are safe for a short time.”

“Untie my hands, or I’ll get my father to flog you!” screamed Septimus.

“Perhaps you’d better,” said Nat Barclay in a low voice. He was afraid his friend would get into trouble.

“No, I won’t. Septimus needs the lesson. You needn’t worry about me. Now we’ll go to the post-office.”

The two boys kept on their way, and Septimus, his hands tied, with wrath in his heart, started for home.

Mr. Snowdon was just coming out of the front door, when to his astonished gaze was revealed his son and heir walking towards the house, with his hands close together, like a prisoner in handcuffs.

“What does all this mean?” he asked in surprise. “What have you been tying your hands for?”

“I didn’t tie my hands,” said Septimus sullenly. “Do you think I am a fool?”

“Septimus, you should not speak to your father like this. If you did not tie your hands, who did?”

“Who did? That young loafer Bernard Brooks. I want you to flog him within an inch of his life.”

“Bernard Brooks tied your hands?”

“Didn’t I say so?”

“But why did you let him do it?”

“How could I help it, when he had Nat Barclay with him?”

“So Nat Barclay was with him?”

“Yes, he was.”

“I forbade him to associate with that Barclay.”

“Much he cares for your orders. When I told him you would flog him, he laughed!”

“Oh, he laughed, did he?” said Mr. Snowdon, much incensed.

“Yes, he doesn’t care for you,” said Septimus, craftily fanning his father’s wrath.

“I’ll learn him,” said Mr. Snowdon, shaking his head vigorously. “He’ll see that I am not to be trifled with. But what did he tie your hands for?”

“Just cut the cord and I’ll tell you. It hurts like all possessed.”

Mr. Snowdon drew a jack-knife from his pocket and severed the cord. Septimus breathed a sigh of relief.

“See how very red my wrists are?” he said. “Pa, do me a favor.”

“Well, what is it?”

“Keep this cord, and let me tie Bernard’s hands with it.”

“A good idea, Septimus. Now tell me what he tied your hands for.”

“For just nothing at all.”

“There must have been something.”

“Well, you see Frank Fisk’s kitten was up in a tree, and I was shying stones at it. Frank made such a fuss that I took out a cord and thought I would tie his hands just to give him a lesson. Just then those two loafers came along, and had the impudence to tell me to stop, just as if they had any authority over me. Of course I told them it was none of their business, and defied them.”

“Very proper, Septimus. You are only responsible for your conduct to me.”

“Then Bernard Brooks made a savage attack upon me, and getting Nat Barclay to hold my hands, he tied them. What do you say to that, pa?”

“What do I say? That it was a high-handed and outrageous proceeding.”

“Bully for you, pa! You express my sentiments. Now what are you goin’ to do about it?”

“I shall call the Brooks boy to account. He forgets that he is under my charge.”

“He seems to think I am under his charge. Say, pa, you won’t allow your son to be insulted and trod upon, will you?”

“No, I won’t, Septimus. For some time I have been thinking that it would be necessary to flog Bernard Brooks, and now I have made up my mind to do it.”

“Good, pa! You’ll let me see you tackle him, won’t you?”

“Yes, Septimus, I will. I can understand the gratification it will give you.”

“If you do that will pay me for what he did to me.”

“But perhaps he won’t come back,” said Mr. Snowdon in an apprehensive tone. “In that case I shall lose the quarterly sum his guardian pays me.”

“You don’t think he’ll run away?” asked Septimus.

Half an hour later this question was answered. Bernard was seen approaching the house, his manner cool and composed, while he looked neither troubled nor flurried.

CHAPTER III. BROUGHT TO BAY.

When Bernard saw Septimus Snowdon and his father standing in front of the house he understood at once, from the expression of their faces, that trouble was in store for him.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Snowdon curtly, "so you have come home at last?"

"Yes, sir. There was no letter for you."

"Ahem! I shall have to write a letter to your guardian."

Bernard shrugged his shoulders, but did not think it necessary to say anything, rather to the disappointment of Ezekiel, who wished to draw him out, "I find," he said, "that you have made an outrageous assault on my innocent boy. What have you to say in extenuation of your conduct?"

"Only that your innocent boy was stoning a kitten, and bullying a young boy."

"Even if he were, what business was it of yours?"

"It will always be my business to protect children and animals from being abused," said Bernard warmly.

"You are a very impudent boy! Are you aware that the boy you assaulted is my son?"

"I ought to be aware of it. There isn't another boy in town who would be guilty of such brutal conduct."

"Are you goin' to stand that, pa?" asked Septimus, anxious to precipitate a conflict between Bernard and his father.

"No, I am not," said Mr. Snowdon, compressing his lips. "Get me the horsewhip."

No command could have been more pleasant to Septimus. He ran into the house, and soon reappeared with an ordinary horsewhip with which his father was in the habit of punishing the pupils under his charge.

He handed it to his father with a malicious smile.

"There it is, pa!" he said. "Lay it on heavy."

Mr. Snowdon did not immediately proceed to make use of the whip. Considering Bernard to be in his power, he was disposed to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse of whom it is preparing to make a victim.

"Do you know what I am going to do, Bernard Brooks?" he demanded sternly.

"Do you know what I am going to do, Bernard Brooks?" demanded Mr. Snowdon sternly. "Suppose you tell me," said Bernard quietly.—Page 20. *Bernard Brooks' Adventures.*

Original Size

"Suppose you tell me," said Bernard quietly.

"I am going to flog you."

"What for?"

"For assaulting my boy."

"Why don't you let him do it?"

"Septimus, do you wish to chastise Bernard with this whip, and so punish him for his attack upon you?"

There was nothing that Septimus would have liked better, but there was something in Bernard's steady look that made him think it would not be prudent.

"I guess you'd better flog him, pa," he said, after a pause.

"Very well, my son, I will."

Whip in hand, Ezekiel Snowdon advanced upon his refractory pupil. Bernard did not wait meekly to receive the punishment, neither did he care to get into a fight with the teacher. He turned and ran through the back yard and down a lane leading to a tract of marsh which belonged to the Snowdon farm. "He'll get away, pa!" said Septimus.

"Try to head him off, my son!"

Septimus, who was in the path, tried to do so, but a swinging blow from Bernard nearly prostrated him, and the fugitive kept on. Mr. Snowdon's blood was up. Brandishing the whip in his long and sinewy arms, he kept his thin legs in motion, and pursued Bernard with as great speed as he was capable of.

But Bernard had several rods the start, and he was a good runner. He kept on, occasionally looking back to see what progress his pursuer was making.

“What does, the boy mean by running to the marsh?” thought Mr. Snowdon. “He is a fool. I shall catch him there to a certainty.”

Bernard probably had views of his own. Indeed, it is quite certain that he had a plan by which he hoped to bring discomfiture upon his dignified preceptor. He made straight for the marsh, till he found his progress barred by a wide ditch about half full of slimy water.

“Aha! the ditch will stop him,” reflected Mr. Snowdon.

But no! Bernard poised himself for an instant on the brink, and then lightly leaped over, landing in safety on the opposite side. Close behind him was Mr. Snowdon. That gentleman felt impelled by the impetus acquired in running to follow Bernard’s example. But the ditch was quite six feet across, and Mr. Snowdon, though not overburdened with flesh, was stiffer in his joints than he had been twenty years before, and this operated against him. Besides, it was slippery where he started to jump, and the result was that he landed in the middle of the ditch where he floundered in the miry water in a woeful condition.

Septimus came up directly, for he was third in the race.

“Where are you, pa?” he asked.

“Don’t you see where I am?” demanded Mr. Snowdon sharply. “Help me out of this quagmire!” Rather reluctantly Septimus extended his hand, for his father’s hand as well as his clothes were bedabbled with mire, and Mr. Snowdon nearly pulled him in, in his efforts to extricate himself from the ditch.

“You’re all over mud, pa!” said Septimus, surveying the sorry plight of his sire.

Just across the ditch stood Bernard, he had come to a halt, and calmly eyed his would-be captor.

“It’s your fault, you young scoundrel!” cried Mr. Snowdon in a fury, his wrath increased by the knowledge that Bernard was as neat and clean as when he started. “If it hadn’t been for you I shouldn’t have been in this plight.”

“I don’t see how I could help it, sir. You shouldn’t have tried to jump over the ditch.”

“Why did you do it?”

“I wanted to get away from you.”

“Jump back at once!”

A smile stole over Bernard’s face.

“I shouldn’t dare to,” he answered. “I might fall in as you have.”

“And serve you right! I order you to jump.”

“Suppose I do, and get safe over?”

“I will flog you within an inch of your life,” said Mr. Snowdon rather imprudently.

“That isn’t inducement enough,” said Bernard. “I guess I had better stay where I am.”

“You needn’t think you will escape the whipping. You may put it off, but you’ll have to take it sooner or later.”

Evidently Mr. Snowdon thought it best to put off punishing Bernard for the present. He was so bespattered with mud that it was necessary to go home and change his clothing. Septimus was very sorry for this decision, as he had been looking forward with pleasant anticipation to seeing Bernard flogged.

“You ain’t goin’ to let him off, pa, are you?” he asked.

“No,” answered Mr. Snowdon, with a vengeful look. “The longer it’s put off, the harder I’ll lay it on when the time comes.”

Satisfied with this assurance Septimus followed his father home. As from time to time he glanced at the figure of his parent he could not help reflecting that Mr. Snowdon was not a father to be proud of. He never looked attractive, but under present circumstances he looked more unsavory than usual.

Left alone Bernard did not leap back across the ditch, but taking a course to the right emerged into the main road about half a mile from Mr. Snowdon’s house.

He took a short cut to the home of his friend Nat Barclay, whom he made acquainted with the catastrophe that had befallen Mr. Snowdon.

Nat laughed—he could hardly help it—as he pictured to himself the miry and bedraggled condition of his old teacher.

“I am afraid he’ll try to get even with you, Bernard,” he said apprehensively.

“No doubt he would if he got a chance.”

“But he can’t help having plenty of chances as you live in his house.”

“But I am not going to live there any longer, Nat.”

“What do you mean?”

“I shall run away.”

“You won’t do that, will you, Bernard? What will your guardian say? You have no one else to depend upon.”

“I don’t know.”

“But this is serious, Bernard.”

“I have myself.”

“But what can a boy of fifteen do?”

“He can support himself. At any rate, he can try. The fact is, Nat, I don’t think Mr. McCracken a friend of mine. I may go to him, and ask if he will make any other arrangements for me. If he won’t, I will make them for myself.”

“What will you do to-night, Bernard?”

“I will go back to Mr. Snowdon’s—creep up to my room, if I have a chance, get out a bundle of clothes, and sleep in the barn. In the morning I can start early, and——”

“Where will you go?”

“I don’t know yet.”

Mr. Snowdon was in the habit of retiring early, and so were his family. Generally at nine o’clock they were in bed. When nine o’clock came he told Septimus to lock the door.

“But suppose Bernard comes back?”

“He can sleep out of doors for one night. It will teach him a lesson.”

He didn’t know that Bernard had already visited the house, made up a bundle of clothing, and withdrawn to the barn, where he had found a comfortable resting place on one of the lofts of hay.

It was Bernard’s intention to get up early in the morning and make his escape before Mr. Snowdon or any of his family were astir.

But a healthy boy, who is a good sleeper, cannot always fix the time of awaking. For some reason Bernard slept on till half-past seven o’clock. Septimus had occasion to go to the barn, and discovered him still asleep. He ran into the house in great excitement.

“Pa,” he said, “Bernard is asleep in the barn. I seed him.”

Occasionally Septimus, though the son of a teacher, made grammatical mistakes.

“Is he asleep?” asked Mr. Snowdon in a tone of interest.

“Yes, pa.”

“The Lord has delivered him into my hands. I will not neglect the opportunity to chastise him.”

“He may wake up when you are getting up.”

“I will take you with me to hold the ladder.”

“He might stick me with the pitchfork,” said Septimus, who was a coward at heart.

“Then I will take Bridget.”

Bridget was the kitchen drudge. She was rather a stupid girl, who stood in fear of her employer.

They went to the barn together. Mr. Snowdon went up the ladder, whip in hand, Bridget holding the ladder. He mounted the opposite scaffold, and prepared to cross to the other, when Bernard, who had been aroused by the sound of voices, made his appearance, cap in hand, and asked composedly: “What are you after, Mr. Snowdon?”

“I’m after you, Bernard Brooks,” answered Mr. Snowdon grimly.

CHAPTER IV. A ROAD SIDE ACQUAINTANCE.

The position was critical. Bernard was tall and muscular for his age, but of course he was not a match for the teacher.

He was, however, cool and collected, and not at all nervous. He maintained his ground till Mr. Snowdon, with slow and cautious steps, had crossed the narrow bridge, and then ran to the back part of the loft.

The schoolmaster followed him as well as he could, but in his impetuosity he lost his balance and fell on the hay.

Bernard made a dash for the plank. Seeing him coming, Bridget was seized with a panic and hastily dismounted from the ladder.

Bernard took advantage of this, and descending to the barn floor, seized the ladder and carried it out of doors, leaving Professor Snowdon a prisoner in the barn loft.

Septimus, who was prudently standing just outside, called out, in alarm, “Where’s my pa? What have you done to him?”

Bernard was not called upon to answer, as there was an angry roar from inside the barn.

“Bring back the ladder, you audacious young ruffian!”

Bridget had fled to the house, and Septimus, who was far from courageous, ran out behind the barn.

“I think the place is too hot to hold me,” thought Bernard, and he struck for the road on a half run.

He had managed to catch up his bundle of clothes when fleeing from the angry teacher, and there was nothing to prevent his bidding a final farewell to the Snowdon Institute.

Meanwhile Professor Snowdon found himself in a quandary. He was in the hay loft, unable to descend to the barn floor.

He could indeed walk across the plank to the opposite scaffold, but that would not help him. It was certainly very aggravating. Bernard, he had no doubt, was in full flight, while he was unable to follow him.

“Bridget!” he cried. “What has become of the ladder?”

But Bridget had already returned to the house.

“Drat that girl,” he muttered angrily. “Has she left me in the lurch?”

Then he bethought himself of his son.

“Septimus!” he cried, or rather roared.

“What is it, pa?” asked Septimus, who had gathered enough courage to return to the barn.

“Where is Bernard Brooks?”

“He’s ran away.”

“Has he taken the ladder with him?”

“He took it out of the barn.”

“He won’t carry it far. Go and bring it here.”

“I dassn’t. He’ll come back and lick me.”

“Do as I tell you at once. If you don’t I will flog you.”

Septimus thought it prudent to heed his father’s appeal, especially as it was evident that Bernard had got away.

He lugged the ladder into the barn.

“Now put it up against the scaffold so that I can get down.”

Septimus did so, but he did not see that the ladder had a secure footing, so that when his father was part way down it fell, and the learned pedagogue tumbled sprawling on the barn floor, receiving some painful contusions, which did not improve his temper.

“It’s your fault, you young booby!” he exclaimed furiously, and springing for Septimus he lashed him across the legs.

“Ouch!” yelled Septimus. “Are you crazy, pa? I ain’t Bernard.”

“I’d like to flog that boy within an inch of his life!” exclaimed Ezekiel Snowdon, excited to fury by the sound of Bernard’s name.

“Then you’d better try to catch him instead of licking me.”

“Come into the house, Septimus,” said his father more calmly. “Look down the road and see if you can see him.”

Septimus shaded his eyes, and looked down the road, but no runaway boy was visible.

“I can’t see him, pa. He may be hiding somewhere.”

“Go and ask Mr. Sweetland if he will lend me his horse. I’ll go after him.”

“There’s Leslie Sweetland now. I’ll ask him.” Leslie Sweetland, a boy of sixteen, well and strongly built, was walking by.

“I say, Leslie,” called out Septimus, “do you think your father will lend us his horse?”

Leslie stopped short. He had very little friendship for Septimus, and disliked the elder Snowdon.

“What do you want him for?” he asked.

“Bernard Brooks has run away, and pa and I want to catch him.”

“Has Bernard run away?” asked Leslie, immediately interested.

“Yes.”

“What did he run away for?”

“Pa went to the barn to horsewhip him for his owdacious conduct. He carried off the ladder and left pa in the hay loft, and now he’s run away.”

Leslie burst into a fit of laughter.

“Well, that’s a good joke!” he said.

“I don’t see where the joke comes in,” growled Ezekiel.

“I don’t blame him for running away,” said Leslie, with spirit.

“I’ve a great mind to horsewhip you,” cried the amiable Snowdon.

“You’d find you’d tackled the wrong boy,”retorted Leslie. “You can’t have our horse.”

“That’s for your father to say.”

“He won’t help you to catch Bernard. I’ll tell him not to.”

“The impudence of the boys in this village is positively terrible,” said Mr. Snowdon. “Septimus, go over to Mr. Bacon, and see if he will lend us his horse.”

Septimus did as ordered, but he found Mr. Bacon’s horse in use, and upon his return Mr. Snowdon felt that it was too late to make other arrangements.

“I’ll write to the boy’s guardian,” he said, “and probably he will send him back without expense to me. If he does I’ll make the boy howl.”

Meanwhile Bernard was making the best of his time. He ran half a mile without stopping. He passed a covered buggy, and as he did so turned back to look at it.

It was occupied by a man of perhaps forty, who seemed to be in trouble. He held the reins loose in his hands, his eyes were partly closed, and his body swayed from side to side of the carriage.

“He needs help,” thought Bernard.

He ran to the horse, seized him by the bridle, and stopped him.

The driver did not seem to be aware of his interference.

Bernard, after a moment’s hesitation, climbed into the carriage, and seating himself beside the gentleman, took the reins from his unresisting fingers.

“Are you sick, sir?” he said.

The gentleman opened his eyes and looked at Bernard.

“Yes,” he said. “I came near fainting away.”

“Shan’t I drive for you?”

“Yes, I wish you would. Who are you?”

“My name is Bernard Brooks.”

“All right! I don’t know you, but you seem like a good boy.”

“Where shall I drive you?”

“To the next town.”

“Poplar Plains?”

“Yes.”

This suited Bernard very well. Poplar Plains was five miles away, and here there was a station on the nearest railroad.

He drove on, while his companion leaned back in the carriage and closed his eyes. Bernard took a side glance and noted his appearance.

He was a man with dark hair and eyes, and his complexion was also dark. He looked to be in good health but for the pallor occasioned by his present attack.

He roused up when they came within a mile of Poplar Plains.

“Are you feeling better?” asked Bernard.

“Yes; a little. You haven’t any hartshorn about you?”

“No, sir; but there is a drug store at the Plains. I can get some for you.”

“Do so.”

“Shall I drive you to any particular place?”

“Yes. Drive to the hotel. Do you know where it is?”

“Yes, sir.”

In a very few minutes Bernard halted in front of the Poplar Plains Hotel. A servant came out to receive the expected guest.

“Is your father going to stop with us?” he asked. “He isn’t my father, but he will stop. He is feeling unwell, and I will get you to help him out.” Assisted by Bernard and the hotel porter, the gentleman descended from the buggy and went into the hotel.

“Sit down here a moment, sir, and I will get you the ammonia,” Bernard said. “The drug store is close by.”

“Wait a moment. You will want some money. Here is a dollar.”

He drew a dollar bill from his vest pocket and handed it to Bernard, who returned in five minutes with a small bottle.

The gentleman, removing the cork, applied the bottle to his nose. He sneezed, but seemed revived.

“I feel better,” he said. “Go and take a room for me and help me up to it.”

“What name shall I put down on the register?”

“William Penrose.”

“Where from?”

“Buffalo.”

Bernard did as requested. Mr. Penrose was assigned to a room on the second floor. Then Bernard, taking out some silver, offered it to his companion.

“The hartshorn only cost ten cents,” he said. “Here is the change.”

“Keep it,” said Mr. Penrose.

“Thank you, sir. It will be very acceptable. Now I will bid you good-by.”

“No, don’t go. Stay with me, unless you have to go home. I may need you.”

“I have no home, sir. I can stay as well as not.”

“Then go down and put your name on the register. There is another bed in the room. You can sleep there.”

CHAPTER V. MR. PENROSE'S SECRET.

Bernard was by no means loath to accept the invitation he had received. His stock of ready money was very small, and would soon be exhausted. While he remained with Mr. Penrose he would be taken care of.

"I shall be glad to accept your invitation, Mr. Penrose," he said.

"I hope I am not interfering with any of your plans."

"No, sir. I have not formed any plans yet."

"That is singular," observed Mr. Penrose, with a mild curiosity.

"I haven't had time to form any plans yet," explained Bernard. "I only started in for myself this morning."

"You excite my curiosity. Do you mind throwing light on the mystery?"

"Not at all, sir. I ran away this morning from a boarding-school in the next town."

"You ran away from school? That doesn't sound well."

"I dare say not, but if you knew Mr. Ezekiel Snowdon, you wouldn't be surprised at my running away."

"Ezekiel Snowdon? Why, I once went to school to a teacher of that name. Describe him."

Bernard did so.

"It must be the same man."

"Where was he teaching?"

"He came to Springfield, Illinois, and was engaged to teach. That was my native town, and I was a lad of thirteen at the time."

"Did you like him?"

"No; I think he was the most unpopular teacher we ever had. He taught just six weeks. At the end of that time the bigger boys formed a combination and rode him on a rail out of town. He was an ignoramus, and was continually flogging the boys. If he couldn't find a pretext for punishment he invented one. But he received his deserts. After his ride on a rail he never ventured to come back to Springfield." Bernard laughed. "I think it must be the same man," he said.

"I have often wondered what the old fellow was doing," said Mr. Penrose. "It seems he has stuck to the business of a pedagogue. Now tell me your experience with him."

This Bernard did. He explained that Mr. Snowdon was now at the head of the Snowdon Institute in the neighboring town of Doncaster.

"Has he many pupils?"

"About eight or ten, but they are boarding pupils."

"Who placed you there?"

"My guardian, Mr. Cornelius McCracken of New York. I think Mr. Snowdon's low terms influenced him in the selection of the school. I soon found out that he wasn't much of a scholar. Besides, he is a tyrant, and tried to bully me.

"He has a son, Septimus, who is a very disagreeable boy, and is continually instigating his father to punish the boys. They are mostly small, and unable to resist injustice. Finally he tackled me, and threatened to horsewhip me."

"You naturally objected," said Mr. Penrose, with a smile.

"Yes; I had no idea of allowing myself to be treated in that way. Yesterday I made up my mind to run away. I stopped over night in the barn, and meant to get off early this morning, but was surprised by Septimus, who let his father know where I was. Soon the old man appeared with a horsewhip, and climbed up to the scaffold where I was sleeping on the hay. I woke up in time, and managed to escape, carrying off the ladder, and leaving Mr. Snowdon a prisoner in the hay loft."

"That was clever in you. And then you took leg bail?"

"Yes, sir. In ten or fifteen minutes I overtook your carriage, and seeing that you were in trouble, I climbed in and took the reins."

"Luckily for me. The horse might have run away with me."

"It was lucky for me, also, that I fell in with you," added Bernard.

"I have a great mind to tell you a secret," said Mr. Penrose, after a pause.

"It will be safe with me, sir."

He was not surprised to hear that his companion had a secret, and was curious to learn what it might be.

"I ought to feel considerable sympathy with you," went on Mr. Penrose, "for I am placed in a similar position. I, too, am running away."

Bernard looked startled. Could it be, he asked himself, that his companion was a fugitive from justice? He could hardly believe it, for Mr. Penrose's appearance was very much in his favor.

His companion went on with a smile, "Don't suppose that I am a defaulter or a thief on my way to Canada," he said. "My case is a peculiar one. I happen to be a rich man."

"I don't see why you should run away, then."

"I have a cousin, an unprincipled man, who is anxious to get possession of my property."

"But how can he do it? The law will protect you in your rights."

"It ought to, certainly, but my cousin is a cunning schemer. He's trying to have me adjudged insane, and get an appointment as my guardian. Do you think I look insane?"

"No, sir."

“I am as sane as my cousin himself, but I am subject to occasional fits, such as the one I had just now. If I were seen in one of these I might be thought to be of unsound mind.”

“Are you often taken that way, Mr. Penrose?”

“Not often, but I have been subject occasionally to fits since I was a boy. My cousin cunningly waited till I was suffering an attack, when he hastily summoned two quacks, and got them to certify that I was insane. I got over the fit before the certificate was made out, but I realized my danger, and I fled from Buffalo, fearing that I might be taken to an asylum during the next seizure.”

“What a scoundrel your cousin must be! He must be worse than Mr. Snowdon.”

“He is a villain of a different type, and certainly quite as bad. In order to enjoy my property, he would coolly doom me to life imprisonment in a madhouse.”

“Where are you intending to go, Mr. Penrose?”

“I may take a voyage somewhere. On the sea I should be safe.”

“Do you think your cousin is in pursuit of you?”

“Probably he is.”

“What is his name?”

“Lawrence Atwood.”

“Is the buggy you were driving your own?”

“No, and that reminds me, I ought to return it to the stable from which I hired it.”

“Where is that, sir?”

“Brooks’ stable, in Doncaster.”

“I suppose you could get a man from the hotel to drive it back—by paying him, of course.”

“That is a good suggestion. I would ask you to take it back, but it might lead to your being captured by Mr. Snowdon.”

“Yes, sir; that would be my only objection.”

“Very well! Go down-stairs and see what arrangement you can make.”

Going down-stairs Bernard had the good luck to find a young man from Doncaster, Freedom Wentworth, who was about to start back.

“Hello, Bernard!” exclaimed the young man, in surprise. “When did you come here?”

“Half an hour ago. I say, Freed, when do you go back to Doncaster?”

“I am just starting back. I wish I could meet somebody going that way, as I don’t like the idea of walking.”

“I can fix you out. There is a gentleman up-stairs who wants to send back a buggy to Brooks’ stable. If you will take charge of it he will pay you for your trouble.”

“I’m in luck. Tell him I shall be very glad to oblige him.”

Bernard went up-stairs and reported to Mr. Penrose.

“Do you know this young man Wentworth?” asked Penrose.

“Yes, sir. He is a very reliable young man.”

“Then I accept his offer. Take this five-dollar bill, and ask him to pay Brooks out of it and keep the balance himself.”

“I will, sir.”

Bernard delivered his commission, and Freedom Wentworth started on his drive.

After he had got off Bernard bethought himself of a mistake he had made.

“I ought to have told Freed not to mention his meeting me. If it gets to the ears of Mr. Snowdon, he may take it into his head to come after me.”

It was certainly a pity that Bernard had not bethought himself of this prudent precaution, as it proved.

Septimus Snowdon was standing in front of Brooks’ stable as Wentworth drove up.

“Where have you come from?” he asked.

“From Poplar Plains.”

“Did you see anything of Bernard Brooks on the way?”

“Yes, he is at the Poplar Plains Hotel. Did your father send him there?”

“Aha!” soliloquized Septimus in exultation. “I’ll tell pa, and we’ll go after him.”

“I hope I haven’t done Bernard any harm,” thought Freedom. “He’s worth half a dozen boys like Septimus Snowdon.”

CHAPTER VI. BERNARD'S DANGER.

"By the way," said Mr. Penrose suddenly, "it has just occurred to me that I have had no breakfast."

"It is the same case with me," returned Bernard, smiling.

"Bless my soul! How hungry you must be!"

"Don't you feel hungry, Mr. Penrose?"

"Yes, but my appetite isn't equal to that of a growing boy. What time is it?"

"I have no watch, Mr. Penrose."

"Then I will look at my own. It is nine o'clock. Won't you go down stairs, Bernard, and ask if breakfast is over."

Bernard returned with the information that the regular breakfast was over, but that a special breakfast for the two guests would be ready in half an hour.

"That will be satisfactory."

Bernard thought it would be satisfactory to him also, for he felt, to use an expression of his own, "as hungry as a bear."

It is needless to say that both enjoyed their breakfast.

"I suppose," said Mr. Penrose, smiling, "that important business prevented your breakfasting with my old teacher, Mr. Snowdon."

"Yes, sir; very important business."

"Does he provide a liberal table?"

"Very far from it, sir."

"So I imagined; though when I was his pupil, he had no boarding pupils. Suppose we take a walk about the town. I have never been in Poplar Plains before."

"All right, sir."

It was two hours before they returned. They had sauntered to the river and taken a seat on the bank under some old trees that afforded a grateful shelter. Mr. Penrose found himself more and more attracted by the frank, open nature of his boy companion.

"Really, Bernard," he said, "I find you a very agreeable comrade. I am glad I fell in with you."

"I shouldn't think you would be, sir."

"Why not?"

"Because Mr. Snowdon says I am a bad lot."

"I am disposed to think that Mr. Snowdon himself is a bad lot."

Finally they rose and made their way back to the hotel.

In front of it was a rusty-looking chaise drawn by a rawboned horse, whose skin was worn away in several places.

Bernard started in dismay.

"Mr. Snowdon has come after me," he said quickly.

"What makes you think so?"

"That horse and carriage is one that he always hires. He gets it because he can hire it for half the price of a stable team."

"But there is no one in the carriage."

"He is probably in the hotel. I don't know what to do."

"How could he have got track of you?"

"Freed Wentworth must have told him I was here. You see, I forgot to tell Freed not to speak of seeing me. Do you think he can carry me back?"

"I'll tell you what to do, Bernard. Go back to the river side, and I will go forward and meet him. When the coast is clear I will go and find you."

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Snowdon and Septimus had driven up five minutes before. They left the horse standing in front of the hotel and entered.

"How do you do, Mr. Snowdon?" said the landlord. "What brings you here?"

"I am after a runaway boy—one of my pupils. I heard he was here."

"There is one boy staying here, but he came with a gentleman whom I took for his guardian."

"What's his name? Let me look at your book." Ezekiel Snowdon ran down the page with his lean forefinger. Finally he came to the following entries:

William Penrose, Buffalo.

Bernard Brooks.

Bernard had not registered himself from any place in particular, feeling that as yet he had no special local habitation.

"There it is!" said Mr. Snowdon triumphantly. "That's the boy—Bernard Brooks."

"And he is one of your pupils?"

"Yes, he ran away from my school—the Snowdon Institute—this morning."

"He seemed to be traveling with Mr. Penrose. He came with him in a carriage."

"I can't help that. The man must have abducted him."

“Don’t you think they had met before? They seemed to be well acquainted.”

“I don’t know about that. Now, Mr. Wilson, I want that boy given up to me. I want to take him home.”

“I have no authority over him, Mr. Snowdon. I can’t deliver him into your hands. I can’t take any responsibility.”

“I’ll take the responsibility,” said Mr. Snowdon impatiently. “Just show me to his room.”

“He isn’t in his room.”

“Where is he, then?”

“He went out to walk with Mr. Penrose directly after breakfast.”

“Is that a good while since?”

“About two hours.”

“Then I will wait for him. He can’t be out much longer.”

“That’s right, pa,” said Septimus. “You’d ought to take him back with you. If he makes any trouble, I’ll help you.”

The landlord regarded Septimus with a glance by no means flattering.

“Who is that boy, Mr. Snowdon?” he asked. “Is he one of your pupils?”

“That is my son, Septimus Snowdon,” answered Ezekiel, with an inflection of pride. It is strange that any one should be proud of such an unfledged cub as Septimus, but Mr. Snowdon was influenced by parental partiality.

Finally the landlord, whose eyes commanded the road outside, saw through the door the approach of Mr. Penrose.

“There’s Mr. Penrose,” he said, “the gentleman your pupil came with, but he is alone.”

“Alone!” repeated Snowdon. “Isn’t the boy with him?”

“No, it seems not. However, he will be here in a minute and you can talk with him.”

Mr. Snowdon advanced to the door, and met Mr. Penrose half way.

“Is this Mr. Penrose?” he asked stiffly.

“The same, Mr. Snowdon.”

“Ha, you know my name?”

“Yes, and I know you. I was once a pupil of yours.”

“Is that so? Where?”

“Out in a town in Illinois. You remember that the big boys rode you out of town on a rail.”

