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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MY UNCLE FLORIMOND ***

MY UNCLE FLORIMOND

By Sidney Luska (Henry Harland)

Author of The Yoke of the Thorah and Others

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THE FRENCH CLASS. *Page 196.*

MY UNCLE FLORIMOND

BY

SIDNEY LUSKA
(HENRY HARLAND)

Author of
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and others

BOSTON
D LOTHROP COMPANY
FRANKLIN AND HAWLEY STREETS

TO MY GRANDMOTHER

A. L. H.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF OLD

NORWICH DAYS

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CHAPTER I.—THE NEPHEW OF A MARQUIS.

Both of my parents died while I was still a baby; and I passed my childhood at the home of my father's mother in Norwich Town—which lies upon the left bank of the river Yantic, some three miles to the north of Norwich City, in Eastern Connecticut.

My father's mother, my dear old grandmother, was a French lady by birth; and her maiden name had been quite an imposing one—Aurore Aline Raymonde Marie Antoinette de la Bourbonnaye. But in 1820, when she was nineteen years old, my grandfather had persuaded her to change it for plain and simple Mrs. Brace; from which it would seem that my grandfather must have been a remarkably persuasive man. At that time she lived in Paris with her father and mother, who were very lofty, aristocratic people—the Marquis and Marquise de la Bourbonnaye. But after her marriage she followed her husband across the ocean to his home in Connecticut, where in 1835 he died, and where she had remained ever since. She had had two children: my father, Edward, whom the rebels shot at the Battle of Bull Run in July, 1861, and my father's elder brother, my Uncle Peter, who had never married, and who was the man of our house in Norwich.

The neighbors called my Uncle Peter Square, because he was a lawyer. Some of them called him Jedge, because he had once been a Justice of the Peace. Between him and me no love was lost. A stern, cold, frowning man, tall and dark, with straight black hair, a lean, smooth-shaven face, thin lips, hard black eyes, and bushy black eyebrows that grew together over his nose making him look false and cruel, he inspired in me an exceeding awe, and not one atom of affection. I was indeed so afraid of him that at the mere sound of his voice my heart would sink into my boots, and my whole skin turn goose-flesh. When I had to pass the door of his room, if he was in, I always quickened my pace and went on tiptoe, half expecting that he might dart out and seize upon me; if he was absent, I would stop and peek in through the keyhole, with the fascinated terror of one gazing into an ogre's den. And, oh me! what an agony of fear I had to suffer three times every day, seated at meals with him. If I so much as spoke a single word, except to answer a question, he would scowl upon me savagely, and growl out, “Children should be seen and not heard.” After he had helped my grandmother, he would demand in the crossest tone you can imagine, “Gregory, do you want a piece of meat?” Then I would draw a deep breath, clinch my fists, muster my utmost courage, and, scarcely louder than a whisper, stammer, “Ye-es, sir, if you p-please.” It would have come much more easily to say, “No, I thank you, sir,”—only I was so very hungry. But not once, in all the years I spent at Norwich, not once did I dare to ask for more. So I often left the table with my appetite not half satisfied, and would have to visit the kitchen between meals, and beg a supplementary morsel from Julia, our cook.

Uncle Peter, for his part, took hardly any notice whatever of me, unless it was to give me a gruff word of command—like “Leave the room,” “Go to bed,” “Hold your tongue,”—or worse still a scolding, or worst of all a whipping. For the latter purpose he employed a flexible rattan cane, with a curiously twisted handle. It buzzed like a hornet as it flew cutting through the air; and then, when it had reached its objective point—mercy, how it stung! I fancied that whipping me afforded him a great deal of enjoyment. Anyhow, he whipped me very often, and on the very slightest provocation: if I happened to be a few minutes behindhand at breakfast, for example, or if I did not have my hair nicely brushed and parted when I appeared at dinner. And if I cried, he would whip all the harder, saying, “I'll give you something to cry about,” so that in the end I learned to stand the most unmerciful flogging with never so much as a tear or a sob. Instead of crying, I would bite my lips, and drive my fingernails into the palms of my hands until they bled. Why, one day, I remember, I was standing in the dining-room, drinking a glass of water, when suddenly I heard his footstep behind me; and it startled me so that I let the tumbler drop from my grasp to the floor, where it broke, spilling the water over the carpet. “You clumsy jackanapes,” he cried; “come up-stairs with me, and I'll show you how to break tumblers.” He seized hold of my ear, and, pinching and tugging at it, led me up-stairs to his room. There he belabored me so vigorously with that rattan cane of his that I was stiff and lame for two days afterward. Well, I dare say that sometimes I merited my Uncle Peter's whippings richly; but I do believe that in the majority of cases when he whipped me, moral suasion would have answered quite as well, or even better. “Spare the rod and spoil the child” was one of his fundamental principles of life.

Happily, however, except at meal hours, my Uncle Peter was seldom in the house. He had an office at the Landing—that was the name Norwich City went by in Norwich Town—and thither daily after breakfast and again after dinner, he betook himself. After supper he would go out to spend the evening—where or how I never knew, though I often wondered; but all day Sunday he would stay at home, shut up in his room; and all day Sunday, therefore, I was careful to keep as still as a mouse.

He did not in the least take after his mother, my grandmother; for she, I verily believe, of all sweet and gentle ladies was the sweetest and the gentlest. It is now more than sixteen years since she died; yet, as I think of her now, my heart swells, my eyes fill with tears, and I can see her as vividly before me as though we had parted but yesterday: a little old body, in a glistening black silk dress, with her snowy hair drawn in a tall puff upward from her forehead, and her kind face illuminated by a pair of large blue eyes, as quick and as bright as any maiden's. She had the whitest, daintiest, tiniest hands you ever did see; and the tiniest feet. These she had inherited from her noble French ancestors; and along with them she had also inherited a delicate Roman nose—or, as it is sometimes called, a Bourbon nose. Now, as you will recollect, the French word for nose is *nez* (pronounced *nay*); and I remember I often wondered whether that Bourbon nose of my grandmother's might not have had something to do with the origin of her family name, Bourbonnaye. But that, of course, was when I was a very young and foolish child indeed.

In her youth, I know, my grandmother had been a perfect beauty. Among the other pictures in our parlor, there hung an oil painting which represented simply the loveliest young lady that I could fancy. She had curling golden hair, laughing eyes as blue as the sky, ripe red lips just made to kiss, faintly blushing cheeks, and a rich, full throat like a column of ivory; and she wore a marvelous costume of cream-colored silk, trimmed with lace; and in one hand she-held a bunch of splendid crimson roses, so well painted that you

could almost smell them. I used to sit before this portrait for hours at a stretch, and admire the charming girl who smiled upon me from it, and wonder and wonder who she could be, and where she lived, and whether I should ever have the good luck to meet her in proper person. I used to think that perhaps I had already met her somewhere, and then forgotten; for, though I could not put my finger on it, there was something strangely familiar to me in her face. I used to say to myself, “What if after all it should be only a fancy picture! Oh! I hope, I hope it isn't.” Then at length, one day, it occurred to me to go to my grandmother for information. Imagine my surprise when she told me that it was a portrait of herself, taken shortly before her wedding.

“O, dear! I wish I had been alive in those days,” I sighed.

“Why?” she queried.

“Because then I could have married you,” I explained. At which she laughed as merrily as though I had got off the funniest joke in the world, and called me an “*enfant terrible*”—a dreadful child.

This episode abode in my mind for a long time to come, and furnished me food for much sorrowful reflection. It brought forcibly home to me the awful truth, which I had never thought of before, that youth and beauty cannot last. That this young girl—so strong, so gay, so full of life, with such bright red lips and brilliant golden hair—that she could have changed into a feeble gray old lady, like my grandmother! It was a sad and appalling possibility.

My grandmother stood nearly as much in awe of my Uncle Peter as I did. He allowed himself to browbeat and bully her in a manner that made my blood boil. “Oh!” I would think in my soul, “just wait till I am a man as big as he is. Won't I teach him a lesson, though?” She and I talked together for the most part in French. This was for two reasons: first, because it was good practice for me; and secondly, because it was pleasant for her—French being her native tongue. Well, my Uncle Peter hated the very sound of French—why I could not guess, but I suspected it was solely for the sake of being disagreeable—and if ever a word of that language escaped my grandmother's lips in his presence, he would glare at her from beneath his shaggy brows, and snarl out, “Can't you speak English to the boy?” She never dared to interfere in my behalf when he was about to whip me—though I knew her heart ached to do so—but would sit alone in her room during the operation, and wait to comfort me after it was over. His rattan cane raised great red welts upon my skin, which smarted and were sore for hours. These she would rub with a salve that cooled and helped to heal them; and then, putting her arm about my neck, she would bid me not to mind it, and not to feel unhappy any more, and would give me peppermint candies and cookies, and tell me long, interesting stories, or read aloud to me, or show me the pictures in her big family Bible. “Paul and Virginia” and “The Arabian Nights” were the books I liked best to be read to from; and my favorite picture was one of Daniel iii the lion's den. Ah, my dear, dear grandmother! As I look back upon those days now, there is no bitterness in my memory of Uncle Peter's whippings; but my memory of your tender goodness in consoling me is infinitely sweet.

No; if my Uncle Peter was perhaps a trifle too severe with me, my grandmother erred in the opposite direction, and did much to spoil me. I never got a single angry word from her in all the years we lived together; yet I am sure I must have tried her patience very frequently and very sorely. Every forenoon, from eight till twelve o'clock, she gave me my lessons: geography, history, grammar, arithmetic and music. I was neither a very apt nor a very industrious pupil in any of these branches; but I was especially dull and especially lazy in my pursuit of the last. My grandmother would sit with me at the piano for an hour, and try and try to make me play my exercise aright; and though I always played it wrong, she never lost her temper, and never scolded. I deserved worse than a scolding; I deserved a good sound box on the ear; for I had shirked my practising, and that was why I blundered so. But the most my grandmother ever said or did by way of reproof, was to shake her head sadly at me, and murmur, “Ah, Gregory, Gregory, I fear that you lack ambition.” So very possibly, after all, my Uncle Peter's sternness was really good for me as a disagreeable but salutary tonic.

My Uncle Florimond was my grandmother's only brother, unmarried, five years older than herself, who lived in France. His full name was even more imposing than hers had been; and to write it I shall have to use up nearly all the letters of the alphabet: Florimond Charles Marie Auguste Alexandre de la Bourbonnaye. As if this were not enough, he joined to it the title of marquis, which had descended to him from his father; just think—Florimond Charles Marie Auguste Alexandre, Marquis de la Bourbonnaye.

Though my grandmother had not once seen her brother Florimond since her marriage—when she was a blushing miss of nineteen, and he a dashing young fellow of four-and-twenty—I think she cared more for him than for anybody else alive, excepting perhaps myself. And though I had never seen him at all, I am sure that he was to me, without exception, the most important personage in the whole wide world. He owed this distinguished place in my regard to several causes. He owed it partly, no doubt, to the glamour attaching to his name and title. To my youthful imagination Florimond Charles Marie Auguste Alexandre de la Bourbonnaye made a strong appeal. Surely, any one who went through life bearing a name like that must be a very great and extrordinary man; and the fact that he was my uncle—my own grandmother's brother—stirred my bosom with pride, and thrilled it with satisfaction. Then, besides, he was a marquis; and a marquis, I supposed, of course, must be the embodiment of everything that was fine and admirable in human nature—good, strong, rich, brave, brilliant, beautiful—just one peg lower in the scale of glory than a king. Yes, on account of his name and title alone, I believe, I should have placed my Uncle Florimond upon a lofty pedestal in the innermost shrine of my fancy, as a hero to drape with all the dazzling qualities I could conceive of, to wonder about, and to worship. But indeed, in this case, I should most likely have done very much the same thing, even if he had had no other title than plain Mister, and if his name had been homely John or James. For my grandmother, who never tired of talking to me of him, had succeeded in communicating to my heart something of her own fondness for him, as well as imbuing my mind with an eager interest in everything that concerned him, and in firing it with a glowing ideal of his personality. She had taught me that he was in point of fact, all that I had pictured him in my surmises.

When, in 1820, Aurore de la Bourbonnaye became Mrs. Brace, and bade good-by to her home and family, her brother Florimond had held a commission as lieutenant in the King's Guard. A portrait of him in his lieutenant's uniform hung over the fireplace in our parlor, directly opposite the portrait of his sister that I

have already spoken of. You never saw a handsomer young soldier: tall, muscular, perfectly shaped, with close-cropped chestnut hair, frank brown eyes, and regular clean-cut features, as refined and sensitive as a woman's, yet full of manly dignity and courage. In one hand he held his military hat, plumed with a long black ostrich feather; his other hand rested upon the hilt of his sword.

His uniform was all ablaze with brass buttons and gold lace; and a beautiful red silk sash swept over his shoulder diagonally downward to his hip, where it was knotted, and whence its tasseled ends fell half-way to his knee. Yes, indeed; he was a handsome, dashing, gallant-looking officer; and you may guess how my grandmother flattered me when she declared, as she often did, “Gregory, you are his living image.” Then she would continue in her quaint old-fashioned French:—“Ah! that thou mayest resemble him in spirit, in character, also. He is of the most noble, of the most generous, of the most gentle. An action base, a thought unworthy, a sentiment dishonorable—it is to him impossible. He is the courage, the courtesy, the chivalry, itself. Regard, then, his face. Is it not radiant of his soul? Is it not eloquent of kindness, of fearlessness, of truth? He is the model, the paragon even, of a gentleman, of a Christian. Say, then, my Gregory, is it that thou lovest him a little also, thou? Is it that thou art going to imitate him a little in thy life, and to strive to become a man as noble, as lovable, as he?”

To which I would respond earnestly in the same language, “O, yes! I love him, I admire him, with all my heart—after thee, my grandmother, better than anybody. And if I could become a man like him, I should be happier than I can say. Anyway, I shall try. He will be my pattern. But tell me, shall I never see him? Will he never come to Norwich? I would give—oh! I would give a thousand dollars—to see him, to embrace him, to speak with him.”

“Alas, no, I fear he will never come to Norwich. He is married to his France, his Paris. But certainly, when thou art grown up, thou shalt see him. Thou wilt go to Europe, and present thyself before him.”

“O, dear! not till I am grown up,” I would complain. “That is so long to wait.” Yet that came to be a settled hope, a moving purpose, in my life—that I should sometime meet my Uncle Florimond in person. I used to indulge my imagination in long, delicious day-dreams, of which our meeting was the subject, anticipating how he would receive me, and what we should say and do. I used to try honestly to be a good boy, so that he would take pleasure in recognizing me as his nephew. My grandmother's assertion to the effect that I looked like him filled my heart with gladness, though, strive as I might, I could not see the resemblance for myself. And if she never tired of talking to me about him, I never tired of listening, either. Indeed, to all the story-books in our library I preferred her anecdotes of Uncle Florimond.

Once a month regularly my grandmother wrote him a long letter; and once a month regularly a long letter arrived from him for her—the reception of which marked a great day in our placid, uneventful calendar. It was my duty to go to the post-office every afternoon, to fetch the mail. When I got an envelope addressed in his handwriting, and bearing the French postage-stamp—oh! didn't I hurry home! I couldn't seem to run fast enough, I was so impatient to deliver it to her, and to hear her read it aloud. Yet the contents of Uncle Florimond's epistles were seldom very exciting; and I dare say, if I should copy one of them here, you would pronounce it quite dull and prosy. He always began, “*Ma sour bien-aimee*”—My well-beloved sister. Then generally he went on to give an account of his goings and his comings since his last—naming the people whom he had met, the houses at which he had dined, the plays he had witnessed, the books he had read—and to inquire tenderly touching his sister's health, and to bid her kiss his little nephew Gregory for him. He invariably wound up, “*Dieu te garde, ma sour cherie*”—God keep thee, my dearest sister.—“Thy affectionate brother, de la Bourbonnaye.” That was his signature—de la Bourbonnaye, written uphill, with a big flourish underneath it—never Florimond. My grandmother explained to me that in this particular—signing his family name without his given one—he but followed a custom prevalent among French noblemen. Well, as I was saying, his letters for the most part were quite unexciting; yet, nevertheless, I listened to them with rapt attention, reluctant to lose a single word. This was for the good and sufficient reason that they came from him—from my Uncle Florimond—from my hero, the Marquis de la Bourbonnaye. And after my grandmother had finished reading one of them, I would ask, “May I look at it, please?” To hold it between my fingers, and gaze upon it, exerted a vague, delightful fascination over me. To think that his own hand had touched this paper, had shaped these characters, less than a fortnight ago! My Uncle Florimond's very hand! It was wonderful!

I was born on the first of March, 1860; so that on the first of March, 1870, I became ten years of age. On the morning of that day, after breakfast, my grandmother called me to her room.

“Thou shalt have a holiday to-day,” she said; “no study, no lessons. But first, stay.”

She unlocked the lowest drawer of the big old-fashioned bureau-desk at which she used to write, and took from it something long and slender, wrapped up in chamois-skin. Then she undid and peeled off the chamois-skin wrapper, and showed me—what do you suppose? A beautiful golden-hilted sword, incased in a golden scabbard!

“Isn't it pretty?” she asked.

“Oh! lovely, superb,” I answered, all admiration and curiosity.

“Guess a little, *mon petit*, whom it belonged to?” she went on.

“To—oh! to my Uncle Florimond—I am sure,” I exclaimed.

“Right. To thy Uncle Florimond. It was presented to him by the king, by King Louis XVIII.”

“By the king—by the king!” I repeated wonderingly. “Just think!”

“Precisely. By the king himself, as a reward of valor and a token of his regard. And when I was married my brother gave it to me as a keepsake. And now—and now, my Gregory, I am going to give it to thee as a birthday present.”

“To me! Oh!” I cried. That was the most I could say. I was quite overcome by my surprise and my delight.

THE BIRTHDAY GIFT OF UNCLE FLORIMOND'S SWORD.

“Yes, I give it to thee; and we will hang it up in thy bed-chamber, on the wall opposite thy bed; and every night and every morning thou shalt look at it, and think of thy Uncle Florimond, and remember to be like him. So thy first and thy last thought every day shall be of him.”

I leave it to you to fancy how happy this present made me, how happy and how proud. For many years that sword was the most highly prized of all my goods and chattels. At this very moment it hangs on the wall in my study, facing the table at which I write these lines.

A day or two later, when I made my usual afternoon trip to the post-office, I found there a large, square brown-paper package, about the size of a school geography, postmarked Paris, and addressed, in my Uncle Florimond's handwriting, not to my grandmother, but to me! to my very self. “Monsieur Grégoire Brace, chez Madame Brace, Norwich Town, Connecticut, Etats-unis d'Amérique.” At first I could hardly believe my eyesight. Why should my Uncle Florimond address anything to me? What could it mean? And what could the contents of the mysterious parcel be? It never occurred to me to open it, and thus settle the question for myself; but, burning with curiosity, I hastened home, and putting it into my grandmother's hands, informed her how it had puzzled and astonished me. She opened it at once, I peering eagerly over her shoulder; and then both of us uttered an exclamation of delight. It was a large illustrated copy of my favorite story, “Paul et Virginie,” bound in scarlet leather, stamped and lettered in gold; and on the fly-leaf, in French, was written, “To my dear little nephew Gregory, on his tenth birthday with much love from his Uncle de la Bourbonnaye.” I can't tell you how this book pleased me. That my Uncle Florimond should care enough for me to send me such a lovely birthday gift! For weeks afterward I wanted no better entertainment than to read it, and to look at its pictures, and remember who had sent it to me. Of course, I sat right down and wrote the very nicest letter I possibly could, to thank him for it.

Now, as you know, in that same year, 1870, the French Emperor, Louis Napoleon, began his disastrous war with the King of Prussia; and it may seem very strange to you when I say that that war, fought more than three thousand miles away, had a direct and important influence upon my life, and indeed brought it to its first great turning-point. But such is the truth. For, as you will remember, after a few successes at the outset, the French army met with defeat in every quarter; and as the news of these calamities reached us in Norwich, through the New York papers, my grandmother grew visibly feebler and older from day to day. The color left her cheeks; the light left her eyes; her voice lost its ring; she ate scarcely more than a bird's portion at dinner; she became nervous, and restless, and very sad: so intense was her love for her native country, so painfully was she affected by its misfortunes.

The first letter we received from Uncle Florimond, after the war broke out, was a very hopeful one. He predicted that a month or two at the utmost would suffice for the complete victory of the French, and the utter overthrow and humiliation of the Barbarians, as he called the Germans. “I myself,” he continued, “am, alas, too old to go to the front; but happily I am not needed, our actual forces being more than sufficient. I remain in Paris at the head of a regiment of municipal guards.” His second letter was still hopeful in tone, though he had to confess that for the moment the Prussians seemed to be enjoying pretty good luck. “*Mais*

cela passera"—But that will pass,—he added confidently. His next letter and his next, however, struck a far less cheery note; and then, after the siege of Paris began, his letters ceased coming altogether, for then, of course, Paris was shut off from any communication with the outside world.

With the commencement of the siege of Paris a cloud settled over our home in Norwich, a darkness and a chill that deepened steadily until, toward the end of January, 1871, the city surrendered and was occupied by the enemy. Dread and anxiety dogged our footsteps all day long every day. "Even at this moment, Gregory, while we sit here in peace and safety, thy Uncle Florimond may be dead or dying," my grandmother would say; then, bowing her head, "*O mon Dieu, sois miséricordieux*"—O my God, be merciful. Now and then she would start in her chair, and shudder; and upon my demanding the cause, she would reply, "I was thinking what if at that instant he had been shot by a Prussian bullet." For hours she would sit perfectly motionless, with her hands folded, and her eyes fixed vacantly upon the wall; until all at once, she would cover her face, and begin to cry as if her heart would break. And then, when the bell rang to summon us to meals, "Ah, what a horror!" she would exclaim. "Here are we with an abundance of food and drink, while he whom we love may be perishing of hunger!" But she had to keep her suffering to herself when Uncle Peter was around; otherwise, he would catch her up sharply, saying, "Tush! don't be absurd."

And so it went on from worse to worse, my grandmother pining away under my very eyes, until the siege ended in 1871, and the war was decided in favor of the Germans. Then, on the fourteenth of February, St. Valentine's Day, our fears lest Uncle Florimond had been killed were relieved. A letter came from him dated February 1st. It was very short. It ran: "Here is a single line, my beloved sister, to tell thee that I am alive and well. To-morrow I shall write thee a real letter"—*une vraie lettre*.

My grandmother never received his "real letter." The long strain and suspense had been too much for her. That day she broke down completely, crying at one moment, laughing the next, and all the time talking to herself in a way that frightened me terribly. That night she went to bed in a high fever, and out of her mind. She did not know me, her own grandson, but kept calling me Florimond. I ran for the doctor; but when he saw her, he shook his head.

On the morning of February 16th my dear, dear grandmother died.

CHAPTER II—I MAKE A FRIEND.

I shall not dwell upon my grief. It would be painful, and it would serve no purpose. The spring of 1871 was a very dark and dismal spring to me. It was as though a part—the best part—of myself had been taken from me. To go on living in the same old house, where everything spoke to me of her, where every nook and corner had its association with her, where every chair and table recalled her to me, yet not to hear her voice, nor see her face, nor feel her presence any more, and to realize that she had gone from me forever—I need not tell you how hard it was, nor how my heart ached, nor how utterly lonesome and desolate I felt. I need not tell you how big and bleak and empty the old house seemed.

Sometimes, though, I could not believe that it was really true, that she had really died. It was too dreadful. I could not help thinking that it must be some mistake, some hideous delusion. I would start from my sleep in the middle of the night, and feel sure that it must have been a bad dream, that she must have come back, that she was even now in bed in her room. Then, full of hope, I would get up and go to see. All my pain was suddenly and cruelly renewed when I found her bed cold and empty. I would throw myself upon it, and bury my face in the coverlet, and abandon myself to a passionate outburst of tears and sobs, calling aloud for her: "*Grand'-mère, grand'mere, O ma grand'mère chérie!*" I almost expected that she would hear me, and be moved to pity for me, and come back.

One night, when I was lying thus upon her bed, in the dark, and calling for her, I felt all at once the clutch of a strong hand upon my shoulder. It terrified me unspeakably. My heart gave a great jump, and stopped its beating. My limbs trembled, and a cold sweat broke out all over my body. I could not see six inches before my face. Who, or rather what, could my invisible captor be? Some grim and fearful monster of the darkness? A giant—a vampire—an ogre—or, at the very least, a burglar! All this flashed through my mind in a fraction of a second. Then I heard the voice of my Uncle Peter: "What do you mean, you young beggar, by raising such a hullaballoo at this hour of the night, and waking people up? Get off to your bed now, and in the morning I'll talk to you." And though I suspected that "I'll talk to you" signified "I'll give you a good sound thrashing," I could have hugged my Uncle Peter, so great was my relief to find that it was he, and no one worse.

Surely enough, next morning after breakfast, he led me to his room, and there he administered to me one of the most thorough and energetic thrashings I ever received from him. But now I had nobody to pet me and make much of me after it; and all that day I felt the awful friendlessness of my position more keenly than I had ever felt it before.

"I have but one friend in the whole world," I thought, "and he is so far, so far away. If I could only somehow get across the ocean, to France, to Paris, to his house, and live with him! He would be so good to me, and I should be so happy!" And I looked up at his sword hanging upon my wall, and longed for the hour when I should touch the hand that had once wielded it.

I must not forget to tell you here of a little correspondence that I had with this distant friend of mine. A day or two after the funeral I approached my Uncle Peter, and, summoning all my courage, inquired, "Are you going to write to Uncle Florimond, and let him know?"

"What?" he asked, as if he had not heard, though I had spoken quite distinctly. That was one of his

disagreeable, disconcerting ways—to make you repeat whatever you had to say. It always put me out of countenance, and made me feel foolish and embarrassed.

"I wanted to know whether you were going to write and tell Uncle Florimond," I explained with a quavering voice.

By way of retort, he half-shut his eyes, and gave me a queer, quizzical glance, which seemed to be partly a sneer, and partly a threat. He kept it up for a minute or two, and then he turned his back upon me, and went off whistling. This I took to be as good as "No" to my question. "Yet," I reflected, "somebody ought to write and tell him. It is only fair to let him know." And I determined that I would do so myself; and I did. I wrote him a letter; and then I rewrote it; and then I copied it; and then I copied it again; and at last I dropped my final copy into the post-box.

About five weeks later I got an answer from him. In a few simple sentences he expressed his great sorrow; and then he went on: "And, now, my dear little nephew, by this mutual loss thou and I are brought closer together; and by a more tender mutual affection we must try to comfort and console each other. For my part, I open to thee that place in my heart left vacant by the death of my sainted sister; and I dare to hope that thou wilt transfer to me something of thy love for her. I attend with impatience the day of our meeting, which, I tell myself, if the Lord spares our lives, must arrive as soon as thou art big enough to leave thy home and come to me in France. Meanwhile, may the good God keep and bless thee, shall be the constant prayer of thy Uncle de la Bourbonnaye."

This letter touched me very deeply.

After reading it I came nearer to feeling really happy than I had come at any time before since she died.

I must hasten over the next year. Of course, as the weeks and months slipped away, I gradually got more or less used to the new state of things, and the first sharp edge of my grief was dulled. The hardest hours of my day were those spent at table with Uncle Peter—alone with him, in a silence broken only by the clinking of our knives and forks. These were very hard, trying hours indeed. The rest of my time I passed out of doors, in the company of Sam Budd, our gardener's son, and the other village boys. What between swimming, fishing, and running the streets with them, I contrived to amuse myself after a fashion. Yet, for all that, the year I speak of was a forlorn, miserable year for me; I was far from being either happy or contented. My first violent anguish had simply given place to a vague, continuous sense of dissatisfaction and unrest, like a hunger, a craving, for something I could not name. That something was really—love: though I was not wise enough to know as much at the time. A child's heart—and, for that matter, a grown-up man's—craves affection as naturally as his stomach craves food; I did not have it; and that was why my heart ached and was sick. I wondered and wondered whether my present mode of life was going to last forever; I longed and longed for change. Somehow to escape, and get across the ocean to my Uncle Florimond, was my constant wish; but I saw no means of realizing it. Once in a while I would think, "Suppose I write to him and tell him how wretched I am, and ask him to send for me?" But then a feeling of shame and delicacy restrained me.

Another thing that you will easily see about this year, is that it must have been a very unprofitable one for me from the point of view of morals. My education was suspended; no more study, no more 'lessons. Uncle Peter never spoke of sending me to school; and I was too young and ignorant to desire to go of my own accord. Then, too, I was without any sort of refining or softening influence at home; Julia, our cook, being my single friend there, and my uncle's treatment of me serving only to sour and harden me. If, therefore, at the end of the year in question I was by no manner of means so nice a boy as I had been at the beginning of it, surely there was little cause for astonishment. Indeed, I imagine the only thing that kept me from growing altogether rough and wild and boisterous, was my thought of Uncle Florimond, and my ambition to be the kind of lad that I believed he would like to have me.

And now I come to an adventure which, as it proved, marked the point of a new departure in my affairs.

It was early in April, 1872. There had been a general thaw, followed by several days of heavy rain; and the result was, of course, a freshet. Our little river, the Yantic, had swollen to three—in some places even to four—times its ordinary width; and its usually placid current had acquired a tremendous strength and speed. This transformation was the subject of endless interest to us boys; and every day we used to go and stand upon the bank, and watch the broad and turbulent rush of water with mingled wonder, terror and delight. It was like seeing an old friend, whom we had hitherto regarded as a quite harmless and rather namby-pamby sort of chap, and been fearlessly familiar with, suddenly display the power and prowess of a giant, and brandish his fists at us, crying, "Come near me at your peril!" Our emotions sought utterance in such ejaculations as "My!" "Whew!" and "Jimminy!" and Sam Budd was always tempting me with, "Say, Gregory, stump ye to go in," which was very aggravating. I hated to have him dare me.

Well, one afternoon—I think it was on the third day of the freshet—when Sam and I made our customary pilgrimage down through Captain Josh Abingdon's garden to the water's edge, fancy our surprise to behold a man standing there and fishing. Fishing in that torrent! It was too absurd for anything; and instantly all our wonder transferred itself from the stream to the fisherman, at whom we stared with eyes and mouths wide open, in an exceedingly curious and ill-bred manner. He didn't notice us at first; and when he did, he didn't seem to mind our rudeness the least bit. He just looked up for a minute, and calmly inspected us; and then he gave each of us a solemn, deliberate wink, and returned his attention to his pole, which, by the way, was an elaborate and costly one, jointed and trimmed with metal. He was a funny-looking man; short and stout, with a broad, flat, good-natured face, a thick nose, a large mouth, and hair as black and curling as a negro's.

He wore a fine suit of clothes of the style that we boys should have called cityfied; and across his waistcoat stretched a massive golden watch-chain, from which dangled a large golden locket set with precious stones.

Presently this strange individual drew in his line to examine his bait; and then, having satisfied himself as to its condition, he attempted to make a throw. But he threw too hard. His pole slipped from his grasp, flew through the air, fell far out into the water, and next moment started off down stream at the rate of a train of steam-cars. This was a sad mishap. The stranger's face expressed extreme dismay, and Sam and I felt sorry for him from the bottom of our hearts. It was really a great pity that such a handsome pole should be lost in such a needless fashion.

But stay! All at once the pole's progress down stream ceased. It had got caught by an eddy, which was sweeping it rapidly inward and upward toward the very spot upon the shore where we stood. Would it reach land safely, and be recovered? We waited, watching, in breathless suspense. Nearer it came—nearer—nearer! Our hopes were mounting very high indeed. A smile lighted the fisherman's broad face. The pole had now approached within twenty feet of the bank. Ten seconds more, and surely—But again, stay! Twenty feet from the shore the waters formed a whirlpool. In this whirlpool for an instant the pole remained motionless. Then, after a few jerky movements to right and left, instead of continuing its journey toward the shore, it began spinning round and round in the circling current. At any minute it might break loose and resume its course down stream; but for the present there it was, halting within a few yards of us—so near, and yet so far.