“Is that so, pa?” gasped Septimus in horror-struck amazement, “I don’t remember anything of the kind,” said Mr. Snowdon, disconcerted. “You must have mistaken the person.”

“Not at all. No one who had once met you would be likely to forget you, Mr. Snowdon.”

“We will drop this subject, if you please,” said Snowdon peevishly. “Where is the boy that went out with you this morning?”

“I really cannot say.”

“That answer is not satisfactory. Do you know who that boy is?”

“He says his name is Bernard Brooks.”

“That is true, and he is a pupil of mine.”

“Was a pupil of yours, like myself?”

“He is still my pupil. He was placed with me by his guardian. I charge you with abducting him, Mr. Penrose.”

“Really, this is amusing.”

“You won’t find it an amusing matter. I demand, where is the boy?”

“He went out to walk, and he left me.”

“Is he coming back to the hotel soon?”

“I can’t say. I have no authority over him.”

“Can’t you give me a clue as to his whereabouts?”

“I might, but I don’t choose to.”

“Mr. Wilson, you hear this? You understand that this gentleman is conniving at the escape of my pupil.”

“I have nothing to do with the matter,” said the landlord.

“By the way, Mr. Snowdon,” asked Mr. Penrose, “why did the boy Bernard run away from you?”

“Because he’s a bad lot.”

“Did you treat him kindly?”

“I always treat my pupils kindly,” answered Mr. Snowdon stiffly.

“You didn’t when I was a pupil of yours, five and twenty years ago. However, the boys didn’t treat you kindly. It makes me laugh whenever I think of you being ridden out of town on a rail.”

“Septimus, go outside!” said Mr. Snowdon, who felt sensitive about having this unpleasant episode in his early life made known to his son and heir.

“I want to stay here, pa.”

“Go out at once or I’ll horsewhip you.”

Much against his will, Septimus left the room. He was very curious to learn more about his father’s adventure with the big boys.

Mr. Snowdon waited an hour in the hope that Bernard would appear, but in vain. Finally he summoned

Septimus reluctantly and started for home. He had ridden about two miles when he met an open carriage holding three gentlemen. They stopped their carriage and hailed Mr. Snowdon.

“Have you seen anything of a man about five feet eight inches in height, rather slender,” began one, and continued with an accurate description of Mr. Penrose.

“Is his name Penrose?” asked Ezekiel.

“Yes.”

“What do you want him for?”

“He is crazy. We want to take him to an asylum.”

“He is at the hotel in Poplar Plains,” answered Mr. Snowdon eagerly. “He has abducted a pupil of mine. I will go back with you. We shall get Bernard after all, Septimus.”

Both carriages started at a good rate of speed for Poplar Plains, Mr. Snowdon’s face wreathed with triumphant smiles.

CHAPTER VII. AN UNEXPECTED CHAMPION.

Bernard posted himself at a point where he could watch the hotel. When he saw the departure of Septimus and his father he made his way back and rejoined Mr. Penrose.

"The coast is clear," said his elder companion, with a smile. "Thanks to you I have had an interview with my old teacher."

"Did he remember you?"

"No; and he seemed very touchy on the subject of his experiences in Illinois."

"Do you think he will come after me again?"

"I don't know, but he certainly appeared very desirous of getting you back. His son seemed to sympathize with him. Is he a friend of yours?"

"Septimus loves me like a brother," laughed Bernard. "He was very anxious to have his father give me a horsewhipping. I shall feel glad to get a little farther away from Doncaster and Snowdon Institute."

"We will go to-morrow morning. I should like to rest here one day."

The two were seated on the piazza when Bernard, chancing to look up, exclaimed in alarm, "There's Mr. Snowdon coming back. He is nearly here. There is another carriage behind."

Mr. Penrose looked up quickly, and Bernard saw that he turned pale.

"The carriage behind," he said, "contains my cousin, the man who is trying to have me adjudged insane, and the two men with him are doubtless doctors, medical quacks, whom he has hired to certify to my insanity."

"Good heavens! Then, you are in as great danger as I."

"Greater," answered Mr. Penrose, in a low, suppressed tone.

"Can they take you?"

"Not legally, but they will try."

"Let us escape while we can."

"No; it would seem to bear out their charges. Besides, they are too near. I will stand my ground. You can get away if you like."

"No; I will stand by you, Mr. Penrose," said Bernard firmly.

The two remained seated till the carriage halted in front of the hotel.

"Aha!" said the cousin triumphantly, "we have run our fugitive to earth."

He jumped out of the carriage, and advanced to the piazza.

"So you are here?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Penrose calmly.

"You escaped my vigilance, and fled from Buffalo."

"Stop there, James Roque! You speak as if I were not a free agent."

"You are not. You are insane, and you know it."

"I know why you want to make me out insane. You want to get possession of my property."

"It is unsafe in your hands. A lunatic isn't fit to manage property."

"I am no lunatic, nor would you try to prove me so, if I were poor. Why did you pursue me?"

"Because you are not fit to be at large."

"I am as sane as you are. Your unprincipled attempt to deprive me of my liberty shows that you ought to be locked up."

"Of course I may be wrong, but I am willing to abide by the verdict of experts. I have brought with me two distinguished physicians, who will examine you, and decide whether you are or are not in your right mind. Dr. Brown and Dr. Jones, will you kindly approach and give your opinion as to the condition of my unfortunate cousin?"

The two doctors descended from the carriage and approached the piazza. They were dressed in shabby black, and eyed Penrose furtively. Brown was the first to speak.

"Your cousin," he said, "affords every indication of insanity. What say you, Dr. Jones?"

"I fully agree with you," replied Dr. Jones, in a nasal tone.

"I see, gentlemen, you have got the whole thing cut and dried," said William Penrose, in a tone of agitation. "These tools of yours have learned their part well. All they need is to look at me to pronounce me insane. Even a renowned doctor would hardly venture to come to so quick a decision merely from a momentary inspection."

"They have both been connected with establishments for the insane. I have called them as experts who cannot be deceived."

"What do you pay them for aiding and abetting you in this villainy?"

By this time Mr. Wilson, the landlord, appeared upon the scene. He looked from one to the other in surprise.

"What does all this mean?" he asked.

"Merely that you have been harboring a lunatic," said James Roque.

"Who is a lunatic?"

"William Penrose."

"I cannot believe it."

"It is hard to believe. Like all of his class he is very cunning. Why, should you keep him here, he might set

fire to your house during the night."

"Is this true?" asked the landlord, who was a timid man.

"It is a base lie!" exclaimed Penrose indignantly. "Don't believe him. He wants to have me adjudged insane that he may get control of my property."

The landlord looked bewildered.

"Is that true?" he repeated doubtfully.

"No, it is a lie. My poor cousin has no property. He is dependent upon me. I am willing to pay his expenses in an asylum, and this is his return."

"Heaven give me patience!" ejaculated Penrose. "This black villain is lying in an infamous manner. He is himself a man of no means, and wants to get possession of my fortune."

"Dr. Brown, is this true?" asked James Roque, turning to his subservient tool.

"No," answered Brown, shaking his head.

"The man doesn't know me," said Mr. Penrose in a tone of contempt. "I never saw him before."

"I used to go to school with him," retorted Brown, unabashed.

"I see you are determined to lie it out."

"I appeal to my distinguished brother, Dr. Jones."

"You are quite right, Dr. Brown. We both know Mr. Penrose."

"You will bear me out in my statement," interposed Roque, "that he escaped from the asylum in Buffalo where I recently placed him?"

"Certainly."

"I was never in an asylum!" said William Penrose.

"Really, gentlemen——" put in the landlord.

"My dear sir, I will see that your bill is paid," said James Roque, "but I depend upon you not to interfere with me, now that I have succeeded in overtaking my unfortunate cousin."

"Of course, if what you say is true——"

"Don't these eminent physicians substantiate my statement?"

"To be sure," said the landlord, who was greatly influenced by the assurance that his bill would be paid.

"I see you take a sensible view. William Penrose, you must go back with us."

"Never!" exclaimed Penrose vehemently.

"You see his excitement. Can there be any clearer indication of insanity? Dr. Brown and Dr. Jones, give me your assistance, and we will secure my unfortunate cousin. Bring the cord from the carriage."

Dr. Brown produced a stout cord which the party had brought with them, and the precious trio approached their unfortunate victim.

"Mr. Wilson," exclaimed Penrose, "will you stand by and allow such an outrage to be enacted under your own roof?"

"I think you had better go with your cousin," said the landlord soothingly. "As you are crazy, it will be better for you."

"But I am not crazy."

"Undoubtedly the man is crazy," broke in Mr. Snowdon. "I have had an interview with him in which he claimed to be a former pupil of mine, and told an absurd story of my being ridden on a rail."

"I see you are a sensible man," said James Roque. "I might have known as much from your intelligent appearance."

"Moreover he has aided and abetted a pupil of mine to escape from my rightful authority."

"The case seems to be pretty clear," said Roque, with a malicious smile. "Cousin Penrose, you may as well resign yourself to circumstances. You must go back with us. I trust you will not compel us to use force. Come, gentlemen, whatever is to be done must be done quickly."

"Stop a minute, gentlemen!" said the landlord. "You promised to pay my bill."

"I will do it as soon as my cousin is secured. You don't want me to leave him here to burn down the house about your ears?"

"No, no!" said the landlord hastily.

"Come along, gentlemen!"

The three closed in about William Penrose, and producing the cord were about to tie him when he called out in desperation, "Will no one save me from these villains?"

"I will help you!" said Bernard, kicking Dr. Brown in the shins with such force that he dropped the cord, and yelled with pain.

"And I, too!" added a new voice.

All eyes were turned upon a long, wiry, loose-jointed man, an unmistakable Yankee, dressed as a Western miner, who had been sitting on the piazza, and had been an interested witness of what had been going on.

CHAPTER VIII. THE CONSPIRATORS ARE FOILED.

Roque and the doctors loosened their hold of William Penrose when they heard the new voice. Then Roque in a supercilious tone said, “You had better attend to your business if you have any.”

He clutched his cousin once more.

“Let us lose no time,” he whispered to the doctors.

“Look here!” said the miner, striding to the group, “you’re trying to kidnap an inoffensive man, and are going clear against the law. This is a free country, and it can’t be done.”

“Sir,” said Roque, “this is an escaped lunatic, and I propose to carry him back to the asylum. I don’t owe you any explanation, but I don’t mind telling you that. Now, get out of the way!”

“He’s no more a lunatic that I am.”

“Thank you, sir,” said Penrose, with reviving hope. “It is a cruel attempt at abduction. Save me from a fate worse than death.”

“I will!” responded the Yankee miner resolutely.

“No man is going to be abducted when Josh Stackpole is around.”

“Clear out!” said James Roque, incensed.

“Clear out, or——”

“Or what?”

“I’ll have you arrested.”

“And I’d have you lynched if you were out in Colorado.”

“You are officious and impertinent.”

“Call me all the hard names you like, squire. It won’t do me any harm.”

“I will do you harm. Landlord, are you going to permit this impertinent person to interfere with me?”

“Really, gentlemen, I don’t know what to say,” answered the landlord, who was a weak and vacillating man. “If I knew the law——”

“I’ll tell you what the law is,” said the miner. “Before I went out West I spent a year in a law office at Burlington, Vermont. These men haven’t shown any papers—they haven’t proved this gentleman to be out of his mind. It’s just a high-handed violation of the law they are trying.”

“In that case, I guess you’d better stop,” said the landlord. “This gentleman is probably right, and——”

“He’s a fool!” interposed Roque angrily.

“Haven’t these eminent physicians declared my cousin to be a lunatic?”

“They look more like tramps than eminent physicians,” remarked Joshua Stackpole.

“We have wasted time enough with this fool,” said Roque. “Dr. Brown, take one arm, and you, Dr. Jones, take the other, and we will soon put an end to this foolery.”

“Do it at your peril!” exclaimed Joshua Stackpole sternly.

The doctors looked somewhat apprehensive, but at a nod from James Roque, and confident in the realization that they were three to one, they proceeded to obey orders. Then something unexpected happened.

Joshua Stackpole sprang upon James Roque and pitched him headlong from the piazza. Then he started for Dr. Brown, and that luckless physician followed his principal.

The miner was about to turn his attention to Dr. Jones when the latter threw up his hands and begged for mercy.

“This is an outrage!” exclaimed Mr. Snowdon, much disconcerted. “Isn’t there a constable at hand, landlord, to arrest this bold ruffian? Bernard Brooks, I want you.”

“Aha!” said Stackpole, “what do you want him for? Is he another lunatic?”

“No; but he is my pupil, who has rebelled against my lawful authority, and run away from his happy home at Snowdon Institute.”

“How is that, sonny?” asked Joshua Stackpole.

“He tried to horsewhip me,” said Bernard.

“And I will do it yet,” cried Mr. Snowdon, with more anger than prudence.

“Ha! It seems there is more work for me to do. You are an old man, and I don’t want to hurt you, but if you don’t get into your wagon and hurry home, I’ll——”

Joshua Stackpole looked so determined that Mr. Snowdon was alarmed.

“Come, Septimus,” he said; “we’d better be going. I’ll go to a magistrate and get a warrant for this man’s arrest.”

By this time James Roque had risen from his recumbent position.

“Dr. Brown and Dr. Jones,” he exclaimed in a passion, “are we to be worsted by a single man? Seize William Penrose.”

“Excuse me!” said Dr. Brown, rubbing his shins.

“And me, too!” added Dr. Jones, with an apprehensive look at Joshua Stackpole.

“Sir,” said James Roque, addressing Mr. Snowdon, “as I can get no help from these cowards, will you lend me your co-operation?”

“I wish you success, sir,” replied Snowdon hurriedly, “but I ought to return to Snowdon Institute, where my presence is imperatively required.”

“I think, squire, you’d better give it up for a bad job,” said Stackpole. “If you make another attempt to abduct this man I’ll treat you worse than before.”

With a look of baffled rage James Roque entered his carriage, followed by the two doctors.

“You have escaped this time,” he said to William Penrose, “but I will have you yet.”

Penrose shuddered as he saw the evil look on his cousin’s face.

“I’ve got something to say to that, squire,” remarked Joshua Stackpole coolly. “Do you see that?” and he displayed a revolver.

“Don’t shoot!” exclaimed James Roque, falling back, his face assuming a sickly pallor.

“I don’t intend to—now,” said Stackpole composedly, “but I can’t answer for what I would do if I heard of your trying to abduct your cousin.”

“I should like to lock you up in an insane asylum,” said Roque, with an ugly look.

“So you think me insane, do you?”

“You are stark, staring mad!”

“Thank you, squire. If I should happen to shoot you accidentally, that’ll let me off.”

James Roque did not think it wise to reply, but drove off hurriedly.

“My friend,” said Penrose, offering his hand, “you have done me a great favor. But for you that man would have carried me to an asylum.”

“What is his object?”

“Unfortunately I am rich and he is poor. As a near relative, he wants to get control of my property. Your brave interference has saved me.”

“Don’t mention it! There wasn’t anything brave about it. The whole pack of them are cowards. Have those doctors ever seen you before?”

“Never.”

“Yet after a mere glance they are ready to pronounce you insane. I don’t believe they are doctors at all.”

“Nor I. They are tools of my cousin. But nothing is easier than to throw a sane man into an asylum on the evidence of such creatures.”

“They’d have a lively time making out me to be insane.”

“James Roque says you are stark, staring mad,” said Penrose, with a smile.

“He’d have reason to think so if I got hold of him,” returned Stackpole grimly. “And now, my friend. I am going to give you a piece of advice.”

“What is it?”

“Get out of this as soon as you can. There’s an ugly look about your cousin’s face, and he may make you trouble yet. Of course, he has no legal right to interfere with you, but that won’t stop a man like him. He hasn’t got hold of your property yet?”

“No.”

“Then if you have money at command, go off where he will not be able to track you. Why not go to Europe, or to Colorado, my State? If he tried any of his tricks there, we’d soon stop him with a rope.”

“Your advice is good and I will follow it. But I don’t like to leave my young friend here. He, too, is in a tight place.”

“Don’t trouble about him. I’ll look after him for a time. It will be better for you to part, as your cousin will probably describe you as traveling in his company.”

“All right! I will make my way at once to New York and take passage for Europe. I have long intended to go there, and this is a favorable opportunity. But I must first show my good will to Bernard by offering him this.”

He drew a ten-dollar bill from his pocketbook and handed it to Bernard.

“Ought I to take so much, Mr. Penrose?” asked Bernard, in a tone of hesitation.

“I am rich. I can spare it,” said William Penrose. “You need not hesitate.”

“Then, I will take it with thanks, for I have got to make my own way, and I have no one to depend upon. My guardian will be angry when he learns that I have run away from Mr. Snowdon.”

“You can adopt me for your guardian for a short time,” said Mr. Stackpole. “And now I move that we get away from Poplar Plains as soon as possible.” A carriage was secured, and within fifteen minutes the three were on their way to the nearest railroad station.

CHAPTER IX. ON THE HUDSON RIVER BOAT.

William Penrose kept on his way to New York, but Bernard and Mr. Stackpole stopped at Albany.

"I have a little business to attend to here," said Mr. Stackpole, "so if you don't mind, we'll stay over here a day."

"All right, sir; I have no pressing business to hurry me on. I have never been in Albany, and shall be glad to go about and see the city."

The next morning they took the day boat down the Hudson. The great steamer was a floating palace, and had every accommodation that could be desired.

Just before going aboard Bernard bought from a newsboy a copy of the Albany *Argus*. He glanced rapidly over the contents of the paper, and his attention was arrested by the account of the mysterious disappearance of a package of government bonds—five thousand dollars—from the banking house of Murdock & Co.

"The loss was not discovered till about the close of business," said the account. "No one in the office could throw any light upon the matter. Whether it was an employee or an outside party is uncertain. Mr. Murdock remembers seeing the package on a desk, but assuming that the clerk was preparing to put it in the safe, gave no more thought to it till it was found to be missing. Detectives have the matter in charge, and it is hoped that the thief will be captured within twenty-four hours."

Bernard read the account with languid interest. He knew none of the parties, and had no special reason to dwell on the paragraph.

"Will you allow me to look at your paper?" asked a young man of twenty-five, dressed in showy style, and carrying a small satchel in his hand.

"Certainly, sir," answered Bernard politely.

"Anything interesting in it?" asked the young man languidly.

"There is an account of the theft of some government bonds from Murdock & Co."

"Ah, that is a prominent house!"

"I don't know anything about Albany firms," said Bernard.

"Then you don't live in Albany?"

"I never saw the city till yesterday."

The young man read the paragraph.

"Rather a clever robbery," he said, in a tone of indifference.

"I think any robbery is foolish," responded Bernard.

"Yes, of course; that is the proper view to take of it. I suppose you attend Sunday school?"

There was a lurking sneer in the young man's tone, as Bernard thought.

"I am not connected with a Sunday school at present," he said.

"I don't think Sunday school boys are better than any other."

"They ought to be."

"True, but we have to consider facts. Won't you go down-stairs and drink a glass of beer?"

"No, thank you."

"Oh, I forgot that you were a Sunday school boy. Well, ta, ta! I'll see you again."

There was something peculiar about the young man. Though it was a warm day he wore an ulster, which he never took off. Then he carried round his portmanteau with him all the time.

During the next two or three hours Bernard saw him several times.

There was something else also that drew his attention to the young man. He scanned his fellow passengers attentively, rather as if he was afraid of meeting some objectionable person. He seemed very restless also. He would seldom stay more than fifteen minutes in one spot.

Bernard had asked him his destination, but he evaded a straightforward reply.

"I am going wherever the boat does," he said, with a smile. "How is it with you?"

"I suppose I shall land in New York."

"Do you know any one there?"

"Yes, I know Mr. Cornelius McCracken."

"Never heard of him. Is he an uncle of yours?"

"No, he is my guardian."

"Your guardian?" repeated the young man, with interest. "Then you have property?"

"I don't think so. Mr. McCracken says I have none."

"Then what is the use of a guardian?"

"Not much. Probably he will throw me off."

"Why?"

"Because I have run away from a school where he placed me."

"Humph! Why did you do that?"

"I was not well treated. The teacher wanted to whip me."

"And you objected?" said the young man, laughing.

"Yes."

"I can't blame you. I should have acted in the same way probably. Who is that man I have seen with you—he

looks like a Yankee."

"He is an acquaintance I made yesterday."

"Are you traveling with him?"

"Yes."

"He has a Western look."

"I think he has been a miner in Colorado."

"So. Has he much money, do you think?" Bernard began to think his companion too inquisitive, and he answered shortly, "I don't know."

"Hasn't told you, I suppose. Well, I shouldn't mind going out West myself and trying mining."

"What business are you in?" asked Bernard, thinking he had a right to ask questions also.

"I am a traveling man," answered the young man, after a slight hesitation.

They passed Newburg early in the afternoon. Shortly after reaching this place, as Bernard was sitting on a bench on the upper deck, his friend in the ulster came up to him hurriedly.

"Please take charge of my portmanteau a few minutes," he said, "if it won't be too much trouble."

"No trouble at all," replied Bernard politely.

The portmanteau was a small one, and it was hard to conjecture from its appearance what it might contain. Upon this point, however, Bernard was not curious.

"It can't contain anything very valuable," he reflected, "or the owner would hardly trust a stranger with it."

They reached Newburg, and remained some time. Bernard thought of going down to the lower deck, but it occurred to him that the owner of the portmanteau might come back for it and be unable to find him. This was rather embarrassing and he felt sorry that he had been so obliging as to assume charge of property not his own.

As they left Newburg he went to the rear part of the boat, and took a look at the place. He knew from the history he studied in school that Washington had at one time had his headquarters here. If there had been time he would have liked to have gone on shore. But even then he could hardly have done so with the portmanteau in charge.

He fixed his eyes carelessly upon the historic town, not expecting to see anything of special interest.

He was destined to a great surprise. There on the pier stood the young man in the ulster. He could not mistake him. Not alone the ulster, but the scanty yellowish mustache and pallid complexion betrayed him.

"He must have been left behind!" thought Bernard, "and I have his portmanteau!"

He took another look at the young man in the ulster. Certainly be betrayed no signs of having been left against his will. He stood in a careless position with a quiet and composed face, looking at the great steamer as it steadily widened the distance between him and his late companion.

Bernard was very much puzzled.

"He doesn't seem to care. Does he remember that I have his portmanteau?" he asked himself.

He tried to attract the young man's attention, but in vain.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself. "I don't know the name of the man who intrusted me with the valise. I wonder if there is any name on it."

He examined it, but found nothing to indicate the identity of the owner.

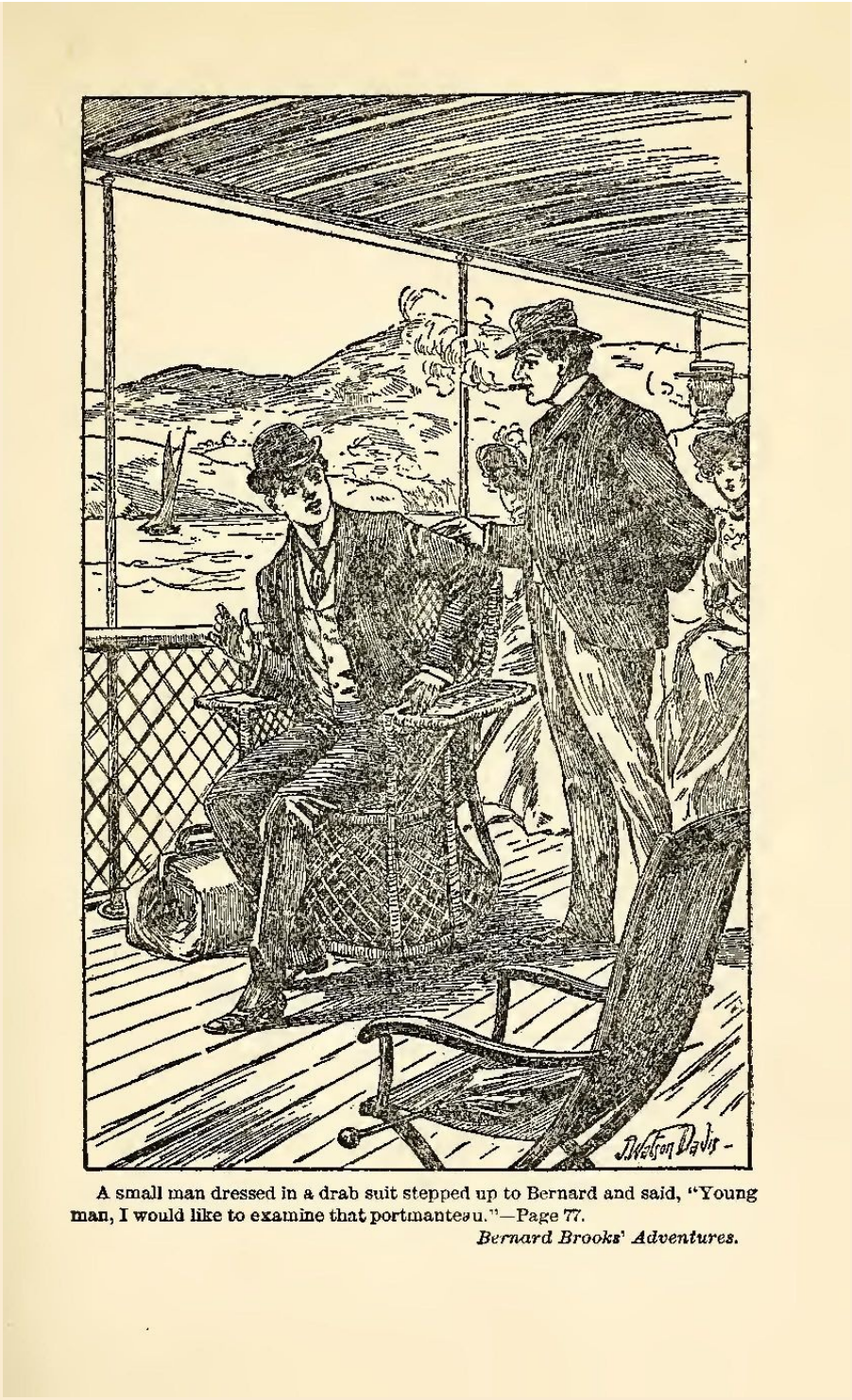
"I must ask Mr. Stackpole what to do," thought Bernard. "It is certainly a queer position to be in. I may find it necessary to open the portmanteau, and ascertain the contents."

He looked around the boat in search of Mr. Stackpole; but the steamer was large and quite crowded. Then there were so many divisions to it that somehow he missed seeing his mining friend. There was nothing now to interfere with his going where he liked, as there was no chance of the young man in the ulster looking for him.

At length he sat down again, and became interested in a German family where there were three or four young children. He got on quite sociable terms with a roguish looking young boy named Herman. Bernard was fond of children, and easily won their sympathy and attachment.

A small man dressed in a drab suit came up-stairs and looked keenly about him. Finally his glance rested upon Bernard and his portmanteau.

He stepped up to Bernard and said, in a tone of quiet authority, "Young man, I would like to examine that portmanteau."



A small man dressed in a drab suit stepped up to Bernard and said, "Young man, I would like to examine that portmanteau."—Page 77.
Bernard Brooks' Adventures.

Original Size

Bernard looked up in surprise.
"The portmanteau is not mine," he said. "What do you want of it?"
"Nevertheless, I must look at it."
Bernard still hesitated.
"Come," said the other firmly, "it won't be wise for you to object. I am a detective."

CHAPTER X. HATCH, DETECTIVE.

Bernard was startled. He had heard of detectives and read about them, but this was the first time he had been brought face to face with one. It must be confessed that the quiet little man hardly came up to his expectations.

"You can open it if you like," he said.

"Where is the key?"

"I haven't got it."

"Young man," said the detective sternly, "I advise you not to throw any obstacles in my way. It may do you harm."

"But," said Bernard earnestly, "I am speaking the truth. The owner of the portmanteau no doubt has the key, but he didn't give it to me."

"The owner? Isn't it yours?"

"*No*, sir."

"Whose is it, then?"

"It belongs to a young man in an ulster, who handed it to me for safe keeping."

"Where is the young man?" asked the detective searchingly.

"He got off at Newburg."

"Leaving the portmanteau with you?"

"Yes."

"When is he going to get it back from you?"

"I don't know."

"And you don't know his name?"

"No, sir."

"That seems a very probable story. Young man, there seems to be a good deal that you don't know. How long have you known the young man you speak of?"

"Only since I came on board the boat."

"I will open the satchel and then will question you further."

He drew from his pocket a bunch of keys, and finally found one that fitted the lock. Opening the portmanteau, he drew out some bonds.

"Aha!" he said, "it is as I suspected. These are some of the bonds that were stolen from Murdock & Co. yesterday."

"Is it possible?" asked Bernard, in amazement. "That is the robbery I was reading about in the *Argus*."

"Exactly," said the detective, with a sharp look. "Where are the rest?"

"Where are the rest? I am sure I don't know."

"Young man, there is no use in trying to deceive me."

"I am not deceiving you. It is as much a mystery to me as to you."

"Here are fifteen hundred dollars in bonds. The amount-taken was five thousand. That leaves a balance of thirty-five hundred dollars."

"The young man must have taken them out and concealed them in his ulster."

"So he wore an ulster?" said the detective, who had not at first noted this item in Bernard's description.

"Yes. I told you so."

"You may be right. On such a warm day as this he would not have worn an ulster unless he had some object in it. You say he got off at Newburg?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he tell you he was going to do so?"

"No. He only told me to keep the portmanteau for him."

"Then how did you know he got off there?"

"After the steamer had started I saw him on the wharf."

"Did he look as if he had got left?"

"No. He looked as if he had decided to remain there."

"You positively know nothing of this man?"

"No, sir."

"How do you account for his leaving the portmanteau in your charge?"

"We had sat and talked together considerably. Perhaps he wanted to have it found on me," suggested Bernard, with a sudden thought.

"This may be, although it looks queer. I shall have to place you under arrest."

"Why?" asked Bernard, in alarm.

"Because I have found a portion of the missing securities in your possession."

"But I told you how that happened."

"Very true, and your account may be correct—or it may not."

"You will find it is."

"What's your name?"

“Bernard Brooks.”

“Where are you going?”

“To New York.”

“What friends have you there?”

“A guardian.”

“His name.”

“Cornelius McCracken.”

“Are you alone on the boat?”

“No, sir. I have a friend with me—Mr. Joshua Stackpole. There he comes now.”

Mr. Stackpole looked surprised as he saw Bernard and the detective together.

“What’s all this?” he asked.

“Mr. Stackpole, I have been under the painful necessity of arresting your young friend.”

“Arresting Bernard? What on earth has he been doing?”

“I have found some of the bonds taken from Murdock & Co. in his possession.”

Mr. Stackpole looked the picture of amazement.

“Well, that beats me!” he exclaimed. “Where did you get them, Bernard?”

“A young man in an ulster gave me the portmanteau which contained them, and asked me to keep them for him.”

“That’s straight. I saw the young man myself, and I saw the portmanteau in his hand. He landed at Newburg; I saw him on the wharf.”

“Yes.”

“Why did he land without them?”

“I don’t know.”

“A part of the bonds were found in the portmanteau—a little less than one-third,” said the detective. “The rest——”

“Are probably in the young man’s possession.”

“I presume so.”

“Very well! Of course, you know your business, but it seems to me you ought to have him arrested.”

“I shall telegraph from the next landing to the chief of police at Newburg to detain him.”

“That is proper.”

“And I shall want your young friend here to testify against him.”

“I can guarantee that he will be ready. It’s a queer thing that the boy should be mixed up in this affair.”

“I think so myself,” said the detective, not wholly without suspicion.

At the next landing the detective got off, and sent the following telegram:

“Chief of Police, Newburg:

“Look for a young man about average height, wearing a brown ulster. Suspected in connection with the Murdock robbery in Albany. Search him.

“Hatch, Detective.