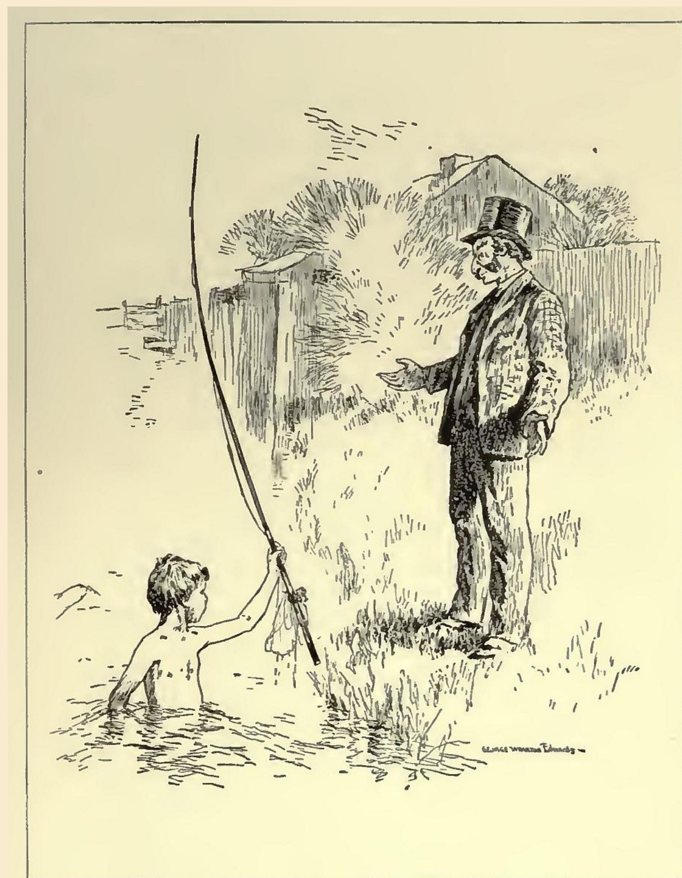
Up to this point we had all kept silence. But now the fisherman broke it with a loud, gasping sigh. Next thing I heard was Sam Budd's voice, pitched in a mocking, defiant key, “Say, Gregory, stump ye to go in.” I looked at Sam. He was already beginning to undress.

No; under the circumstances—with that man as a witness—I could not refuse the challenge. My reputation, my character, was at stake. I knew that the water would be as cold as ice; I knew that the force of its current involved danger to a swimmer of a sort not to be laughed at. Yet my pride had been touched, my vanity had been aroused. I could not allow Sam Budd to “stump” me with impunity, and then outdo me. “You do, do you?” I retorted. “Well, come on.” And stripping off my clothes in a twinkling, I plunged into the flood, Sam following close at my heels.

As cold as ice! Why, ice was nowhere, compared to the Yantic River in that first week of April. They say extremes meet. Well, the water was so cold that it seemed actually to scald my skin, as if it had been boiling hot. But never mind. The first shock over, I gritted my teeth to keep them from chattering, and struck boldly out for the whirlpool, where the precious rod was still spinning round and round. Of course, in order to save myself from being swept down below it, I had to aim diagonally at a point far above it.

The details of my struggle I need not give. Indeed, I don't believe I could give them, even if it were desirable that I should. My memory of the time I spent in the water is exceedingly confused and dim. Intense cold; desperately hard work with arms and legs; frantic efforts to get my breath; a fierce determination to be the first to reach that pole no matter at what hazard; a sense of immense relief and triumph when, suddenly, I realized that success had crowned my labors—when I felt the pole actually in my hands; then a fight to regain the shore; and finally, again, success!

Yes, there I stood upon the dry land, safe and sound, though panting and shivering from exhaustion and cold. I was also rather dazed and bewildered; yet I still had enough of my wits about me to go up to the fisherman, and say politely, “Here, sir, is your pole.” He cried in response—and I noticed that he pronounced the English language in a very peculiar way—“My kracious! You was a brave boy, Bubby. Hurry up; dress; you catch your death of cold standing still there, mitout no clodes on you, like dot. My koodness! a boy like you was worth a tousand dollars.”



SUCCESS!

Suddenly it occurred to me to wonder what had become of Sam. I had not once thought of him since my

plunge into the water. I suppose the reason for this forgetfulness was that my entire mind, as well as my entire body, had been bent upon the work I had in hand. But now, as I say, it suddenly occurred to me to wonder what had become of him; and a sickening fear lest he might have got drowned made my heart quail.

"O, sir!" I demanded, "Sam—the other boy—where is he? Has anything happened to him? Did he—he didn't —he didn't get drowned?"

"Drownded?" repeated the fisherman. "Well, you can bet he didn't. He's all right. There he is—under dot tree over there."

He pointed toward an apple-tree, beneath which I descried Sam Budd, already nearly dressed. As Sam's eyes met mine, a very sheepish look crept over his face, and he called out, "Oh! I gave up long ago." Well, you may just guess how proud and victorious I felt to hear this admission from my rival's lips.

The fisherman now turned his attention to straightening out his tackle, which had got into a sad mess during its bath, while I set to putting on my things. Pretty soon he drew near to where I stood, and, surveying me with a curious glance, "Well, Bubby, how you feel?" he asked.

"Oh! I feel all right, thank you, sir; only a little cold," I answered.

"Well, Bubby, you was a fine boy," he went on. "Well, how old was you?"

"I'm twelve, going on thirteen."

"My kracious! Is dot all? Why, you wasn't much older as a baby; and yet so tall and strong already. Well, Bubby, what's your name?"

"Gregory Brace."

"Krekory Prace, hey? Well, dot's a fine name. Well; you live here in Nawvich, I suppose—yes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Maybe your papa was in business here?"

"No, sir; my father is dead."

"Oh! is dot so? Well, dot's too bad. And so you was a half-orphan, yes?"

"No, sir; my mother is dead, too."

"You don't say so! Well, my kracious! Well, den you was a whole orphan, ain't you? Well, who you live with?"

"I live with my uncle, sir—Judge Brace."

"Oh! so your uncle was a judge. Well, dot's grand. Well, you go to school, I suppose, hey?"

"No, sir; I don't go to school."

"You don't go to school? Oh! then, maybe you was in business already, yes."

"O, no, sir! I'm not in business."

"You don't go to school, and you wasn't in business; well, what you do mit yourself all day long, hey?"

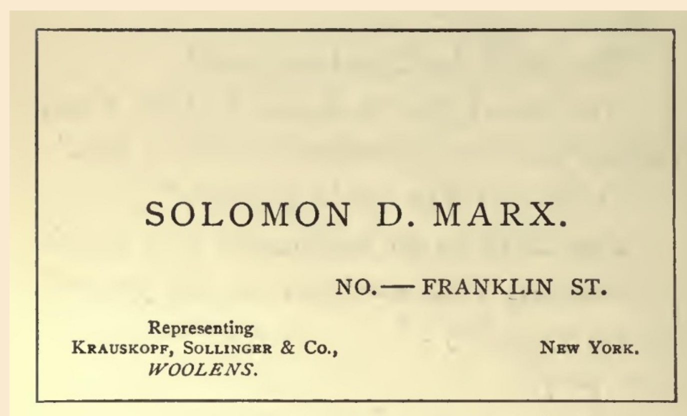
"I play."

"You play! Well, then you was a sort of a gentleman of leisure, ain't you? Well, dot must be pretty good fun —to play all day. Well, Bubby, you ever go to New York?"

"No, sir; I've never been in New York. Do you live in New York, sir?"

"Yes, Bubby, I live in New York when I'm at home. But I'm shenerally on the road, like I was to-day. I'm what you call a trummer; a salesman for Krauskopf, Sollinger & Co., voolens. Here's my card."

He handed me a large pasteboard card, of which the following is a copy:—


SOLOMON D. MARX.

NO.— FRANKLIN ST.

Representing
KRAUSKOPF, SOLLINGER & CO.,
WOOLENS.

NEW YORK.

"Yes," he went on, "dot's my name, and dot's my address. And when you come to New York you call on me there, and I'll treat you like a buyer. I'll show you around our establishment, and I'll give you a dinner by a restaurant, and I'll take you to the theayter, and then, if you want it, I'll get you a chop."

"A chop?" I queried. "What is a chop?"

"What is a chop! Why, if you want to go into business, you got to get a chop, ain't you? A chop was an embloyment; and then there was chop-lots also." At this I understood that he meant a job. "Yes, Bubby, a fine boy like you hadn't oughter be doing nodings all day long. You'd oughter go into business, and get rich. You're smart enough, and you got enerchy. I was in business already when I was ten years old, and I ain't no

smarter as you, and I ain't got no more enerchy. Yes, Bubby, you take my advice: come down to New York, and I get you a chop, and you make your fortune, no mistake about it. And now, Bubby, I want to give you a little present to remember me by.”

He drew a great fat roll of money from his waistcoat pocket, and offered me a two-dollar bill.

“O, no! I thank you, sir,” I hastened to say. “I don't want any money.”

“O, well! this ain't no money to speak of, Bubby; only a two-tollar pill. You just take it, and buy yourself a little keepsake. It von't hurt you.”

“You're very kind, sir; but I really can't take it, thank you.” And it flashed through my mind: “What would Uncle Florimond think of me, if I should accept his money?”

“Well, dot's too bad. I really like to make you a little present, Bubby. But if you was too proud, what you say if I give it to the other boy, hey?”

“Oh! to Sam—yes, I think that would be a very good idea,” I replied.

So he called Sam—*Sem* was the way he pronounced it—and gave him the two-dol-lar bill, which Sam received without the faintest show of compunction.

“Well, I got to go now,” the fisherman said, holding out his hand. “Well, good-by, Bubby; and don't forget, when you come to New York, to give me a call. Well, so-long.”

Sam and I watched him till he got out of sight. Then we too started for home.

At the time, my talk with Mr. Solomon D. Marx did not make any especial impression on me; but a few days later it came back to me, the subject of serious meditation. The circumstances were as follows:—

We had just got through our supper, and Uncle Peter had gone to his room, when all at once I heard his door open, and his voice, loud and sharp, call, “Gregory!”

“Yes, sir,” I answered, my heart in a flutter; and to myself I thought, “O, dear, what can be the matter now?”

“Come here, quick!” he ordered.

I entered his room, and saw him standing near his table, with a cigar-box in his hand.

“You young rascal,” he began; “so you have been stealing my cigars!”

This charge of theft was so unexpected, so insulting, so untrue, that, if he had struck me a blow between the eyes, it could not have taken me more aback. The blood rushed to my face; my whole frame grew rigid, as if I had been petrified. I tried to speak; but my presence of mind had deserted me; I could not think of a single word.

“Well?” he questioned. “Well? ''

“I—I—I”—I stammered. Scared out of my wits, I could get no further.

“Well, have you nothing to say for yourself?”

“I—I did—I didn't—do it,” I gasped. “I don't know what you mean.”

“What!” he thundered. “You dare to lie to me about it! You dare to steal from me, and then lie to my face! You insufferable beggar! I'll teach you a lesson.” And, putting out his hand, he took his rattan cane from the peg it hung by on the wall.

“Oh! really and truly, Uncle Peter,” I protested, “I never stole a thing in all my life. I never saw your cigars. I didn't even know you had any. Oh! you—you're not going to whip me, when I didn't do it?”

“Why, what a barefaced little liar it is! Egad! you do it beautifully. I wouldn't have given you credit for so much cleverness.” He said this in a sarcastic voice, and with a mocking smile. Then he frowned, and his voice changed. “Come here,” he snarled, his fingers tightening upon the handle of his cane.

A great wave of anger swept over me, and brought me a momentary flush of courage. “No, sir; I won't,” I answered, my whole body in a tremor.

Uncle Peter started. I had never before dared to defy him. He did not know what to make of my doing so now. He turned pale. He bit his lip. His eyes burned with a peculiarly ugly light. So he stood, glaring at me, for a moment. Then, “You—won't,” he repeated, very low, and pausing between the words. “Why, what kind of talk is this I hear? Well, well, my fine fellow, you amuse me.”

I was standing between him and the door. I turned now, with the idea of escaping from the room. But he was too quick for me. I had only just got my hand upon the latch, when he sprang forward, seized me by the collar of my jacket, and, with one strong pull, landed me again in the middle of the floor.

“There!” he cried. “Now we'll have it out. I owe you four: one for stealing my cigars; one for lying to me about it; one for telling me you wouldn't; and one for trying to sneak out of the room. Take this, and this, and this.”

With that he set his rattan cane in motion; nor did he bring it to a stand-still until I felt as though I had not one well spot left upon my skin.

“Now, then, be off with you,” he growled; and I found myself in the hall outside his door.

I dragged my aching body to my room, and sat down at my window in the dark. Never before had I experienced such a furious sense of outrage. Many and many a time I had been whipped, as I thought, unjustly; but this time he had added insult to injury; he had accused me of stealing and of lying; and, deaf to my assertion of my innocence, he had punished me accordingly. I seriously believe that I did not mind the whipping in itself half so much as I minded the shameful accusations that he had brought against me. “How long, how long,” I groaned, “has this got to last? Shall I never be able to get away—to get to France, to my Uncle Florimond? If I only had some money—if I had a hundred dollars—then all my troubles would be over and done with. Surely, a hundred dollars would be enough to take me to the very door of his house in Paris.” But how—how to obtain such an enormous sum? And it was at this point that my conversation with Mr. Solomon D. Marx came back to me:—

“Why, go to New York! Go into business! You'll soon earn a hundred dollars. Mr. Marx said he would get

you a job. Start for New York to-morrow."

This notion took immediate and entire possession of my fancy, and I remained awake all night, building glittering air-castles upon it as a foundation. The only doubt that vexed me was, "What will Uncle Peter say? Will he let me go?" The idea of going secretly, or without his consent, never once entered my head. "Well, to-morrow morning," I resolved, "I will speak with him, and ask his permission. And if he gives it to me—hurrah! And if he doesn't—O, dear me, dear me!"

To cut a long story short, when, next morning, I did speak with him, and ask his permission, he, to my infinite joy, responded, "Why, go, and be hanged to you. Good riddance to bad rubbish!"

In my tin savings bank, I found, I had nine dollars and sixty-three cents. With this in my pocket; with the sword of my Uncle Florimond as the principal part of my luggage; and with a heart full of strange and new emotions, of fear and hope, and gladness and regret, I embarked that evening upon the Sound steamboat, City of Lawrence, for the metropolis where I have ever since had my home; bade good-by to my old life, and set sail alone upon the great, awful, unknown sea of the future.

CHAPTER III.—NEW YORK.

I did not feel rich enough to take a stateroom on the City of Lawrence; that would have cost a dollar extra; so I picked out a sofa in the big gilt and white saloon, and sitting down upon it, proceeded to make myself as comfortable as the circumstances would permit. A small boy, armed with a large sword, and standing guard over a hand-satchel and a square package done up in a newspaper—which last contained my Uncle Florimond's copy of *Paul et Virginie*—I dare say I presented a curious spectacle to the passers-by. Indeed, almost everybody turned to look at me; and one man, with an original wit, inquired, "Hello, sword, where you going with that boy?" But my mind was too busy with other and weightier matters to be disturbed about mere appearances. One thought in particular occupied it: I must not on any account allow myself to fall asleep—for then I might be robbed. No; I must take great pains to keep wide awake all night long.

For the first hour or two it was easy enough to make this resolution good. The undiscovered country awaiting my exploration, the novelty and the excitement of my position, the people walking back and forth, and laughing and chattering, the noises coming from the dock outside, and from every corner of the steamboat inside, the bright lights of the cabin lamps—all combined to put my senses on the alert, and to banish sleep. But after we had got under way, and the other passengers had retired to their berths or staterooms, and most of the lamps had been extinguished, and the only sound to be heard was the muffled throbbing of the engines, then tired nature asserted herself, the sandman came, my eyelids grew very heavy, I began to nod. Er-rub-dub-dub, er-rub-dub-dub, went the engines; er-rub-dubdub, er-rub-er-rub-er-er-er-r-r…,

Mercy! With a sudden start I came to myself. It was broad day. I had been sleeping soundly for I knew not how many hours.

My first thought, of course, was for my valuables. Had my fears been realized? Had I been robbed? I hastened to make an investigation. No! My money, my sword, my satchel, my *Paul et Virginie*, remained in their proper places, unmolested. Having relieved my anxiety on this head, I got up, stretched myself, and went out on deck.

If I live to be a hundred, I don't believe I shall ever forget my first breath of the outdoor air on that red-letter April morning—it was so sweet, so pure, so fresh and keen and stimulating. It sent a glow of new vitality tingling through my body. I just stood still and drew in deep inhalations of it with delight. It was like drinking a rich, delicious wine. My heart warmed and mellowed. Hope and gladness entered into it.

It must have been very early. The sun, a huge ball of gold, floated into rosy mists but a little higher than the horizon; and a heavy dew bathed the deck and the chairs and the rail. We were speeding along, almost, it seemed, within a stone's throw of the shore, where the turf was beginning to put on the first vivid green of spring, where the leafless trees were exquisitely penciled against the gleaming sky, and where, from the chimneys of the houses, the smoke of breakfast fires curled upward: Over all there lay a wondrous, restful stillness, which the pounding of our paddle-wheels upon the water served only to accentuate, and which awoke in one's breast a deep, solemn, and yet joyous sense of peace.

I staid out on deck from that moment until, some two hours later, we brought up alongside our pier; and with what strange and strong emotions I watched the vast town grow from a mere distant reddish blur to the grim, frowning mass of brick and stone it really is, I shall not attempt to tell. To a country-bred lad like myself it was bound to be a stirring and memorable experience. Looking back at it now, I can truly say that it was one of the most stirring and memorable experiences of my life.

It was precisely eight o'clock, as a gentleman of whom I inquired the hour was kind enough to inform me, when I stepped off the City of Lawrence and into the city of New York. My heart was bounding, but my poor brain was bewildered. The hurly-burly of people, the fierce-looking men at the entrance of the dock, who shook their fists at me, and shouted, "Cadge, cadge, want a cadge?" leaving me to wonder what a cadge was, the roar and motion of the wagons in the street, everything, everything interested, excited, yet also confused, baffled, and to some degree frightened me. I felt as though I had been set down in pandemonium; yet I was not sorry to be there; I rather liked it.

I went up to a person whom I took to be a policeman, for he wore a uniform resembling that worn by our one single policeman in Norwich City; and, exhibiting the card that Mr. Marx had given me, I asked him how to reach the street and house indicated upon it.

He eyed me with unconcealed amusement at my accoutrements, and answered, “Ye wahk down tin blocks; thin turrun to yer lift four blocks; thin down wan; thin to yer roight chew or thray doors; and there ye are.”

“Thank you, sir,” said I, and started off, repeating his instructions to myself, so as not to forget them.

I felt very hungry, and I hoped that Mr. Marx would offer me some breakfast; but it did not occur to me to stop at an eating-house, and breakfast on my own account, until, as I was trudging along, I presently caught sight of a sign-board standing on the walk in front of a shop, which advertised, in big conspicuous white letters upon a black ground:—

LADIES’ AND GENTS’ DINING PARLOR.

BILL OF FARE.

Beefsteak	10c.
Roast Beef	10c.
Roast Pork	10c.
Pork and Beans	10c.
Flap Jacks	10c.
Fried Potatoes	5c.
Hot Tea or Coffee	5c.

A choice Havana Cigar for 5 cents.

Merely to read the names of these good things made my mouth water. The prices seemed reasonable. I walked into the ladies' and gents' dining parlor—which was rather shabby and dingy, I thought, for a parlor—and asked for a beefsteak and some fried potatoes; a burly, villainous-looking colored man, in his shirt-sleeves, having demanded, “Wall, Boss, wottle you have?” His shirt-sleeves were not immaculately clean; neither was the dark red cloth that covered my table; neither, I feared, was the fork he gave me to eat with. To make sure, I picked this last-named object up, and examined it; whereupon the waiter, with a horrid loud laugh, cried, “Oh! yassah, it's sawlid, sawlid silvah, sah,” which made me feel wretchedly silly and uncomfortable. The beefsteak was pretty tough, and not especially toothsome in its flavor; the potatoes were lukewarm and greasy; the bread was soggy, the butter rancid; the waiter took up a position close at hand, and stared at me with his wicked little eyes as steadily as if he had never seen a boy before: so, despite my hunger, I ate with a poor appetite, and was glad enough when by and by I left the ladies' and gents' dining parlor behind me, and resumed my journey through the streets. As I was crossing the threshold, the waiter called after me, “Say, Johnny, where joo hook the sword?”

Inquiring my way of each new policeman that I passed—for I distrusted my memory of the directions I had received from the first—I finally reached No. ——, Franklin Street and read the name of Krauskopf, Sollinger & Co., engraved in Old English letters upon a shining metal sign. I entered, and with a trembling heart inquired for Mr. Marx. Ten seconds later I stood before him.

GREGORY ARRIVES AT KRAUSKOPF, SOLLINGER AND CO.'S.

"Mr. Marx," I ventured, in rather a timid voice.

He was seated in a swivel-chair, reading a newspaper, and smoking a cigar. At the sound of his name, he glanced up, and looked at me for a moment with an absent-minded and indifferent face, showing no glimmer of recognition. But then, suddenly, his eyes lighted; he sprang from his chair, started back, and cried:—

"My kracious! was dot you, Bubby? Was dot yourself? Was dot—well, my koodness!"

"Yes, sir; Gregory Brace," I replied.

"Krekory Prace! Yes, dot's a fact. No mistake about it. It's yourself, sure. But—but, koodness kracious, Bubby, what—how—why—when—where—where you come from? When you leave Nawvich? How you get here? What you—well, it's simply wonderful."

"I came down on the boat last night," I said.

"Oh! you came down on de boat last night. Well, I svear. Well, Bubby, who came mit you?"

"Nobody, sir; I came alone."

"You came alone! You don't say so. Well, did your mamma—excuse me; you ain't got no mamma; I forgot; it was your uncle—well, did your uncle know you was come?"

"Oh! yes, sir; he knows it; he said I might."

"He said you might, hey? Well, dot's fine. Well, Bubby, what you come for? To make a little visit, hey, and go around a little, and see the town? Well, Bubby, this was a big surprise; it was, and no mistake. But I'm glad to see you, all de same. Well, shake hands."

"No, sir," I explained, after we had shaken hands, "I didn't come for a visit. I came to go into business. You said you would get me a job, and I have come for that."

"Oh! you was come to go into pusiness, was you? And you want I should get you a chop? Well, if I ever! Well, you're a great feller, Bubby; you got so much ambition about you. Well, dot's all right. I get you the chop, don't you be afraid. We talk about dot in a minute. But now, excuse me, Bubby, but what you doing mit the sword? Was you going to kill somebody mit it, hey, Bubby?"

"O, no, sir! it—it's a keepsake."

"Oh! it was a keepsake, was it, Bubby? Well, dot's grand. Well, who was it a keepsake of? It's a handsome sword, Bubby, and it must be worth quite a good deal of money. If dot's chenu-wine gold, I shouldn't wonder if it was worth two or three hundred dollars.—Oh! by the way, Bubby, you had your breakfast yet already?"

"Well, yes, sir; I've had a sort of breakfast."

"A sort of a breakfast, hey? Well, what sort of a breakfast was it?"

I gave him an account of my experience in the ladies' and gents' dining parlor. He laughed immoderately, though I couldn't see that it was so very funny. "Well, Bubby," he remarked, "dot was simply immense. Dot oughter go into a comic paper, mit a picture of dot big nigger staring at you. Well, I give ten dollars to been there, and heard him tell you dot fork was solid silver. Well, dot was a. pretty poor sort of a breakfast, anyhow. I guess you better come along out mit me now, and we get anudder sort of a breakfast, hey? You just wait here a minute while I go put on my hat. And say, Bubby, I guess you better give me dot sword, to leaf here while we're gone. I don't believe you'll need it. Give me dem udder things, too," pointing to my satchel and my book.

He went away, but soon came back, with his hat on; and, taking my hand, he led me out into the street. After a walk of a few blocks, we turned into a luxurious little restaurant, as unlike the dining parlor as a fine lady is unlike a beggar woman, and sat down at a neat round table covered with a snowy cloth.

"Now, Bubby," inquired Mr. Marx, "you got any preferences? Or will you give me card blanch to order what I think best?"

"Oh! order what you think best."

He beckoned a waiter, and spoke to him at some length in a foreign language, which, I guessed, was German. The waiter went off; and then, addressing me, Mr. Marx said, "Well, now, Bubby, now we're settled down, quiet and comfortable, now you go ahead and tell me all about it."

"All about what, sir?" queried I.

"Why, all about yourself, and what you leaf your home for, and what you expect to do here in New York, and every dings—the whole pusiness. Well, fire away."

"Well, sir, I—it—it's this way," I began. And then, as well as I could, I told Mr. Marx substantially everything that I have as yet told you in this story—about my grandmother, my Uncle Florimond, my Uncle Peter, and all the rest. Meanwhile the waiter had brought the breakfast—such an abundant, delicious breakfast! such juicy mutton chops, such succulent stewed potatoes, such bread, such butter, such coffee!—and I was violating the primary canons of good breeding by talking with my mouth full. Mr. Marx heard me through with every sign of interest and sympathy, only interrupting once, to ask, "Well, what I ordered—I hope it gives you entire satisfaction, hey?" and when I had done:—

"Well, if I ever!" he exclaimed. "Well, dot beats de record! Well, dot Uncle Peter was simply outracheous! Well, Bubby, you done just right, you done just exactly right, to come to me. The only thing dot surprises me is how you stood it so long already. Well, dot Uncle Peter of yours, Bubby—well, dot's simply unnecheral."

He paused for a little, and appeared to be thinking. By and by he went on, "But your grandma, Bubby, your grandma was elegant. Yes, Bubby, your grandma was an angel, and no mistake about it. She reminds me, Bubby, she reminds me of my own mamma. Ach, Krekory, my mamma was so loafly. You couldn't hardly believe it. She was simply magnificent. Your grandma and her, they might have been ter*vins*. Yes, Krekory, they might have been ter*vin* sisters."

Much to my surprise, Mr. Marx's eyes filled with tears, and there was a frog in his voice. "I can't help it, Bubby," he said. "When you told me about dot grandma of yours, dot made me feel like crying. You see," he added in an apologetic key, "I got so much sentiment about me."

He was silent again for a little, and then again by and by he went on, "But I tell you what, Krekory, it's

awful lucky dot you came down to New York just exactly when you did. Uddervise—if you'd come tomorrow instead of to-day, for example—you wouldn't have found me no more. Tomorrow morning I start off on the road for a six weeks' trip. What you done, hey, if you come down to New York and don't find me, hey, Bubby? Dot would been fearful, hey? Well, now, Krekory, now about dot chop. Well, as I got to leaf town to-morrow morning, I ain't got the time to find you a first-class chop before I go. But I tell you what I do. I take you up and introduce you to my fader-in-law; and you stay mit him till I get back from my trip, and then I find you the best chop in the market, don't you be afraid. My fader-in-law was a cheweler of the name of Mr. Finkelstein, Mr. Gottlieb Finkelstein. He's one of the nicest gentlemen you want to know, Bubby, and he'll treat you splendid. As soon as you get through mit dot breakfast, I take you up and introduce you to him."

We went back to Mr. Marx's place of business, and got my traps; and then we took a horse-car up-town to Mr. Finkelstein's, which was in Third Avenue near Forty-Seventh Street. Mr. Marx talked to me about his father-in-law all the time.

"He's got more wit about him than any man of my acquaintance," he said, "and he's so fond of music. He's a vidower, you know, Bubby; and I married his only daughter, of the name of Hedwig. Me and my wife, we board; but Mr. Finkelstein, he lives up-stairs over his store, mit an old woman of the name of Henrietta, for houze-keeper. Well, you'll like him first-rate, Bubby, you see if you don't; and he'll like you, you got so much enerchy about you. My kracious! If you talk about eating, he sets one of the grandest tables in the United States. And he's so fond of music, Krek-ory—it's simply wonderful. But I tell you one thing, Bubby; don't you never let him play a game of pinochle mit you, or else you get beat all holler. He's the most magnificent pinochle player in New York City; he's simply A-number-one.. . . Hello! here we are."

We left the horse-car, and found ourselves in front of a small jeweler's shop, which we entered. The shop was empty, but, a bell over the door having tinkled in announcement of our arrival, there entered next moment from the room behind it an old gentleman, who, as soon as he saw Mr. Marx, cried, "Hello, Solly! Is dot you? Vail, I declare! Vail, how goes it?"

The very instant I first set eyes on him, I thought this was one of the pleasantest-looking old gentlemen I had ever seen in my life; and I am sure you would have shared my opinion if you had seen him, too. He was quite short—not taller than five feet two or three at the utmost—and as slender as a young girl; but he had a head and face that were really beautiful. His forehead was high, and his hair, white as snow and soft as silk, was combed straight back from it. A long white silky beard swept downward over his breast, half-way to his waist. His nose was a perfect aquiline, and it reminded me a little of my grandmother's, only it was longer and more pointed. But what made his face especially prepossessing were his eyes; the kindest, merriest eyes you can imagine; dark blue in color; shining with a mild, sweet light that won your heart at once, yet having also a humorous twinkle in them. Yes, the moment I first saw Mr. Finkelstein I took a liking to him; a liking which was ere a great while to develop into one of the strongest affections of my life.

"Vail, how goes it?" he had inquired of Mr. Marx; and Mr. Marx had answered, "First-class. How's yourself?"

"Oh! vail, pretty fair, tank you. I cain't complain. I like to be better, but I might be vorse. Vail, how's Heddie?"

"Oh! Hedwig, she's immense, as usual. Well, how's business?"

"Oh! don't aisk me. Poor, dirt-poor. I ain't made no sale vort mentioning dese two or tree days already. Only vun customer here dis morning yet, and he didn't buy nodings. Aifter exaiming five tousand tol-lars vort of goots, he tried to chew me down on a two tollar and a haif plated gold vatch-chain. Den I aisked him vedder he took my establishment for a back-handed owction, and he got maid and vent avay. Vail, I cain't help it; I must haif my shoke, you know, Solly. Vail, come along into de parlor. Valk in, set down, make yourself to home."

Without stopping his talk, he led us into the room behind the shop, which was very neatly and comfortably furnished, and offered us chairs. "Set down," said he, "and make yourself shust as much to home as if you belonged here. I hate to talk to a man stainding up. Vail, Solly, I'm real glaid to see you; but, tell me, Solly, was dis young shentleman mit you a sort of a body-guard, hey?"

"A body-guard?" repeated Mr. Marx, "how you mean?"

"Why, on account of de sword; I tought maybe you took him along for brodection."

"Ach, my kracious, fader-in-law, you're simply killing, you got so much wit about you," cried Mr. Marx, laughing.

"Vail, I must haif my shoke, dot's a faict," admitted Mr. Finkelstein. "Vail, Soily, you might as vail make us acqvainted, hey?"

"Well, dot's what brought me up here this morning, fader-in-law. I wanted to introduce him to you. Well, this is Mr. Krekory Prace—Mr. Finkelstein."

"Bleased to make your acqvaintance, Mr. Prace; shake hands," said Mr. Finkelstein. "And so your name was Kraikory, was it, Shonny? I used to know a Mr. Kraikory kept an undertaker's estaiblishment on Sixt Aivenue. Maybe he was a relation of yours, hey?"

"No, sir; I don't think so. Gregory is only my first name," I answered.

"Well, now, fader-in-law," struck in Mr. Marx, "you remember dot boy I told you about up in Nawvich, what jumped into the water, and saved me my fishing-pole already, de udder day?"

"Yes, Solly, I remember. Vail?"

"Well, fader-in-law, this was the boy."