“Wire to me at central office, New York.”

In due time the boat reached New York. By special favor Bernard was allowed to go to the Grand Union Hotel with Mr. Stackpole on the guarantee of the latter that his young charge would be ready when wanted.

At the central office Detective Hatch found the following despatch from Newburg:

“Party in ulster under arrest. Bonds have been found in inside pockets of ulster—thirty-five hundred dollars.

“Smith,

“Chief of Newburg Police.”

Detective Hatch rubbed his hands in glee. He telegraphed to Murdock & Co.: “Bonds recovered and thief in custody.”

While upon this subject it may be stated that the thief was tried, convicted, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. Bernard received the following letter from Murdock & Co.:

“Bernard Brooks:

“We are apprised by Detective Hatch that you have aided him in securing the bonds of which we were robbed. This has occasioned you some trouble and inconvenience, and we wish to make you some acknowledgment. We send you herewith a Waltham gold watch, and hope it may please you.

“Murdock & Co.,

“Bankers and Brokers.”

The watch was a very handsome one, and proved to be a good timekeeper. It was what Bernard had long desired, but had had very little hope of securing. Mr. Stackpole bought him a chain to go with it.

“This is my contribution,” he said.

Bernard had been a week in New York, and he thought it high time to call upon his guardian. He ascertained from the directory that Cornelius McCracken had an office in Pine Street, and he accordingly betook himself there one morning.

He went up-stairs to a room on the third floor. On a door he saw the name Cornelius McCracken, Agent.

He ventured to open the door, and found himself in a room of moderate size, provided with the usual office furniture.

At a desk in the right hand corner, beside a window, sat a man of medium size, rather portly, with scanty locks that had once been red, but were now sprinkled plentifully with gray.

Bernard paused in the doorway and finally said: “Is this Mr. McCracken?”

“Yes,” answered the agent. “Who wants me?”

“I am your ward—Bernard Brooks.”

Mr. McCracken wheeled round in his chair quickly, and fixed a pair of sharp, ferret-like eyes on Bernard.

“So you have found me at last!” he said. “And now what have you to say in extenuation of your shameful conduct?”

CHAPTER XI. MR. SNOWDON LOSES HIS PUPIL.

Bernard colored, partly with indignation.

"What shameful conduct do you refer to?" he asked.

"I have received a letter from Mr. Snowdon, your respected preceptor, telling me how you have behaved."

"Would you allow me to read the letter?"

"Yes, though I think you won't find it very pleasant reading."

He lifted the lid of his desk and drew out a letter which he handed to Bernard.

Bernard opened and read it.

It ran thus:

"Cornelius McCracken, Esq.:

Respected Sir: It gives me keen anguish to reveal to you the unworthy conduct of the boy whom you intrusted to my charge. It may not wholly surprise you, for, if I remember rightly, you described Bernard Brooks to me as a "bad lot." In truth he is so. He has been mutinous and disagreeable, and has bullied my son Septimus, whom for some reason he seems to dislike strongly. Septimus is of a very amiable disposition—he is very like me—but he was constrained to complain of Bernard's overbearing conduct. I felt that the boy needed castigation. You remember that King Solomon approved corporal punishment. Accordingly I prepared to inflict it. Getting wind of my intention, Bernard ran away. He led me a long chase into the marshy lands to the rear of my farm, and managed to entrap me into a ditch where my wardrobe received considerable injury. Then he stayed away all night. In the morning, however, my boy Septimus found him in a hayloft in my barn and notified me.

"I immediately took a horsewhip and went out to the barn. I ascended to the loft, but he, being active and agile, managed to elude me, and escaped from the barn, removing the ladder so that I could not descend for some time. I won't go into details, but I will mention that he ran away to the neighboring town of Poplar Plains, where I found him in the company of an escaped lunatic. I should have been able to capture him but for the presence and interference of a Western desperado, who produced a revolver and threatened my life. He is still at large and probably still in the company of this lunatic, who seems at present disposed to befriend him, but may at any time murder him, as his cousin, now in pursuit of him, gives him a very bad character.

"I have felt it my duty to lay these facts before you for your consideration. I may add that I was put to considerable expense in hiring a horse to pursue Bernard. This and some other items amount to about five dollars, which I shall be glad if you will remit to me, as my means are straitened and I cannot bear the loss.

"Yours sincerely,

"Ezekiel Snowdon."

"What have you to say to this?" asked Mr. McCracken severely.

"Only that Mr. Snowdon is unfit to teach, and is as brutal as he dares to be. I was fully justified in running away. I don't allow any man to horsewhip me."

"So you abused his son, Sep——" and Mr. McCracken referred to the letter to refresh his memory as to the name.

"Septimus? He is worse, if anything, than his father."

"Do you expect me to send you to another school, where you can have your own way?"

"No; I would prefer to earn my own living."

"Are you still with the lunatic?"

"Mr. Penrose is no lunatic, though he has a cousin who is trying to get him into an insane asylum in order to gain possession of his money."

"Very plausible! I suppose he tells you so. Are you still with him?"

"No, sir. I am with a miner from Colorado—a Mr. Stackpole."

"Is he the desperado referred to by Mr. Snowdon in his letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Upon my word, I congratulate you on your choice of associates. Where is he now?"

"In New York, at the Grand Union Hotel. I have been staying there with him."

"Has he adopted you?"

"No, sir. Mr. McCracken, there is one question I would like to ask you."

"What is it?"

"You are my guardian. Have you charge of my property for me?"

"No. Who told you that I had?" demanded Mr. McCracken suspiciously.

"No one, but I thought my father might have left something."

"He left about a hundred and fifty dollars, but it was gone long ago."

"And have you been paying my expenses out of your own pocket ever since?"

"Yes," answered Mr. McCracken, but he looked somewhat embarrassed.

"Then I thank you for your liberality, sir. I don't like to impose upon it, and would like to make my own living."

"That sounds very well, but what can you do?"

"I don't know yet, but I am sure I can earn my board. I am young and strong."

“Where did you get that gold watch?” asked Mr. McCracken, as Bernard drew it to consult the time.

“It was given me by a firm of bankers in Albany—Murdock & Co.”

“What induced them to give it to you?”

“I helped them to recover some bonds which had been stolen from them.”

“Humph! You seem to be fond of adventures.”

“The adventure was forced upon me.”

“Let me know what you want.”

“If you could help me to find a place where I can earn a living I should feel deeply indebted to you, and it would save you from supporting me out of your own pocket.”

“I will think of it. Where are you staying?”

“At the Grand Union Hotel.”

“Who is paying your bills?”

“Mr. Joshua Stackpole.”

“You can come to my house. In a few days I shall probably find you a place.”

“Thank you, sir. Where do you live?”

Mr. McCracken gave an address on Lexington Avenue.

“I will go there this afternoon.”

“I shall be home at five. You may present yourself then.”

Bernard was about to leave the office when Mr. McCracken called him back.

“Wait a minute. Did you notice what Mr. Snowdon said about his expense in getting you back?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Bernard with a smile. “Do you think he expended five dollars?”

“No, sir. I know he did not. The horse he hired is about twenty-five years old, and he can have it whenever he please for seventy-five cents.”

“So Mr. Snowdon wishes to make a little profit out of the transaction.”

“So it appears.”

“Very well, that will do.”

The next day Mr. Snowdon received the following letter:

“Dear Sir:

“I have delayed answering your letter till I could see my ward. He called on me this morning. He charges you with an attempt to horsewhip for insufficient cause. Into the merits of this controversy between you I will not enter. I doubt if it will be advisable to send him back to Snowdon Institute, and at his request I shall find him some employment.

“As to the charge you make for expenses in pursuing him I think you have greatly overcharged. I inclose two dollars, which Bernard tells me is considerably more than your horse hire cost you.

“Your obedient servant,

“Cornelius McCracken.”

Ezekiel Snowdon read this letter with a perturbed brow.

“Such is gratitude!” he exclaimed, raising his eyes to heaven in protest. “The mental anguish that that boy has cost me ought to count for something. Yet his guardian has sent me a paltry two-dollar bill. Truly the virtuous are persecuted in this world. They must seek their reward in a better sphere.”

“Has the crazy man been caught, pa?”

“Not that I have heard. That good man, his cousin, has been foiled in his efforts probably. I shall miss the money I have been accustomed to receive from Bernard’s guardian. Unless we can fill his place, I shall be obliged to cut down the rations of butter, and have it only every other day.”

“I can’t do without butter, pa. You needn’t give any at all to the boarders.”

“True, the suggestion is a good one. Competent medical authorities say that butter is apt to bring humors to children. They will be better off without it.”

Bernard reported to Mr. Stackpole the interview he had had with his guardian, and asked his advice as to what he had better do.

“You had better try him for a while, Bernard,” said Mr. Stackpole, “and see whether he is ready to do the fair thing by you. If he doesn’t you will always find a friend in Joshua Stackpole.”

“Thank you, Mr. Stackpole, I am sure of that.”

“So this Mr. McCracken says your father left you no property. When did he die?”

“When I was about seven years old.”

“What do you know about him?”

“Very little. He used to travel—I think he was an agent of some kind. Mr. McCracken never would tell me much about him. How long shall you stay in New York, Mr. Stackpole?”

“I shall leave in a day or two. I have to go to Philadelphia on business, and after I return I shall leave for Colorado. My address will be at the Red Dog Mine, Gulchville.”

“That’s a queer name, Mr. Stackpole. Was there ever a red dog?”

“One of the miners in a fit of intoxication painted his dog red, and that gave a name to the mine.”

The next day found Bernard at his guardian’s house.

CHAPTER XII. BERNARD MEETS A FRIEND OF HIS FATHER.

Cornelius McCracken lived in a three story and basement house on Lexington Avenue. It was a solid and comfortable house, but not showy. He had a wife and three children. The eldest, a girl, had recently married.

There were two boys of sixteen and eighteen, but they were not particularly interesting, and as they were attending school Bernard did not get well acquainted with them.

On the first morning after breakfast Bernard asked, as his guardian was starting for his office, “Is there anything you wish me to do?”

“No; you can go about the city and make yourself familiar with it. If I should get you a place here it might be well for you to know your way about the streets.”

“I shall like that.”

“Oh, by the way, have you any money for car fare, or any small expenses?”

“Yes, sir, I have all I shall need for the present.”

Mr. McCracken looked relieved, for he was not a liberal man, and was glad to be freed from the expense of supplying his ward with pocket money.

Shortly after breakfast he went out and bent his steps toward Broadway. He had been in New York before, but not for some years, and it was quite new to him. He wandered about as chance suggested.

About eleven o’clock he was passing a barber shop on a side street, and it occurred to him that his hair needed cutting. He entered the shop, and sat down to wait his turn. He found himself sitting next a man with hair partially gray, who regarded him with some attention.

“Have you come in to be shaved?” he asked, with a smile.

Bernard smiled in return.

“No,” he answered. “That can wait. I shall have my hair cut.”

“You bear a striking resemblance to a man I once knew,” said the old gentleman, after a pause.

“What was his name?” asked Bernard, with natural curiosity.

“Clayton Brooks.”

“That was my father,” said Bernard quickly.

“Is it possible? That accounts for the resemblance. Is your father living?”

“No, sir; he died ten years ago.”

“I supposed he must be dead, as I had lost track of him.”

“Did you know him well?” asked Bernard eagerly.

“Quite well. We were both traveling salesmen. He traveled for a jewelry firm in Maiden Lane, I for a dry goods house. Our territory was in large part the same, and we often stayed at the same hotel. Is your mother living?”

“No, sir. She died before my father.”

“Then you are an orphan?”

“Yes, sir,” answered Bernard gravely.

“Pardon me—it is none of my business—but your father left you comfortably provided for, did he not?”

Bernard shook his head.

“On the contrary, he left almost nothing, I am told.”

“Who, then, took care of you, for you were too young to take care of yourself?”

“A business man down town, Cornelius McCracken. He is my guardian, though there seems to be no property for him to take care of for me.”

“I remember the name.”

“Did you ever hear my father speak of him? I have often wondered how he came to be my guardian.”

“Yes, I remember now that your father told me he had saved a few thousand dollars, and put it into Mr. McCracken’s hands to invest for him.”

“Are you sure of this?” asked Bernard, in surprise.

“Yes. The name is a peculiar one, and I remember it for that reason.”

“Then there was some property—at one time.”

“Yes; I am not mistaken about that.”

“It is singular that Mr. McCracken has never told me anything about it.”

“Yes,” answered the old gentleman slowly. “It is singular. Does he say that your father left nothing?”

“No. He says that he left a trifle, but that it was soon exhausted, and that he had since paid my expenses out of his own pocket.”

“The money which your father put into his hands was no trifle. The interest alone would have paid a boy’s expenses. Are you at Mr. McCracken’s house?”

“Yes, sir; but I only went there yesterday. He put me at a boarding-school in the country, and I ran away.”

“You don’t look like a boy who would run away from school.”

“I shouldn’t if I had not had good cause.”

“Suppose you tell me why you did it.”

Bernard, upon this, told the story already familiar to the reader.

“Do you blame me for leaving Mr. Snowdon?” he asked, at the conclusion of his tale.

“No, I do not. By George, I would have done the same if I had been in your place. Does Mr. McCracken want you to go back?”

“No; he is going to find a place for me.”

“If I were in business I would give you a position in a minute. I am sure that your father’s son would suit me.”

“Thank you, sir. Are you still traveling?”

“No. Four years since an old uncle died and left me a good sum of money, so that I have since been able to live at ease without working. I am not an old man, still I am fully ten years older than your father would have been, and it is pleasant to think I can do as I please.”

“I don’t care to retire just yet,” said Bernard, smiling.

“I should hope not. Even if you were able to live without work, I would not give much for a boy who would be willing to do so.”

“Next!” announced one of the barbers.

“It is my turn, I believe,” said the old gentleman.

“Can you meet me to-morrow at eleven o’clock at the St. Nicholas Hotel?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I may have more to say to you about your affairs. On your father’s account, I take a great interest in you. By the way, don’t say anything to Mr. McCracken about meeting a friend of your father’s.”

“No, sir, I will not.”

The next day Bernard kept his appointment. He had been in the hotel—now torn down—but five minutes, when his acquaintance of the day before made his appearance.

“By the way,” said he, “I forgot to tell you my name.”

“I thought of that after we parted,” said Bernard.

“It is Alvin Franklin. There is a tradition in our family that we are related to Benjamin Franklin. I can’t certify to it, but I hope it is true. Here is my card.”.

“Thank you, sir. I should have remembered it without a card, but I will keep it.”

“Referring to my conversation with you yesterday, I have made some inquiries of my business acquaintances.”

“What did you learn, sir?”

“That his reputation is not of the best. He is not a man who is above suspicion, but he takes care to keep within the law. In fact, as far as I can learn, he is a tricky man.”

“I hope that will never be said of me, Mr. Franklin.”

“It could never be said of your father. He was as straight and honorable a man as ever lived.”

“I am proud to hear you say so,” said Bernard, flushing with pleasure.

“I may be a little hasty, but I can’t help feeling that in some way Mr. McCracken has wronged you.”

“In what way, sir?”

“I think he has not accounted to you for property your father placed in his hands.”

“The same thought came into my mind, Mr. Franklin, but I did not wish to suspect my guardian, with nothing to go upon.”

“He seems to be just the man to cheat an orphan. A man who is dishonest in one way is likely to be dishonest in another.”

“Even if it is so, I suppose I have no way of proving it.”

“Probably not. If there were any proofs of the trust reposed by your father, Mr. McCracken would be likely to destroy them. I will think over the matter, and if I can hit upon any course that would benefit you I will let you know.”

Bernard and his new friend talked further of his father. It was a delight to the boy to meet some one who had known the parents of whom he could scarcely remember anything. All that Mr. Franklin had to say of the elder Brooks redounded to his credit, and this was naturally gratifying to his son.

When they parted, Bernard asked, “Shall I mention to Mr. McCracken meeting you?”

“I think not—at present.”

But chance ordered otherwise...

When Bernard was drawing his handkerchief out of his side pocket after supper, he twitched out the card, which fell to the floor.

Mr. McCracken’s sharp eye detected it.

“What is that?” he asked.

“A card.”

“Of course. What name is on it?”

“Alvin Franklin.”

“Who is he? Is it a man you know?”

“Yes, sir. It is an acquaintance of my father.”

“When did you see him?”

“To-day, at the St. Nicholas Hotel.”

“Did he talk to you about your father?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What did he say, and how did he happen to know him?”

Bernard answered this question, but did not think it necessary to speak of the money which his father was said to have left.

Mr. McCracken made no comment, but did not seem pleased. When Bernard went up to bed, he said to himself, “I must get the boy out of the city. This man may tell him too much.”

CHAPTER XIII. PROFESSOR PUFFER.

Three days later Mr. McCracken said to Bernard at the breakfast table: “Well, I have secured a position for you.”

“Indeed, sir, what is it?” inquired Bernard, with interest. “Is it in the city?”

“No; did you particularly wish to live in the city?”

“No, sir; as long as the position is a good one, and is likely to lead to something, I am not particular.”

“You are a sensible boy. Let me say, then, that my friend Professor Puffer—Ezra Puffer—perhaps you have heard of him—requires a boy of fair education as secretary and literary assistant. Though he has never seen you, he will take you on my recommendation.”

“But, sir,” said Bernard, considerably amazed, “am I qualified to be literary assistant to a professor?”

“As to that, I don’t think anything will be required beyond the ability of a fair scholar. You have a fair education, I take it.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You know a little Latin and French, eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And write a good hand?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then I have no doubt you will suit my friend Puffer.”

“Of what is he professor?”

“I can’t tell you exactly, but I believe he is interested in antiquities. By the way, he is going to Europe. I suppose you won’t object to going with him.”

“No; I shall like it,” said Bernard, in a tone of satisfaction.

“I thought you would. How soon can you be ready?”

“Whenever you wish.”

“Professor Puffer will sail to-morrow in a packet ship, and I have promised to take you on board. He is so busy making preparations that he cannot call here.”

“I should like to make his acquaintance before I start.”

“Why?” asked Mr. McCracken sharply. “Can’t you accept him on my recommendation?”

“I hope he isn’t like Mr. Snowdon.”

“You will find him to be a gentleman. Is that satisfactory?”

“Oh, yes, sir. Don’t imagine I want to make trouble. Only I had a little curiosity in regard to him; that is all. Have you any idea how I shall be employed?”

“Well, to tell the truth, I can’t give you much idea. Your labors will be light, and you will have a chance to see the world. Upon my word, young man, you are very fortunate. If at your age I had such an opportunity I should have been delighted. If, however, you would prefer to go back to the care of Mr. Snowdon, I won’t object to gratifying you.”

“Oh, no; I am quite satisfied,” said Bernard hastily. “I shall certainly prefer Professor Puffer. What is his appearance?”

“I should say that he was about my age. He has but one eye, the other having been destroyed by an accident when he was a young man. I think the other eye is weak, and it is probably for this reason that he requires a secretary.”

“Very likely, sir.”

“You can pack your valise to-day, and to-morrow morning I will take you to the vessel.”

Mr. Stackpole had left the city, and Bernard did not have an opportunity of seeing his father’s old friend Alvin Franklin, so that he was unable to inform either of his departure for Europe. He was sorry for this, as he looked upon both as friends, and would have liked to have had their good wishes.

Somehow he never looked upon his guardian as a friend. The information he had received from Mr. Franklin, moreover, had excited in his mind a suspicion as to Mr. McCracken’s honesty.

However, he was to have an opportunity of supporting himself. Mr. McCracken had told him that Professor Puffer would pay him twenty-five dollars a month, besides his board and traveling expenses, and this he rightly considered as an unusual salary for a boy of his age.

About nine o’clock the next morning he started with Mr. McCracken for the ship Vesta. It lay at a North River pier, and half an hour or less brought them to it. It was a ship of fair size, but as Bernard knew very little about ships of any kind—he had never been on one—he was not in a condition to judge on this point.

They boarded the ship, and Mr. McCracken addressed the second mate, whom he knew slightly.

“Is Professor Puffer on board?” he asked.

“Yes, sir; he is in the cabin.”

“Thank you.”

They proceeded to the cabin, where they found the professor. He was a short, rather stout man, with a red face, scanty hair, and a green shade covering the lost eye.

Mr. McCracken went up and shook his hand.

“Professor Puffer,” he said, “I have brought Bernard Brooks, your new secretary. I hope he will prove satisfactory.”

Professor Puffer turned his glance towards Bernard, whom he examined attentively. Then he said, in a deep bass voice: “I have taken him on your recommendation, Mr. McCracken. You know what I want. If you say he

will suit me I have no doubt he will. Young man, I hope we shall get on well together."

"I hope so, sir."

"Has your guardian acquainted you with the details of your engagement?"

"He hasn't told me exactly what I will have to do."

"You will learn in good time," said the professor, with a wave of his hand.

"Whatever the duties are I will try to give you satisfaction."

"All right!"

"You can look about the vessel, Bernard," said Mr. McCracken, "while the professor and I have a little conversation."

"All right, sir. I shall be glad to do so."

So Bernard walked about the ship and watched with interest the preparations for departure. It was all new to him, and he could not help feeling elated when he reflected that he was about to see something of foreign countries, while at the same time earning his living.

He was obliged to confess that Professor Puffer did not come up to his expectations. In fact, he looked like anything but a literary man or professor. Bernard had imagined a tall, slender man, with a high intellectual brow, a pale face, an air of refinement and cultivation, and a quiet manner. Professor Puffer was quite the reverse. He looked more like a sailor, and his red face seemed to indicate that he was not a member of a total abstinence society.

"I never in the world should think that he was a professor," reflected Bernard. "However, appearances are not always to be trusted, and he may be very intellectual, though he certainly does not look so. I do hope we shall get along well together."

He was interrupted in his reflections by the appearance of Mr. McCracken on deck.

"I shall have to say good-by, Bernard," said his guardian, "as the vessel is about ready to start. I hope you will be a good boy and give satisfaction to Professor Puffer. If you do not, you cannot expect me to do anything more for you."

"No, sir, I won't. I thank you for procuring me the situation. I will try to justify your recommendation."

"All right! Well, good-by."

It might have been supposed that Mr. McCracken would have shaken hands with Bernard now that he was about to go away to a distant point and for an indefinite time, but he did not offer to do it, and Bernard on the whole was glad to have it so. He felt a physical repulsion for Mr. McCracken which he could not explain, and preferred to dispense with all signs of friendliness.

He felt rather relieved, too, when Mr. McCracken had left the vessel, and he had seen the last of him, for a time at least.

The preparations for departure continued. The sailors were busy, and soon the vessel left her wharf, and was towed out into the stream. Bernard watched the shipping in the harbor, the ferry-boats darting here and there, the Jersey shore, and later the spires and warehouses of the great city on the other side of the river. He rather wondered why he did not see Professor Puffer, but that gentleman had gone below. At length Bernard thought it time to inquire the whereabouts of his employer. The steward led him below, and pointed to the door of a stateroom. He knocked at the door, and did not at first have a reply. A second knock elicited an indistinct sound which he interpreted as "Come in!"

He opened the door and saw the professor lying in the lower berth in what appeared to be a stupor.

"Don't you feel well, Professor Puffer?" asked Bernard.

"Who are you?" returned the professor, with a tipsy hiccough.

This, with the undeniable smell of liquor, and a whisky bottle on the floor, showed clearly enough what was the matter with the professor.

Bernard was shocked. He had always had a horror of intemperance, and he regarded his corpulent employer with ill-concealed disgust.

"I am Bernard Brooks, your new secretary," he answered.

"Thatsh all right! Take a drink," returned the professor, trying to indicate the bottle.

"No, thank you. I am not thirsty," said Bernard.

"Give it to me, then."

Much against his will Bernard handed the bottle to his learned employer, who poured down the small amount that was left in it.

"Thatsh good!" he ejaculated.

"Have I got to occupy the room with a man like that?" thought Bernard, with disgust. "I hope there are very few professors like Professor Puffer."

CHAPTER XIV. SOME OF THE PASSENGERS.

Bernard had always cherished high respect for literary men and professors, though it must be confessed that he did not venerate Professor Snowdon. To find Professor Puffer an inebriate was certainly a shock to him. Still, he remembered that Burns had been intemperate, and that Byron loved gin, and that in spite of his taste for whisky Professor Puffer might be a learned man.

The next day the professor was sober, partly, perhaps, because his supply of drink had given out. Bernard resolved to get better acquainted with him.

"Professor Puffer," he said, after breakfast, "I am ready to begin work whenever you please."

"All right! Have you been seasick?"

"No, sir."

"I thought perhaps for the first three or four days you might be affected."

"I thought so, too, as I am not used to the sea, but I haven't had any trouble yet, so that I can go to work any time you desire."

"I shan't undertake to do any work on the ship, Mr.—— what is your name?"

"Brooks—Bernard Brooks."

"Just so. I shall remember after a while."

"I am very much obliged to you for giving me a situation when you don't know any more of me."

"Oh, Mr. McCracken spoke for you. A sharp man is Mr. McCracken."

"I dare say he is, but I don't know much about him."

"Don't you?" asked the professor, showing some interest. "Isn't he your guardian?"

"Yes, sir, but I have never spent much time with him."

"Has he charge of much property of yours?"

"He says I have no property."

"Ha, indeed! As a rule, guardians are not appointed unless there is property."

"He was a friend—that is, an acquaintance of my father."

"How long has your father been dead?"

"Ever since I was five years old."

Now it occurred to Bernard to ask some questions. "Mr. McCracken told me you were interested in antiquities."

"Yes—antiquities."

"Have you written any works on the subject?"

"Yes, several," answered the professor, with some hesitation.

"Have you any of them with you?"

"No."

"I thought I should like to look them over if you had, and it might help qualify me for my duties."

"I have no doubt you will answer my purpose," said the professor, yawning, as if he did not feel much interest in the subject.

Bernard was rather disappointed. He wished the professor would talk to him on his specialty, as it would be interesting and instructive.

"Are we going to stay abroad long?" he asked.

"My plans are not fully formed," said the professor. He gave the impression of not caring to talk on the subject, and Bernard took the hint, and ceased to question him. He found time hanging heavily on his hands, as he appeared to have no duties and thought it might be interesting to make some acquaintances on board the ship.

There were ten passengers besides Professor Puffer and himself. The first he became acquainted with was a thin, sallow-faced man who wore green glasses. What he was Bernard could not conjecture, but soon learned.

He was standing forward looking out at the white capped waves when a voice accosted him. "Young man, are you bilious?"

Opening his eyes in surprise, Bernard recognized the sallow-faced passenger.

"I don't think I am," he answered.

"I am Dr. Felix Hampton," said his new acquaintance. "I have discovered a medicine which will effectually cure biliousness."

"Indeed, sir! You will be a public benefactor, in that case."

"True, young man. I feel that my work is a great one. Thousands will bless my name. I am going abroad to introduce my medicine in Europe. There must be thousands of bilious cases in London alone."

"I presume you are right. Shall you establish yourself in London?"

"I cannot give myself to any one country. I shall endeavor to sell an interest in my medicine to some responsible party who will push it in Great Britain. Who is the red-faced man you are traveling with?"

"Professor Ezra Puffer."

"What is he professor of?"

"I don't know, sir. I believe he is interested in antiquities."

"Is he bilious?"

"I haven't known him long enough to tell."

“Would you mind recommending my medicine to him?”

“I think you had better do so yourself. I don’t know anything about the medicine, you know.”

“Is he your father?”

“No, sir.”

The idea of being the son of Professor Puffer was quite repugnant to Bernard, and he answered promptly.

“You may be bilious without knowing it. If you will, come to my stateroom I will give you a teaspoonful of the medicine without charge.”

“Thank you, sir. I don’t care for it. If I were sick I would make up my mind to buy medicine, but I feel perfectly healthy. Do you use it yourself?”

“I did, but now I am entirely cured of the insidious disease.”

It struck Bernard that Dr. Hampton was singularly unhealthy in appearance, but this he kept to himself.

As he walked to another part of the deck he was accosted by a bright, healthy looking man of perhaps thirty-five, with a rosy face and a quick, alert manner.

“I see you have been talking with Dr. Hampton,” he said.

“I didn’t know that was his name.”

“Did he ask you if you were bilious?”

“Yes, and offered me a dose of his medicine without charge.”

The other laughed. “He made me the same liberal offer. Neither you nor I look like bilious cases.”

“I should think not,”

“The doctor himself looks like a victim of liver complaint. Are you traveling alone?”

“No, sir. I am traveling with Professor Puffer.”

“A short man with a red face?”

“Yes.”

“A friend of your family?”

“I never saw him until I met him on the ship.”

“You called him Professor Puffer. What is he professor of?”

“I believe he is interested in antiquities.”

“He seems to me more interested in liquor. But I must apologize. I should not speak so of your friend.”

Bernard laughed.

“I am not sensitive on the subject of my friend, or rather my employer,” he said.

“Your employer?”

“Yes; I am his secretary, and I believe I am to assist him in his literary labors.”

“Then I suppose you will become a professor of antiquities also.”

“Perhaps so,” assented Bernard, with a smile.

“For my part, I don’t care much for antiquities. I am more interested in the present than in the past. I am buyer for a Boston house, and my name is Nelson Sturgis. How may I call you?”

“Bernard Brooks.”

“Professor Brooks?” asked Sturgis.

“Not yet,” laughed Bernard.

“Suppose we take a little promenade. I make a practice of walking two hours daily on shipboard in order to get my customary exercise.”

“I shall be glad to join you, Mr. Sturgis.”

As they were walking they had an opportunity to witness an amusing meeting between Professor Puffer and Dr. Hampton.

As Professor Puffer emerged from the cabin the sallow-faced man approached him with the stereotyped question, “Pardon me, sir, but are you bilious?”

“What the—dickens do you mean?” demanded Professor Puffer, glaring at the doctor.

“No offense, sir, but I think most persons are bilious.”

“You look a good deal more bilious than I.”

“No, sir, you are mistaken. I have cured myself of liver complaint by Dr. Hampton’s celebrated liver tonic. I am Dr. Hampton.”

“Are you? Well, your appearance doesn’t speak very well for your remedy. My liver is perfectly regular.”

“I am glad to hear it, sir. I was speaking to your secretary a short time since, but he doesn’t think he is bilious. A boy of his age wouldn’t be apt to know. I will make you the same offer that I did him. I will give you a dose of the tonic free gratis, and you may find that it will benefit you.”

“Is there any whisky or brandy in the tonic?” asked Professor Puffer, with sudden interest.

“No, sir, not a drop. You may rest assured that it is a strict temperance medicine.”

“Then I don’t want any of it, sir. Temperance is a humbug. Are you a temperance man?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I am not. Good morning.”

Dr. Hampton’s next interview was more satisfactory. Among the passengers was a thin maiden lady of uncertain age. She was beginning to suffer seasickness when Dr. Hampton approached her.

“Pardon me,” he said, “but you look bilious.”

“I fear I am,” she answered, in a hollow tone. “I feel dreadfully.”

“I thought I could not be mistaken. Shall I relieve you?”

“Oh, sir, if you only could.”

“I can. A bottle of my celebrated liver tonic will make a new man—I mean woman—of you.”

“Bring me some, please, for indeed I feel very sick.”

Dr. Hampton produced a small bottle from his pocket. “This is it,” he said. “A dollar, please.”

The maiden lady drew a dollar bill from her pocket, and the doctor, producing a spoon, administered a dose. The result was magical! The lady rushed hastily to the side of the vessel, and was relieved of her breakfast.

“I feel better,” she gasped.

“I knew you would,” said the doctor, and he put the bill into his pocket with a smile of satisfaction.

CHAPTER XV. JACK STAPLES.

Professor Puffer had a grievance. He had sent on board a good supply of whisky—sufficient to last him through the voyage—but the greater part of this had mysteriously disappeared. Whether it had been carried to the wrong vessel or not could not be ascertained. At any rate, he had to do without it, and this to a man of the professor's tastes was a great deprivation.

He was quite ready to buy some, and applied to the captain, but Captain Smith had no more than he desired for his own use. He occasionally invited the professor to take a glass, in his own cabin, but this by no means satisfied Mr. Puffer. The enforced abstinence made him irritable, and he vented this irritation on Bernard, with the result of making the boy shun his company.

"Where do you keep yourself all the time?" asked Professor Puffer, one afternoon. "I haven't seen you for hours."

"Have you any work for me to do?" asked Bernard hopefully.

"No. I shall do no work on board ship."

"Would you like to have me read to you?"

"You may read the morning paper if you can find one," sneered the professor.

But it appeared that Professor Puffer had nothing for him to do, and had only complained of his absence because he was irritable, and wanted something to find fault with.

Bernard made the acquaintance of one of the sailors, Jack Staples, who was a stout, good-humored man of thirty. He possessed a shrewd intelligence that interested Bernard, and he often chatted with him about his Vermont home.

"How came you to go to sea?" asked Bernard one day.

"Well, you see, my father died and my mother married again. You never had a stepfather, I take it."

"No; my mother died when I was a baby, and my father when I was five years old."

"That was bad luck."

"Yes," answered Bernard gravely.

"I think," said Jack, shifting his quid of tobacco from one cheek to the other, "that I was about fifteen when my mother told me that she had decided to marry Mr. Stubbs. Stubbs kept a grocery store in the village, and passed for a man well to do. My mother had about two thousand dollars, left by my father, and she did some dressmaking, while I did chores for the neighbors, and sometimes worked on a farm, so that between us we made a comfortable living, and always had enough to eat. When mother told me that, I felt very much upset, for I didn't like Mr. Stubbs, who was a mean, grasping man, and I tried to get her off the notion of marrying him. But it was of no use. She said she had given her word.

"'Besides,' she added, 'we haven't got much money, Jack, and Mr. Stubbs says he will support, us both in comfort.'

"'Are you going to give him your money, mother?' I asked.

"'Well, yes, Jack. Mr. Stubbs says he can use it in his business, and he will allow me interest on it at the rate of six per cent. You know I only get five per cent in the savings bank.'

"'It is safe in the savings bank,' I said.

"'And so it will be with Mr. Stubbs. He is a good, honorable man.'

"'I don't know about that. All the boys in town dislike him.'

"'He says they tease him, and steal apples and other things from the store,' she replied.

"'I don't like the idea of having such a man as that for my father.'

"'He is going to put you into his store, and teach you business, and make a man of you,' she said.

"I made a wry face, for I knew of one or two boys who had worked for Stubbs, and complained that he had treated them like niggers. However, I soon found that it was no use talking to mother, for she had made up her mind and I couldn't alter it. In a month she changed her name to Stubbs, and we went to live at the house of my stepfather.

"I soon found that he lived very meanly. We didn't live half so well as mother and I had before she married, although our means were small. I went into the store, and I never worked so hard in my life. I went to bed tired, and I got up at five o'clock in the morning, feeling more tired than when I went to bed. Presently I needed some new clothes, so I went to mother, and asked for some. She applied to Stubbs, but he refused to get them for me.

"'The boy is proud,' he said. 'He wants to look like a dude. I won't encourage him in such foolishness.'

"'He really needs some new clothes,' pleaded mother.

"'Then he can buy them himself,' he returned.

"'I will buy some out of my interest money,' said mother.

"'Your interest isn't due,' he said shortly.

"'You might advance me a little,' she returned 'Say, ten dollars.'

"But he wouldn't do it, and while I am on the subject I may as well say that he never did pay her the interest he promised. Of course he had to give her a few dollars now and then, but I don't think it amounted to more than thirty or forty dollars a year, while she was entitled to a hundred and twenty."

"He must have been a mean man," said Bernard, in a tone of sympathy.

"Mean was no name for it. I tried to get him to pay me wages, no matter how small, so that I could have something to spend for myself, but it was of no use. He wouldn't agree to it. Finally I told mother I couldn't stand it any longer; I must run away and earn my own living. She felt bad about having me go, but she saw how I was treated, and she cried a little, but didn't say much. So I ran away, and when I reached Boston I

tried to get a place. This I couldn't do, as I had no friends and no one to recommend me; and finally, not knowing what else to do, I shipped as a sailor."

"Have you ever been home since?"

"Yes, I went two or three times, and I always carried some money to mother, who needed it enough, poor woman! Finally I went home two years since and I found that my mother was dead;" and Jack wiped away a tear from his eye. "I don't think I shall ever go there again."

"And did Mr. Stubbs keep your mother's money?" asked Bernard.

"You may be sure he did. But it didn't do him much good."

"How is that?"

"His store burned down. Some say it was set on fire by an enemy, and he had plenty. It wasn't insured, for the insurance company had increased its rates, and Mr. Stubbs was too mean to pay them. Then in trying to put out the fire—it was a cold winter night—he caught a bad cold which brought on consumption, and finally made him helpless. Would you like to know where he is now?"

"Yes."

"He is in the poorhouse, for all his means had melted away. The man in charge is about as amiable as Stubbs himself, and I have no doubt he has a pretty hard time of it. I don't pity him, for my part, for he made my mother unhappy, and drove me to sea."

"I am sorry for you, Jack. Your luck has been worse than mine. My father and mother are both dead, but as long as they lived they fared well."

"No one ever tried to rob them of money, as my mother was robbed of her small fortune?"

"I don't feel sure of that," said Bernard thoughtfully.

"What do you mean?"

Then Bernard told Jack what he had heard from Alvin Franklin about his father's having had money, and of his suspicion that Mr. McCracken had appropriated it.

The story made an impression on Jack Staples.

"I shouldn't wonder if you were right, Bernard," he said. "He seems to have treated you in a queer way. What sort of a man is this Professor Puffer?"

"I don't know much about him."

"Do you like him?"

"No."

"I'll tell you what—he looks to me like my stepfather."

"I am puzzled about him," said Bernard. "He doesn't look in the least like a literary man, or a professor."

"That's so."

"Then I find he is intemperate. I haven't been able to learn anything about his business, or studies, but he is fond of whisky. Do you know, Jack, I don't believe I shall be content to stay with him very long."

"Is he a friend of your guardian?"

"I suppose so."

"Are you to get any pay?"

"Twenty-five dollars a month and my expenses."

"That is good—if you get it."

"Don't you think I will?"

"I don't think you'll get it any more than my mother got her interest."

"Then I certainly shall not stay with him."

"But what can you do? You will be in Europe."

"I don't know, Jack, but I think I shall get along somehow."

"To my mind your guardian had some object in putting you with such a man."

"Perhaps so, but I may be doing Mr. McCracken an injustice."

"If ever you get into trouble, Bernard, don't forget that Jack Staples is your friend. I have got a few dollars stowed away in a bank at home, and they are yours if you need them."

"I will remember it, Jack, and thank you, whether I need them or not."

A day or two later something happened that made Bernard still more suspicious of his guardian and Professor Puffer.

CHAPTER XVI. A SCRAP OF PAPER.

Bernard was in the stateroom one day during the absence of Professor Puffer, when he noticed on the floor a fragment of paper, looking like a portion of a letter with writing upon it. He picked it up and mechanically read the words which it contained.

The paper had been torn irregularly across, so that it contained no complete sentence. The words it did contain arrested his attention. This is a transcript of them:

the boy in my way.
Would like to get rid
don't bring him back to
your discretion.

Bernard could not doubt that the reference was to him, and that the letter of which this was a fragment had been written by his guardian, as a document of instruction to Professor Puffer. It was clear that the professor was an agent of Mr. McCracken, and that the latter was anxious to get him out of the way.

But how? How much danger was involved in this unfriendly disposition of his guardian? Again, why did he want to get rid of him? These were questions which Bernard found himself unable to answer.

It was clear, however, that his engagement as private secretary was only a subterfuge in order to get him under the charge of Puffer, who was evidently no professor at all. It seemed an elaborate and clumsy device on the part of Mr. McCracken, but Bernard must take things as he found them, and form his own plans accordingly.

He wished he could have seen the whole letter, as the additional information it contained might help him to a decision. One thing, however, seemed evident: that it would be wise to part company with Professor Puffer as soon as practicable after he reached Europe. On the ship it was policy for him to continue the companionship, and leave the professor ignorant of the discovery he had made.

Bernard considered whether he had better communicate the contents of the scrap of paper to any one on board. On the whole, it seemed wise, in case anything should happen. There was not one of the passengers whom he felt like taking into his confidence.

Dr. Felix Hampton had no thought except for his bilious tonic, and Bernard doubted if he was a man of discretion. Nelson Sturgis was probably reliable, and seemed friendly, but, upon the whole, Bernard preferred to intrust the secret to Jack Staples. He was an humble friend, but a man to be trusted. He therefore took the earliest opportunity of speaking to Jack.

"I've got something to show you, Jack," he said, when he found the sailor alone.

"All right, lad. What is it?"

"This scrap of paper."

"Do you want me to give you my opinion of your handwriting?"

"It isn't my handwriting."

"Whose then?"

"To the best of my knowledge, it is the handwriting of my guardian, Cornelius McCracken."

Jack studied the paper, and then asked quietly: "Where did you find this, lad?"

"In my stateroom. It was dropped, no doubt, by Professor Puffer."

"So I surmised. You think it was written to him by your guardian?"

"Yes; I think there can be no doubt of that. Now, what do you think it means, Jack?"

"It means mischief," said Jack sententiously. "It was written by one rascal to another. Of course, by 'the boy' he means you."

"Yes."

"And he wants to get rid of you?"

Bernard nodded.

"If we had the whole letter we could see into this thing better. How did he expect that professor fellow to get rid of you?".

"That's the question I've been asking myself, but I can't answer it.".

"What do you think of doing, lad?"

"I shall leave the professor as soon as I get a chance."

"Yes, that's sensible."

"But I can't leave him while we are on shipboard. I must wait till we get to the other side."

"I suppose he wouldn't try to do you any harm on board the Vesta," said the sailor thoughtfully.

"I don't think so."

"Still, it's best to watch."

"I was going to ask you to do that, Jack."

"So I will, lad, as well as I can, but you know I'm just a sailor, and my duties on this here vessel don't give me much of a chance."

"That's true, Jack."

"Do you think that he'll suspect that you've got the paper?"

"I can't tell yet. It seems to have been torn off, perhaps, for a lighter. He may not miss it."

"If he had sense he'd guard such a letter as that carefully."

"I would, if it were mine, but some men are careless, and I think he is one of that kind."

“You mean to leave him when you get to the other side?”

“Yes, Jack.”

“Have you any money?”

“Only a few dollars.”

“If I was only at home, lad, I’d see that you had money. But all my money—over a hundred dollars,” added Jack, with pride—“is in a savings bank in York. I don’t carry any money with me.”

“Thank you, all the same, Jack; I guess I’ll get along somehow.”

“It’s a hard thing to be three thousand miles away from home without brass. Still, there’s one thing in your favor, lad.”

“What is that?”

“You’re sure to make friends. Why, I was your friend as soon as I clapped eyes on you.”

“Thank you, Jack; but all may not be as friendly as you.”

“You’ll get along, lad; take my word for that.”

“Your words encourage me, Jack. Any way, I’d rather trust a perfect stranger than Professor Puffer.”

“I surmise you’re right there, lad.”

Bernard was curious to find out whether the professor had discovered the loss of the telltale scrap of paper. He therefore watched him carefully, thinking that he might learn this by his manner. But Professor Puffer didn’t appear to suspect anything, and Bernard took care not to betray by his own manner that he had made any discovery.

Days passed—a period more than long enough to reach their destined port had the Vesta been a steamer, but being only a sailing vessel, contrary winds kept her back, and when twenty days had passed they were still out at sea. Both Jack and Bernard kept the professor under careful watch, but neither one detected anything of a suspicious character.

This Bernard remarked to Jack one day.

“You’re right, lad; the time hasn’t come yet. The mischief he’s up to isn’t on board ship. He will wait till he has you on shore.”

“If he does that, it’ll be too late, for as soon as we reach port, or as soon after as I can, I mean to leave him.”

“That’ll be the best way. Didn’t you tell me he was going to pay you a salary?”

“Yes.”

“How much?”

“Twenty-five dollars a month.”

“More than half the month has passed. Why don’t you strike him for a part of your salary?”

“He would think I had no use for money on board.”

“All the same, lad, ask him. It won’t do no harm, and if you get anything, it will help you after you have left him. You can’t get along in England without money, or, for that matter, anywhere else.”

“I can think of one place, Jack.”

“Where’s that?”

“Where *Robinson Crusoe* was wrecked on a desolate island money was of no use to him, though I believe some was saved from the wreck.”

“You’re right there, lad; but as soon as he got off it would help him.”

“Well, Jack, I’ll take your advice, and let you know what he says.”

Accordingly, the next day, when Bernard found himself alone with Professor Puffer, he said: “I have been with you about twenty days, professor.”

“Is it as long as that? What of it?”

“I thought you might be willing to advance me half a month’s salary?”

“What do you want of money? There are no shops on the Vesta.”

“That’s true, but I should feel a bit more comfortable with a little money in my pocket.”

“Do you want to play for money?”

“No, sir.”

“You can’t use any money till you get to Liverpool.”

“I know it, sir, but——”

“When you get there I will give you some; till then you have no occasion for any. Besides, you have done no work.”

“I have been ready for work if you had any for me.”

“That’s all right. You shall have a chance to work in due time. We couldn’t do any work on the ship.”

Bernard had to be content with this. He reflected that if the professor carried out his promise, and gave him half a month’s salary on reaching Liverpool, that would be as soon as he would have any use for it.

As the voyage drew nearer and nearer the end, Bernard grew excited. A new life lay before him. What would be the result of his efforts to make his own living, after he had left the professor?

CHAPTER XVII. BERNARD'S PERIL.

One evening Bernard was standing at the side of the vessel, looking out over the waste of waters, and wondering what was to be his future. It was quite dark, so that he was unable to see far.

He felt that this symbolized his own life. He could not see far ahead of him, and what he could see was obscure. He didn't dream that he was in great peril, and yet the greatest danger of his life hung over him. Whence did it come? The night was still, and the waves were calm. Nature was kind, but the peril came from a human source.

All at once he felt himself lifted in a pair of powerful arms—lifted to a level with the rail, so that his startled eyes looked down in helpless fear upon the cruel waves beneath. He uttered a sharp cry, and this saved his life.

His stanch friend, Jack Staples, was close at hand. He sprang forward and grasped Professor Puffer by the throat, at the same time tearing Bernard from his grasp.

"You scoundrel!" ejaculated the indignant sailor.

"What are you' about? Do you mean to murder the boy?"

Professor Puffer, who had thought himself quite unobserved, was as much startled as his victim had been, but he was shrewd and tricky.

He passed his hand to his forehead, as he fell back, and said, in a dazed tone: "What is the matter? Where am I?"

"Where are you?" retorted the incensed sailor. "If you were where you ought, to be, you would now be on the gallows."

"What do you mean by your insolence, you low sailor?" exclaimed Puffer.

"I mean that I have a great mind to treat you as you were treating the boy. You were about to murder him, you scoundrel!"

"There is some mistake," said Puffer. "I—I had a severe headache, and I was out of my head. I must have been walking in my sleep. What was I doing?"

"You were trying to throw the boy into the sea. You know that well enough."

"Good heavens! You don't mean it?" ejaculated Puffer, with well counterfeited horror. "I can't believe it. And you prevented it?"

"Yes, I did. But for me, the boy would have been drowned."

"My honest friend," said the professor effusively, "you have done me a great—the greatest service. You have saved me from a terrible crime. Let me shake your hand!"

"No," said Jack, drawing back, "I won't take the hand of a murderer—leastways, of one who attempted to murder."

"Don't say that, my worthy friend. You hurt my feelings. At least, let me show my appreciation of your great service. Here's a gold piece——"

"Keep your money; I don't want it," said Jack scornfully.

"At any rate," went on the professor, crestfallen, "let me hope that you will keep this unfortunate affair to yourself. It would do no good to reveal it, and it would put me in a false position."

"I won't promise anything," said Jack suspiciously. "Only, if you try to hurt a hair of this boy's head again I'll have you in jail as soon as we reach port."

"Oh, how you mistake me!" murmured the professor sadly. "Yet I cannot blame you. It certainly did look suspicious."

"I should say it did."

"And I cannot blame you for your very natural prejudice against me. How should you know my kindness of heart? I would not even harm an animal—much less a bright, promising boy, for whom I cherish a warm affection."

Bernard was not deceived by the professor's protestations. He had never noticed any affection on the part of his companion, and felt sure that the action was premeditated. He realized, that Puffer was only carrying out the instructions of his guardian, and that it was in this way he had decided to "get rid of him."

"Stow that," said Jack contemptuously. "You don't deceive me with your smooth talk."

"I must submit to your injustice, my worthy fellow, for I know that you are a true friend to the boy, and, therefore, I freely forgive you. But you, Bernard, I trust you acquit me of the terrible crime which this honest sailor thinks I premeditated?"

"I won't express any opinion, Professor Puffer," replied Bernard coldly. "I can only say that but for him you would have taken my life."

"This is indeed hard," whined the professor, "to feel that you hate and distrust me. But I will prove to you that I am a better friend than you think me. You asked me the other day for some money on account?"

"Yes, sir."

"I said I would wait till we landed. Now I will voluntarily anticipate payment. Here are fifteen dollars. You can convert them into English money when you reach Liverpool."

"I will take the money, Professor Puffer, because it is rightfully mine, but I cannot forget the terrible fate to which you attempted to consign me."

"You will think better of me in time, Bernard. I can bring you a medical certificate to prove to you that I am subject to fits of sleep walking."

"Have you ever attempted to kill any one in these fits before?"

"No, thank heaven! I can't account for my action to-night. But it is getting late; we had better go to bed."

“I will never occupy the stateroom with you again!” said Bernard hastily.

“Don’t be foolish,” returned the professor testily. “You surely don’t suppose you are in any further peril?”

“I don’t know about that. According to your own statement, you are subject to fits of sleep walking, when you are not responsible for what you do.”

“They occur only at rare intervals. The last one was two months since. Come to the stateroom. Your omission to do so will only create scandal.”

“Let it,” said Bernard resolutely. “It won’t be my fault. There is nothing that I am afraid to have revealed.”

“But can’t you see what a position it will put me in?”

“I can’t help that, Professor Puffer.”

“But you can’t go without sleep.”

“No, I shall not like to, but I would rather lie down on deck than occupy the stateroom with you.”

“You are making a fool of yourself,” said the professor, biting his lip.

“The lad is right,” said Jack. “He won’t have to sit up all night. There is a vacant bunk near mine, and if he isn’t too proud to sleep with rough sailors, he can pass the night there.”

“I will do it Jack,” said Bernard. “I haven’t any foolish pride. If the forecastle is fit for you to sleep in, it’s fit for me.”

He walked off with Jack, and Professor Puffer was left gnawing his lip.

“What a scrape I have got into!” he said to himself. “But for that rascally sailor the boy would have dropped into the water and that would have been the last of him. Then I would have got a thousand dollars from Mr. McCracken, and had a hold on him that would have amounted to a great deal more. As it is, unless the sailor and the boy keep silent, I shall be in the worst scrape of my life.”

A little reflection, however, allayed the fears of Professor Puffer. In a short time the boy and Jack would part company, and if Bernard ever brought up this subject again, and charged him with attempted murder, his testimony would be unsupported, and would carry very little weight with it, especially as Mr. McCracken would side with him against the boy.

Bernard slept that night in the forecastle, and enjoyed as good a night’s rest as usual. The next day he was transferred, at Mr. Puffer’s request, to a vacant stateroom, on the ground that he could not sleep as well with another person in the same room. The purser asked why he had waited so long before suggesting the change.

“I didn’t want to make trouble,” replied the professor carelessly.

As Professor Puffer agreed to pay extra for the additional stateroom, no objections were made, and henceforth—though it was only for three nights—Bernard had a room to himself.

Nothing more, happened worth noting till the Vesta reached Liverpool.

Bernard was exercised in mind. He had fully determined to leave the professor, but it was not necessary to do so immediately. He was afraid also that Puffer, claiming guardianship, would have him pursued if he fled from him. He would easily be able to establish the fact that Bernard was under his charge, and this might embarrass him.

“Come, Bernard,” said Professor Puffer, “I want you to get your luggage ready. We shall go ashore as soon as the custom officers have examined it.”

“Where are you going, sir?”

“To the Albion Hotel.”

“If I go with you, you must have a separate room for me.”

“Haven’t you got over that old folly? That will make an extra expense.”

“I can’t help that, sir. You have made it necessary.”

Professor Puffer was very angry, but he reflected that it would not be wise to make a fuss, as it would lead to a revelation from Bernard that would embarrass him, at the least, especially as Jack Staples was at hand ready to confirm any allegation that his ward might make.

“Very well,” he said shortly.

They were conveyed to the Albion Hotel, and a small room was assigned to Bernard, adjoining the larger one occupied by Professor Puffer.

“Good-by, Jack,” said Bernard, grasping the honest sailor’s hand warmly. “You have been a good friend to me. But for you I wouldn’t have lived to reach Liverpool.”

“How long are you going to stay with the professor?” asked Jack.

“Not long.”

“That’s right, lad. You can’t trust him. He’s a snake in the grass.”

“I have the same opinion of him that you have, Jack. I won’t trust him, and I shall leave him very soon. But I want a little time to think about my plans.”

“God bless you, lad! If you ever get into trouble, think of Jack Staples.”

“I will, Jack;” and so the two friends parted.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE EVENTS OF A NIGHT.

The chamber at the Albion Hotel occupied by Bernard was a small one, connecting by a side door with the larger one which had been taken by Professor Puffer. Bernard was not ordinarily suspicious, but his distrust of his traveling companion led him to examine carefully the door leading into the larger room. It seemed to be locked, but the key was probably in the other room, at the disposal of its occupant.

This did not suit Bernard's views, and he, with some difficulty, pushed up the bureau so that it would bar the entrance even if the door were opened. This Professor Puffer didn't know.

Both retired at a comparatively early hour. It was quite dark, when Bernard, rousing from a light slumber, thought he heard a noise near the door. He was instantly wide awake.

Presently he heard a key grating in the lock, and then he saw the door behind the bureau open. There was a light in the adjoining room. By the help of this Bernard saw the figure and face of the professor as he peered into the room.

Evidently he was surprised and disconcerted at the sight of the bureau. He looked over towards the bed, but this was in shadow, and he could not see Bernard gazing at him. He made an attempt to move the bureau, but it was heavy, and it could not be done without making a noise likely to wake a sleeper.

"Confound it!" Bernard heard the professor mutter, and then, after a pause, he closed the door and locked it.

"What was he going to do?" Bernard asked himself, not without alarm. "Did he wish to do me any harm?"

This question was readily asked, but not so easily answered. Bernard remained awake for some time, being almost afraid to go to sleep. After a while, however, he reflected that Professor Puffer would not dare to make a second attempt.

Besides, he was a light sleeper, and the noise which Puffer must unavoidably make would be sure to waken him. So after a while he fell asleep, and did not wake up till seven o'clock. His first step was to remove the bureau to its former place. Then he began to dress.

He had nearly finished the process when a knock was heard at the door leading into the hall.

Bernard opened it, and his glance rested on Professor Puffer.

"Are you nearly ready to go down to breakfast?" asked the professor.

"Yes, sir."

Unbidden Puffer entered the room and looked quickly towards the connecting door. He observed that the bureau had been removed. He frowned slightly, but did not refer to the matter.

"Did you sleep well?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," answered Bernard.

"So did I. I was conscious of nothing until I woke up this morning."

He glanced at Bernard, to see whether this statement made any impression upon him. He wished to ascertain whether Bernard had been aware of his attempted entrance during the night.

Bernard made no comment.

"Liverpool seems to be a good place to sleep," he went on. "It seems good to step on shore after so long a time on shipboard."

"You are right."

"Are you ready to go down to breakfast?"

"Yes, sir."

"Come down then. I feel hungry."

They went into the coffee room, and were soon served with mutton chops, beautiful, flaky potatoes, coffee, and bread and butter. The chops were good, and the coffee as good as the average British article of that name.

In spite of the disturbance of the night before, Bernard enjoyed his breakfast. So, apparently, did the professor, but he did not say much. He appeared busy thinking.

Presently a cheery voice was heard from the next table: "How are you, professor? Good morning, Bernard!"

Looking up, Bernard saw that the speaker was Nelson Sturgis, the Boston buyer.

"Good morning!" said Bernard, with real pleasure, for Mr. Sturgis had a pleasant manner, and he was glad to meet him.

"Morning!" muttered Professor Puffer coldly.

"Well, how do you like Liverpool?"

"I don't know. Have not had an opportunity to go about yet."

"Nor I. Come around with me, if you have nothing better to do."

"I don't know whether Professor Puffer will require my company or not," said Bernard, in a tone of hesitation.

"No," answered Professor Puffer. "If you wish to take a walk with Mr. Sturgis, I have no objection."

"Thank you, sir."

"You can report at half-past twelve or one, and we will dine then."

"All right, sir."

"How long do you remain in Liverpool, professor?" asked Nelson Sturgis.

"I am not quite sure."

"You will be here to-night?"

“Yes, sir; I shall be here to-night.”

“So shall I. I expect to go to London to-morrow.” After breakfast Bernard put on his hat, and started out with his new friend.

“Now, my boy, I am going to show you the town,” said Mr. Sturgis.

“I shall be very much obliged to you, sir.”

First they visited the docks, which are considered the most noteworthy feature of Liverpool. They extend for five miles along the margin of the river, and are built in the most solid and enduring manner.

“I am a patriotic American,” observed Mr. Sturgis, “but I am obliged to confess that no American city can boast of docks that are equal to these.”

“How many are there?” asked Bernard.

“Over fifty, I believe. They have been built at immense expense. I hope to see the time when New York will have docks like them.”

They visited some of the large squares, walked past St. George’s hall, the custom house, the free library and museum, and all these interested Bernard.

“We can’t see everything,” said Mr. Sturgis, “but you now have some idea of Liverpool. Do you know how long we have been walking about?”

“No, sir.”

“Three hours. I begin to feel tired. Suppose we go back to the hotel.”

“All right, sir. I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Sturgis, for showing me so much.”

“I have enjoyed the walk myself. By the way, Bernard, at the risk of hurting your feelings, I will venture to say that I don’t much admire your traveling companion.”

“Nor I, sir.”

“I have wondered more than once what brought you together.”

“My guardian. I never saw Professor Puffer till we went on board the Vesta.”

“Do you expect to make a long tour with him?”

“I don’t know, sir.”

“Hasn’t he disclosed his plans to you?”

“No, sir. I believe he is engaged on some literary work, and I am engaged to help him.”

“Then, I suppose, you will settle down somewhere?”

“I suppose so.”

“Mr. Sturgis,” said Bernard, after a short pause, “I find myself in a difficult, not to say dangerous, position, and I would like to ask your advice.”

Nelson Sturgis looked a little surprised, but he answered cordially: “Speak freely, Bernard. I will give you the best advice I can.”

“First, I must tell you how I am situated.”

Then Bernard gave an account of Professor Puffer’s attempt to throw him over the rail during the voyage.

Mr. Sturgis listened in amazement.

“I can hardly believe this,” he said. “Do you think the professor knew what he was talking about?”

“Yes, sir, I fully believe it.”

“What excuse did he make?”

“He said that he was walking in his sleep.”

“But what motive could he possibly have? It looks unaccountable.”

“I can’t understand it myself, but I think he was acting under instructions from my guardian.”

“What reason have you for thinking so?”

In reply Bernard produced the fragment of a letter which he had picked up in the stateroom.

“This certainly does look suspicious. Have you any idea why it is that your guardian wishes to get rid of you?”

“Yes, sir. I met a gentleman before I left New York who knew my father. He tells me that he is certain that my father left property, and he thinks that Mr. McCracken has it in his possession, and is resolved to keep it.”

“It is not unlikely. Does your guardian know that you have any suspicion of this?”

“He knows that I met an old friend of my father’s, and he may suspect that Mr. Franklin has told me this.”

“You certainly are in a difficult position,” said Nelson Sturgis thoughtfully. “Has anything happened since you arrived in Liverpool?”

In reply Bernard told the incident of the night before.

“I can’t understand why he wished to enter my room,” he concluded. “He would not dare attempt my life. Do you think so?”

“It is hard to tell what to think. If you have any fear as to sleeping in your own room to-night, you will be welcome to share mine. I occupy No. 15.”

“I will remember it, sir.”

When, at ten o’clock Bernard went up to bed, he was struck as he entered the chamber by one significant circumstance. The bureau had disappeared!

CHAPTER XIX. PROFESSOR PUFFERS DISCOMFITURE.

When Bernard noticed the disappearance of the bureau he understood at once the alarming significance of the step which Professor Puffer had taken, for he felt sure that it was at his instigation that this article of furniture had been removed. It might have been carried into the professor's own chamber through the connecting door, but this was of minor importance. Enough that he, Bernard, no longer had anything to serve as a barrier and prevent the unauthorized intrusion of his traveling companion into his room.

Bernard sat down on the bed and began to consider thoughtfully what he should do. Did the professor mean to do him harm? This was what he asked himself. Evidently he intended to come into the room. Bernard did not care to run the risk of his presence. He decided to sleep elsewhere.

He opened the door into the hall noiselessly, and proceeding to the room of the Boston drummer, he knocked.

The door was opened by Mr. Sturgis in person.

"Well?" he said inquiringly.

Bernard told him of the discovery he had made.

"I don't dare to sleep in the room to-night," he concluded, "for I am sure the professor would make me a visit."

"You are no doubt right. The case seems very mysterious. I don't see on what pretext he could have induced the landlord to remove the bureau. English people (and landlords are no exception) are very averse to changes, even of trifling character."

"At any rate the change has been made," said Bernard. "Perhaps he has not consulted the landlord at all, but simply removed the bureau into his own chamber."

"Perhaps so, but we must take things as they are. It is clear that it won't do to sleep in the room. I am glad to be able to offer you a bed. There are two in this room, as you see.".

"Thank you, Mr. Sturgis. I will accept your kind offer."

"Then, as it is late, we had better go to bed at once, so as to get a good night's rest. I should like to see the face of the professor when he opens the door and finds that the bird has flown."

Bernard laughed.

"I should like to see it myself," he said.

We will now go back to Mr. Puffer.

He retired rather earlier than Bernard, and as he lay down he said to himself, with a peculiar smile, "The boy won't be able to keep me out to-night He may think himself smart, but he is not smart enough to baffle the plans of Ezra Puffer."

Professor Puffer had the faculty of sleeping for as short or long a time as he chose. He set himself for a two hours' nap, and in five minutes he was sound asleep.

About twelve o'clock he awoke.

He was at first bewildered, but quickly recalled to mind what he had arranged to do.

He rose and lit the candle which stood upon a small table in the center of the room. Then, in his stocking feet, he noiselessly approached the door.

He turned the key in the lock and opened the door leading into Bernard's room raising the candle he drew near the bed and looked to see the recumbent figure of his young traveling companion. To his intense surprise the bed was unoccupied.

"What does it mean?" he asked himself in bewilderment. "Where can be the boy be?"

His expression of perplexity was fast succeeded by one of rage as he came to the conclusion that Bernard, on discovering the absence of the bureau, had deliberately resolved to abandon the room.

"He is the most impudent and audacious boy I ever met," reflected the professor. "I don't wonder Mr. McCracken calls him 'a bad lot.'"

Of course there was nothing to do but return to his own chamber. But his exit was not to be a peaceful one. He had scarcely started for the door when there was a rushing sound, and a huge dog sprang forward and fastened his teeth in the professor's leg. Such an attack under the circumstances would have startled even a brave man, and Professor Puffer was not a brave man.

In the indistinct light he could not at once distinguish the figure of his assailant and what it was that had attacked him. He had a suspicion that it was some contrivance of Bernard.

"Let go, or I will kill you!" he yelled.