"What! Go 'vay!" exclaimed Mr. Finkelstein. "You don't mean it! Vail, if I aifer! Vail, Shonny, let me look at you." He looked at me with all his eyes, swaying his head slowly from side to side as he did so. "Vail, I wouldn't haif believed, it, aictually."

"It's a fact, all de same; no mistake about it," attested Mr. Marx. "And now he's come down to New York, looking for a chop."

“A shop, hey? Vail, what kind of a shop does he vant, Solly? I should tink a shop by de vater-vorks vould be about his ticket, hey?”

“Oh! no shoking. Pusiness is pusiness, fader-in-law,” Mr. Marx protested. “Well, seriously, I guess he ain't particular what kind of a chop, so long as it's steady and has prospects. He's got so much enerchy and ambition about him, I guesss he'll succeed in 'most any kind of a chop. But first I guess you better let him tell you de reasons he leaf his home, and den you can give him your advice. Go ahead, Bubby, and tell Mr. Finkelstein what you told me down by the restaurant.”

“Yes, go ahead, Shonny,” Mr. Finkelstein added; and so for a second time that day I gave an account of myself.

Mr. Finkelstein was even a more sympathetic listener than Mr. Marx had been. He kept swaying his head and muttering ejaculations, sometimes in English, sometimes in German, but always indicative of his eager interest in my tale. “*Mein Gott!*” “*Ist's moglich?*” “You don't say so!” “Vail, if I aifer!” And his kind eyes were all the time fixed upon my face in the most friendly and encouraging way. In the end, “Vail, I declare! Vail, my kracious!” he cried. “Vail, Shonny, I naifer heard nodings like dot in all my life before. You poor little boy! All alone in de vorld, mit nobody but dot parparian, dot saivage, to take care of you. Vail, it was simply heart-rending. Vail, your Uncle Peter, he'd oughter be tarred and feddered, dot's a faict. But don't you be afraid, Shonny; God will punish him; He will, shust as sure as I'm sitting here, Kraikory. Oh! you're a good boy, Kraikory, you're a fine boy. You make me loaf you already like a fader. Vail, Shonny, and so now you was come down to New York mit de idea of getting rich, was you?”

“Yes, sir,” I confessed.

“Vail, dot's a first-claiss idea. Dot's de same idea what I come to dis country mit. Vail, now, I give you a little piece of information, Shonny; what maybe you didn't know before. Every man in dis vorld was born to get rich. Did you know dot, Shonny?”

“Why, no, sir; I didn't know it. Is it true?”

“Yes, sir; it's a solemn faict. I leaf it to Solly, here. Every man in dis vorld is born to get rich—only some of 'em don't live long enough. You see de point?”

Mr. Marx and I joined in a laugh. Mr. Finkelstein smiled faintly, and said, as if to excuse himself, “Vail, I cain't help it. I must haif my shoke.”

“The grandest thing about your wit, fader-in-law,” Mr. Marx observed, “is dot you don't never laugh yourself.”

“No; dot's so,” agreed Mr. Finkelstein. “When you get off a vitticism, you don't vant to laif yourself, for fear you might laif de cream off it.”

“Ain't he immense?” demanded Mr. Marx, in an aside to me. Then, turning to his father-in-law: “Well, as I was going to tell you, I got to leaf town to-morrow morning for a trip on the road; so I thought I'd ask you to let Krekory stay here mit you till I get back. Den I go to vork and look around for a chop for him.”

“Solly,” replied Mr. Finkelstein, “you got a good heart; and your brains is simply remarkable. You done shust exaictly right. I'm very glaid to have such a fine boy for a visitor. But look at here, Solly; I was tinking vedder I might not manufacture a shop for him myself.”

“Manufacture a chop? How you mean?” Mr. Marx queried.

“How I mean? How should I mean? I mean I ain't got no ready-mait shops on hand shust now in dis estaiblishment; but I might mainufacture a shop for the right party. You see de point?”

“You mean you'll make a chop for him? You mean you'll give him a chop here, by you?” cried Mr. Marx.

“Vail, Solomon, if you was as vise as your namesake, you might haif known dot mitout my going into so much eggsblanations.”

“My kracious, fader-in-law, you're simply elegant, you're simply loafly, and no mistake about it. Well, I svear!”

“Oh! dot's all right. Don't mention it. I took a chenu-wine liking to Kraikory; he's got so much enterprise about him,” said Mr. Finkelstein.

“Well, what sort of a chop would it be, fader-in-law?” questioned Mr. Marx.

“Vail, I tink I give him de position of clerk, errant boy, and sheneral assistant,” Mr. Finkelstein replied.

“Well, Krekory, what you say to dot?” Mr. Marx inquired.

“De question is, do you accept de appointment?” added Mr. Finkelstein.

“O, yes, sir!” I answered. “You're very, very kind, you're very good to me. I—” I had to stop talking, and take a good big swallow, to keep down my tears; yet, surely, I had nothing to cry about!

“Well, fader-in-law, what vages will you pay?” pursued Mr. Marx.

“Vail, Solly, what vages was dey paying now to boys of his age?”

“Well, they generally start them on two dollars a week.”

“Two tollars a veek, and he boards and clodes himself, hey?”

“Yes, fader-in-law, dot's de system.”

“Vail, Solly, I tell you what I do. I board and clode him, and give him a quarter a veek to get drunk on. Is dot saitisfaictory?”

“But, sir,” I hastened to put in, pained and astonished at his remark, “I—I don't get drunk.”

“O, Lord, Bubby!” cried Mr. Marx, laughing. “You're simply killing! He don't mean get drunk. Dot's only his witty way of saying pocket-money.”

“Oh! I—I understand,” I stammered.

“You must excuse me, Shonny,” said Mr. Finkelstein. “I didn't mean to make you maid. But I must haif my shoke, you know; I cain't help it. Vail, Solly, was de proposition saitisfaictory?”

“Well, Bubby, was Mr. Finkelstein's proposition satisfactory?” asked Mr. Marx.

“O, yes, sir! yes, indeed,” said I.

“Vail, all right; dot settles it,” concluded Mr. Finkelstein. “And now, Kraikory, I pay you your first veek's sailary in advaince, hey?” and he handed me a crisp twenty-five-cent paper piece.

I was trying, in the depths of my own mind, to calculate how long it would take me, at this rate, to earn the hundred dollars that I needed for my journey across the sea to my Uncle Florimond. The outlook was not encouraging. I remembered, though, a certain French proverb that my grandmother had often repeated to me, and I tried to find some consolation in it: “*Tout vient à la fin à qui sait attendre*”—Everything comes at last to him who knows how to wait.

CHAPTER IV—AT MR. FINKELSTEIN'S.

So you see me installed at Mr. Finkel-stein's as clerk, errand boy and general assistant. Next morning I entered upon the discharge of my duties, my kind employer showing me what to do and how to do it. Under his supervision I opened and swept out the store, dusted the counter, polished up the glass and nickel-work of the show-cases, and, in a word, made the place ship-shape and tidy for the day. Then we withdrew into the back parlor, and sat down to a fine savory breakfast that the old housekeeper Henrietta had laid there. She ate at table with us, but uttered not a syllable during the repast; and, much to my amazement, Mr. Finkelstein talked to me about her in her very presence as freely and as frankly as if she had been stone deaf, or a hundred miles away.

“She ain't exaictly what you call hainsome, Kraikory,” he said; “but she's as solid as dey make 'em. She was a second cousin of my deceased vife's, and she's vun of de graindest cooks in de United States of America. May be you don't believe it, hey? Vail, you shust vait till some day you eat vun of her big dinners, and den you'll see. I tell you what I do. When Solly gets back from de road I'll invite him and my daughter to dinner here de first Sunday aifternoon, shust on purpose for you to see de vay Henrietta can cook when she really settles down to pusiness. It's simply vunderful. You'll be surprised. De vay she cooks a raisined fish, sveet and sour—ach! it makes my mout vater shust to tink of it. Vail, she's awful *goot*-hearted-too, Kraikory; but so old —*du lieber Herr!* You couldn't hardly believe it. It's fearful, it's aictually fearful. Why, she's old enough to be my mudder, and I'm going on sixty-seven already. Dot's a solemn faict.”

“Is she deaf?” I asked.

“Daif?” he repeated. “Vail, my kracious! What put dot idea in your head? What in de vorld made you tink she's daif? She ain't no more daif as you are yourself.”

“Why,” I explained, “I thought she might be deaf, because she doesn't seem to notice what you're saying about her.”

“Oh! Vail, dot beats de deck. Dot's pretty goot. O, no! dot ain't becoase she's daif, Kraikory; dot's becoase she's so funny. She's vun of de funniest ladies in de city of New York. Why, look at here; she's lived in dis country going on forty years already; and she's so funny dot she ain't learned ten vorts of de English lainguage yet. Dot's as true as I'm alife. She don't understand what me and you are talking about, no more as if we spoke Spainish.”

After we had folded our napkins, “Vail, now, Kraikory,” began Mr. Finkelstein, “dis morning you got a lesson in being sheneral assistant already, don't you? Vail, now I give you a lesson in being errant boy. Come along mit me.” He led me to the front door of the shop, and, pointing to a house across the street, resumed, “You see dot peelding ofer dere, what's got de sign out, Ferdinand Flisch, photo-graipher? You see it all right, hey? Vail, now I tell you what you do. You run along ofer dere, and you climb up to de top floor, which is where Mr. Flisch's estaiblishment is situated, and you aisk to see Mr. Flisch, and you say to him, 'Mr. Flisch, Mr. Finkelstein sents you his coampliments, and chaillenges you to come ofer and play a little game of pinochle mit him dis morning'—you understand? Vail, now run along.”

Following Mr. Finkelstein's instructions, I mounted to the top story of the house across the way, and opened a door upon which the name Flisch was emblazoned in large gilt script. This door admitted me to a small ante-room; carpeted, furnished with a counter, several chairs, and a sofa, hung all round the walls with framed photographs, presumably specimens of Mr. Flisch's art, and smelling unpleasantly of the chemicals that photographers employ. A very pretty and very tiny little girl, who couldn't have been a day older than I, if she was so old, sat behind the counter, reading a book. At my entrance, she glanced up; and her eyes, which were large and dark, seemed to ask me what I wished.

“Please, I should like to see Mr. Flisch,” I replied to her tacit question.

“I'll go call him,” said she, in a voice that was as sweet as the tinkle of a bell. “Won't you sit down?” And she left the room.

In a minute or two she came back, followed by a short, plump, red-faced, bald-pated little old gentleman, with a brisk and cheery manner, who, upon seeing me, demanded, “Well, Sonny, what you want?”

I delivered the message that Mr. Finkel-stein had charged me with, and Mr. Flisch responded, “All right. I'll come right along with you now.” So in his company I recrossed the street. On the way he remarked, “Well, Sonny, I guess I never seen you before, did I? Was you visiting by Mr. Finkelstein, perhaps?”

“O, no, sir!” I answered, and proceeded to explain my status in Mr. Finkelstein's household.

“Well, Sonny, you'll have a mighty easy time of it,” Mr. Flisch informed me. “You won't die of hard work.

Mr. Finkelstein don't do no business. He don't need to. He only keeps that store for fun.”

“Now, Kraikory,” said my employer, when we had reached his door, “me and Mr. Flisch, we'll go in de parlor and play a little game of pinochle togedder; and now you sit down outside here in de store; and if any customers come, you call me.”

I sat in the store, with nothing to do, all the rest of the forenoon; but, idle though I was, the time passed quickly enough. What between looking out of the window at the busy life upon the street—a spectacle of extreme novelty and interest to me—and thinking about my own affairs and the great change that had suddenly come over them, my mind had plenty to occupy it; and I was quite surprised when all at once the clocks, of which there must have been at least a dozen in the shop, began to strike twelve. Thus far not one customer had presented himself. Just at this instant, however, the shop door opened, and the bell above it sounded. I got up to go and call Mr. Finkelstein; but when I looked at the person who had entered, I saw that it was no customer, after all. It was that same pretty little girl whom I had noticed behind the counter at Mr. Flisch's.

“I came to tell Mr. Flisch that his dinner is ready,” she announced, in that clear, sweet voice of hers.

“I'll go tell him,” said I.

I went into the back room, where the air was blue with tobacco smoke, and where the two old gentlemen were seated over their cards, and spoke to Mr. Flisch.

“All right, Sonny; I come right away,” he answered; and I returned to the store.

The little girl was still there, standing where I had left her.

“Mr. Flisch will come right away,” said I.

“Thank you,” said she.

And then, with undisguised curiosity, she and I just stood and scanned each other for a moment from the corners of our eyes. For my part, I was too bashful to make any advances, though I should have liked to scrape acquaintance with her; but she, apparently, had more courage, for, pretty soon, “What's your name?” she asked.

“My name is Gregory Brace. What's yours?”

“Mine is Rosalind Earle. How old are you?”

“I'm twelve, going on thirteen.”

“I'm eleven, going on twelve.”

And the next instant she had vanished like a flash.

Mr. Flisch shortly followed her; and it may have been a quarter of an hour later on, that my attention was suddenly arrested by the sound of music issuing from the back room, where Mr. Finkelstein remained alone. I recognized the tune as the Carnival of Venice; and it brought my heart into my mouth, for that was one of the tunes that my grandmother had used to play upon her piano. But now the instrument was not a piano. Unless my ears totally deceived me, it was a hand-organ. This struck me as very odd; and I went to the door of the parlor, and looked in. There sat Mr. Finkelstein, a newspaper open before him, and a cigar between his fingers, reading and smoking; while on the floor in front of him, surely enough, stood a hand-organ; and, with his foot upon the crank of it, he was operating the instrument just as you would operate the wheel of a bicycle.

GREGORY SURPRISES MR. FINKELSTEIN AT THE HAND-ORGAN.

Well, I couldn't help smiling, though I knew that it was unmannerly of me to do so. The scene was really too ludicrous for anything. Mr. Finkelstein appeared a little embarrassed when he spied me looking at him, and stopped his playing, and said rather sheepishly, with somewhat of the air of a naughty child surprised in mischief, “Vail, Kraikory, I suppose you tink I'm crazy, hey? Vail, I cain't help it; I'm so fond of music. But look at here, Kraikory; don't you say nodings to Solly about it, will you? Dere's a goot poy. Don't you mention it to him. He vouldn't naifer let me hear de laist of it.”

I having pledged myself to secrecy, Mr. Finkelstein picked the hand-organ up, and locked it away out of sight in a closet. But after we had had our dinner, he brought it forth again, and, not without some manifest hesitation, addressed me thus: “Look at here, Kraikory; dere's a proverp which says dot man is a creature of

haibits. Vail, Kraikory, I got a sort of a haibit to lie down and take a short naip every day aifter my meals. And say, Kraikory, you know how fond of music I am, don't you? I simply dote on it, Kraikory. I guess maybe I'm de fondest man of music in de United States of America. And—vail, look at here, Kraikory, as you ain't got nodings in particular to do, I tought maybe you vouldn't mind to sit here a few minutes, and—and shust turn dot craink a little while I go to sleep—hey?”

I assented willingly; so Mr. Finkelstein lay down upon his lounge, and I began to turn the crank, thereby grinding out the rollicking measures of Finnigan's Ball.

“My kracious, Kraikory, you do it splendid,” the old gentleman exclaimed, by way of encouragement. “You got a graind tailent for music, Kraikory.” Then I heard him chuckle softly to himself, and murmur, “I cain't help it, I aictually cain't. I must haif my shoke.” Very soon he was snoring peacefully.

Well, to cut a long story short, my first day at Mr. Finkelstein's passed smoothly by, and so did the next and the next. In a surprisingly short time I became quite accustomed to my new mode of life, and all sense of strangeness wore away. Every morning I opened and tidied up the shop; then we breakfasted; then the routine of the day began. As Mr. Flisch had predicted, I had a very easy time of it indeed. Every afternoon I played the hand-organ, while Mr. Finkelstein indulged in his siesta; almost every forenoon I tended the store, while he and Mr. Flisch amused themselves with pinochle in the parlor. Mr. Marx and his wife dined with us I should think as often as once a week; Henrietta surpassed herself on these occasions, and I came to entertain as high an opinion of her skill in cookery as my employer could have wished.