But his threat produced no effect upon the huge, shaggy dog who had been lying under the bed, and had been aroused by the entrance of Professor Puffer, whom he evidently felt to be an unauthorized intruder and a suspicious character.

As the reader may be as much puzzled as was the professor himself, I will explain that when Bernard opened the door to leave his chamber, the dog, who had been walking through the entry, made his way into it without the notice of the boy. He had stretched himself out under the four poster, and was sleeping the sleep of a thoroughly tired dog when he was aroused by the stealthy entrance of the professor.

With a dog's instinct he fastened his teeth in the unprotected calf of the intruder, and inflicted a wound decidedly painful.

When Professor Puffer, lowering the candle, saw his foe, he was frightened more, than ever.

"This is a trick of that rascally boy!" he concluded. "Get out, you brute!"

With this exclamation he drew his leg away from the dog's grip, and gave him a vicious kick.

But the dog's fighting spirit was aroused. He took a new hold, and growled in a manner that sent terror to the heart of the unhappy professor. Drops of perspiration came out upon his forehead, and his heart was sick with fear. He felt helpless in the powerful jaws of the dog.

"What shall I do? What can I do?" he moaned. "If I only had a revolver."

The more he struggled, the more the dog felt that he had done right in attacking him.

The professor could stand it no longer. He gave utterance to a succession of piercing shrieks, which aroused the house. He did not succeed in terrifying the dog, however, who hung on with remorseless tenacity.

The cries of the professor roused the house. The guests poured out of their rooms, among them Nelson Sturgis and Bernard. Last, but not least, the stout, rubicund landlord, a typical Englishman, made his appearance.

As all were attired in their night clothes, the effect was picturesque, to say the least, "What is the matter?" asked the landlord.

"Call off the dog! Don't you see he is tearing me to pieces?" roared Puffer.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the landlord, in bewilderment. "Where did he come from?"

"Take off the dog!" roared the professor again. Nelson Sturgis was the only one present who appeared to have his wits about him.

He approached, and seizing the animal by his collar, he forcibly pulled him away from his victim. The professor, whose leg had been badly torn, bent over and clasped his hands about the wounded place.

"Where did the dog come from, and how did he happen to attack you?" asked Sturgis.

"He was lying in wait here," said the professor. "Won't somebody kill him?"

"But how did you happen to be here?" asked Sturgis pointedly. "Is this your room?"

"No, it is the boy's room."

"Then how did you happen to be here?" persisted Sturgis.

"I heard a noise," answered Puffer with some hesitation, "and thought the boy might be sick. I suppose it must have been the dog."

Then he turned to Bernard.

"Why didn't you sleep in the room?" he asked severely.

"Mr. Sturgis asked me to occupy his room. He has two beds."

"Why didn't you mention the matter to me, and ask my permission? Don't you know that I am your guardian for the time being?"

"I had my reasons for not caring to sleep in this room," said Bernard significantly. "Do you want to know what they are?"

"No," answered Puffer, who feared that those reasons might compromise him. "Why did you admit the dog into the room?"

"I had no idea he was here. He must have slipped into the room when I left it."

"That sounds very plausible," sneered Puffer, "but I believe you called the dog into the room purposely."

"What could have been my object in doing it?" asked Bernard quietly.

"To make an attack upon me."

"But how could I know that you intended to enter the room?"

This was a question which Puffer found it difficult to answer.

The landlord had entered the room, and for the first time noticed the disappearance of the bureau.

"Young man, where is the bureau?" he inquired, addressing his inquiry to Bernard.

"I don't know, sir."

"Do you know, sir?" asked Boniface, turning to Puffer.

"I moved it into my room," answered the professor in some confusion.

"Then, sir, you took a great liberty," said the innkeeper in an irate tone. "It must be moved back."

"I will attend to it to-morrow."

The company prepared to disperse.

"Bernard," said the professor, "I expect you to finish the night in your own room."

"Excuse me, Professor Puffer," replied Bernard firmly, "but I would rather not."

Professor Puffer muttered something, but did not dare to press the demand.

And so the night wore on, and Professor Puffer was obliged to acknowledge that his cunning stratagem had failed.

CHAPTER XX. A LOST CLUE.

"What would you advise me to do, Mr. Sturgis?" asked Bernard as he was dressing the next morning.

"I advise you to leave Professor Puffer. He seems to be a thoroughly bad man. You will be in danger as long as you remain with him."

"I will take your advice, though this will throw me upon my own resources. I think I can make a living in some way, though I should know better how to go about it in America."

"How much money have you got?"

"About twenty dollars."

"That won't last you long. I must see what I can think of for you. First of all, you mustn't stay in Liverpool. Professor Puffer would probably make an effort to get you into his clutches."

"Where would you advise me to go?"

"To London. I shall leave directly after breakfast and you can go up with me."

"I shall be glad to go with one who has been there before. But I must keep out of the way of the professor."

"I will arrange matters for you. When you are dressed, go at once to the station of the London and Northwestern Railway. You will find a restaurant close by where you can get breakfast. Then go to the waiting room, where I will join you before the next train starts."

Bernard followed the directions of his friend, and Mr. Sturgis went down to breakfast. Professor Puffer was already in the coffee room.

"Where is my ward?" he asked abruptly.

"I can't tell you, sir," returned Nelson Sturgis coolly.

"Didn't he pass the night with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you should know where he is."

"I have already told you that I don't know."

"Do you think he has left the hotel?"

"I think it quite probable."

"Did he tell you where he was going?"

"No."

"I believe you are deceiving me," said Professor Puffer angrily.

"And I am sure that you are impertinent. I may feel inclined to pull your nose."

Nelson Sturgis was a tall, athletic man, and Professor Puffer was persuaded that he could carry out his threat if he was so minded. Accordingly he thought it best to desist.

After breakfast Mr. Sturgis summoned a hotel attendant.

"Here is half a crown," he said. "Go to the chamber of my young friend, Bernard Brooks, and bring his satchel to my room."

"All right, sir."

This was done without the observation of Puffer, or he would have prevented the removal of Bernard's luggage.

Mr. Sturgis called a hackney coach, had his luggage put on, including Bernard's satchel, and drove to the railway station.

"Well, Bernard, I have brought your satchel," he said.

"Thank you, sir. I was wondering what I should do without it."

"I had no idea of leaving it with the professor. Now I will secure tickets to London."

"What will be the price?"

"Never mind. I will undertake to get you to London free of expense to yourself. Afterwards we will consult about your plans."

Just as the train was starting, Professor Puffer reached the station, and from the platform espied his ward in the act of leaving him.

"Stop!" he called out, shaking his fist at the receding train.

"Good-by, Professor Puffer!" said Bernard with a smile and a wave of the hand.

Puffer in his anger, ran a few steps, talking violently.

"My ward is running away," he said to a policeman. "Can't you stop the train?"

"No; I can't."

"But I want to get him back."

"Then you'll have to go before a magistrate."

"Where is that train going?"

"To London."

"Then I'll go, too. When is the next train?"

"At twelve o'clock, sir."

Professor Puffer returned to the hotel at once, packed his trunk, and enrolled himself as a passenger on the noon train.

"If that fellow escapes me," he said with an ugly look, "he'll have to be pretty smart. I won't have it said

that a boy of his age has got the better of me." Mr. Sturgis bought first class tickets, and Bernard found himself in a handsomely upholstered compartment only large enough to hold eight passengers.

The doors were locked after they started, which struck Bernard as peculiar.

"I like our American cars better," he said.

"So do I, but they are not so exclusive. The English like to be exclusive."

It was an express train, and deposited them in London in a few hours.

"Now, Bernard," said Mr. Sturgis, "I think it will be well for us to go to different hotels. I shall go to the Charing Cross, but this is a prominent hotel, and should you go there you could easily be traced."

"Where shall I go?"

"There is a comfortable family hotel in Arundel Street, Strand. The charges, including room and board, are only about six shillings per day, or a dollar and a half in American money. At the Charing Cross they are higher."

"Then I will go to Arundel Street."

"Very well. When you reach London I will see you started for your hotel."

"Shan't I see you again, sir?"

"Yes, I will call around in the evening. By the way, I have thought of a way to put Professor Puffer off the track."

"How is that, sir?"

"He will very likely question some of the hackmen. I will therefore take you with me to the Charing Cross. Then we will dismiss the hackman, and you can take a cab from there to Arundel Street." This precaution was well taken. When Professor Puffer reached London he began to interview the hackmen.

"I had two friends arrive by the nine o'clock train," he said, "a gentleman and a boy of sixteen." Then he described them.

"They neglected to tell me at what hotel they intended to stop. Do any of you remember seeing them?"

"Yes, sir," replied one cabby. "I took them to the Charing Cross."

"Thank you," said Puffer, in a tone of satisfaction. "That is just what I wanted to find out. Here's a shilling."

"Thank you, sir. You are a gentleman."

"And you may take me to the Charing Cross. I shall probably find them there."

"I should make a good detective," thought the professor complacently, as he rolled through the streets. "Master Bernard Brooks will find that he hasn't made much in his attempt to outwit me. Indeed I am better off for it, as he has been obliged to pay his own fare to London."

When he reached the hotel, he inquired at the office: "Is there an American gentleman named Sturgis here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where is he now?"

"In the dining-room, taking dinner."

Professor Puffer smiled maliciously.

"Doubtless Bernard will be with him," He reflected. "They will be rather surprised to see me."

He walked into the dining-room and looked around.

His search was partially rewarded.

At a table near the window sat Nelson Sturgis with a substantial dinner before him, but Bernard was not with him.

"He is somewhere in the hotel," thought the professor. "Meanwhile I will pay my respects to Mr. Sturgis."

"I hope I see you well, Mr. Sturgis," said the professor, with an ironical smile.

"Thank you, I am quite well," answered Sturgis composedly.

"You see I have reached London not far behind you."

"So I see."

"Did you and my ward have a pleasant journey?"

"Very pleasant."

"I am indebted to you for paying his traveling expenses."

"You can reimburse me if you like."

"You must excuse me. I only pay the boy's bills when he is traveling with me."

"Just as you like."

"I will now relieve you of the charge which, without my permission, you have undertaken. Will you be kind enough to notify Bernard that I have come for him?"

"Why do you give me that commission?" asked Sturgis, arching his brows. "Are you under the impression that Bernard is with me?"

"Certainly. Isn't he?"

"No."

"Isn't he stopping at this hotel?"

"He is not."

"Where, then, is he? I have positive information that he came here with you."

"From whom did you obtain the information?"

"From the hackman who drove you here," answered Professor Puffer triumphantly.

“Then I can’t deny it,” said Sturgis, with affected chagrin.

“Of course you can’t. It wasn’t much trouble to get on your track. I am sharper than you probably anticipated.”

“Very true, Professor Puffer.”

“Now I will thank you to tell me where Bernard is. Of course you know?”

“I can guess.”

“So I supposed.”

“But I don’t propose to tell.”

“That is of very little importance. He is in this hotel. I have traced him here.”

“He is not here now, however. He is in a different part of London.”

“Is this true?” asked Professor Puffer, his jaw dropping.

“Quite true, I assure you. By the way, Professor Puffer, you may be sharp, but I think I am a match for you. And now, if you kindly leave me, I will resume my dinner.”

CHAPTER XXI. A DAY IN LONDON.

Bernard found the Arundel Hotel, to which he had been directed, neat and quiet. It was more like a large boarding-house than a hotel. The terms were very reasonable, and that with him was an important consideration.

There were several Americans among the guests, including two ministers and a schoolma'am of uncertain age, who was taking a well-earned rest after fifteen years of service in the public schools of Massachusetts.

It was next to her that Bernard had a seat at the table. Being, from her profession, attracted by young people, she was led to feel an interest in the bright and attractive boy with whom the exigencies of hotel life had brought her in contact.

"You are an American boy, I take it?" she said.

"Yes, miss."

"Miss Smith," she suggested, smiling. "It is a little more convenient to know the name of the person to whom you are speaking."

"Miss Smith, then. My name is Bernard Brooks."

"Ah, indeed! I think there is a Brooks family in Somerville, Massachusetts, where I am teaching. Are they related to you?"

"I don't think so. I come from New York State."

"Here we are all Americans. Have you arrived' lately?"

"Only two days since."

"And it is your first visit to England?"

"Yes."

"Do you intend to visit the continent?"

"I should like to."

"But that probably depends upon your traveling companions."

"I have no traveling companions."

"Did you come to England alone?" asked Miss Smith, in some surprise.

"No. I was in the company of Professor Puffer."

"Indeed! I never heard of the gentleman. Is he a professor of Harvard?"

"I don't think he is connected with any college. I am told that he is interested in antiquities, and has written upon the subject."

"I should like to meet him," said the schoolmistress.

"Perhaps you will introduce me."

"I am afraid I cannot. The professor and I have parted."

"Why, if it isn't taking too great a liberty to ask?"

"I didn't like him. He didn't treat me well. Once, in a fit of sleep walking, he tried to throw me into the sea."

"That seems strange. Certainly you were justified in leaving him. Where is he now?"

"I left him in Liverpool."

"But didn't he have charge of you?"

"Yes; but I think I can take better care of myself."

"You may think me intrusive, but I am old enough to be your mother; that is, almost," she added cautiously. "Didn't he have charge of money for your expenses?"

"I was engaged to assist him as his private secretary. I was to have twenty-five dollars a month and my expenses paid."

"That was very good pay. I see that you are in a difficult position. Do you really think it would be unsafe for you to stay with him?"

"I am sure of it."

"Then, of course, that settles it. Have you taken the advice of any older person?"

"I took the advice of Mr. Nelson Sturgis, from Boston."

"That is a very good Boston name. Is Mr. Sturgis in this hotel?"

"No; he went to the Charing Cross."

"If you don't think me impertinent, how do you expect to defray your expenses? Is there any one in America who will provide you with the necessary fund?"

"No. There is a man in New York who calls himself my guardian, but he certainly is not my friend. He put me in charge of this Professor Puffer, and from a letter I picked up I find he wants to get rid of me."

"But how will you live?"

"I shall try to get something to do, Miss Smith."

"That will be hard in a city like London, where you are a stranger."

"I have no doubt of that, but there is no other course open to me."

"If you were in America you would stand a better chance. I wish I could think of any way of helping you. I have a nephew about your age, and I can't help thinking what if he were in your position. Shall you stay long at this hotel?"

"I shall have money enough to stay a week or two."

“And I shall be here about a week. I must think for you.”

“I wish you would,” said Bernard gratefully. “It seems pleasant to have some one interested in you.”

“Won’t this Mr. Sturgis do something for you?”

“He has already. It is he who paid my expenses from Liverpool. He seems a very nice gentleman, and I am sure he is friendly to me.”

“You had better look over the daily papers, and if you see any place advertised which you think you can fill, apply for it.”

“Thank you. I will take your advice.”

During the afternoon Bernard walked through the Strand and Fleet Street. He found plenty to attract his attention. Though the signs were English he found a great difference between English and American shops. Near the Bank of England he met Nelson Sturgis.

“Glad to meet you, Bernard,” said the Boston drummer. “I have some news for you.”

“What is it, Mr. Sturgis?”

“Your friend, the professor, has called upon me at the Charing Cross.”

Bernard was startled.

“How do you think he guessed we were there?”

“In the easiest way in the world. He found the cabby who had driven us to the hotel.”

“Was he looking for me?”

“Yes. When he saw me his face brightened. He demanded you, thinking that you were somewhere in the hotel.”

“It is lucky I didn’t stay there. Is he there now?”

“No; finding that he was mistaken, he went away disappointed.”

“Suppose we meet him in the street?”

“Bluff him. Refuse to go with him. He would have to prove a right to control you, and that would be difficult. How do you like your hotel?”

“Very much. It is comfortable and cheap.”

“Have you made any acquaintances?”

“Yes; a schoolma’am from Massachusetts.”

“Is she young and pretty?” asked Mr. Sturgis with a smile.

“No; she is plain, and, as to age, I think she must be near forty. She might do for you,” suggested Bernard with a roguish look.

“Thank you. Your description doesn’t seem attractive.”

“She is a very nice lady, however, and has given me some good advice about getting a position.”

“I am glad of that. I wish I could do something for you, but my stay in London is very limited.”

“I am sorry for that. I shall feel very lonely when you are gone.”

“And unfortunately I go to-morrow.”

“Where?”

“To some of the manufacturing districts. You know my trip is a business one. How are you off for money?”

“I can get along for the present, and I hope before long to get a place.”

“I hope so, but I fear your being an American will interfere with you. The English have an idea that American boys have too much license, and they would hesitate to take one into their employment.”

“It seems queer to see boys even younger than I am with silk hats on.”

“Yes; but it is the English style. You can’t pass for an English boy—of the better class—without following their example.”

“I wouldn’t do that. They look like guys. Just let one of them appear in New York rigged out in that way. Why, the other boys would mob him.”

“That is true. Still I don’t know, but it is well when you are in Rome to do as the Romans do.”

“Does that mean that you recommend me to put on one of those tiles?”

“Well, not at present,” said Mr. Sturgis. “If it would procure you a position I should advise you to do so.”

Presently the two separated, and Bernard strolled on alone, his companion having a business call to make near the bank.

“Have a shine?”

The boy who asked the question was a typical London street urchin, with ragged clothes, and face and hands bearing evidence of his occupation.

Bernard looked at his shoes. They certainly stood in need of polishing, but he knew that his means were small and daily diminishing, and was cautious enough to ask the price.

“A penny,” answered the street boy.

Bernard signed to the boy to begin.

The boy understood his business, and went to work like an expert.

“Do you earn much?” asked Bernard.

“That’s as it happens. When I’m lucky I make one and eight pence or two shillin’s. Yesterday a gent—he was an American—give me sixpence for a shine. Americans are rich.”

“Not all of them. I am an American.”

“Have you got a bowie knife?”

“No,” answered Bernard, with a laugh. “What makes you ask?”

“I was readin’ a story in a paper that said all the American boys carried bowie knives.”

“That’s a mistake.”

Bernard was feeling for a penny to pay the young bootblack when he heard a snort of triumph, and looking up, he saw Professor Puffer bearing down upon him.

CHAPTER XXII. DICK THE BOOTBLACK.

"What's the matter?" asked the bootblack, noting the swift change in Bernard's face.

"That man—he is after me!" ejaculated Bernard, preparing to move on.

He knew that it would be disagreeable to have an encounter with Professor Puffer and he thought it better to get out of his way.

Whether he could do so was doubtful, as the professor was close at hand.

"I'll help you," said the bootblack, "if you'll give me a shilling. You be here in an hour."

"All right," said Bernard, and he started to run.

But by this time Professor Puffer was only ten feet away. He felt that Bernard was within his grasp.

But he did not reckon for the bootblack. The latter advanced to meet the professor, and managed to stumble in front of him so that Puffer, whose legs were short, fell over him, striking forcibly on his face. Meanwhile Bernard was hurrying away.

Professor Puffer got up in a furious rage.

"What are you running over me for?" he demanded, shaking his fist at the bootblack.

The latter began to rub his knees vigorously.

"What are you runnin' over me for?" he demanded in an injured tone.

Professor Puffer eyed him suspiciously. He hardly knew whether the encounter was premeditated or not, "Did you see a boy rather taller than you dressed in a dark suit? I think you have been blacking his shoes."

"Yes, I did, and he run away without payin' me. Is he your boy?"

"Yes. Where did he go?"

"I dunno. You ran over me so that I couldn't see. Will you pay for the shine?"

"No; he must pay for it himself. But I'll give you a sixpence if you'll find him for me."

"All right! Give me the money."

"Not now. I'll wait till you find him for me."

"I don't do business in that way, mister."

"I believe you're in league with him," said the professor suspiciously.

"I dunno what that means," returned the boy innocently. "Don't you try your long words on me. If he was your boy, what made him run away from you?"

"Because he is a bad lot. He won't obey me."

"Ain't he bad, though?" said the bootblack virtuously. "And you look like such a kind old man, too. He'd ought to be flogged, that he had."

"I am not so very old," said the professor quickly; for, like a good many others, he didn't care to be considered aged.

"That so! You don't look more'n sixty."

"I am not near that," said Puffer. "But that is of no importance. If you'll help me you will find it for your advantage."

"I'll try. S'pose I do find him, where will I find you?"

The professor took out a card and wrote his address on it.

"I'll tell you what to do," he said. "If you find Bernard——"

"Is that his name?"

"Yes. Bernard Brooks. If you see him, find out where he lives and come and tell me."

"What will you do to him, if you catch him?" asked the bootblack, with curiosity.

"Never you mind! I will take him back into my charge. I may send him to a boarding-school."

"I wish some kind gentleman would send me to a boardin'-school," said the bootblack, with an angelic expression. "Say, mister, won't you adopt me?"

"I cannot afford it. Besides, I have trouble enough with the boy I have; but I can't stand waiting here. You are sure you didn't see where the boy went?"

"No, I didn't."

"Somehow that boy continually eludes me," muttered Puffer, as he walked disappointed away. "I begin to hate him."

Meanwhile Bernard had not gone very far. He had darted into a narrow street, and, himself screened from observation, watched the interview between the professor and the bootblack. Though he could not hear what was said, he judged that his street friend was not betraying him.

"He has an honest face, though a dirty one," he reflected. "He has earned the money I promised him."

When Professor Puffer had disappeared from the scene he crossed to where the bootblack was standing.

"Well," he said, "so he's gone."

"Yes."

"You had quite a talk with him."

"Yes. I fooled the old man. He's goin' to give me sixpence for lettin' him know where you live."

Bernard laughed.

"You can tell him any place you like," he said.

"Then I'll tell him you're boardin' with Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace."

"I don't think he'll give you sixpence for that."

“I don’t want any of his money,” said the bootblack contemptuously. “He’s no good.”

“What did he say about me?”

“He says you’re a bad lot.”

“I’ve heard that before. I’d a good deal rather have you for a friend than him.”

“Would you?” asked the bootblack, with an expression of gratification. “What is your name?”

“Dick Sprowl.”

“Then, Dick, there’s my hand.”

“My hand is dirty. You’d better not take it.”

“I don’t care whether your hand is dirty or not. Your heart is all right. There’s the shilling I promised you.”

“You’re a gentleman,” said the bootblack. “Say, you needn’t give me any money as long as you’re my friend.”

“Yes, Dick, take the money, and my friendship, too.”

Bernard returned to the Arundel Hotel in time for dinner.

He met Miss Minerva Smith on the doorstep, waiting for the door to open.

“Well, Bernard,” she said pleasantly, “has anything happened?”

“Yes; I fell in with Professor Puffer.”

“Where?”

“On the Strand.”

“Was the interview a pleasant one?”

Bernard laughed.

“To tell the truth, I didn’t wait to see him.”

Then he told of the professor’s approach, and of his escape by the help of the bootblack.

“You seem to have been fortunate. Have you heard of any position?”

“No,” answered Bernard, shaking his head. “I am not so lucky as that. I am beginning to feel a little anxious. I am not sure but I ought to find a cheaper boarding place.”

“I don’t think you could—that is, a satisfactory one. Perhaps it may not be necessary. In looking over a morning paper I saw an advertisement which might possibly prove of advantage to you.”

“Let me see it!” said Bernard eagerly.

“I will show it to you after dinner.”

“That may be too late.”

“No; the applicant was to call between three and four this afternoon.”

After dinner Miss Smith produced the paper, and called Bernard’s attention to this advertisement.

WANTED—By a young man about to make a voyage for his health, a pleasant traveling companion. Apply, between three and four o’clock this afternoon at Morley’s Hotel, Trafalgar Square.

Walter Cunningham.

“How would that suit you, Bernard?” asked Miss Smith.

“Very well indeed.”

“Then you are not afraid of seasickness?”

“No; in my voyage across the Atlantic I had no trouble in that way. Do you think I shall have any chance of success?”

“I think your appearance would recommend you. The chief obstacle would be your youth. If you were as old as I am—” and she smiled and paused.

“Can’t you lend me a few years, Miss Smith,” asked Bernard.

“I should be only too glad to do so,” replied the schoolmistress; “but I am afraid that is not practicable.”

“Perhaps I should be expected to bear my own expenses,” suggested Bernard. “Of course, that would be out of the question.”

“That is hardly likely. At any rate, you will soon learn all the particulars.”

“Where is Trafalgar Square?”

“Not much over a mile distant. You might take a hansom.”

“I think I will. Otherwise I might fall in with Professor Puffer again, and even if I escaped from him, the delay might prove fatal.”

“Very true. Fortunately, the expense will be trifling.”

Bernard went up to his room and put on a clean collar. He brushed his hair carefully also. His shoes were all right, thanks to his young street friend, Dick Sprowl.

Then he went to the Strand and hailed a hansom.

“I want to go to Morley’s Hotel, Trafalgar Square,” he said. “Do you know where it is?”

“Yes, sir,” answered cabby, with a pitying smile. “I’ll have you there in a jiffy.”

In about fifteen minutes the cab drew up in front of a plain hotel, and the driver assisted Bernard to descend.

Bernard satisfied himself that this was Morley’s Hotel, and dismissing the cab driver he advanced to the entrance. The result of his application would be so important to him that he could not help feeling nervous.

CHAPTER XXIII. AN APARTMENT AT MORLEY'S HOTEL.

Bernard was shown up-stairs to an apartment on the second floor. He was ushered into an anteroom, where four persons were already sitting. These Bernard inferred were applicants for the post of traveling companion.

When he entered, the others regarded him with interest, and, as it seemed, with amusement. His youth made it seem ridiculous in their eyes for him to aspire to the position advertised.

Bernard, too, was interested in taking stock of his competitors.

One was a tall young man, of about thirty-five, dressed in a tightly fitting suit, the coat buttoned up to the throat. Whatever his qualifications might be, he looked stiff and uncompanionable.

His next neighbor was considerably shorter, quite smartly dressed, and his face wore a self-satisfied smirk, as if he had a remarkably good opinion of himself. Another was a man of at least forty, with a middle-aged look, and an air of discouragement about him.

The fourth was an awkward looking young man, not over twenty-one, who seemed bashful and ill at ease. He was just from the university, where he had not quite completed the full course, and, whatever his scholarship might be, looked inexperienced and unpractical.

A man servant appeared, and looking about him doubtfully, signaled to the first mentioned applicant to follow him. While he was closeted with the advertiser, the others were expectant and ill at ease. They feared that choice would be made of the first applicant.

At the end of ten minutes he reappeared in the anteroom. All eyes were turned upon him.

"Are you engaged?" asked applicant No. 2.

The tall young man answered complacently, "Not yet, but I probably shall be. Mr. Cunningham will communicate with me."

He left the room, and No. 2 followed the servant into the advertiser's presence. He reappeared at the end of five minutes.

"Well?" asked the man of middle age anxiously.

"I think it will be me," was the reply. "Mr. Cunningham was very social and agreeable. Between ourselves, there isn't the slightest chance of the other man being taken. He flattered himself too much."

"Is he going to write to you?"

"Yes. I told him that the first man fully expected the appointment, but he only laughed. I understood what that meant."

So No. 2 departed and No. 3 was invited into the advertiser's presence.

He, too, came back at the end of from five to ten minutes, but he did not look as confident as the two who preceded him.

"Are you chosen?" asked the university man eagerly.

"No, and I don't think I shall be. Mr. Cunningham evidently regarded me as too old. He is himself a young man. I don't think he is over twenty-three or twenty-four."

The college man brightened up. This seemed favorable to his chances. As he argued, Cunningham would naturally prefer a person somewhere near his own age.

At a signal, from the servant he entered the presence of Walter Cunningham, his face flushing with nervous embarrassment.

Soon he, too, came out, and there was but one applicant left—Bernard—to greet him. He, too, had been of opinion that the college man would be accepted.

"Am I to congratulate you?" he asked.

"I don't know," answered the university man.

"Mr. Cunningham was very kind and friendly. He has reserved his decision, and tells me that if I am selected I will hear from him in two days."

"Follow me, young man," said the servant, signaling to Bernard.

Bernard found himself almost immediately in the presence of Walter Cunningham. The advertiser was a pleasant looking young man, whose appearance attracted Bernard. He looked rather surprised at Bernard's youth.

"Have you come in answer to my advertisement?" he asked.

"I have," replied Bernard. "I can see that you think me very young."

"Well, certainly you are not very old," returned Cunningham, smiling pleasantly. "How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"And I am twenty-three."

"It is rather presumptuous in me to answer your advertisement, but there was no limitation of age."

"True. You were quite justified in applying. You are not English?"

"No; I am an American."

"So I judged. I know something of America. Two years since I spent six months in the States. I have seen most of your large cities, from New York to San Francisco."

"I am sorry to say that my traveling has been very limited."

"And you really have no special qualifications for the position of a traveling companion?"

"No, sir."

“Are you acquainted with any of the modern languages?”

“I can read French pretty easily.”

Mr. Cunningham looked pleased.

“That will be a help,” he said. “Do you speak it at all?”

“Just a little. I wrote French exercises, and had a few lessons in French conversation. Of course, I have very small claim to the place, but it is quite important for me to find employment, and an American lady—a teacher—suggested to me to apply.”

“Then your means are limited? Have you parents?”

“No, sir; I am quite alone in the world.”

“How did you chance to come to England?”

“It might take me some time to answer that question.”

“Never mind! I have plenty of time at my command.”

Thus invited, Bernard made a full statement of his position, and the circumstances which led to his leaving America. He also explained why he had left Professor Puffer.

“I am very much interested in your narrative,” said Cunningham. “You are certainly placed in a difficult position. You have reason to think that your guardian is no friend of yours?”

“I am certain of that, sir.”

“This Professor Puffer, though it is doubtful if he has any rightful claim to the title, appears to be a bad lot.”

“That’s what he calls me,” said Bernard, laughing. He already felt on very cordial terms with Mr. Cunningham.

“I may be foolish,” went on Cunningham, after a pause. “I don’t know what my friends will say, but I feel very much inclined to engage you.”

“I hope you will. It is not only that I need employment. I am sure I should enjoy being with you.”

“That settles it,” said Cunningham. “I already like you, and if you like me I am sure it will be pleasant for us to be associated. To be sure, you don’t know much about traveling. I do, and can supply your deficiencies. Now I will tell you why I seek a companion. Partly because it is agreeable, but partly also because I am not robust and am likely—that is, there is a chance of being sick—and in that case I should need a friend with me. I think I want a friend more than a companion. That was one reason why I didn’t feel favorably inclined to the other applicants.”

“No doubt they were better qualified than I am.”

“Yes, they were. The first one has considerable experience in traveling and speaks two or three of the Continental languages, but I never could make a friend of him.”

“He seemed very stiff and unsocial.”

“That was my judgment of him. As to the second, he was entirely too well satisfied with himself. I have no doubt he would try to make himself agreeable, and he has traveled some.”

“He seemed to think there was every chance of his obtaining the position. No one thought I had any chance.”

“You wouldn’t have with most persons, but I happen to like you,” said Walter Cunningham frankly.

“I am glad of that. I thought the young man who went in last might be successful. The middle-aged man didn’t have strong hopes.”

“No, he is too old, and seems to have had such a rough time in life that he would be far from a cheerful companion. He seems very hard up. When I write him my refusal I shall send him a five pound note to relieve his feeling of disappointment.”

“That will be very kind in you. I would do the same in your place.”

“I think we are alike in being considerate of others. As to the young man, he doesn’t seem to be practical. I am afraid that I should be a companion to him rather than he to me.”

“It may be so with me, but I shall try to make myself useful.”

“You look bright, and would, I think, learn rapidly to do all I expect of you.”

At this moment the man servant came in and handed a card to Mr. Cunningham, who uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“Whose card do you think this is?” he asked.

“I couldn’t guess.”

“It bears the name of Professor Ezra Puffer, your friend.”

“Don’t call him my friend! What can bring him here?”

“He wants to be my traveling companion.”

CHAPTER XXIV. PROFESSOR PUFFER FROM HIS OWN POINT OF VIEW.

"Shall you see him, Mr. Cunningham?" asked Bernard.

"Yes; I have engaged you, to be sure, but after what you have told me of the professor, I am curious to interview him."

"I shouldn't like to have him see me. He might try to get me into his power."

"Wouldn't you like to be present and hear what he has to say?"

"Yes, if I could do so unobserved."

"You can. There is an alcove curtained off from the main room. Go in there, and you can hear every word that passes between us."

"Thank you, I shall like it very much."

"You may tell the gentleman to come in," said Walter Cunningham, addressing his servant.

The latter reappeared, followed by Professor Puffer, who bowed low to the young man from whom he sought a position.

"Professor Puffer?" said Cunningham inquiringly.

"I have that honor," said Puffer. "I called about your advertisement for a traveling companion."

"Do you know of any one whom you can recommend?"

"I would be glad to accept the position myself. What salary do you propose to give?"

"That will be a matter of negotiation after I have made my selection."

"I only wanted to make sure that it would be worth my while to accept. As you may infer from my card I am a man of reputation," and Professor Puffer swelled out his chest and assumed a look of dignity.

"I am glad to hear it. I consider it a compliment that a man of your standing should be willing to be my companion."

"To tell the truth, Mr. Cunningham," went on Puffer, "I was not sure till I saw you whether I should be willing, but now that I have seen you I have a strong desire to accompany you."

"Appearances are deceitful, you know, professor."

"I am willing to take the risk. How soon do you propose to start?"

"My dear sir, it seems to me you are going too fast. I have not yet selected you. I should like to ask you a few questions."

"I shall have pleasure in answering, sir. Professor Puffer is always open and aboveboard."

"That is well. May I ask where you have held the position of professor?"

"At the American University of Harvard. Doubtless you have heard of it."

"Certainly."

"I have also lectured at Cornell University."

"On what subject?"

"Ahem! On antiquities."

"Then that is your specialty?"

"Yes, sir."

"Doubtless I should find your companionship very instructive."

"You are kind to say so."

"I don't say so. I only say that from your account of yourself I should presume so. Of course I know of you only from your own statements. So you were a professor at Harvard University?"

"Yes, sir."

"During what years?"

"I left there a year since, after serving for a term of five years."

"That was a long period. Why did you leave, may I ask?"

"On account of my health. I labored so assiduously that it became seriously affected. My physician prescribed traveling for a year or more. My means are not large, partly because I have spent so much money on books and scientific research, and our salaries as professors were not munificent."

"You have a large library?"

"About four hundred volumes," answered Puffer promptly. "I think those books—many of them rare—must have cost over ten thousand dollars."

"Where are they now?"

"I have stored them. I could not make up my mind to sell them."

"What an old humbug!" thought Bernard, as he heard the professor's statements in the security of the alcove.

"May I ask your age, Professor Puffer?"

Puffer hesitated, and finally answered, "I am forty-five."

Walter Cunningham would have been surprised if he had put any confidence in the professor's statements, as he looked at least ten years older.

"I asked because I am a young man, and though you are doubtless a man from whom I should gain instruction, I am in doubt as to whether your age would not be too great to make you a congenial companion."

“My dear Mr. Cunningham,” said the professor with a genial smile, “I am not surprised to hear you say so. Forty-five no doubt seems very old to you, but I assure you I have a young heart and my company is prized by a great many young people. Why, only recently I was engaged as companion for a boy of sixteen.”

“Indeed! What was his name?”

“Bernard Brooks.”

“Did he seem happy in your company?”

“Yes, indeed! We were like brothers. He loved me dearly.”

Walter Cunningham had hard work to suppress a smile, and Bernard felt like choking with laughter.

“Old Puffer is a worse humbug than I supposed,” he said to himself. “How I should like to burst upon him after that big falsehood! Wouldn’t he look disconcerted!”

“Where is the boy now? I should like to see him.”

“He has left England with some friends of the family.”

“Was he sorry to part with you?”

“I don’t like to boast, but, big boy as he is, he shed tears at leaving me.”

“How was it that you gained such an ascendency over him?”

“I really can’t say. I am naturally fond of young people, and they take to me.”

“You think, then, that I should find you an agreeable companion?”

“My dear Mr. Cunningham, may I say Walter, give me a week and we should be like Damon and Pythias.”

“I suppose this boy Bernard was an attractive boy?”

“Very much so. Of course he had his faults—most boys have—but as long as he gave me his affection I was willing to overlook them.”

“That was very kind in you. I am afraid I have faults, too.”

“Very few, I am sure, Walter—excuse me, Mr. Cunningham.”

“Can you give me an idea of what you would regard as a satisfactory salary in case I engaged you?”

The professor brightened up. This looked encouraging.

“At Harvard I was paid three thousand dollars a year,” he said, “but then my duties were arduous. I instructed a large junior class, and gave lectures weekly to the seniors.”

“I hope you wouldn’t feel inclined to lecture me, professor.”

“Ha, ha! very good!” said Puffer, laughing heartily. “You will have your joke. However, I only mentioned this to explain why my salary was so large. Of course I shouldn’t expect nearly as much with you. If you paid my traveling expenses and a hundred dollars a month it would satisfy me. I am not expecting to save much in this my year of recreation.”

“I will consider your proposal. By the way, can you show me a catalogue of Harvard University with your name enrolled as professor?”

“I am really sorry, but I don’t happen to have a catalogue with me.”

“One of Cornell, where I understand you gave a course of lectures, will do.”

“I regret to say that I haven’t that either.”

“Of course I don’t doubt you, but it would be pleasant to have some confirmation of your statements.”

“My dear Mr. Cunningham, I hope you don’t doubt my word.”

“You know I have never met you before this morning. Perhaps you have some of the books you have published which you can show me.”

“I haven’t at present, but I may be able to pick one up in the London book stores.”

“Do so, and send it to me by messenger. I shall be too busy to see you for a week to come.”

“Do I understand,” asked the professor insinuatingly, “that you engage me as a traveling companion?”

“Don’t understand anything of the kind just now. Give me your address, and I will communicate with you.”.

“I am staying at the Brown Hotel, in Norfolk Street.”

“Very well, I will note it down.”

“I shall be glad to hear from you as soon as possible, as I have another position in view.”

“Very well, Professor Puffer. I won’t keep you waiting unduly.”

Professor Puffer bowed gracefully and retired. Then Bernard was called from his nook by Mr. Cunningham. He came out all smiles.

“It was as good as a play, Mr. Cunningham,” he said. “I am very glad the professor speaks so well of me. It is quite unexpected.”

“It seems you shed tears at leaving him.”

“If I did they were tears of joy.”

“I don’t know but I had better reconsider my decision and engage Professor Puffer instead of you.”

“If you really think you would like him better, Mr. Cunningham, you had better do so.”

“You are not very much afraid of it. Well, Bernard, I will tell you what I did not care to tell him. I mean to start away inside of a week, and I think you had better join me at this hotel, so that we may make preparations together.”

“I should like nothing better.”

“As to the salary—you have not inquired how much I am to pay you.”

“I am content to leave that to you.”

“Very well. The professor settled that matter. I will pay your traveling expenses and give you a hundred

dollars a month."

"But that is much more than I can earn," said Bernard, in astonishment.

"Very probably. I give you a large salary out of friendship."

Miss Smith, the schoolmistress, was delighted to hear of Bernard's success. The next day he removed to Morley's Hotel.

CHAPTER XXV. BERNARD'S GOOD FORTUNE

"It will be several days before I shall be able to get away, Bernard," said Walter Cunningham, the next morning, "and, by the way, I have not told you where I am going."

"No, sir; I should like very much to know."

"I propose to visit Italy and perhaps Sicily. We shall go first to Paris, and remain a short time." Bernard's eyes sparkled. He had always wished to visit the continent, and had expected to do so in the company of Professor Puffer, but he felt that he should enjoy himself much more in the companionship of Walter Cunningham. Even had Puffer proved a reliable man, there was nothing about him to win the good will and attachment of a boy of his age.

"I shall enjoy it very much, Mr. Cunningham," said Bernard.

"So I hope. I have not told you much about myself," continued the young man, "but as we are to be companions and friends it is proper that I should do so."

Bernard did not speak, but his face expressed unmistakable interest.

"I am alone in the world. My father and mother are dead, and I never had a brother or sister. My father was a wealthy man of business and a man of note, having reached (this was two years before he died) the position of Lord Mayor of London. He contracted a fever at his country house, where, it appeared, the drainage was bad. Two years since, just after I had attained my majority, he died, my mother having preceded him; and I was left in possession of a hundred thousand pounds."

"Half a million of dollars!" said Bernard.

"Yes, that is the way it would be rated in America. In a pecuniary way, therefore, I am fortunate, but I can't tell you how solitary I feel at times."

"I can understand it, Mr. Cunningham. I am in the same position as yourself, only that I am left destitute."

"Then it appears to me, Bernard, there is a special propriety in our being together. How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

"I am but seven years older. I shall look upon you as a younger brother, and in our new relationship I shall expect you to drop the formal Mr. and call me Walter."

"It will seem awkward at first, but I shall get used to it and like it."

"By the way—you will excuse my mentioning it—but it seems to me that your suit is well worn, not to say shabby."

"That is true. As soon as I can afford it I will buy another."

"You need not wait till then. I will send you to my tailor's, with instructions to make you two suits at once. I will also give you an order on my haberdasher for such articles as you may require in his line."

"Thank you. You can deduct the price from my salary."

"That is unnecessary. These articles will be my first gift to you."

"How kind you are, Walter. I think," Bernard added with a smile, "Professor Puffer would be willing to be a brother to you."

"I have no doubt of it, but in spite of the professor's fascinations and the affection which he says you entertain for him, I am afraid I should not appreciate him as perhaps he deserves. Now, I think it will be well for you to go and order your clothing, as we haven't much time to spare."

Mr. Cunningham's tailor occupied a shop in Regent Street, and thither Bernard went. He took with him a note from his employer which insured him a flattering reception. He had no trouble in choosing cloth for suits, as Mr. Cunningham had sent instructions. Next he repaired to the haberdasher's, and selected such furnishing goods as he required. By special direction of Mr. Cunningham they were of the best description.

He was just coming out of the shop when he met the young man—the first applicant for the position of companion to Mr. Cunningham. He looked rather shabby, and Bernard noticed that his coat was shiny.

He stopped short at sight of Bernard.

"Didn't I see you at Mr. Cunningham's rooms at Morley's two days since?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir."

"I have been expecting to hear from him. Do you know whether he has yet made choice of a traveling companion?"

"Yes, sir; he has."

A shade of disappointment passed over the young man's features.

"Whom did he select?" he asked.

"He chose me."

"You!" exclaimed the other, in mingled surprise and disdain. "You?"

"Yes, sir."

"What on earth made him select you? Why, you are only a boy."

"That is true."

"Have you ever traveled?"

"Only across the Atlantic from America."

"It is positively humiliating," said the other angrily, "to be superseded by a half grown, immature boy," and he glared at Bernard.

"No doubt, sir," said Bernard.

"Why, it was the height of audacity for you to apply for such a position."

"I suppose it was," said Bernard modestly; "but I had one excuse."

“What was it?”

“I was poor, and very much in need of employment.”

“Then why didn’t you apply for a position as shop boy.”

“Because I don’t think I could live on the pay of a shop boy.”

“Mr. Cunningham must be insane. Certain no man with his wits about him could make such a foolish selection. Listen to me! I am poor as well as you. I need a new suit of clothes, but I can’t buy it. I have been out of work for three months. Now I am going to ask a favor of you.”

Bernard concluded that the favor was a pecuniary one, and he felt disposed to assist his unfortunate fellow applicant; but he waited to have him explain himself.

“This is the favor I ask,” the young man proceeded. “You will not long retain your position. Mr. Cunningham will discover your incompetency. When you are about to be discharged, will you mention my name as your successor? I am sure to suit Mr. Cunningham. There is my card.”

Considerably astonished at the coolness of the request, Bernard glanced at the card. It bore the name and address of Stephen Brayton.

“I will remember your request, Mr. Brayton,” he said; “but I hope I shall not be discharged.”

“Of course you hope so, but you are certain to lose your place. You seem to be good-natured. Since you have been successful, perhaps you will do me another favor.”

“I will if I can.”

“It is a small one. I am very short of money. Could you lend me half a crown?”

“I will do better than that. Here’s half a sovereign.”

The young man’s eyes sparkled with pleasure.

“You have a good heart,” he said. “As I did not get the place I am glad you did.”

“Thank you. I wish you good luck.”

“He is right,” thought Bernard. “It was certainly a singular selection for Mr. Cunningham to make. He did not think of my qualifications. He evidently took a liking to me.”

The next morning as Bernard was sitting in Mr. Cunningham’s rooms at Morley’s assorting his papers, the servant brought in a short note which Bernard read.

It ran thus:

“My Dear Mr. Cunningham:

“Not yet having heard from you, and being uncertain as to your decision in reference to a traveling companion, I have ventured to call to inquire as to your intentions. It is desirable that I should know speedily, as I have a proposal from another party which I shall otherwise accept. I should, however, prefer to go with you, as in the brief interview which you kindly accorded me I was very favorably impressed by your engaging personal traits.

“I am, very respectfully,

“Ezra Puffer.”

Bernard read over this note with amusement and a little apprehension.

“What had I better do?” he thought. “Will it be safe for me to see the professor?”

Mr. Cunningham had assured him that Professor Puffer could have no possible hold upon him, and he therefore decided to take the risk.

“You can tell the gentleman to come in,” he said.

Professor Puffer was in the anteroom. When he presented himself, with the note already written, he asked the servant, “Is Mr. Cunningham in?”

“No, sir,” said the servant; “but Mr. Brooks is in.”

“Is Mr. Brooks a friend of Mr. Cunningham’s?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then be kind enough to hand him this note. It is addressed to Mr. Cunningham, but he can read it.”

“Yes, sir. All right, sir.”

Quite unprepared for a meeting with his old ward, Professor Puffer entered the room with a jaunty step. When he recognized Bernard, he stepped back with an expression of intense astonishment on his face.

Professor Puffer entered the room with a jaunty step. "Bernard Brooks," he ejaculated. "Yes," said Bernard.—Page 213.

Bernard Brooks' Adventures.

Original Size

“Bernard Brooks!” he ejaculated.
“Yes, Professor Puffer. What can I do for you?”

CHAPTER XXVI. PROFESSOR PUFFER ONCE MORE.

"What brings you here, Bernard Brooks?" demanded Professor Puffer sternly. "You have no business in Mr. Cunningham's room."

"I am in the employ of Mr. Cunningham," said Bernard.

"How can that be? You are too young to be his valet."

"I have been engaged by him as his traveling companion."

To say that Professor Puffer was surprised would be too mild. He was absolutely overwhelmed with astonishment. He could not believe it.

"This must be a falsehood," he returned after a pause.

"You can stay here and inquire of Mr. Cunningham if you like."

"I will," said Puffer sternly. "I will let him know in that case that you are under my guardianship, and that I will not permit you to accept the preposterous engagement. You, a traveling companion!"

Bernard was not quite withered by the professor's disdainful tone. Secure in the attachment of Walter Cunningham, all fear of his quondam guardian had disappeared.

"You forget, Professor Puffer, that I was your companion," he said with a smile. "If I was fit to be your companion, I am certainly fit to be his."

"You were not my companion. You were my ward. You are my ward still, and when I leave this place you must go too."

"Would you take away Mr. Cunningham's traveling companion?"

"He will have no trouble in obtaining a better one. But I don't believe you have been engaged. He would have no use for a child."

"Say 'kid' at once, professor."

"I do not use slang," returned Professor Puffer severely. "I shall wait and see Mr. Cunningham."

"You will excuse my going on with my work."

"What are you doing?"

"Sorting Mr. Cunningham's papers."

"Does he trust you to do that?"

"He requests me to do so."

"Do you actually mean to say that you have been engaged as his traveling companion?"

"It is quite true."

"Where did you fall in with him?"

"I saw his advertisement and applied for the place."

"Where were you staying at the time?"

"At the Arundel Hotel, near the Strand."

"Ha! And I was only in the next street How did it happen that I did not meet you?"

"I don't know."

"If your story is true, which I can hardly believe, what pay has Mr. Cunningham promised to give you?"

"Excuse me, Professor Puffer, but I would rather not tell."

"As your guardian, I demand an answer."

"You are not my guardian. Nothing would induce me to place myself again under your charge. You know very well what reasons I have for fearing and distrusting you."

"I suppose you allude to that little affair on board the Vesta."

"That little affair, as you call it, was an attempt to murder me."

"Nonsense!" said the professor, but he did not appear quite at his ease. "You had better not make such a ridiculous charge. No one will believe it."

"You may be mistaken in that, Professor Puffer."

"When does Mr. Cunningham propose to travel?"

"You had better apply to him. I do not feel at liberty to spread his plans."

Professor Puffer felt exceedingly mortified and annoyed. Here was a situation which he had applied for and been refused actually given to a mere boy against whom he felt a grudge—his own ward, as he chose to consider him.

"I won't let him keep the place," said Puffer, shutting his lips firmly. "I will tear him away from this fool of a Cunningham—and when I get him once more into my grasp, I will revenge myself upon him. He won't find it so easy to get away from me again." Half an hour passed. The professor maintained his place, looking grim and angry. Bernard handed him the morning issue of the London *Times*, but he seemed busy with his own reflections, and scarcely glanced at it.

Finally a light step was heard at the door, and Mr. Cunningham entered the room. He looked from the professor to Bernard, and a smile formed upon his face. He guessed what had occurred.

"Professor Puffer, I believe?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered the professor. "May I ask you if you have considered my application?"

"Yes. I should have communicated with you. I have engaged Mr. Brooks to be my traveling companion."

"Mr. Brooks!" said the professor scornfully. "Are you aware that this boy is under my guardianship?"

“No, I am not.”

“It is true, and he has no right to make any engagement without my permission.”

“Excuse me, but is this the boy of sixteen to whom you referred in your conversation with me the other day?”

“He is.”

“You said that you had been engaged as his traveling companion. You said nothing about being his guardian.”

“I didn’t go into particulars,” replied the professor, who began to see that there would be something to explain.

“You said, however, that he had left you, and had left England with some friends of the family.”

“Ahem! I was mistaken. I have been requested to resume the charge of him.”

“Have you a letter to that effect?”

“Not with me.”

“Your story appears inconsistent. I am convinced that you have no claim upon Bernard. I have engaged him as my companion, and intend to take him with me on my proposed journey.”

“Of what possible use can a boy be to you?”

“That is my affair!” said Walter Cunningham shortly.

“I will not permit him to go with you.”

“What do you propose to do about it?”

“I will appeal to the law.”

“I think, Professor Puffer, the less you have to do with the law the better. Bernard has informed me of a scene on board the Vesta which might expose you to arrest.”

“I don’t understand what he refers to.”

“I refer to your attempt to throw him overboard.”

“Does he say that?” asked the professor in pretended amazement.

“Yes.”

“Then he has told an outrageous falsehood. No such thing ever took place. He is the worst boy I ever met.”

“When you were here before you spoke very differently of him. You said he was a very attractive boy, and you referred to his attachment to you. You said he shed tears at parting from you.”

Bernard burst into a fit of laughter, which only aggravated his old guardian the more.

“He didn’t deserve it. I spoke of him as well as I could, because I did not want to hurt his reputation.”

“Professor Puffer,” said Walter Cunningham, in a tone of disgust, “I am busy this morning, and I will not detain you any longer.”

“I will go,” responded the professor, “but not alone. Bernard Brooks, come with me!”

“I decline,” said Bernard.

“Then I will have recourse to the law.”

“So will I,” retorted Bernard.

“No one will believe your preposterous charge, if that is what you refer to. You have no proof.”

“There you are mistaken. I have the affidavit of Jack Staples, seaman on the Vesta, who saved me from your murderous attack.”

Puffer turned pale. What Bernard said surprised him very much, and he saw at once that such a document would mean danger to him.

“If you want to invoke the law, Professor Puffer, you can do so,” said Mr. Cunningham.

Puffer was discreetly silent. He seized his hat and left the room without bidding farewell to Bernard or Walter Cunningham.

“Your friend has gone, Bernard,” said Cunningham. “I venture to say that he won’t come back. It is certainly a droll circumstance that you and he should have applied for the same situation and that he was refused.”

“You may repent of your choice, Walter.”

“When I do I will tell you. And now, Bernard, I have brought you something.”

As he spoke he drew from his pocket a handsome gold watch and chain.

“I observed that you had no watch,” he said, “and I resolved to supply the deficiency.”

“How can I thank you, Walter?” exclaimed Bernard in joyful excitement. “Of all things it is the one I most desired.”

“You will find it a good one. In such an article as a watch, a cheap one is not desirable. Here is one which you can keep all your life.”

Before leaving London Bernard wrote the following letter to his friend Barclay:

“Dear Nat: You may be desirous of hearing from me. I have not time to go into details. I will say, however, that my New York guardian is no friend of mine, but as well as I can make out, a dangerous enemy. He sent me to England in charge of a man named Puffer—he calls himself Professor Puffer—who tried to throw me overboard one dark night. I escaped from him after reaching London and secured a very advantageous situation as traveling companion to a wealthy young man named Walter Cunningham. We start next week for Italy, and I am very busy making preparations. I will write you from Italy.

“Do you ever see my dear friend Septimus, and is he as sweet and amiable as ever? I didn’t like his father, but I prefer him to Professor Puffer.

“Your sincere friend,
“Bernard Brooks.”

CHAPTER XXVII. A CITIZEN OF NEBRASKA.

Three months later Bernard and Mr. Cunningham were domiciled in the Hotel Constance in Rome. They had taken a leisurely course from London, staying three weeks in Paris, visiting the interior of France, and spending some weeks in Switzerland and northern Italy. They had now been two weeks in Rome, and used the time to good advantage in visiting the art galleries and the ruins of the ancient city.

Bernard had enjoyed everything, and had managed to pick up some conversational Italian. To some extent he had acted as courier for Mr. Cunningham, who had always been accustomed to have things done for him. He found Bernard especially useful, as he had dismissed his servant at Milan. The latter was a stiff-necked Englishman, and was continually getting into trouble from his inability to adapt himself to foreigners and foreign ways.

"Are you ready to leave Rome, Bernard?" asked Walter Cunningham.

"Whenever you are," answered Bernard promptly.

"Of course we have not seen all or even a small part of the things worth seeing, but I am tired of sightseeing. I have thought that an independent excursion in our own carriage, not following any prescribed course, but halting where the fancy seizes us, would be enjoyable."

"I should like nothing better," said Bernard enthusiastically. "In what direction do you propose to go?"

"In the general direction of Naples."

"I am told by an American, who is a guest at this hotel, that there are several routes."

"That is true. I have decided to go by way of Frosinone, San Germano, and Capua. The route is said to be very interesting. I wish you would look up a *vetturino* and arrange to hire him by the day. Then we shall be able to pursue an independent course."

"I will do so, Walter. Have you any instructions as to the price?"

"No: you know from the short excursions we have made what is fair and moderate. You may as well select a *vettura* that is roomy and large enough to accommodate four persons. We don't want to be cramped, for that will interfere with our enjoyment."

"And when do you wish to start?"

"To-morrow morning, say at eleven o'clock."

"Very well. I will attend to it."

"It is a great comfort to have you with me, Bernard. You take a great deal of trouble off my hands."

"I am glad to hear you say that. Think how I would be situated if you had not taken me up."

"I have been well repaid for doing so."

Bernard engaged a *vettura*, a traveling carriage, designed for four persons, and in an hour it made its appearance. The *vetturino*, as the driver is called, was a lithe, slender, dark-complexioned man who answered to the name of Pasquale. What his last name was Bernard did not inquire, as it was sufficient to have a single name to call him by.

"How long will the signor want the *vettura?*" asked the driver.

"I do not know. We will hire it by the day."

"And where will the signor wish to go?"

"To Naples, by way of Valmontone and Frosinone. Do you know the route?"

"*Si, signor*, most assuredly."

Bernard and Mr. Cunningham seated themselves in the carriage, and they started. They left Rome by the Porta Maggiore, their course being through the Campagna, the dreary and unwholesome tract in the immediate neighborhood of Rome. There was very little to see in the first day's journey except a ruined aqueduct, which detained them but a short time, and they pushed on to Valmontone, where they arranged to stop over night. The inn was far from satisfactory, and they were not tempted to prolong their stay.

In the evening, as they sat on a bench outside the inn, a man of about fifty, wearing a tall white hat, with an unmistakable American look, walked up to them and removing his hat said: "Gentlemen, I'm glad to see you. Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Amos Sanderson, and I live about ten miles from Omaha when I'm at home."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Sanderson," said Cunningham politely. "I am Walter Cunningham, from London."

"You don't mean to say you're an Englishman," said Sanderson, in surprise. "You look like an American."

"Doubtless that is meant as a compliment," said Cunningham, smiling.

"Well, I never heard any one take offense at being taken for an American."

"True. I have been in America, and I understand why it is that you Americans are proud of your country. However, if I am not an American, my young friend here, Bernard Brooks, is an American boy."

"I am glad to meet a fellow countryman, Mr. Sanderson," remarked Bernard, smiling.

"Well, well, it does seem real good to meet an American boy," said Mr. Sanderson, his face lighting up. "Shake, Bernard, my boy!" and he extended a muscular hand, which Bernard shook cordially.

"Are you staying at this hotel, Mr. Sanderson?" asked Walter Cunningham.

"Don't call it a hotel! It doesn't deserve the name. Call it a tavern. It's a regular one horse place."

"Then I am glad we are only going to stop one night."

"I have been here a day and a half, and it's the longest day and a half I ever passed."

"Why did you stay if you didn't like it?"

"I'll tell you why. I came here in a small *vettura*, and I had a quarrel with the *vetturino*, who tried to cheat.

So I sent him off, and was glad to get rid of him, for a man with a more villainous countenance I never saw. I haven't been able to get another carriage, so here I am. How did you come?"

"By a *vettura*. We are making the journey in a leisurely way, going as far or as short a distance daily as we choose."

"Where are you going?"

"To Naples."

"So am I. Is your *vettura* a large one?"

"Large enough to hold four persons. We like plenty of room."

"Then I'll make you a proposition. Here I am alone—shipwrecked, as it were, on land. If you will let me join your party I'll pay my share of the expense. In fact, I don't mind paying more, for I ain't mean, though I do hate to be imposed upon. Come now, what do you say?"

Walter Cunningham was rather startled by this unexpected proposal from an utter stranger. It jarred somewhat against his British exclusiveness. Still, there was something attractive in the American, rough and unpolished as he was in his manners, and Cunningham felt that he would amuse and interest them. As far as honesty went it would be impossible to suspect Mr. Sanderson. Besides, he looked like a man of substance and not like an adventurer. Walter Cunningham glanced towards Bernard, and thought he read in the boy's face a desire that the American's proposal should be accepted.

"I hardly know what to say," he replied after a pause. "We do not in general care for the companionship of others, and I can hardly be said to have much knowledge of you—our acquaintance being of the briefest."

"About ten minutes," said Mr. Sanderson. "That's true, and I'm afraid it's cheeky in me to ask you to take me, but I feel sort of drawn to you both, particularly to my young countryman, Bernard."

"Say no more, Mr. Sanderson. We'll take you with us as far as Capua, at any rate. There, as it is a large and well known place, you will have no difficulty in making other arrangements."

"Thank you, squire. You're a gentleman. You'll find Amos Sanderson a true friend, that'll stand by you through thick and thin. If we are attacked by bandits, he won't run away and leave you in the lurch."

"Bandits? Surely there is no danger of meeting any of them?"

"Well, squire, I wish there wasn't, but I don't feel certain. Only last week a couple of gentlemen were overhauled, and had to pay a good stiff sum to get away."

"I supposed the bandits had all been driven out of the country."

"That's where you are mistaken. There's people everywhere that find it easier and more agreeable to make money by taking it than by earning it, and I guess Italy has her fair share of such gentry. I'll tell you a little secret. I quarreled with my *vetturino* on purpose. His face was a villainous one, and I shouldn't be at all surprised if he were in league with some of the bandits."

"I have heard of such things."

"Some of these *vetturinos*" (Mr. Sanderson was not aware that he should have said *vetturini*) "have brothers or cousins among the bandits and play into their hands. I guess mine was one of that kind."

"Our *vetturino* Pasquale seems to be an honest sort of fellow. I should not suspect him of leading us into a trap."

CHAPTER XXVIII. ITALY SEEN THROUGH AMERICAN SPECTACLES.

Still, Mr. Cunningham reflected that in case of an attack it would be convenient to have such an addition to his party as the American, for Amos Sanderson seemed like a brave man, who would have his wits about him and might render valuable assistance.

"Are you traveling on business, Mr. Sanderson?" asked Bernard.

"No; I've been pretty lucky, and put by a considerable pile, and my friends told me I ought to see Europe. So I left my business in the hands of my brother, and came over last March."

"Are you enjoying it?"

"Well, middling well! I can't get used to their cookery. Why, I haven't seen a doughnut or eaten a plate of pork and beans since I left America."

"I never ate a doughnut in my life," said Walter Cunningham.

"Then you've missed a great deal. I reckon Bernard knows how they taste."

"Oh, I have eaten a great many."

"The fact is, there's no country where you can get such good living as in America," said Amos Sanderson, with patriotic complacency.

Mr. Cunningham smiled, but did not dispute the statement. It is doubtful, however, whether he would have agreed with the man from Nebraska.

Mr. Cunningham was not sorry that he had permitted Amos Sanderson to join his party. The American was singularly ignorant as regards the antiquities of Italy, but he had a shrewd common sense, and his quaint remarks were unintentionally humorous. He always spoke from the point of view of a Western American.

Scattered along the route, or a little distance from it, were the ruins of ancient or medieval buildings, churches, temples, monasteries, and other edifices. Many of these had historical associations. These were quite unknown to Mr. Sanderson, and even where they were explained to him he was not much interested.

"It isn't creditable to Italy," he said one day, "to have so many ruined buildings. They'd ought to be repaired when they're worth it, and when they're not the best way would be to pull 'em down."

"But, my dear sir," said Walter Cunningham, "it would be a great loss to Italy if your advice were followed. Most travelers come here on purpose to see the ruins."

"Then I don't admire their taste."

"And naturally they bring a great deal of money into Italy. If the ruins were repaired or pulled down they wouldn't come, and the people would lose a good deal of their income."

"That's practical. That's what I understand. But it seems foolish, after all. When Chicago burned down, a number of years ago, suppose they kept the ruins instead of building up again, everybody would have laughed at them."

"There were no associations connected with the burned buildings of Chicago."

"What's associations, any way? They won't pay your butcher's bill."

"Surely, Mr. Sanderson, if you could see the house once occupied by Julius Cæsar, for instance, you would be interested?"

"I don't know that I would. Cæsar's dead and gone, and I don't believe any way that he was as great a man as General Jackson."

"I see, Mr. Sanderson, you are hopelessly practical."

"Yes, I'm practical, and I'm proud of it. There's some folks that can write poetry, and leave their families to starve, because they can't earn an honest penny. Why, I knew a man once named John L. Simpkins that could write poetry by the yard. He often writ poems for the Omaha papers, and never got a red cent for it. His folks had to support him, though he was strong and able to work."

"I shouldn't have much respect for a poet like that."

"Nor I. He had a brother, Ephraim Simpkins, that kept a grocery store, and was forehanded. John fell in love with a girl and used to write poetry to her. Everybody thought she'd marry him. But when she found that he didn't earn more'n three dollars a week she up and married his brother, the grocer, and that showed her to be a girl of sense." When the travelers reached Ceprano, Mr. Cunningham suggested making an excursion to Isota and Arpino.

"At Isota," he said, "we shall see the falls of the Liris, and at Arpino we shall see the site of Cicero's villa."

"Who was Cicero?" asked Amos Sanderson.

"Surely you must have heard of Cicero?" said Walter Cunningham, in surprise.

"Well, mebbe I have. What did he do?"