Between little Rosalind Earle and myself a great friendship rapidly sprang up. On week-days we caught only fleeting glimpses of each other; but almost every Sunday I used to go to see her at her home, which was in Third Avenue, a short distance above our respective places of business. Her father, who had been a newspaper reporter, was dead; and her mother, a pale sad lady, very kind and sweet, went out by the day as a dressmaker and seampstress. They were wretchedly poor; and that was why little Rosalind, who ought to have worn pinafores, and gone to school, had to work for her living at Mr. Flisch's, like a grownup person. But her education proceeded after a fashion, nevertheless. In her spare moments during the day she would study her lessons, and in the evening at home she would say them to her mother. Though she was my junior by a year and more, she was already doing compound interest in arithmetic, whereas I had never got beyond long division. This made me feel heartily ashamed of myself, and so I invested a couple of dollars in some second-hand schoolbooks, and thenceforth devoted my spare moments to study, too. Almost every Sunday, as I have said, I used to go to see her; and if the weather was fine, her mother would take us for an outing in Central Park, where we would have a jolly good time racing each other over the turf of the common, or admiring the lions and tigers and monkeys and hippopotamuses, at the Arsenal. Yes, I loved little Rosalind very dearly, and every minute that I spent at her side was the happiest sort of a minute for me.

Mr. Finkelstein, when he first noticed me poring over my school-books in the shop, expressed the liveliest kind of satisfaction with my conduct.

“Dot's right, Kraikory,” he cried. “Dot's maiknificent. Go ahead mit your education. Dere ain't nodings like it. A first-claiss education—vail, sir, it's de graindest advantage a feller can haif in de baittle of life. Yes, sir, dot's a faict. You go ahead mit your education, and you study real hard, and you'll get to be—why, you might get to be an alderman, no mistake about it. But look at here, Kraikory; tell me; where you got de books, hey? You bought 'em? You don't say so? Vail, what you pay for dem, hey, Kraikory? Two tollars! Two aictual tollars! My kracious! Vail, look at here, Kraikory; I like to make you a little present of dem books, so here's a two tollar pill to reimburse you. Oh! dot's all right. Don't mention it. Put it in de baink. Do what you please mit it. I got anudder.” And every now and then during the summer he would inquire, “Vail, Kraikory, how you getting on mit your education? Vail, I suppose you must know pretty much aiferydings by dis time, hey? Vail, now I give you a sum. If I can buy fife barrels of aipples for six tollars and a quowter, how much will seventeen barrels of potatoes coast me, hey?... Ach, I was only shoking, was I? Vail, dot's a faict; I was only shoking; and you was pretty smart to find it out. But now, shoking aside, I tell you what you do. You keep right on mit your education, and you study real hard, and you'll get to be—why, you might get to be as big a man as Horace Greeley, aictually.” Horace Greeley was a candidate for the presidency that year, and he had no more ardent partisan than my employer.

After the summer had passed, and September came, Mr. Finkelstein called me into the parlor one day, and began, “Now, look at here, Kraikory; I got somedings important to talk to you about. I been tinking about dot little maitter of your education a good deal lately; and I talked mit Solly about it, and got his advice; and at laist I made up my mind dot you oughter go to school. You got so much aimbition about you, dot if you get a first-claiss education while you're young, you might get to be vun of de biggest men in New York City aifter you're grown up. Vail, me and Solly, we talked it all ofer, and we made up our mind dot you better go to school right avay.

“Vail, now I tell you what I do. I found out de public schools open for de season next Monday morning. Vail, next Monday morning I take you up to de public school in Fifty-first Street, and I get you aidmitted. And now I tell you what I do. If you study real hard, and get A-number-vun marks, and cratchuate all right when de time comes—vail, den I send you to college! Me and Solly, we talked it all ofer, and dot's what we made up our minds we oughter do. Dere ain't nodings like a good education, Kraikory; you can bet ten tousand tollars on dot. When I was your age I didn't haif no chaince at vun; and dot's why I'm so eeknorant. But now you got de chaince, Kraikory; and you go ahead and take advaintage of it. My kracious! When I see you cratchuate from college, I'll be so prout I von!t know what to do.”

I leave you to form your own opinion of Mr. Finkelstein's generosity, as well as of the gratitude that it inspired in me. Next Monday morning I entered the public school in Fifty-first Street, and a little less than two years later—namely, in the spring of 1874—I graduated. I had studied “real hard,” and got “A-number-vun” marks; Mr. Finkelstein was as good as his word, and that same spring I passed the examinations for admission to the Introductory Class of the College of the City of New York.

Well, there! In a couple of sentences I have skipped over as many years; and not one word about the hero of my story!

“But what,” I can hear you ask, “what of your Uncle Florimond in all this time? Had you given up your idea of going to him? had you forgotten your ideal of him—had he ceased to be a moving force in your life?”

No; to each of these questions my answer must be a prompt and emphatic no.

I had not by any means given up my idea of going to him; but I had, for reasons that seemed good, put off indefinitely the day of my departure. Two or three weeks after my arrival at Mr. Finkelstein's I wrote Uncle Florimond a letter, and told him of the new turn that my affairs had taken. I did not say anything about my Uncle Peter's treatment of me, because I felt somehow reluctant to let him know how unjust and unkind his own sister's son, my own father's brother, could be, and because, also, I thought it would be scarcely fair and above-board for me to tell tales, now that our bygones were bygones. I simply said that I had left Norwich, and come to New York, and gone into business; and that my purpose was to earn a lot of money just as quickly as I could, and then to set sail for France.

I received no answer from him till about six months afterward; and in this he said that he was glad I meant to come to France, but he thought it was a pity that I should go into business so early in my youth, for that must of course interrupt my education.

I hastened to reply that, since I had written my former letter to him, my outlook had again changed; that my kind and liberal employer had sent me to school, where I was working as hard as I knew how, with the promise of a college course before me if I showed proper zeal and aptitude.

I had to wait more than a year now for his next epistle; but it came at last one day towards the close of the vacation that intervened between my graduation from school and the beginning of my career at college.

“I have been ill and in trouble, my dear little nephew,” he wrote, “since the reception of thy last letter so good and so gentle; and I have lacked both the force and the heart to write to thee. At this moment at length it goes better; and I seize the first occasion to take my pen. The news of the progress which thou makest in thy studies gives me an infinite pleasure, as does also thy hope of a course at the university. And though I become from more to more impatient to meet thee, and to see with my proper eyes the grandson of my adored sister, I am happy, nevertheless, to force myself to wait for an end so precious. That thou mayst become a gentleman well-instructed and accomplished, it is my sincere desire; for it is that, I am sure of it, which my cherished sister would most ardently have wished. Be then industrious; study well thy lessons; grow in spirit as in body; remember that, though thy name is different, thou art the last of the la Bourbonnaye. I astonish myself, however, that thy Uncle Peter does not charge himself with the expenses. Is it that he has not the means? I have believed him very rich.

“Present my respects to thy worthy patron, that good Finkelstein, who, though bourgeois and shopkeeper, I must suppose is a man of heart; and think ever with tenderness of thy old devoted uncle, de la Bourbonnaye.

“Paris, the 3 7ember, 1874.”

7ember was Uncle Florimond's quaint French way of writing September, *Sept,* as you know, being French for seven.

And now as to those other questions that you have asked me—so far was I from having forgotten my ideal of him, so far was he from having ceased to be a moving force in my life, I have not any doubt whatever that the thought of my relationship with him, and my desire to appear to advantage in his eyes, had a great deal to do with fostering my ambition as a scholar. Certainly, the nephew of Florimond Marquis de la Bourbonnaye must not let any boy of ordinary lineage stand above him in his classes; and then, besides, how much more highly would Uncle Florimond consider me, if, when we met, he found not an untutored ignoramus, but, in his own words, “a gentleman well-instructed and accomplished!”

During the two years that I have skipped over in such summary-fashion, my friendship with little Rosalind Earle had continued as active and as cordial as it had been at the beginning. She had grown quite tall, and even prettier than ever, with her oval face and olive skin, her soft brown hair and large dark eyes, and was really almost a young lady. She had kept pace with me in my studies also, I having acted as her teacher. Every Sunday at her home I would go over with her all my lessons for the past week, imparting to her as intelligently as I was able what I myself had learned. This would supply her with subject-matter for her study during the week to come; so that on the following Sunday she would be ready for a new send-off. This was capital drill for me, because, in order to instruct another, I had to see that my own knowledge was exact and thorough. And then, besides, I enjoyed these Sunday afternoon conferences with Rosalind so heartily, that they lightened the labor of learning, and made what to a boy is usually dull grind and drudgery, to me an abundant source of pleasure. Rosalind retained her situation at Mr. Flisch's, but her salary had been materially increased. She was only thirteen years old, yet she earned the dazzling sum of six dollars every week. This was because she had acquired the art of retouching negatives, and had thus trebled her value to her employer.

But I had made another friend during those two years, whose influence upon my life at that time was perhaps even greater than Rosalind's. Among my classmates at the school in Fifty-first Street there was a boy named Arthur Ripley, older than I, taller, stronger, a very handsome fellow, with blue eyes and curling hair, very bright, and seemingly very good-natured, whom I had admired privately from the moment I had first seen him. He, however, had taken no notice of me; and so we had never got especially well acquainted, until one day I chanced to hear him speak a few words of French; and his accent was so good that I couldn't help wondering how he had come by it.

“Say, then, Ripley,” I demanded, in the Gallic tongue, but with Saxon bluntness, “how does it happen that you speak French so well? Your pronunciation is truly extraordinary.”

“And why not?” he retorted. “I have spoken it since my childhood. My grandmother—the mother of my father—was a French lady.”

“Hold,” cried I. “Really? And so was mine.”

Thereupon we fell into conversation. We got on famously together. From that hour we were intimates. I was admitted into Ripley's “set,” which included all the nicest boys of the school; and Ripley invited me to his home, which, with its beautiful pictures and books and furnishings, and general air of comfort and

refinement, struck me as the loveliest place I had ever set my foot in, and where his mother and father made me feel instantly and entirely at my ease. They talked French to me; and little by little drew from me the whole story of my life; and when I had done, “Ah! my poor little one,” said his mother, with a tenderness that went straight to my heart, “how thy lot has been hard! Come, let me kiss thee.” And, “Hold, my little man,” said his father. “You are a good and brave boy, and I am glad that my son has found such a comrade. Moreover, do you know, you come of one of the most illustrious families not only of France, but even of Europe? The la Bourbonnaye are of the most ancient nobility, and in each generation they have distinguished themselves. At Paris there is an important street named for them. A Marquis de la Bourbonnaye won great celebrity as an admiral under Louis xv.; another, his son, I believe, was equally renowned as a royalist general during the revolution.”

“Yes, sir,” I put in, delighted at his familiarity with the history of our house; “they were the father and the grandfather of my grandmother.”

“But I had supposed that the family was extinct. You teach me that it survives still in the person of your Uncle Florimond. I am content of it.”

Arthur Ripley and I became as intimate as only boys, I think, can become. We were partners in tops, marbles, décalcomanies, and postage stamps. We spent the recess hour together every day. We walked home together every afternoon. We set out pleasure hunting almost every Saturday—now to watch or to take part in a base-ball match, now to skate in Central Park, now to row on the Harlem River, now to fish in the same muddy stream, where, to the best of my recollection, we never so much as got a single bite. He was “Rip,” to me, and to him I was “Greg.” We belonged, as has been said, to the same set at school; at college we joined the same debating society, and pledged ourselves to the same Greek-letter fraternity.

He was the bravest, strongest fellow I ever knew; a splendid athlete; excelling in all sports that required skill or courage. He was frankness, honesty, generosity personified; a young prince whom I admired and loved, who compelled love and admiration from everybody who knew him. In the whole school there was not a boy whom Ripley couldn't whip; he could have led us all in scholarship as well, only he was careless and rather lazy, and didn't go in for high standing, or that sort of thing. He wrote the best compositions, however, and made the best declamations. I tell you, to hear him recite Spartacus's address to the gladiators—“Ye call me chief, and ye do well to call him chief who for twelve long years has met upon the bloody sands of the arena every shape of man and beast that the broad empire of Rome could furnish”—I tell you, it was thrilling. Ripley's father was a lawyer; and he meant to be a lawyer, too. So far as he was responsible for it, Ripley's influence over me was altogether good. What bad came of my association with him, I alone was to blame for.

Some bad did come, and now I must tell you about it.

He and the other boys of our circle were gentlemen's sons, who lived with their parents in handsome houses, wore fine clothes, had plenty of pocket-money, and generally cut a very dashing figure; whereas I—I was the dependent of a petty Third-Avenue Jewish shopkeeper; I had scarcely any pocket-money whatever; and as for my clothes—my jackets were usually threadbare, and my trousers ornamented at an obtrusive point with two conspicuous patches, that Henrietta had neatly inserted there—trousers, moreover, which had been originally designed for the person of Mr. Marx, but which the skillful Henrietta had cut down and adjusted to my less copious proportions.

And now the bad, if perhaps not unnatural, result of all this was to pique my vanity, and to arouse in me a certain false and quite wrong and improper shame of my condition. I was ashamed because I could not spend money as my companions did; I was ashamed of my shabby clothing; I was ashamed of my connection with Mr. Finkelstein; I was even a little ashamed of my intimacy with Rosalind Earle, for she too occupied a very humble station in the world.

And, as the obverse of this false shame, I became inflated with a pride that was equally false and wrong. I was as good a gentleman as anybody, if not better. I was the dependent of a Third-Avenue shopkeeper, true enough. But I was also the nephew of the Marquis de la Bourbonnaye. And I am afraid that I got into the habit of bragging a good deal about my relationship with that aristocratic person. Anyhow, my state of mind was not by any means a wholesome or a happy one; and by and by it bore practical consequences that were not wholesome or happy either.

CHAPTER V—PRIDE AND A FALL.

Arthur Ripley, as I have said, meant to be a lawyer. He was full of enthusiasm for his future profession, and never tired of talking about it. In his room at home he had three or four big law-books, bound in yellow calf-skin, which he used to read for his pleasure, just as we other boys would read our story-books; and he seemed to know their contents by heart. At least, we gave him the credit for knowing them by heart. He passed among us for little less than a Solomon of legal wisdom. His opinion upon a legal question had, to our thinking, the authority of a judgment from the bench; and if one of our number had got into a legal difficulty of any sort, I am sure he would have gone to Ripley for aid and counsel as readily and as confidently as to the most eminent jurist at the bar.

This being premised, you will easily understand the impression made upon me by the following conversation which I had with Ripley one day in the early summer of 1875.

We had just passed our examinations for promotion from the Introductory to the Freshman class at college, and our consequent vacation had just begun. I was minding the shop, while Messrs. Flisch and Finkelstein

smoked their cigars and played their pinochle in the back room, and Ripley was keeping me company. We had been talking about my grandmother; and presently Ripley queried: “Look here, Greg, she was a woman of some property, wasn't she? I mean to say she lived in good style, had plenty of money, was comfortable and well-to-do, hey?”

“Why, yes,” I answered, “she was pretty well-off—why, about as well as anybody in Norwich Town, I suppose. Why do you ask?”

“Because—what I should like to know is, why didn't she leave anything to you?”

“Why, how could she? I was only her grandchild. My Uncle Peter was her son. Don't you see?”

“But that doesn't make any difference. Your father being dead, you were, equally with your uncle, her legal heir and next-of-kin. And as long as she was so fond of you, it seems kind of funny she didn't provide for you in any way.”

“What do you mean by her legal heir and next-of-kin?”

“Don't you know that? Why, a legal heir and next-of-kin is a person entitled to take under the statutes of descent and distribution. For instance, if your grandmother had died intestate, you would have come in for half of all the property she left, your Uncle Peter taking the other half. See the point?”

“Can't say I do. You're too high-up for me, with your legal slang. What does intestate mean?”

“Why, intestate—why, that means without having made a will. When a person dies without leaving a will, he is said to have died intestate.”

“Well, I guess my grandmother died intestate, then. I don't believe she left any will.”