"He was a great orator."

"Did he go to Congress?"

"There was no Congress in Rome. However, he was a consul—that is, one of the two rulers or presidents of Rome."

"I'll bet he couldn't talk as well as Joseph L. Higgins, of Omaha. Why, that man can get up in a meeting and talk you deaf, dumb, and blind. The words will flow like a cataract."

"I don't think Cicero could talk like that," said Bernard, smiling, "but I have read some of his orations, and they were very eloquent."

"I'd like to match Joseph L. Higgins against him. I'd like to hear a specimen of Cicero's speeches and judge for myself."

"Here is a specimen," said Bernard—"the beginning of his speech against Catiline: '*Quousque tandem abutere Catilina patientia nostra*.'"

"Why, that's nothing but gibberish," said Amos, in great disgust. "If Joseph L. Higgins should talk like that the people would fire bad eggs at him."

"I hope you don't object to visiting Cicero's villa, Mr. Sanderson?"

"Oh, no, I'm ready to go wherever you and Bernard do. I suppose I must do the same as other people."

"Your minister at home will be very much interested when you tell him you have visited the house where Cicero lived."

"Do you think he ever heard of Cicero?"

"Oh, yes, all educated men have heard of him."

"Then, I'll take particular notice of it, and describe it to him."

When they reached Cicero's villa, however, Mr. Sanderson was not favorably impressed by it.

"For a president of Rome," he said, "Cicero didn't live very well. Why, for twenty-five dollars month he could get a house in Omaha with all the modern conveniences that would beat this by a long shot.".

"They didn't have modern conveniences at that time, Mr. Sanderson."

"Then, I'm glad I didn't live in them days. Give me the solid comfort of an Omaha house rather than all these marble pillars and ancient fandangos."

"I am inclined to agree with you there, Mr. Sanderson," said the young Englishman, laughing. "I enjoy seeing the remains of ancient edifices, but I think myself I should rather live in a nice English or American house."

"From all I can see," continued the American, "I'd rather be an alderman in Omaha than the biggest man in old Rome. Did they speak English?"

"No; English was not known."

"How did they talk, then?"

"You haven't forgotten the few words Bernard recited from one of Cicero's orations?"

"No."

"That was Latin, the language that was spoken at that time."

"It's the most foolish kind of gibberish I ever heard. There ain't no language like English."

"I prefer it myself to any other."

"I should say so. I heard two Frenchmen jabbering the other day, shrugging their shoulders and waving their arms like windmills. It seemed awfully foolish."

"They think their language much finer than English."

"Then, they must be fools," said Amos Sanderson scornfully. "Why, it made me think of monkeys, by hokey, it did!"

"Where did you receive your education, Mr. Sanderson?" asked Cunningham curiously.

"I went to a deestrict school till I was eleven. Then my father died, and I had to hustle. Didn't have any time to study after that."

"That's the way most of your great men began, Mr. Sanderson."

"I expect they did. Education isn't everything. Why, the boy that stood at the head of my class is a clerk at fifteen dollars a week, while I have an income of fifteen thousand. He's got a lot of book knowledge, but it hasn't done him much good."

This conversation will give some idea of the American's peculiar ways of regarding everything foreign to his own experience. He could not like the Italian ruins, and this was not surprising. The inns on the route which they had selected were uncommonly poor, and the cookery was such as might have been expected from the comfortless surroundings.

One morning, however, Bernard and Mr. Cunningham were agreeably surprised by an excellent dish of ham and eggs.

"Really," said Cunningham. "This seems something like what we get in England."

"Or in America," suggested Amos.

"Yes, or in America."

"They must have an unusually good cook in this inn."

"Thank you, squire," said Sanderson, who seemed very much amused at something. "You do me proud."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I cooked the breakfast."

"You!" exclaimed Cunningham and Bernard, in concert.

"Yes; I went out into the kitchen and scraped acquaintance with one of the understrappers who knows a little English, and I offered a piaster for the privilege of cooking the ham and eggs. They accepted the offer, and gave me what I needed. So here you see the result."

"We missed you during the last half hour, but had no idea you were getting our breakfast Really, Mr. Sanderson, you have quite a genius for cookery."

"I guess I could make a good living as a cook if I had to. Any way, if I couldn't cook better than them furriners I'd be ashamed of myself."

"I hope this isn't the last time we are indebted to your skill."

"Well, I don't think I'd be willing to do it regular. It would be too much like work."

Apart from the poor hotels the travelers enjoyed their leisurely journey. Sometimes they proceeded only fifteen miles a day. The trip was pleasant, but not exciting. The excitement was to come.

CHAPTER XXIX. CAPTURED BY BANDITTI.

Though on joining the party Amos Sanderson had spoken of the possibility of encountering banditti, his companions had scarcely given a thought to the subject since. In the scenes of beauty through which they were passing such a possibility seemed incongruous, and no apprehension was felt. But danger there was, notwithstanding.

They had spent the night at a wretched inn in the town of Melfa, and proceeding on their way, passed on the left the picturesque town of Rocca Secca. About a mile beyond they were startled by the sudden appearance of three dark and swarthy Italians, who, darting from a clump of bushes at the wayside, seized one of the horses by the bridle, and pointing pistols at the party, called out in English in a menacing tone, “Money!”

“Well, I’ll be jiggered,” exclaimed the American, “here’s the banditti sure enough!”

Walter Cunningham looked troubled. It was a very disagreeable interruption.

“Look here, gentlemen bandits,” said Amos, “we haven’t any money to spare. We are only poor travelers. You have made a mistake. There’s some rich gentlemen on the road who will be here about this time to-morrow. You’d better wait for them.”

Of course all this was thrown away upon the Italians, who did not understand English, and frowned impatiently while Mr. Sanderson was speaking.

“Give up your money, and that at once,” said the foremost of the banditti.

He spoke in Italian, but Bernard, who had picked up some familiar phrases, understood and interpreted.

“Really this is very disagreeable,” said Cunningham.

“I wish they understood English. I’d argy a little with them,” added the American.

“I am afraid it wouldn’t do much good, Mr. Sanderson,” said Bernard. “They would probably shoot you for an answer.”

The party looked undecided. By way of hastening a decision one of the bandits came up to the door of the carriage, and holding his pistol in one hand, held out his hat in the other.

“I suppose we must surrender at discretion,” said the young Englishman. “They won’t make much of a haul in my case.”

“Nor in mine,” added Sanderson. “I have about enough money to last me as far as Naples, where I intend to call on my banker.”

“We had better give up what we have. It won’t ruin us.”

The American, who was pugnacious and liked to argue, yielded unwillingly. He and his companions emptied their pockets, and passed the contents over to the black-bearded fellow who acted as collector. He looked at the sum and frowned fiercely as he turned to his companions and spoke a few words to them.

“What does he say?” asked Amos Sanderson.

“I don’t understand,” said Bernard. “He talks too fast for me.”

Here Pasquale broke into the conversation.

“He says it isn’t enough,” he explained.

“But it is all we have. Tell him so.”

Pasquale put the message into Italian, and communicated it to his countrymen.

“Well, what does he say?” asked Walter Cunningham.

“He says it is not enough, and that you can get more.”

“Where can we get it?”

“He says you can get it at your bankers’.”

“Bring the bankers along, and we will ask them.”

“The signor will only anger them, and that will be bad.”

“How much in the name of wonder do they want?”

Pasquale repeated the question.

“They want five thousand scudi more,” he reported.

“How much is a scudi?” asked the American, turning to Cunningham.

“A dollar.”

“And the rascals want five thousand dollars? Jumping Jehoshaphat, haven’t they got cheek! Why do they ask so much of three poor travelers?”

Pasquale repeated the question, and received an answer.

“They say you are not poor, that one of you is a great English milord, and that you are a rich American.”

“I’d like to know how they found out I am rich,” said Amos, disgusted. “Have they seen my tax bill?”

“They say all Americans are rich.”

“That’s where they make a big mistake. I know plenty of men in Omaha that wouldn’t be worth a hundred dollars if their debts were paid. As to my friend here being a rich milord, I don’t know but he is. I am not a milord at all, but only a plain American citizen.”

“I am not a milord,” said Walter Cunningham, smiling. “However, I am aware that in Italy every Englishman who has money enough to travel is supposed to be a lord, just as every American is called rich.”

“They don’t say anything about me,” said Bernard. “I wonder whether they take me to be rich or a milord?”

“They don’t take account of you because you are a boy. They think you are related to Mr. Cunningham or myself.”

“I am willing to be overlooked.”

“I wonder if I could pass myself off for a boy,” said the American humorously.

“Hardly. You have lost too much hair.”

“The gentlemen are getting impatient,” said Pasquale warningly.

“Are they? Well, I guess we shall take our time.”

“It will not be well to provoke them needlessly,” said Walter Cunningham. “You may tell them that we cannot give them five thousand scudi,” he added addressing the *vetturino*.

The bandits held a conference, but it was not prolonged. Evidently they were incensed at the contumacy of their victims.

After the conference, during which the three travelers were very anxious, they spoke to Pasquale, who communicated their decision.

“They say you must either make arrangements to pay the five thousand scudi, or go with them.”

“Where in thunder do they mean to carry us, Pasquale?”

“I don’t know. They would not tell if I asked them.”

“Tell them to take us along, then,” said Mr. Sanderson, leaning back in his seat and nodding obstinately.

Walter Cunningham seemed to acquiesce, and the answer was returned.

Immediately one of the bandits took his seat beside the *vetturino* and took the reins from him. The other two walked beside the carriage. The party turned off from the main road, and entered a lane leading up the hill to the left.

“Well, boys, we’re in for it, I s’pose,” said Amos Sanderson. “It’s too bad, I vow. Such things couldn’t be done in America under the Stars and Stripes.”

“Don’t robberies ever take place in the States?” asked Walter Cunningham.

“Well, perhaps so, but these fellows have not only robbed us of all we have, but are carrying us off because we won’t give them more. I’d just like to wrestle with them one by one. If I didn’t throw them, I’d be jiggered, that’s all.”

“I don’t think they would agree to any such plan. They carry pistols, and probably knives. They are more used to them than to wrestling.”

“No doubt you are right, milord,” said Amos, at which Cunningham laughed. “Where do you think they’re going to carry us?”

“They probably have some secret resort somewhere among these hills. We shall find out before long. What do you think of our adventure, Bernard?”

“I wish I knew how it was going to turn out, Walter,” returned Bernard soberly.

“So do I,” said the American. “I shall have to have a good think. I can’t think unless I have a smoke. Will you have a cigar, Cunningham?”

“No, thank you.”

“Or you, Bernard?”

“No, but it might be a good idea to offer cigars to our new friends.”

“That’s a good idea. I’ll act on it.”

Mr. Sanderson took out a cigar, and, lighting it, put it in his mouth. Next he selected three others, offering the first to the man who sat beside the *vetturino*.

“Will you have a cigar, my friend?” he said.

The bandit took it, and said politely, “*Grazia, signor*.”

“What’s that?”

“He says ‘thank you,’” returned Bernard.

The other bandits accepted the cigars graciously, and were evidently more favorably inclined to the travelers they were escorting.

“I say, Bernard, we look like a friendly family party,” said Amos, who was amused by the situation.

The new driver was in no hurry. He drove in leisurely fashion, partly because their way ran up hill, partly because his two companions were obliged to walk, and could not otherwise keep up.

“I wish I knew where they were taking us,” said Amos Sanderson.

“To a free hotel,” answered Bernard.

“It’ll have to be free, for they haven’t left us any money to pay for that or anything else.”

“Their hotel can’t be much worse than the one we stopped at last night at Melfa.”

“I wish their bill might not be any larger,” said Walter Cunningham.

The cigars were smoked, and then the party subsided into silence. Even the lively American realized that they were in a difficult and perhaps dangerous situation. All three were busy with their own thoughts, Bernard was anxious, but he was also curious, and excited. He remembered to have read a story three years before in which a party had been surprised by banditti somewhere in Sicily. He forgot how the story ended. When he read it he certainly was very far from thinking that some time a similar adventure would happen to himself.

CHAPTER XXX. IN A TRAP.

They proceeded thus for a short distance, when there was a sudden stop. The *vetturino* was ordered to descend from the driver's seat, and he and the bandits had a conference.

Bernard was the only one of the party who understood Italian at all, and he failed to get any idea from the rapid words spoken by the four Italians. What they could be talking about not one of the party could conjecture.

At length the conference seemed to be over. One of the bandits took out a few scudi and handed them to the *vetturino*. The latter looked very much dissatisfied and had the appearance of one who was making a bad bargain.

Then the bandit who had taken the lead came to the door of the carriage.

"Gentlemen, you will descend," he said.

"What's that?" asked the American.

"He says we are to get out of the carriage," interpreted Bernard.

"What's that for, I wonder?"

"Probably we shall find out after a while."

When the three travelers had left the carriage their traveling bags were taken from the *vettura* and placed in their hands.

Then Pasquale mounted the box and drove away. "Where are you going, Pasquale?" asked Walter Cunningham.

"I am obliged to go. The gentlemen will not allow me to go any further."

"Will you inform the authorities of the outrage that has been perpetrated?" said the American. Pasquale shrugged his shoulders.

"It would be as much as my life is worth," he replied.

"I suppose," replied Cunningham, "that the bandits are unwilling to let the *vetturino* know their headquarters. So they have sent him away."

"I believe he is in the plot."

"I don't think so. He seems an honest sort of fellow. But what can he do single handed? Should he betray these men, it would, as he says, be as much as his life is worth."

The captives did not particularly enjoy carrying their baggage, and the American in particular grumbled not a little, but there seemed no help for it.

They ascended a rising ground, and then made a descent to a plain. After an hour's walking, quite spent with fatigue, they reached a large, irregularly built stone house, which was in a state of partial ruin. It was very old, dating back probably to the middle ages.

"I wonder whether that is the bandits' retreat?" said Bernard.

"At any rate, it is an improvement upon the hotel where we spent last night."

The question was soon settled. Through a doorway the bandits led the way into a courtyard, and; crossing it, one of them took out a huge key and opened an oaken door.

He signed to the captives to follow him.

They did so, and found themselves in a spacious room nearly twenty-five feet square. The floor was of stone, and it was nearly bare of furniture. In one corner there was a heap of bedclothes. Along one side was a bench, on which Amos Sanderson seated himself without asking permission.

"I feel about ready to drop," he said. "My valise is as heavy as yours and Bernard's together."

"Have you a dress suit?" asked Bernard, laughing. "If our captors should give a ball in our honor you might need it."

"It doesn't seem like a very gay place. I have never been in jail, but this room carries out my idea of a dungeon cell."

The room was indeed a gloomy one. There were windows, it is true, but so high up that they only admitted a limited amount of sunshine.

"Now, how long are they going to keep us? That is what I would like to know; and what object have they in detaining us?"

"I suppose," said Cunningham, "they will keep us till they get the five thousand scudi."

"Then they'll wait a long time, I reckon."

The bandits left the room, taking care to fasten the door on the outside.

"Boys," said Amos Sanderson, "I don't mind admitting that I have never been more hungry in the whole course of my life."

Bernard and Walter Cunningham agreed that their feelings harmonized with his.

"Suppose we order dinner," said Bernard humorously.

"They will be sure to feed us," observed Cunningham. "They won't kill the goose from which they expect golden eggs."

He proved to be right. In a short time the door was opened, and one of the bandits appeared, bringing a large loaf of black bread, with a small dish of olives, and a supply of macaroni. A quart bottle of sour wine completed the generous collation.

It was not very tempting. It was worse than they had fared at any of the poor inns where they had lodged, yet Amos Sanderson's face brightened when he saw the food, and he did full justice to it.

"I am so hungry that I really believe I could eat shoe leather," he said.

Bernard and Walter Cunningham also ate with zest.

“Now I suppose they will bring in the bill,” said Amos Sanderson grimly.

But when the meal was over they were left to themselves for a time.

“Now that I have eaten I feel sleepy,” said the American. “I suppose that heap of rags in the corner is meant for a bed. I will make one.”

He picked up a narrow mattress, which had been rolled up before it was laid away, and spread it out on the floor. Then he selected a quilt, and, stretching himself out, spread it over him.

“That walk with my valise quite tuckered me out,” he said. “Just call me when the carriage is ready.” Bernard and Walter Cunningham could not so readily throw off the burden of anxiety. They sat together upon the bench and discussed the situation.

“We are in a bad scrape, Bernard,” said his friend, “and I have led you into it.”

“I think we will get out of it after a while,” said Bernard, trying to be cheerful.

“Yes; if absolutely necessary, I will persuade Mr. Sanderson to join me in paying the ransom, though I should hate to let these rascals reap the reward of their knavery.”

They were served with supper at six o’clock. Scarcely was this over when the three bandits entered the room, accompanied by a man of thirty-five or thereabouts, who looked like a clerk or bookkeeper. It was soon evident that he was present as an interpreter.

“Gentlemen,” he said, in tolerable English, “my friends here, who are not acquainted with your language, have asked me to act as interpreter. They wish to confer with you about your release.”

“That’s the talk,” said Amos Sanderson, with alacrity. “A release is what we are anxious about.”

“I may say that you won’t have to stay here any longer than you desire.”

“Then we’ll go now, and thank you for your consideration.”

“Upon conditions.”

Walter Cunningham smiled. He quite understood that there would be conditions.

“I suppose you want us to keep your secret,” said the American. “We’ll do it.”

“That is not quite all,” replied the interpreter. “My friends want to be paid for their trouble.”

“They needn’t have taken any trouble. We didn’t ask them to.”

The interpreter frowned slightly. He began to think Mr. Sanderson “too fresh.”

“You talk too much,” he said curtly. “They have fixed your ransom at five thousand scudi. That is certainly small for such wealthy and illustrious signors.”

“Look here, my friend, five thousand scudi is a great deal of money.”

“Not for millionaires.”

“Who said we were millionaires?”

“All English and American signors are rich.”

“How are we to get the money to pay you? You, or your friends, rather, have taken all we have.”

“You can get some from your bankers in Naples.”

“You seem to have got our affairs down fine. Well, let us go to Naples—you can go with us if you like—and we’ll, see whether our bankers will let us have the money.”

“The signor takes us for fools.”

Here Mr. Cunningham thought it time to interfere, as the American was likely to anger their captors and upset all negotiations.

“Even if we have money,” he said, “it would probably be necessary for us to see our bankers. They do not know us, and might not give the money to a messenger.”

“Just what I said,” put in Mr. Sanderson.

The bandits conferred together, and then the interpreter spoke again.

“To whom does the boy belong?” he asked.

“To me,” answered Walter Cunningham.

“Is he known to your bankers?”

“No. He has never been in Naples.”

“Are you fond of him?”

“Very much so.”

“If he should go to Naples with a letter from you, could he get the money?”

“I am not sure.”

“Then I am not sure about your release.”

“Mr. Sanderson, will you join me in paying the ransom this gentleman has mentioned?”

“No, I’ll be jiggered if I will!”

“Then I am afraid you will have to remain here.”

“If you will pay three thousand scudi we will release you and the boy,” said the interpreter.

“What, and leave me here?” exclaimed the American.

“It is your own fault, signor.”

After considerable conversation a plan was agreed upon, in which Amos Sanderson unwillingly acquiesced.

CHAPTER XXXI. WALTER CUNNINGHAM'S MISSION.

It was decided that Cunningham himself should go to Naples, carrying with him not only his own letter of credit, but Amos Sanderson's as well. He was to draw three thousand scudi on his own account, and two thousand on account of the American, and come back with this sum, on the receipt of which the three would be released.

"If you don't come back," said the interpreter, "this gentleman and the boy will have to take a long journey."

"Where?" asked Amos Sanderson, with some curiosity.

"To the next world," answered the interpreter grimly.

"Mr. Cunningham, you will not fail us?" said Sanderson nervously.

"You may rely on me. What do you take me for?"

"I thought perhaps when you found yourself at liberty you would choose to remain so. You have no particular interest in me."

"Even if that were so, do you think I would leave Bernard exposed to danger?"

"Enough said. I am sure now that you will return. But," continued the American, who was inclined to be suspicious, "perhaps these gentlemen, when they get the money, will keep us and demand another ransom."

This was interpreted to the bandits, who looked angry.

"Tell the signor," said the chief proudly, "that we are men of honor. When we give our word we keep it."

"I have heard that there is honor among thieves," muttered Sanderson.

"What does he say?" asked the chief suspiciously.

"What did you say, signor?" inquired the interpreter.

"I said that you looked like men of honor."

"That is well. You will not be disappointed."

In half an hour Walter Cunningham was on his way to Naples. The door was again bolted on the outside, and Bernard and Amos Sanderson were left to their reflections.

"This ain't exactly cheerful, Bernard," said Amos. "Here we are, free born American citizens, locked up as if we were criminals. It ain't very creditable to any country to have such things going on. I'd like to have a short interview with the king of Italy."

"What would you say to him?"

"What would I say? I'd give him a piece of my mind. I'd tell him that he didn't know how to govern."

"Probably he can't stop this brigandage."

"Then he ought to resign, and let somebody fill his place that could stop it. Do you think if old General Jackson were king that he would let these rascals stop and plunder travelers? However, the time will come when there will be a different government."

"Do you think so, Mr. Sanderson?"

"Yes, I do.".

"When will that be?"

"When Italy is under the Stars and Stripes." Bernard looked surprised.

"Surely you don't think that will ever happen?"

"I am sure of it," said Amos Sanderson, in a positive tone. "It's the manifest destiny of the United States to annex the rest of the world. Within fifty years England will form a part of the great American republic."

"I wonder what Mr. Cunningham would say to that?"

"He would deny it, it's likely. These Britishers are mighty conceited."

"Perhaps he would think it more likely that we should belong to Great Britain."

"Never! England tried to conquer us twice, and she got whipped each time."

"I am glad of one thing," said Bernard, smiling.

"And what is that?"

"That we shan't have to stay here till the Stars and Stripes float over Italy."

"I don't know as I should care to wait, myself. I don't say it will be soon. You may be an old man before it happens. But it's bound to come some day."

"I wonder how soon we may expect Mr. Cunningham back. Do you know how long it will take to go to Naples?"

"No, but it isn't very far. Perhaps we shall see him back in three days."

"I don't expect him so soon. He will have to see the bankers."

"Look here, Bernard," said the American, after a pause, "I have been thinking that we might find some way of escape."

Bernard shook his head.

"What good would it do?" he rejoined. "Mr. Cunningham wouldn't know of it, and he would bring the money. When he does that we shall be released at any rate."

Amos Sanderson was impressed by this consideration, and no longer allowed his mind to dwell on plans of escape.

Meals were served to the captives twice a day. This was probably as often as the bandits ate themselves, for

of all nations Italians are perhaps the least fond of the pleasures of the table, and probably eat scarcely more than half as much as an average Englishman or American. They treated their captives as well as themselves, but this did not satisfy Amos Sanderson, who from his boyhood had been a hearty eater.

"They might as well feed us on bread and water and be done with it," he said. "When I get through eating I am just as hungry as before. It's as bad as prison fare."

"Well, Mr. Sanderson, we are prisoners, are we not?"

"But not convicts. They might remember that we are gentlemen."

Bernard was not as much disturbed by the scanty fare as his companion. True, he would have liked more abundant meals, but he had patience and reflected that the present inconvenience would probably last only a short time. Nevertheless, he and Amos Sanderson counted the days, and every morning said to each other: "One more day is past. It won't be long before Mr. Cunningham returns, and we are released."

"If he does come back," suggested Sanderson.

"Do you doubt that he is honorable?" asked Bernard angrily.

"Well, no; but the temptation is great. If he stays away he will be five thousand scudi in, and be his own master besides."

"Would you yield to any such temptation?"

"No."

"Then you doubt whether he is as honorable as yourself?"

"Don't get riled, Bernard. I can't help thinking how much depends on your friend's return."

"He will return. You needn't be afraid."

But when the sixth morning came, and Mr. Cunningham was still absent, even Bernard became somewhat anxious.

"Well, he isn't here yet," said the American significantly.

"No."

"Do you still have confidence in him?"

"Certainly."

"All I can say, then, is that he isn't hurrying much. Why, it isn't far to Naples. If I had gone I'll guarantee I would have been back within three days."

Bernard did not answer.

"I notice you don't look so chipper as you did."

"No. I have just as much confidence in Mr. Cunningham, but he may have met with some accident."

"Very likely," said Amos Sanderson sarcastically. "Or, he may have fallen into the hands of another gang of bandits on his way here."

"It won't be very lucky for us if he has. That's all I've got to say."

There was another cause for anxiety. The bandits, who, during the first three or four days, had treated their captives politely and even courteously, now wore a different expression. They looked gloomy and frowned ominously when they entered the apartment where their captives were confined. They made no conversation with them, but their looks were hostile. Finally—it was on the morning of the seventh day—they entered the room in a body, accompanied by the interpreter.

They took seats, and the interpreter addressed himself to Mr. Sanderson.

"Signor," he said, "your friend has not returned."

"I know it, and I am blamed sorry for it."

"This is the seventh day since he started."

"Correct, squire. It seemed as much as seven weeks to me."

"Naples is not far off," continued the interpreter significantly.

"That's so."

"Don't you think he has had time to go there and return?"

"Yes, I do," blurted out Sanderson. "I think he's been infernally slow. If you'd only let me go instead of him I'd have been back long ago."

"I see the signor agrees with me. He has been gone much longer than is necessary."

"I think so, too."

"Perhaps there has been some accident," suggested Bernard.

"My friends are not willing to wait much longer," said the interpreter.

"I don't see that we can do anything to hurry him back."

"No, but if he should delay another day it might be very uncomfortable for you and the boy."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that if he is not here by to-morrow we will think that he does not mean to come at all."

"And what then?"

The interpreter shrugged his shoulders.

"Probably the signor can conjecture?"

"You will keep us in captivity then?"

"No, we will give you a passport to another world."

"You will murder us?" inquired Amos Sanderson, horror-struck, for he had a natural love for the world in which his money secured him a liberal share of enjoyment.

“The signor has said it.”

“Why, that would be outrageous!” exclaimed the American, big drops of perspiration forming on his forehead.

“Then your friend should come back with the money.”

“But it won’t be our fault if he does not.”

“True, but it will be very disagreeable for you.”

“Look here, what good is it going to do you to kill me?” asked Amos Sanderson, in an argumentative tone.

“I don’t care to argue. Our friends here wish to prepare you for the worst. If your friend does not appear to-morrow at noon you and the boy must die.”

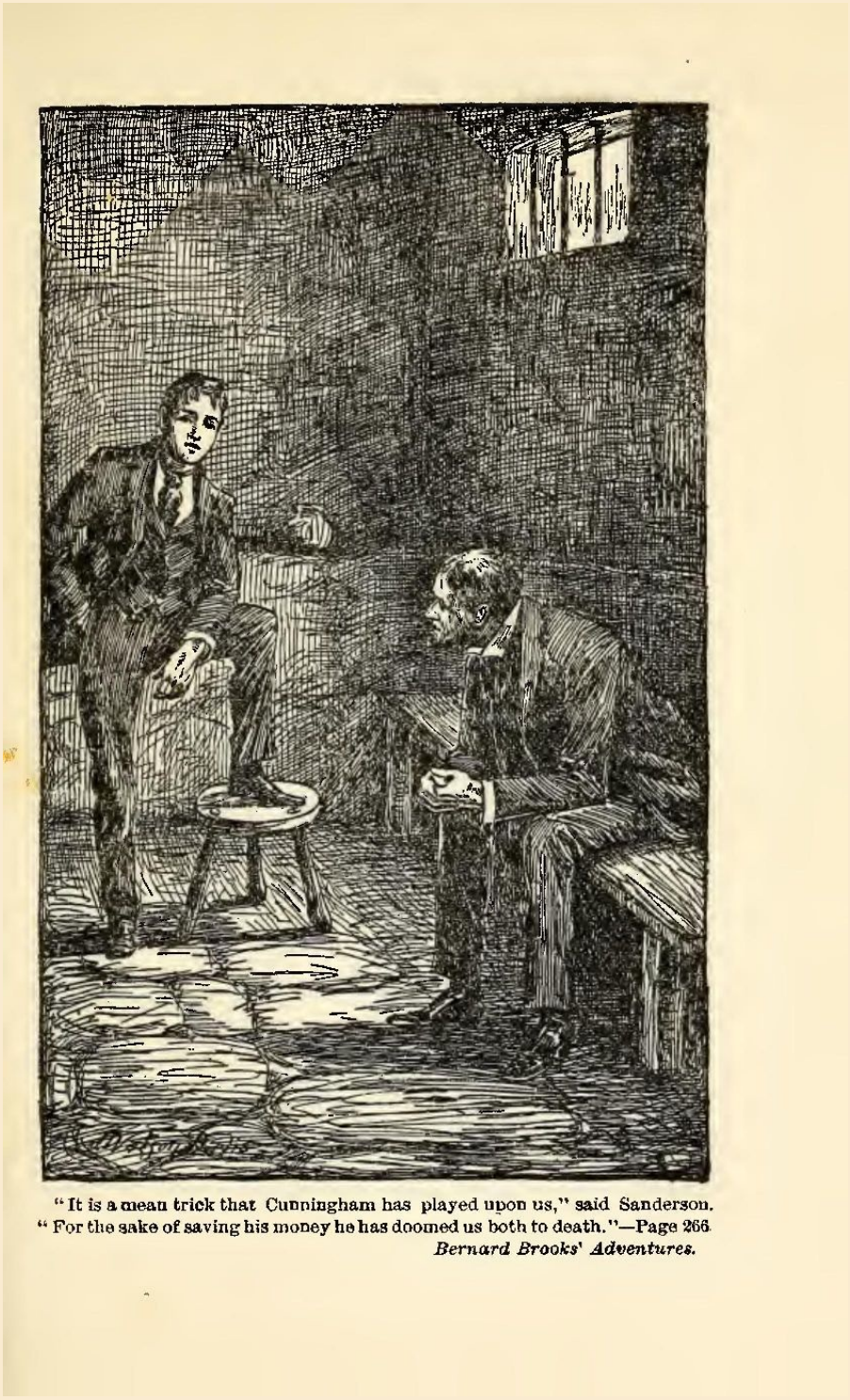
“Do you hear that, Bernard?” asked Sanderson.

“Yes,” answered Bernard, in a low voice.

The boy’s face was pale, and a feeling of awe was in his heart as he felt that the end of his life might be near. He did not feel inclined to argue the matter like Sanderson, but he inwardly prayed for Walter Cunningham’s return.

CHAPTER XXXII. SUSPENSE.

Neither Bernard nor his companion slept much that night. Both realized that it might be the last night of their lives. Bernard felt solemn, but mingled with Sanderson's alarm and anxiety was a feeling of intense anger against Walter Cunningham for his desertion of them.



"It is a mean trick that Cunningham has played upon us," said Sanderson. "For the sake of saving his money he has doomed us both to death."—Page 266.
Bernard Brooks' Adventures.

Original Size

"It is a mean, contemptible trick that Cunningham has played upon us," he said. "For the sake of saving his paltry money he has doomed us both to death."

"I am sure it isn't his fault."

"Oh, you may excuse him if you will. I won't do it. I understand him better than you do."

"I don't feel like disputing you," said Bernard gravely, "but I know him well, and I am sure he would not leave me in the lurch."

They tossed about on their beds and neither one slept. They woke and rose unrefreshed.

Breakfast was brought them, but neither could eat a mouthful.

"I can't eat anything. It would choke me," said Sanderson.

"Walter Cunningham may come yet," said Bernard, but his hope was very faint.

“Then he had better hurry, that’s all I have got to say. I wish I could communicate with the American minister. Our government should send over a fleet of war vessels and blow Naples sky high.”

“You must remember that these men are outlaws—that it is their work, and not the work of the government.”

“Then the government should suppress them. I wish,” Amos Sanderson continued, with a groan, “that I had never set foot in this forsaken country. I should have stood a better chance in a savage land.”