“She didn't? Why, if she didn't leave a will—Oh! but she must have. Look here, Greg, this is serious. Are you sure she didn't?”

“O, no! of course I'm not sure. I never thought of the matter before, and so I can't be sure. But I don't believe she did.”

“But, Greg, if she didn't—if she didn't leave a will, disinheriting you, and bequeathing everything to Peter—man alive, what are you doing here in old Finkelstein's jewelry shop? Why, Greg, you're rich. You're absolute owner of half of her estate.”

“O, no! I'm perfectly sure she never did that. If she made any will at all, she didn't disinherit me, and give everything to Uncle Peter. She cared a great deal more for me than she did for Uncle Peter. I'm sure she never made a will favoring him above me. I always supposed that she had died, as you call it, intestate; and so, he being her son, the property had descended to him in the regular course of events.”

“But don't I tell you that it wouldn't have descended to him? It would have descended to both of you in equal shares. Here's the whole business in a nut-shell: either she did leave a will, cutting you off with a shilling; or else you're entitled to fifty cents in every dollar that she owned.”

“But I have never received a penny. If what you say is true, how do you account for that?”

“There's just the point. If your idea about the will is correct, your Uncle Peter must be a pretty rogue indeed. He's been playing a sharp game, Greg, and cheating you out of your rights. And we can make it hot enough for him, I tell you. We can compel him to divide up; and inside of a month you'll be rolling in wealth.”

“Oh! come, Rip,” I protested, “fen fooling a fellow about a thing like this.”

“But I'm not fooling. I never was more in earnest in all my life. It's as plain as the nose on your face. There are no two ways about it. Ask anybody.”

“But—but then—but then I'm rich—rich!”

“That's what you are, unless, by a properly executed will, your grandmother disinherited you.”

“But I tell you I know she never did that. It stands to reason that she didn't.”

“Well, sir, then it only remains for you to claim your rights at the hands of your amiable uncle, and to open a bank account.”

“O my goodness! O, Rip! Oh! it's impossible. It's too—too glorious to be true,” I cried, as a realizing sense of my position rushed upon me. My heart was pounding like a hammer against my ribs; my breath was coming short and swift; my brain was in a whirl. I felt dazzled and bewildered; and yet I felt a wondrous, thrilling joy, a great glow of exultation, that sent me dancing around the shop like a maniac, wringing my hands in self-congratulation.

I was rich! Only think, I was rich! I could take my proper station now, and cut my proper figure in the world. Good-by, patched trousers, good-by, shop, good-by all such low, humiliating things. Welcome opulence, position, purple and fine linen. Hurrah! I would engage a passage upon the very first, the very fastest steamer, and sail away to that brilliant, courtly country where my Uncle Florimond, resplendent in the trappings of nobility, awaited me with open arms, there to live in the state and fashion that would become the nephew of a marquis. I would burn my plebeian ships behind me. I would do this, that, and the other wonderful thing. I saw it all in a single radiant glance.

But what you see more plainly than anything else, I did not see at all.

I did not see that I was accepting my good fortune in an altogether wrong and selfish spirit. I did not see that my first thought in my prosperity ought to have been for those who had stood by me in my adversity. I did not see that my first impulse ought to have been now to make up in some wise to my friend and benefactor, Mr. Finkelstein, for his great goodness and kindness to me. I did not see that I was an arrant little snob, an ungrateful little coxcomb. A mixture of false shame and evil pride had puffed me up like so much inflammable gas, which—Ripley having unwittingly applied the spark to it—had now burst into flame.

“O, Rip!” I cried again, “it's too glorious to be true.”

“Well, now,” cut in Ripley, “let's be practical. What you want to do is step into your kingdom. Well, to-day's Saturday, isn't it? Well, now, I propose that day after to-morrow, Monday, you and I go to Norwich. There we can make a search in the Probate Office, and find out for certain just how the facts stand. Then we can come back here and put the case in the hands of my father, who's a lawyer, and who will have a guardian appointed

for you, and do everything else that's necessary. See? Now, the question is, Will you go to Norwich with me Monday night?”

“Won't I, though!” was my response.

And then Rip and I just sat there in the shop, and talked, and talked, and talked, planning out my life for the future, and wondering exactly how rich I was going to be. We surmised that my grandmother could not possibly have left less than a hundred thousand dollars, in which event I should come in for a cool fifty thousand. We employed the strongest language at our command to stigmatize my Uncle Peter's rascality in having for so long a time kept me out of my just rights; and we gloated in imagination over his chagrin and his discomfiture when we should compel him to render an account of his stewardship and to disgorge my portion of our inheritance. I declared it as my intention to go to my Uncle Florimond in Paris as soon as the affair was finally settled; and Ripley agreed that that would be the appropriate thing for me to do—“Though, of course,” he added, “I shall feel awfully cut up at our separation. Still, it's undoubtedly the thing for you to do. It's what I would do if I were in your place. And, O, Scottie! Greg, won't old Finkelstein and your other Hebrew friends open their eyes?”

“Won't they, though!” I returned, reveling in fancy over their astonishment and their increased respect for me, after I should have explained to them my sudden and tremendous rise in the world. But in this particular I was destined to disappointment; for when, as soon as Ripley had gone home, I joined Mr. Finkelstein in the parlor, and conveyed to him the joyful information, he, having heard me through without any sign of especial wonder, remarked:—

“Vail, Kraikory, I suppose you vant me to conkraitulate you, hey? Vail, it's a graind ting to be rich, Kraikory, and no mistake about it. And I shust tell you dis, Kraikory: dere ain't nobody in de United States of America vould be glaidder if ainy goot luck haippened to you, as I vould be. I'm awful fond of you, Kraikory, and dere ain't nodings what I vant more as to see you haippy and prosperous. De only trouble is, Kraikory, dot I ain't so sure as dis vould be such awful goot luck, aifter all. For, to tell you de honest troot, Kraikory, I don't like de vay you take it. No, I aictually don't. You're too stuck-up and prout about it, Kraikory; and I hate to see you stuck-up and prout. It ain't nice to be prout, Kraikory; it ain't what you call manly; and I simply hate to see you do ainydings what ain't nice and manly—I'm so fond of you, don't you understand? Den, ainyhow, Kraikory, de Bible says dot prite goes before destruction, and a howty spirit before a fall; and dot's a solemn faict, Kraikory; dey do, shust as sure as you're alife. De Bible's shust exaictly right, Kraikory; you can bet ten tousand tollars on it. Why, I myself, I seen hundreds of fellers get stuck-up and prout already; and den de first ting dey knew, dey bust all to pieces like a goot-for-nodings boiler. Yes, siree, if I was as prout as you are, Kraikory, I'd feel afraid.

“No, Kraikory, I don't like de vay you take it, and I really tink if you get dis money what you're talking about, I really tink it'll spoil you, Kraikory; and dot's why I cain't conkraitulate you de vay you vant me to. You ain't been like yourself for a pretty long while now already, Kraikory. I ain't said nodings about it; but I seen it all de same; and Solly seen it, and Heddie, she seen it, and Mr. Flisch seen it, and Henrietta seen it, and we all seen it, and we all felt simply fearful about it. And now I tink it shust needs dis money to spoil you altogedder. I hate to say ainydings to hurt your feelings, Kraikory, but dot's my honest opinion; and me and you, we'd oughter be goot enough friends to talk right out to each udder like fader and son. De faict is, Kraikory, I've loafed you shust exaictly de same as if we was fader and son; and dot's de reason it makes me feel so awful to see you get stuck-up and prout. But you was a goot boy down deep, Kraikory, and I guess you'll turn out all right in de end, if dis here money don't spoil you. You got a little foolishness about you, which is necheral to your age. When I was your age I was a big fool, too.

“Vail, and so, shust as soon as de maitter's settled, you're going to Europe, are you, to live mit your Uncle Florimond in Pairis? Vail, dot's all right, Kraikory, if you like to do it. I ain't got no pusiness to make ainy obshections, dot's sure. All I got to say, Kraikory, is dis: Your Unde Florimond, he may be an awful fine feller, and I guess likely he is; but I don't know as he's aifer done much of ainydings for you; and if I was in your place, I'd feel sorter sorry to stop my education, and leaf de old friends what I was certain of, and go to a new friend what I hadn't naifer tried; dot's all. Vail, if you vant to go, I suppose you'll go; and Solly and me and Henrietta and dot little kirl ofer by Mr. Flisch, vail, we'll have to get along mitout you de best vay we can. I guess dot little Rosie, I guess she'll feel pretty baid about it, Kraikory; but I don't suppose dot'l make much difference to you, to shush by de vay you talk. Poor little ting! She's awful fond of you, Kraikory, and I guess she'll feel pretty lonesome aifter you've gone avay. Oh! vail, I suppose she von't die of it. Dere are plenty udder young fellers in dis vorld, and I don't suppose she'll cry herself to dead for you. All de same, I guess she'll feel pretty baid first off; but dot's your business, and not mine.

“Vail, let me see. To-day's Saturday; and you're going to Nawvich Monday night. Vail, dot's all right. I ain't got nodings to say against dot. I shust give you vun little piece of advice, dough, Kraikory, and dot is dis: If I was in your place, I vouldn't feel too awful sure of dis here money, until I'd aictually got hold of it, for fear I might be disappointed. Dere's a proverp which goes, 'Dere's a great mainy slips between de cup and de lips,' Kraikory; and dot's a solemn faict, which I advice you to remember.”

This sermon of Mr. Finkelstein's made me feel very sore indeed; but I felt sorer still next day, when Rosalind—whom I was calling upon, and to whom I had just communicated the momentous news—when Rosalind, with flushed cheeks and flashing eyes, assailed me thus:—

"O, GREGORY BRACE! OH! SHAME ON YOU," SAID ROSALIND.

"O, Gregory Brace! Oh! shame on you. Oh! I don't know you. I can't believe it's you. I can't believe it's the same boy at all. Such selfishness! Such ingratitude! Such a proud hard heart! It's been as much as anyone could do to put up with you for ever and ever so long, you've been so vain and so conceited and everything; but this just caps the climax. Oh! think of poor Mr. Finkelstein. He's been so good and generous to you, and so fond of you; and he's sent you to school and college, and given you every advantage he possibly could; and you owe him so much, and you're under such great obligations to him, for he took you right out of the streets, and gave you a home, and made a son of you, instead of a servant—yes, he did—and now the very first thing that you propose to do, as soon as you're able to, is to leave him, to abandon him—oh! you ungrateful thing—and go to your horrid old French uncle, who, I don't believe cares the snap of his finger for you. He is horrid, too; and I hope he'll just treat you horribly, just to punish you. And I hope that Arthur Ripley is mistaken, and that you won't get a single penny from your Uncle Peter, but just a good whipping to take you down; and I hope you'll have to come back to Mr. Finkelstein, and humbly beg his pardon; yes, I do, with all my heart and soul. I'd just like to see you have to come down from your high horse and eat humble pie for a while; yes, I would. The idea! Desert Mr. Finkelstein! You, who might have been begging in the streets, except for him! I should think you'd be ashamed to look me in the face. Oh! you mean to give him a good round sum of money, do you, to pay him for what he's done for you? Why, how very liberal and noble you are, to be sure! As though money could pay for what Mr. Finkelstein has done for you! As though money were what he wants from you, and not love and affection! O, Gregory! you've changed so that I don't know you, and I don't like you at all any more, and I don't care to be friends with you any more, and you needn't come to see me any more. There!"

Yes, I felt very sore and very angry. What Rosalind said only served to exasperate and embitter me, and to make me grit my teeth, and pursue all the more doggedly my own selfish purpose.

Well, on Monday night, according to our agreement, Ripley and I set out for Norwich, passengers aboard the very same steamboat, the City of Lawrence, that I had come to New York by, three years before; and bright and early Tuesday morning we reached our destination.

I only wish I could spare a page to tell you something of the emotions that I felt as we came in sight of the dingy old town. It had not changed the least bit in the world; it was like the face of an old familiar friend; it called up before me my own self of former years; it brought a thousand memories surging upon me, and filled my heart with a strong, unutterable melancholy, that was yet somehow indescribably sweet and tender.

But Ripley and I had no time for the indulgence of sentiment. "Now, then, where's the Court House? Where's the Probate Office?" he demanded as soon as we had set foot upon the dry land. "We must pitch right in, without losing a moment."

So I led him to the Probate Court; and there he "pitched right in" with a vengeance, examining the indices to lots of big written books of records, while I stood by to hand them to him, and to put them back in their places when he had finished with them—until, after an hour or so, he announced, "Well, Greg, you're right. She left no will."

Then he continued: "Now we must find out the date upon which Peter took out his Letters of Administration, and also whether he had himself constituted your guardian, as he most likely did; and then we'll have all the facts we need to establish your claims, and put you in possession."

Thereupon he attacked another set of big written volumes, and with these he was busy as long as two hours more. In the end, "By Jingo, Greg," he cried, "here's a state of things! He didn't take out any Letters of Administration at all."

"Well," I queried, not understanding the meaning of this circumstance, "what of that? What does that signify?"

"Why, that signifies an even darker and more systematic piece of fraud than I had suspected. In order to cheat you out of your share, he failed to comply with the law. He didn't go through the proper formalities to get control of her property, but simply took possession of it without authority. And now we've got him completely at our mercy. We could prosecute him criminally, if we liked. We could send him to State Prison. Oh! won't we make him hop? I say, Greg, do you want to have some fun?"

"How? What way?"

"Well, sir, if you want to have some fun, I'll tell you what let's do. Let's go call on your Uncle Peter, and confront him with this little piece of villainy, and politely ask him to explain it: and then see him squirm. It'll sort of square accounts with him for the number of times he's given you a flogging."

“O, no! I—I guess we'd better not,” I demurred, faltering at the prospect of a personal encounter with my redoubtable relative.

“But, man alive, you have nothing to fear. We've got the whip-hand of him. Just think, we can threaten him with criminal prosecution. Oh! come on. It'll be the jolliest kind of a lark.”

Well, I allowed myself to be persuaded; and we set forth for Uncle Peter's office, Ripley all agog for excitement, and I trying not to appear afraid. But Uncle Peter wasn't in. An oldish man, who seemed to be in charge, informed us that the Jedge had got a touch of the rheumatiz, and was stayin' hum.

“Never mind,” said Ripley to me; “we'll visit him at his home, we'll beard him in his den. Come along!”

I tried to beg off, but Rip insisted; and I weakly gave in.

If I had been stirred by strong emotions at the sight of Norwich City, conceive how much more deeply I was stirred when we reached Norwich Town—when I saw our old house peeping out from among the great elm-trees that embosomed it—when I actually stood upon its doorstep, with my hand upon the old brass knocker! A strange servant girl opened the door, and to my request to see Judge Brace, replied, “The Jedge is sick in his room.”

“That doesn't matter,” I explained. “You know, I am his nephew. Tell him his nephew Gregory wants to see him.” And I marched boldly through the hall—where the same tall eight-day clock, with its silver face that showed the phases of the moon, was ticking just as it had used to tick as long ago as I could remember—and into the parlor, Ripley following. I say I marched in boldly, yet I was really frightened half to death, as the moment of a face-to-face meeting with my terrible uncle became so imminent. There in the parlor stood the piano upon which my grandmother had labored so patiently to teach me to play. There hung the oil portrait of her, in her robe of cream-colored silk, taken when she was a beautiful young girl, and there, opposite it, above the fireplace, the companion-picture of my Uncle Florimond, in his lieutenant's uniform, with his sword and his crimson sash. Ripley started back a little when he saw this painting, and cried, “For mercy's sake, Greg, who is it? I never saw anything like it. The same eyes, nose, mouth, chin, everything. It's you all over”—thus confirming what my grandmother used to tell me: “Gregory, thou art his living image.” The room was haunted by a myriad dear associations. I forgot the errand that had brought me there; I forgot my fear of meeting Uncle Peter; I forgot all of the recent past, and was carried back to the happiest days of my childhood; and my heart just swelled, and thrilled, and ached. But next instant it gave a great spasmodic leap, and stood still for a second, and then began to gallop ahead like mad, while a perspiration broke out over my forehead; for the maid-servant entered, and said “Please walk upstairs to the Jedge's room.” I really thought I should faint. It was as much as I could do to get my breath. My knees knocked together. My hands shook like those of an aged palsy-stricken man. However, there was no such thing as backing out at this late date; so I screwed my courage to the sticking place, and led Ripley upstairs to Uncle Peter's room.