“The signor is not hungry?” said the bandit who had brought in the breakfast. He spoke in Italian, but Bernard understood.

“No,” he answered, “we are not hungry.”

“How can you expect a man to have an appetite when he’s going to be murdered?” growled Sanderson.

The bandit did not understand, and merely looked at him gravely.

“It’s too bad,” went on the American, “to leave the world, when a man has made a fortune and is able to enjoy it. Why, I ought to live twenty-five years yet. I am only forty-seven.”

“And I am not yet seventeen,” said Bernard.

“Yes, it’s hard luck for us both. And to think Cunningham has doomed us to all this! I’d like to wring his neck. If I had gone it would have been different.”

Bernard felt too despondent to defend his friend. In his secret heart he felt that Cunningham ought to have managed somehow to come back and save them from the doom which now awaited them.

“It is half-past eleven,” said the American, drawing out his watch, which, perhaps because it was only of silver, the bandits had not confiscated.

“Then we have half an hour to live. If only Mr. Cunningham would appear in that time!” sighed Bernard.

Slowly the minutes passed, but there was no arrival.

Punctually at twelve o’clock the door opened and the bandits entered, accompanied by the interpreter. There was a stern gravity upon the faces of the three Italians, which caused the hearts of the captives to sink within them.

“Well,” said the interpreter, “your friend has not come.”

“No, confound him!” exclaimed Sanderson fiercely. “I’d like to strangle him.”

“Give him another day,” pleaded Bernard. “He must have met with some delay.”

The interpreter shrugged his shoulders.

“Naples is only fifteen miles away, and it is now the seventh day. Doubtless he is enjoying himself. He has no thought of returning.”

“I have no doubt you are right,” said Amos Sanderson bitterly.

“The signor agrees with me, then.”

“You should have let me go.”

“Would it have been any better?” asked the interpreter gravely.

“Yes. I give you my word it would.”

Then a sudden thought came to Mr. Sanderson.

“Look here,” he said, “you want money, don’t you?”

“That is what we want.”

“Then I’ll tell you what I’ll do. Send me to Naples, and I’ll bring you five thousand scudi. I’ll hurry back as soon as I can.”

“Does the signor take us for fools? We have lost one of our prisoners. Shall we let another go?”

“But you will have the boy left.”

“Well?”

“If I don’t come back you will have him in your power.”

Bernard looked at Amos Sanderson.

He was not especially pleased with his proposal, nor did he feel in the least certain that he would come back. Still, his life would be prolonged, and that would lead to something. Possibly it would give Walter Cunningham time to return.

“I am willing to be left,” he said, “if you choose to let this gentleman go.”

“You’re a trump, Bernard!” said Mr. Sanderson cordially. “I’ll come back, I assure you. You see the boy is willing.”

“But we are not,” said the interpreter decidedly. “Of the three the boy is the last one that we wish to retain.”

“But you want the money, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Then let me go.”

“How will the signor get the money?”

“From my bankers.”

“But you gave your letter of credit to the other signor.”

“So I did,” said Amos Sanderson, with sudden recollection.

“And without your letter of credit you could get no money.”

Amos Sanderson was silent. He had no answer to make. He had still harder thoughts in his heart of Walter Cunningham, whom he accused of the basest treachery.

“Have you any more to say?” asked the interpreter.

“No,” answered Sanderson sullenly.

“And you?” turning to Bernard.

“I ask you to wait another day.”

“We cannot do it. It is clear that Signor Cunningham will not return.”

At a signal one of the bandits went to the door and opened it.

“Follow me,” said the interpreter.

Bernard and Sanderson had been so long confined that they were glad to pass through the portal into the bright sunshine without.

“Now what are you going to do with us?” asked the American.

“You can choose in what way you will die. Shall it be by the knife or the pistol?”

Just then Bernard turned his head. He uttered a joyful exclamation.

“Look!” he said in delight, “there he comes! There is Walter Cunningham.”

A dozen rods away could be seen the figure of their missing companion. He seemed to be extremely fatigued, and his clothing was covered with dust.

“I knew he would come,” said Bernard triumphantly.

CHAPTER XXXIII. RESCUED.

"I'm glad to see you, old man," called out Amos Sanderson joyfully. "I was afraid you wouldn't come. It came near being serious for us."

"Yes, I have come," said Walter Cunningham wearily.

He looked ready to drop, and there was an expression of sadness on his face.

"You seem very tired," said Bernard compassionately.

"Yes, I was afraid I would be too late. Why are you all out here? What is going to happen?"

"I'll tell you," said Sanderson. "These gentlemen were about to kill us. They had just offered us the choice of how to die. But now that you have come with the money——"

"I have no money," said Cunningham in a low voice.

"What!" exclaimed Sanderson, in dismay.

"You have no money?" said the interpreter, in amazement.

"What have you been doing all this time, then?" asked the American.

"I will tell you, but I must sit. I have been walking for hours."

He sat down on a broken branch of a tree and breathed a deep sigh.

The bandits looked puzzled. They did not understand what he had said, but felt that it was something of importance, and they looked to the interpreter for an explanation. The latter said nothing, but waited.

"Listen," began Cunningham; "a week since I left here and went to Naples."

"You did go to Naples, then?"

"Yes, I reached Naples, though it took me rather longer than I anticipated. I went to see the bankers, and ——"

"Got the money?"

"Yes, I got the money."

"Then I don't understand."

"You will soon. I was delayed two days, and this will account in part for the length of time I have been absent. As soon as I could I started on my return."

"With the money?"

"Yes, with the money. But I was waylaid by two men twenty miles back, and robbed of every scudi."

Amos Sanderson groaned.

"Is this true?" asked the interpreter.

"Yes; I wish it were not."

"And you have come here with empty pockets?"

"Yes."

"Why, then, did you come back at all?"

"Because I felt that I could not desert my comrades. I went out as their agent, and it was my duty to report to them, and share their fate if any harm should befall them."

"You hear that, Mr. Sanderson?" said Bernard triumphantly.

"If I had been the messenger this thing would not have happened."

"Will you explain to these gentlemen what I have said?" said Cunningham to the interpreter.

The latter did so, and the result was scowling looks on the swarthy faces of the three Italians. The three captives awaited in silence the result of their conference. They had not to wait long.

"I am sorry, gentlemen," said the interpreter, "for what is going to happen. My friends here are deeply disappointed."

"It is not our fault," said Amos Sanderson.

"They have stated the terms of release. They required five thousand scudi, and they are not forthcoming. Under the circumstances they have no choice but to doom you all to death."

It was a terrible sentence, and the hearts of the three captives quailed.

"At least spare the boy—spare Bernard," said Walter Cunningham.

"We can make no exception," replied the interpreter, after a brief conference with the bandits. "All we can do is to give you the choice of the knife or the pistol."

"I choose the pistol," said the Englishman.

"Look here, you are making fools of yourselves," cried Amos Sanderson. "Send me to Naples, and I will bring back the money. I see that you are in earnest, and I will keep my word."

Again there was a whispered conference. Then the interpreter spoke again.

"My friends do not trust you," he said. "You would not return."

Sanderson wished to argue the question, but the interpreter silenced him by an imperative gesture.

"No words of yours can alter our purpose," he said. "We have been more lenient with you than with most of our prisoners. We have given you seven days to get the money for your ransom, and it is not here. We have no time to waste. What is to be done must be done quickly."

"There seems no help for it, Bernard," said the Englishman.

Within five minutes the three captives, with hands tied, were bound to trees, and with blanched faces awaited the fatal volley from the three bandits, who stationed themselves at the distance of twenty paces fronting them.

Bernard gave himself up for lost when something unexpected happened. He heard shots, and for the moment thought they came from the pistols of their intended murderers. But to his astonishment it was the robber opposite him who fell. Another shot and another and the other two fell, fatally wounded. Then a party of soldiers came dashing forward, accompanied by a man whose face looked familiar to Bernard.

“Mr. Penrose!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, Bernard, it is I. I was robbed by these men a month since. I tracked them, and I have at last brought them to justice.”

“You’re a trump, squire!” said Amos Sanderson. “I never felt so relieved in the whole course of my life. Come and untie me.”

William Penrose took a jack-knife from his pocket, but he untied Bernard first.

“You have the prior claim on me,” he said.

It was found that two of the bandits were dead.

The third was taken by the soldiers, and carried on an extemporized litter to the nearest town, where he was imprisoned, but later tried and sentenced to be executed.

Overjoyed at their unexpected rescue from peril, the three travelers made the best of their way to Naples, where, despite the loss of five thousand scudi, Walter Cunningham and Amos Sanderson enjoyed themselves by trips to Mt. Vesuvius, Pompeii, and a ride to Sorrento along the shores of the magnificent Bay of Naples.

“Have you consoled yourself for the loss of two thousand scudi?” asked Bernard, addressing himself to the American, as they sat on a balcony in their Sorrento hotel, looking out upon the moonlit waters of the famous sea.

“Yes,” answered Mr. Sanderson. “Now that the three rascals who captured us and nearly put us to death have met the same fate themselves, I don’t make any account of the money. Thank Providence, I have plenty, left.”

“That’s the right way to look upon it,” said Walter Cunningham.

“I am the only one who has lost nothing,” said Bernard. “I have the best reason to be satisfied.” The three still remained together. They had been companions in misfortune, and this was a tie that still held them. Yet, truth to tell, neither Bernard nor his English friend enjoyed the society of the American, who was hardly congenial, and had some objectionable qualities.

“I have no prejudice against your countrymen,” said Mr. Cunningham to Bernard. “I have known many cultivated and refined Americans, whose society I enjoyed, but they differed essentially from Mr. Sanderson. I own I wish he would leave us.”

“He seems determined to stand by us,” said Bernard.

“Yes, so it seems.”

“There is one chance of separating from him. He has made up his mind to go to Sicily and wants us to go with him.”

“We can refuse. But in that case he may give up his plan.”

“I don’t think he will. He tells me he has always wanted to go to Sicily.”

“He may stand a chance of being again captured by banditti. I understand that Sicily is more infested with them than the mainland.”

“I earnestly hope not. I don’t care especially for Mr. Sanderson, but I think he has had his share of that kind of peril.”

That evening Mr. Sanderson broached the subject, and strongly urged his two companions to start with him for Palermo.

“We shall have to disappoint you,” said Walter Cunningham. “We have other plans.”

“But it won’t take long, and I surmise you have no important business to keep you from going.”

The next day, however, Mr. Cunningham was provided with an excuse. He received a letter from England informing him that an uncle, his mother’s brother, was dying, and wished to see him.

“Are you ready to go back to England with me at once, Bernard?” he said.

“I shall be glad to do so.”

“Then pack your luggage, and we will go.”

In London Bernard received a letter from America that interested him.

CHAPTER XXXIV. NAT BARCLAY'S LETTER.

The day after Bernard reached London he received at his old address a letter bearing the familiar postmark of Doncaster. It will be remembered that it was at Doncaster our story opened, and it was there that the boarding-school of Professor Ezekiel Snowdon was located. Bernard's face lighted up with pleasure, for in the superscription he recognized the handwriting of his friend Nat Barclay.

He tore open the envelope and read the letter quickly. It ran thus:

"Dear Bernard:

"I write this with great anxiety, for I don't know if you are living or dead. Yesterday I met Septimus Snowdon, who is the same disagreeable bully as ever, and he said, 'Well, I have some news for you about your friend Bernard Brooks.' I was rather surprised at this, for I didn't suppose you would be very likely to write to him. Still I asked, 'Have you heard from him?' 'No,' he answered disdainfully. 'I wouldn't have any correspondence with a fellow like him. But he isn't likely to write any more letters.' 'Why not?' I asked. 'Because he's dead, that's why,' snapped Septimus, and I saw that he seemed pleased. 'I don't believe it,' I returned. 'Where do you get your information?' 'You'll have to believe it,' he said. 'Pa received a letter from his guardian, Mr. Cornelius McCracken, of New York, saying that his death had been reported to him by the gentleman in whose company he went to Europe. I believe he wrote that he had met with an accident in Marseilles.' Now I had a good deal of doubt about the correctness of this statement, for I knew from your own letters that you parted with Professor Puffer in London, and were not likely to be in Marseilles with him. I asked Septimus some further questions, but he seemed to have no more information.

"'Well,' said Septimus sneeringly, 'are you going to put on mourning for your great friend Bernard?' 'I might,' I answered, 'if I believed him to be dead, but I don't believe it.'

"'You'll never see him again,' said Septimus positively.

"Now, Bernard, though I don't believe the story, I am anxious, and if you are alive I hope you will write me again and tell me. I won't believe it till I have your own authority. That sounds like a bull, doesn't it? But I'll go on and write as if you were still alive. You may wish to know something about the school. To the best of my belief it is far from prosperous. There are very few scholars, and those don't look as if their parents or guardians paid much for them. Then the professor himself is looking very shabby and seedy. I don't believe he has had a new coat for over a year. Septimus looks better. There is a pupil in the school about his size, and I really believe that Septimus is wearing his clothes. I hear that old Snowdon gave the boy a dollar and a half for his best suit. The boy was glad to sell it in order to get a little pocket money. I know how he spent a part of it. He went to the baker's in the village and bought a supply of cakes and doughnuts, of which he stood in need, for I hear that the seminary table, never very good, is now poorer than ever.

"When are you coming back to America? I long to see you. If you do come you must be sure to come out to Doncaster and see

"Your affectionate friend,

"Nat Barclay."

Bernard showed his letter to Mr. Cunningham.

"Would you like to go to America, Bernard?" he asked.

"I don't want to leave you, sir."

"But suppose I should go, too?"

"Then I should be delighted to go."

"I cannot go while my uncle's life is in doubt, but when I am released from attendance upon him I shall have nothing to hinder me."

That day week the uncle died. After the funeral Mr. Cunningham said, "Well, Bernard, I have not forgotten the promise I made you. We will go to the office of the Cunard steamers, and see whether we can engage passage by the Etruria, which is the first one to sail."

It was found that one of the best staterooms on the palatial steamer was still disengaged. Walter Cunningham lost no time in securing it, and the two embarked on the following Saturday.

There is no occasion to dwell upon the voyage. The weather was good, and the Etruria made one of the quick passages for which she is famous.

When Bernard steamed into port, and saw the familiar roofs and spires of the great American city, his heart thrilled within him, and he felt that warm glow which the sight of home is apt to enkindle.

CHAPTER XXXV. PROFESSOR PUFFER'S DECLINE AND FALL.

"Bernard," said Walter Cunningham, as they sat together in a handsome apartment at the Brevoort House, "I feel that I have not done as well by you as I should."

"You have been a kind friend to me, Mr. Cunningham. I have lacked for nothing since I have been with you. I think you do yourself injustice."

"That is true, but suppose anything should happen to me, how would you fare?"

"We won't think of that, Walter. You are a young man. You are likely to live for many years."

"So I hope," said the young Englishman, smiling. "Life is sweet to me, and I have something to live for, especially now that I have you. But I feel that I ought to make a provision for you, to place your future beyond a contingency."

Bernard did not reply. He waited for Mr. Cunningham to finish what he had to say.

"I shall therefore go to my banker's this morning, and turn over to you the sum of fifteen thousand dollars. It is not all I intend to do for you, but it will prevent your experiencing inconvenience in the event of any sudden accident to me."

"Fifteen thousand dollars!" repeated Bernard, in astonishment. "Why, that will make me rich. How can I thank you for your great kindness?"

"I look upon you as a brother, Bernard. With the affection I feel for you I could not allow you to run the risk of poverty and destitution. To be sure, you are young and a boy of capacity, but for a time you might be in trouble."

That very morning Mr. Cunningham took Bernard to the office of his banker in Wall Street, and transferred the sum he had mentioned to Bernard's account.

"I advise you to keep your money for the present in the hands of my good friends here, unless you should prefer to deposit it with your old guardian, Mr. McCracken."

"I would not trust Mr. McCracken," said Bernard, "but I should like before I leave the city to pay him a visit."

Walking down Broadway in the afternoon Bernard was treated to a surprise. Marching in front of him with a slow and weary step was a thick-set man of over fifty, sandwiched between two advertising boards, bearing in large capitals these words:

"USE SWEETLAND'S PILLS."

There was something familiar in the figure, but from a rear view Bernard could not immediately place it. However, the man presently turned partly round, showing his side face, and Bernard was startled by a sudden recognition.

It was Professor Puffer!

Yes, the celebrated professor, author (by his own account) of several large and elaborate works on the antiquities of the old world, had actually sunk so low as to become a sandwich man, earning the miserable pittance of fifty cents a day.

Bernard at once in some excitement imparted his astonishing discovery to his companion.

"What! Is that your Professor Puffer?" asked Cunningham in wonder. "How have the mighty fallen!"

"He was never so mighty as I supposed," said Bernard. "I feel quite sure that he was a humbug and no professor at all."

"I am inclined to agree with you. I don't think any real professor would ever be reduced to such shifts as this. What are you going to do? Shall you make yourself known to your old companion?"

"I think I would like to do so," said Bernard thoughtfully. "He may be able to give me some information, concerning my guardian, for instance that may be of service to me."

"Perhaps you are right. At any rate, it will do no harm, unless you are afraid that the professor will try to get you into his power again."

Bernard smiled as he regarded with complacency his own well knit figure—he was three inches taller than when he had been a fellow passenger of the professor on the ship Vesta.

"If he should try to get me into his power, will you stand by me, Mr. Cunningham?" he said.

"Yes; but I fancy that you are quite able to fight your own battles."

Bernard stepped forward until he was in a line with Professor Puffer. Then in a clear, distinct voice, he said, "Professor Puffer!"

The sandwich man turned quickly, and regarded Bernard with surprise. The latter had not only grown, but he was much better dressed than when the professor parted with him.

"Who are you?" he demanded, looking bewildered.

"Don't you remember your old companion on the Vesta?"

"Bernard Brooks!" ejaculated Professor Puffer in deep amazement.

CHAPTER XXXVI. PROFESSOR PUFFER BECOMES AN ALLY.

Professor Puffer let his eye glide slowly over Bernard's figure. He noted not only his increase in size, but his neat dress, and bright and handsome face.

"How long have you been in America?" he asked abruptly.

"I arrived yesterday by the Etruria."

"You seem well and prosperous," went on Puffer, with an envious sigh.

"Yes; I have been fortunate."

"It is wonderful. You are elegantly dressed. Yet I left you destitute, or rather you left me, without a penny to fall back upon."

"That is true, Professor Puffer."

"It was a reckless step to take."

"It may have been, but you must admit that I had good reasons for taking the step," said Bernard significantly.

"What are you doing? Are you employed?" asked the professor, without comment.

"I am, and I am not. I am nominally private secretary to my kind friend, Mr. Walter Cunningham," said Bernard, with a look at that gentleman.

"The gentleman who advertised in London for a traveling companion?"

"The same."

"I sought the position. I should have been much better qualified than you," said the professor peevishly.

"You don't appear to have prospered," rejoined Bernard.

"No. Is it not disgraceful that a man of my attainments should fill this ignoble position?" said Professor Puffer bitterly.

"Couldn't you get anything better to do?"

"If I could you would not have found me traveling through the streets as a sandwich man. Up and down I walk through the livelong day, and how much do you think I receive for my degrading labors?"

"I suppose it is not much."

"Fifty cents a day," answered the professor bitterly.

"And you live on that?"

"Don't live on it I starve."

"But I don't see how you became so reduced. Was not Cornelius McCracken, my old guardian, a friend of yours?"

"McCracken! The selfish beast! Don't name him to me. I can't bear to hear his name spoken."

"Has he treated you badly?" asked Bernard.

"Has he not? I was his confidential agent. He selected me to do his dirty work. He placed you under my care, having certain interests of his own to serve."

"I have always wondered what his object could have been?"

As Bernard spoke he fixed his eyes eagerly upon the face of his old companion. He felt persuaded that Professor Puffer could tell him what he was very anxious to know. He meant before the interview was over to obtain from him light as to his relations with Mr. McCracken.

"Have you see him lately? Won't he do anything for you?" he continued.

"Listen! When I returned from Europe, two months since, I called upon him. I had previously communicated with him by letter. He asked after you. I told him that you were dead."

"Why did you tell him that?"

"Because it was what he wished to know."

"Did he wish me to die?" asked Bernard, startled, but not wholly surprised.

"He did. In sending you to Europe with me, he wished to get rid of you, and I had instructions to that effect."

"That accounts for your trying to throw me overboard that night on the Vesta."

"Yes. I was endeavoring to carry out my instructions."

"Were the instructions oral or written?"

"Written. I had a letter in McCracken's own handwriting."

"Don't that give you a hold upon him?"

"It would if I had kept it, but unfortunately I lost it on the steamer, I think."

Bernard had the letter in his trunk at the hotel. He had always preserved it, thinking that some time he might find a use for it. Of course the professor didn't know this.

"I reported your death," continued Puffer. "I said you had been run over and fatally injured in Marseilles. I could see how much satisfaction this news afforded Mr. McCracken. He ascertained by cunning questions that I didn't have his letter in my possession, and then he became cool and indifferent. 'I am sorry for the boy's death,' he said. 'He was young to die. I think you must have been careless.' 'I was only carrying out your instructions,' I said. 'What do you mean?' he retorted. 'I committed him to your charge. If I gave you any instructions, produce them.'

"This I couldn't do, and he knew it.

“I represented to him that I was very poor, and needed help.

“‘Really,’ he said, ‘that is nothing to me.’

“‘Can’t you give me employment?’ I asked.

“‘I have no places vacant,’ he answered coldly.

“‘What am I to do?’ I asked. ‘I have no money.’

“‘Surely you don’t expect me to support you,’ he said impatiently. ‘You have no claim upon me.’

“Then I bethought myself of a clever scheme.

“‘Surely,’ I said, ‘you will repay me the sum I paid out for the boy’s funeral.’

“He reflected a moment, and then answered in the affirmative.

“‘Yes,’ he said, ‘if you will give me a receipt in due form.’

“I went out of the office with one hundred dollars in my pocket.”

“It was certainly a lucky thought,” said Bernard, smiling; “considering that my funeral expenses are paid, I feel unusually full of life. However, I am glad you got the money.”

“It is all gone now!” went on Puffer mournfully. “I lived perhaps too freely while it lasted. When it was gone I called once more at Mr. McCracken’s office, and was literally kicked out. What do you think of that?”

Hitherto Walter Cunningham had stood by in silence, listening to the conversation between Bernard and his quondam guardian. Now he came forward with a question.

“Can you tell me, Professor Puffer,” he asked, “why Mr. McCracken wishes to get rid of Bernard?”

“The answer is an easy one. He has in his possession ten thousand dollars intrusted to him by Bernard’s father. It must amount to a good deal more now from the interest that has accrued.”

“What proof can you give of this? Did he ever write to you to that effect?”

“No; but he admitted it to me in conversation.”

“I am disposed to get this back from him. Are you willing to help me?”

“I wish I could,” said Puffer earnestly. “I owe him a grudge. That would be a welcome revenge. But I am afraid there is no chance. If only I had that letter of instructions I could prove at any rate that he wanted me to get rid of him.”

“That would give us a hold on him, and with the help of it I think we could bring him to terms.”

“But unfortunately I have lost the letter,” continued the professor regretfully.

“Professor Puffer,” said Bernard, “that letter is still in existence.”

“Is it?” asked Puffer eagerly. “Where is it?”

“I have it in my trunk. I found it on the floor of your stateroom on the Vesta. It is not quite complete, but there is enough in it with your help to fasten a very serious charge upon Mr. McCracken.”

“Good! good! I am thankful,” said the professor. “I will go with you, and beard him in his den. He shall repent the way in which he has treated me. But you will have to wait till evening. I shall not be through with my work till six o’clock.”

“You can leave it now,” said Cunningham. “I am not at all sure that you are entitled to the title of professor, but at all events you are fit for something better than a sandwich man. I will see that you are no longer reduced to such humble work.”

“I shall be thankful,” said Ezra Puffer, “deeply thankful if you will find me a better position. Sometimes I meet a man whom I knew in better days, and then I am inexpressibly mortified to be seen in such a position.”

“I think I can promise you some more congenial employment. Do you know where the Brevoort House is?”

“Yes.”

“Come round there at ten o’clock to-morrow morning, and call for me. You remember my name?”

“Yes; you are Mr. Cunningham.”

“Do you think,” asked Puffer, “that you could spare me half a dollar now? I feel quite hungry, and I should like to make a good meal.”

“Certainly. Here are five dollars. Now, be sure to call at the Brevoort House to-morrow morning.”

“Most certainly I will,” said the professor, eying the bank note he had just received with a joyful glance. “I should be a fool if I didn’t. Through you and Bernard, I hope to have another chance of living respectably. Now I must go and surrender this badge of my servitude,” and he glanced disdainfully at the two placards which he had already removed from their position behind and in front. “I hope, Bernard, you will never be subjected to such humiliation.”

“I hardly think it likely,” said Walter Cunningham, “especially if through you he obtains possession of his father’s money.”

“I will do my best, sir. I think, Cornelius McCracken,” he continued, snapping his fingers at an imaginary form, “that we shall be too much for you at last. You will be sorry that you did not treat me better.”

Professor Puffer disappeared rapidly round the corner of Houston Street, and Bernard and Walter Cunningham walked up town to their hotel.

“Things seem to be turning in your favor, Bernard,” said his companion. “The money left by your father will not be of so much consequence to you now, but it will be a satisfaction to wrest it from the hands of your faithless guardian. Professor Puffer will prove to be a good friend to you after all.”

CHAPTER XXXVII. A BAD DAY FOR MR. MCCRACKEN.

Cornelius McCracken sat in his office in a complacent mood. He had just closed a successful speculation in Wall Street, by which he had cleared a few hundred dollars. He was not a rich man for the city, and this was of some consequence to him.

Then his mind could not help reverting to Bernard and the accident which had removed him from his path and averted all danger of restitution of the boy's fortune. Truly all seemed favorable.

He heard a slight noise at the door, and lifting his eyes recognized with a scowl his old ally and confederate, Professor Puffer.

"What do you want here?" he demanded roughly. "I have no time for such as you."

Professor Puffer entered the room, nevertheless, and sank into a chair.

"Mr. McCracken," he said, "I am very unfortunate. I am reduced to the position of a sandwich man. I who have occupied the position of a gentleman."

"What is that to me? It is an honest way of earning your living. You are lucky to find work at all."

"I have given it up. I can't stand it. Besides, I met yesterday afternoon a person whom I had known in happier and more prosperous days. I felt as if I should sink through the sidewalk."

"I see—you are poor and proud," sneered McCracken. "It is out of place in a man like you."

"Mr. McCracken, can't you help me? I have served you faithfully in a matter you know of."

"And you have been paid."

"But think how you have benefited. By the boy's death you have fallen heir to his fortune, and——"

"Who told you he had a fortune?"

"You admitted it yourself in a conversation."

"Well, it was very small—a few hundred dollars."

"On that point I will not speak. Even admitting it to be only that, can't you spare me a few dollars?"

"No, I can't. Get out of my office!"

"Mr. McCracken," said Puffer, changing his tone, "you have thrown me over because you think you don't need me any more. Suppose now—only suppose—that a mistake had been made—that Bernard was not dead after all."

"What do you mean?" demanded the merchant nervously. "You told me he was dead."

"Suppose I was mistaken."

"Then you deceived me basely. But you are only trying to play a trick on me. You have mistaken your man. Again I order you to leave my office."

"I will do so, but I shall return."

"If you do, you will be kicked out."

Professor Puffer did not seem alarmed. He went out, closing the door behind him, and immediately afterwards Bernard opened it and went in.

"Didn't I tell you not to come back?" exclaimed McCracken angrily.

"No," answered a young, fresh voice.

Mr. McCracken turned quickly and there stood Bernard Brooks. He had grown considerably; he was much improved in dress; but Mr. McCracken recognized him.

"I see you know me," said Bernard.

"No, I don't."

"I think you do. I am Bernard Brooks."

"I thought you were dead."

"It was a mistake."

"I am not prepared to admit your identity. You don't look like Bernard Brooks."

"I shall have no difficulty in proving myself to be your former ward.".

"Well, what do you want? Do you wish to put yourself under my charge? In that case I will send you to Professor Snowdon."

"No, thank you. I can take care of myself."

"I am willing. In that case I will bid you good morning. I am busy," and Mr. McCracken made a motion to return to his writing.

"You asked me if I had any business with you. I have," continued Bernard. "I wish you to give up the fortune my father left in your charge for me."

"You lie! There was no such fortune. Some one has been deceiving you. Perhaps it is that arrant liar, Ezra Puffer."

"Whom you hired to put me out of the way."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. McCracken hoarsely,

"I have in my possession a letter which you wrote to him, from which it will be easy to prove your attempted crime and the motive."

"There is no such letter. I never wrote one of that tenor."

"It is in your handwriting."

"Show it to me, then."

“I can’t. It is in the hands of my lawyer.”

“You have dared to put it into the hands of a lawyer?”

“I felt that it was my best course.”

Cornelius McCracken’s countenance worked convulsively. He was beginning to be afraid of his ward.

“There was a matter of five hundred dollars,” he admitted reluctantly, “left over after my disbursements for you. I will at my leisure look over my accounts, and if there is any money due you, you shall have it.”

“I have made the acquaintance of Mr. Oliver Franklin, an old friend of my father. He tells a very different story. He says my father left at least ten thousand dollars.”

“Stuff and nonsense! You must be crazy.”

“I won’t discuss the question with you, Mr. McCracken. I have put the matter into the hands of a lawyer, who will see you about the matter. I only wished to give you notice what I intended doing. Good morning.”

Bernard left the office, leaving his guardian in no enviable state of mind. Without dwelling on the legal steps taken, it is enough to say that Mr. McCracken was ultimately compelled to disgorge twelve thousand dollars to his former ward.

Bernard and his English friend succeeded in obtaining for Professor Puffer a position as doorkeeper, in an art museum, which, on the whole, he preferred to being a sandwich man.

Before this law matter was terminated Bernard made up his mind to visit Doncaster and see his old friend and teacher, Professor Ezekiel Snowdon.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. CONCLUSION.

When Bernard left the cars and stepped on the platform of the Doncaster station, he saw Freedom Wentworth preparing to drive away on a store wagon. “Give me a ride, Freed?” said Bernard.

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

“The same, Freed. Shall I have the ride?”

“Yes, jump up. Why, you’re looking fine. Where do you want to go?”

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

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

“Not much!”

“What are you doing? Are you working?”

“I am living on my money.”

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

“But I am really. I have fifteen thousand dollars.”

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

“I will tell you later. But who is that ahead of us? Isn’t it Nat Barclay?”

“Yes.”

“Nat!” called out Bernard.

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

When they reached the Snowdon Institute Bernard jumped down.

“I’ll see you later, Nat,” he said.

“Come round to dinner, Bernard.”

“I will.”

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

“Have you business with me, young gentleman?” he said respectfully, noticing Bernard’s handsome attire.

“You don’t seem to recognize me, professor.”

“Have I seen you before?”,

“I am Bernard Brooks.”

“Is it possible! You—you seem to be prosperous.”

“Yes, Professor Snowdon, the world has used me fairly well of late.”

“I am so glad to hear it,” said the tutor gushingly. “I always thought that you’d get along in business. You are in business, aren’t you?”

“To a certain extent, yes,” replied Bernard. “I have fallen heir to some fifteen thousand dollars.”

“You don’t tell me! Dear me, how fortunate! Do you wish to return to the institute?”

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

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

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

“A little harmless joke. I didn’t mean it. Here, Septimus!”

Septimus came from the street, eying Bernard with curiosity.

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

“How do you do, Bernard?” said Septimus, looking surprised.

“Very well, thank you!”

“Why, you’re rigged out in tip-top style!” went on Septimus, enviously.

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

“Is that straight?” asked Septimus.

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

“Won’t you come back here to live?” asked Septimus. “We’ll have awful good times together.”

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

“Yes, I did,” affirmed Septimus.

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

“May I come to visit you?” asked Septimus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE END.

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