Uncle Peter was seated in an arm-chair, with his legs, wrapped in a comforter, stretched out on another chair in front of him. He never so much as said how-d'-ye-do? or anything; but at once, scowling at us, asked in his gruffest voice, “Well, what do you want?”

I was so afraid and so abashed that I could hardly speak; but I did contrive to point at Ripley, and gasp, “He—he'll tell you.”

“Well,” snapped Uncle Peter, turning to my spokesman, “go on. State your business.”

“Well, sir,” began Rip—and O, me! as I listened to him, didn't my wonder at his wisdom, and my admiration of his eloquence, mount up a peg?—“well, sir, our business is very simple, and can be stated in a very few words. The amount of it is simply this. My friend Gregory Brace, being the only child of Edward Brace, deceased, who was a son of your mother, Aurore Brace, deceased, is, equally with yourself, the heir and next-of-kin of the said decedent, and would, in the event of her having died intestate, divide share and share alike with you whatever property she left. Now, sir, we have caused a search to be made in the records of the Probate Court of this County, and we find that the said decedent did in fact die intestate. It, therefore, became your duty to petition for Letters of Administration upon her estate; to cite Gregory Brace to show cause why such Letters should not be issued; to cause a guardian *ad litem* to be appointed to act for him in the proceedings; to cause a permanent guardian to be appointed for him after the issuance of said Letters; and then to apply the rents, profits, and income of one undivided half of the estate of said decedent to his support, maintenance and education, allowing what excess there might be to accrue to his benefit. Well, sir, examination proves that you have performed none of these duties; that you have illegally and without warrant or authority possessed yourself of the whole of said estate, thereby committing a fraud upon the said Gregory Brace, and violating the statutes in such case made and provided. And now, sir, we have come here to give you notice that it is our intention to put this matter at once into the hands of an attorney, with directions that he proceed against you, both criminally and civilly.” Uncle Peter heard Ripley through without interrupting, though an ugly smile flickered about his lips. When Rip had done, he lay back in his chair, and gave a loud harsh laugh. Then he drew a long, mock-respectful face, and in a very dry, sarcastic manner spoke as follows:—

“Why, my young friend, you talk like a book. And what profound and varied knowledge of the law you do possess, to be sure! Why, I must congratulate my nephew upon having found such an able and sagacious advocate. And really, I cannot see the necessity of your calling in the services of an attorney, for a person of your distinguished calibre ought certainly to be equal to conducting this dual prosecution, both civil and criminal, single-handed. My sakes alive!” he cried, with a sudden change of tone and bearing. “Do you know what I've a great mind to do with you and your client, my fine young fellow? I've a great mind to cane you both within an inch of your precious lives, and send you skulking away, with your tails between your legs, like two whipped puppies. But, bless me, no! You're neither of you worth the trouble. So I'll spare my rod, and spoil your fancy, by giving you a small measure of information. Now, then, pray tell me, Mr. Advocate, what is your valuation of the property which the 'said decedent' left?”

Ripley, nothing daunted, answered, “At least a hundred thousand dollars.”

“At least a hundred thousand dollars,” repeated Uncle Peter; “well, that's a pretty sum. Well, now, what would you say, my learned friend, if I should tell you that she didn't leave a penny?”

“I should say it was very extraordinary, and that I couldn't believe it. She was the widow of a wealthy man. She lived in good style. It stands to reason that she couldn't have died penniless.”

“And so it does; it stands to reason, as you say; and yet penniless she was when she died, and penniless she had been for ten years before; and if she lived in good style, it was because I paid the bills; and if this young cub, my nephew, wore good clothes and ate good dinners, it was my charity he had to thank. Little by little, stick by stick, my mother disposed of all the property her husband left her, selling the bulk of it to me, and sending the proceeds to France, to help to reconstruct the fortunes of her family there, who were ruined by the revolution. She was a pauper when she died; and that's why I took out no Letters of Administration—because there was nothing to administrate upon. There, now I've told you more than I was under any obligation to; and now, both of you, get out!”

“Come, Greg,” said Rip, “let's go.”

We went. Out of doors, I began, “Well, Rip”—

“Well, Greg,” Rip interrupted, “we've been on a fool's errand, a wild-goose chase, and the less said about it the better.”

“And I—I'm not rich, after all?”

“That's what's the matter, Greg. If she didn't leave any property—you see, we took it for granted that she did—why, there's nothing for you to inherit. It's too bad, old fellow; but then, you're no worse off than you were in the beginning. Anyhow, there's no use crying over spilt milk. Come on; let's take the afternoon train to New York.”

So my fine castle in the air had fallen to pieces like a house of cards. I tell you, it was a mighty crest-fallen young gentleman, in a very humble frame of mind, who sat next to Arthur Ripley that afternoon in the train that was speeding to New York.

CHAPTER VI—MY UNCLE FLORIMOND.

Yes, indeed, it was a very crest-fallen youth who accompanied Arthur Ripley back to New York that bright summer afternoon, and who toward bed-time that evening stole quietly into Mr. Finkelstein's shop. It was hard work under the circumstances to return to Mr. Finkelstein's. I had to swallow my pride in doing so, and it proved to be an exceedingly unpalatable dose. I had expected to return a young prince, in princely style, to dazzle my plebeian friends with my magnificence, and overwhelm them with my bounteous generosity; and now, in point of fact, I came back poorer than I had gone away, a beggar and a dependent, one who would be homeless and penniless if they should refuse to take him in. It was a dreadful come-down. I think, if there had been anywhere else for me to go, I should never have returned to Mr. Finkelstein's at all, it mortified my vanity so cruelly to have to do it. I felt as though I should like to seek out some obscure hiding-place in the remotest quarter of the world, and bury myself there forever from the sight of men. “O, Rip!” I cried, “I should just like to bag my head.”

Of course, as I opened the shop door, the bell above it must needs tinkle; and in response to this summons Mr. Finkelstein himself issued from the parlor.

“What, Kraikory!” he exclaimed at sight of me. “Back so soon? Ach! I tought it was a customer. Vail, it's you yourself, and no mistake about it.”

“Yes, sir,” I replied, “we came back on the train this afternoon.”

“Ach, so? You came back on de train dis aifternoon? Vail, vail, valk in, set down, make yourself to home. Vail, Kraik-ory, I'm real glaid to see you. Vail, it's all right, I suppose? You got de money, hey? Vail, was it more or less as you expected? Was it fifty tousand, or a hundred, or maybe only terventy-fife? Vail, set down and tell me all about it.”

“N-no, sir,” I began, rather tremulously; “it—we—there—there was a mistake. She—I mean to say my grandmother—she didn't leave any money, after all. She didn't have any to leave. She was quite poor, instead of rich, and—and my Uncle Peter, he supported her. He owned the house and everything. He had bought it from her, and she had sent the money to France. So—I—that is—you see”—I broke down. I could get no further.

“Ach, dere, dere, Kraikory,” cried Mr. Finkelstein, as my emotion betrayed itself, and he laid his hand caressingly upon my shoulder; “dere, dere, don't you go feel baid about it, my dear little poy.” Then he caught himself up. “Excuse me, Kraikory; I didn't mean to call you a little poy; I forgot. But don't you go feel baid about it, all de same. You ain't no vorse off as you was before already. Put it down to experience, Kraikory, sharsh it to experience. It's allright. You got a comfortable home here by me. You needn't feel so awful about it. Come, sheer up, Kraikory. Don't tink about it no more. Come along inside mit me, and Henrietta will get you somedings to eat. We ain't got no faitted caif to kill in your honor, Kraikory, but we got some of de finest liver sowsage in de United States of America; and ainyhow, Kraikory, veal is a fearful dry meat. Ach, dere, dere, for mercy's sake, don't you feel baid. I get off a shoke shust on purpose to make you laif, and you don't naifer notice it. Ach, Kraikory, don't feel baid. I simply hate to see you feel baid, Kraikory; I simply cain't staind it. I give ten tousand tollars right out of my own pocket sooner as see you feel baid, Kraikory; I'm so fond of you, don't you understand?”

My heart melted all at once like ice in sunshine. Tears sprang to my eyes. “Oh! my dear, dear Mr. Finkelstein,” I sobbed, “you are so good to me. Oh! can—can you ever—for—forgive the—the way I've acted? I

—I'm—I'm so sorry for it."

"My kracious, Kraikory, don't talk like dot. If you talk like dot, you make me aict so foolish I be ashamed to show my face. You make me cry like a raikular old voman, Kraikory; you aictually vill. Ach, dere I go. Ach, my kracious! Ach! I cain't help it. Ach, what—what an old fool I am.... Kraikory—my boy—my son—come here, Kraikory—come here to me. O, Kraikory! I loaf you like a fader. O, Kraikory! you know what I tought? I tought I loast you foraifer, Kraikory. O, Kraikory! I'm so glaid to haif you back. Ach, Kraikory, God is good." The tears rolled downward from his dear old eyes, and pattered like rain-drops upon my cheeks. He had clasped me in his arms.

From that hour I took up my old place at Mr. Finkelstein's, in a humbler, healthier, and, on the whole, happier frame of mind than I had known for many a long day before. My heart had been touched, and my conscience smitten, by his loving kindness.

I was sincerely remorseful for the ungrateful manner in which I had behaved toward him, and for the unworthy sentiments that I had cherished. I strove honestly, by amending my conduct, to do what I could in the way' of atonement.

Incidentally, moreover, my little adventure had brought me face to face with some of the naked facts of life. In a grim and vivid tableau it had shown me what a helpless and dependent creature I was; how for the sheer necessities of food, shelter and clothing I must rely upon the charity of other people. I tried now to make myself of real value to my patron, of real use in the shop and about the house, and thus in some measure to render an equivalent for what he did for me. Instead of going off afternoons to amuse myself with Ripley, I would remain at home to improve such chances as I had to be of service to Mr. Finkelstein. I would play the hand-organ for him, or read aloud to him, or take charge of the shop, while he slept, or enjoyed his game of pinochle with Mr. Flisch. And in my moments of leisure I would study a dog-eared fourth-hand copy of Munson's *Complete Phonographer* that I had bought; for I had long thought that I should like to learn short-hand, and had even devoted a good deal of time to mastering the rudiments of that art; and I fancied that, by much diligent practice now, I might hasten forward the day when I should be able to earn my own livelihood, and thus cease to be a burden upon my friends. Indeed, I could already write as many as sixty words a minute with perfect ease.

Mr. Finkelstein did not altogether approve of my assiduous industry, and used to warn me, "Look out, Kraikory! It don't naifer pay to run a ting into de ground; it aictually don't. You study so hart, your head'll get more knowledge inside of it as it can hold, and den, de first ting you know, all of a sudden vun day, it'll svell up and bust. Ainy-how, Kraikory, dere's a proverp which goes, 'All vork and no play makes Shack a dull poy'; and dot's as true as you're alife, Kraikory; it aictually does. You better knock off dis aifternoon, Kraikory, and go haif some fun. It's Saiturday, ain't it? And dere's a maitinee, hey? Vail, why don't you go to de teayter?... How? You study so hart becoase you vant to get able to earn your living? Now look at here, Kraikory; don't you talk foolish. I got plenty money, ain't I? And I got a right to spend my money so as to get saitisfaiction out of it, hey? Vail, now look at here; dere ain't no vay of spending my money what'll give me so much saitisfaiction as to spend it to make you haippy and contented; dot's a solemn faict. You needn't vorry about earning your living. You ain't got to earn it for a great mainy years yet already—not till you get all done mit your education. And ainyhow, Kraikory, you do earn it. You mind de store, and you read out lout to me, and you keep me company; and, my kracious, you're such a shenu-wine musician, Kraikory, you got such a graind tailent for de haind-organ, I don't know how I'd get along midout you. I guess I haif to raise your sailary next New Years."

This was-only of a piece with Mr. Fin-kelstein's usual kindness. But I felt that I had abused his kindness in the past, and I was determined to abuse it no longer.

I say I was happier than I had been for a long while before, and so I was. I was happier because I was more contented. My disappointment about the inheritance, though keen enough at the moment, did not last long. As Mr. Finkelstein had remarked, I was no worse off than I had been in the first place; and then, I derived a good deal of consolation from remembering what Uncle Peter had told me—that the money had gone to reconstruct the splendor of our house in France. My disappointment at seeing my meeting with Uncle Florimond again become a thing of the indefinite future, was deeper and more enduring. "Alas," I sighed, with a heart sick for hope deferred, "it seems as though I was never going to be able to go to him at all." And I gulped down a big lump that had gathered in my throat.

Against Rosalind Earle I still nursed some foolish resentment. She had wished that I might have to eat humble pie. Well, her wish had come to pass; and I felt almost as though it were her fault that it had done so. She had said she didn't like me any more, and didn't care to have me call upon her any more. I took her at her word, and staid away, regarding myself in the light of a much-abused and injured person. So three or four weeks elapsed, and she and I never met. Then... Toward six o'clock one evening I was seated in the parlor, poring over my *Complete Phonogacipher*, when the door from the shop opened with a creak, and a light footstep became audible behind my chair. The next instant I heard Rosalind's voice, low and gentle, call my name.

My heart began to flutter. I got up and turned around, and saw the dear little girl standing a yard distant from me, with her hand extended for me to take, and with her beautiful dark eyes fixed appealingly upon my face. I didn't speak; and I pretended not to see her hand; and I just stood still there, mute and pouting, like the sulky coxcomb and simpleton that I was.

Rosalind allowed her hand to drop to her side, and a very pained look came over her face; and there was a frog in her voice, as she said, "O, Gregory! you—you are still angry with me."

"O, no! I'm not angry with you," I answered, but in an offish tone; and that was true; I really wasn't angry with her the least bit any more. All my anger had evaporated at the sight of her face and the sound of her voice. But I didn't know how to unbend gracefully and without loss of dignity.

"Then—then why haven't you been to see me?" she asked.

"You said you didn't want me to come to see you any more."

"But I didn't mean it. You must have known I didn't mean it."

“But you said it, anyhow. I don't care to go where I'm not wanted. When people say a thing, how am I to know they don't mean it?”

“But I said it when I was vexed. And what people say when they're vexed—other people ought not to count it. It isn't fair. And really and truly, Gregory, I didn't mean it; and I'm sorry I said it; and I'm sorry I spoke to you the way I did; and—and that's why I've come here, Gregory; I've come to ask your pardon.”

“Oh! certainly; don't mention it; no apology's necessary,” I said. I would have given anything to have taken her in my arms, and kissed her, and begged her pardon; but I was too stiff-necked and self-conscious.

“And then,” she went on, “after you came back from Norwich, and Mr. Flisch told me what Mr. Finkelstein had told him—about how disappointed you had been, and everything—I—I felt so sorry for you, Gregory, and so sorry that I had spoken to you that way; and I wanted to come right over, and tell you I didn't mean it, and beg your pardon, and ask you to make up with me; but I thought maybe you mightn't like it, and that you might be angry with me, and—and not—not—I don't know; but anyway, I didn't come. And then I just hoped and hoped all the time that maybe you would come to see me; but you never did. And then at last I just couldn't wait any longer, I felt so guilty and sorry and everything; and—and so I stopped in on my way home to day; and, O, Gregory! I really didn't mean to hurt your feelings, and I hope you'll forgive me, Gregory, and not be angry with me any more.”

By this time I had gone up, and taken her in my arms; and, “O, Rosalind!” I cried, “don't talk like that. You—you make me feel so ashamed. You—you humiliate me so. What you said to me that day—it was just right. You were just right, and I was wrong. And I deserved to have you talk to me ten times worse, I was so horrid and stuck-up and everything. And I—I'm awfully sorry. And I've wanted—I've wanted to go and see you all the time, and tell you I was sorry; only—only I don't know—I suppose I was too proud. And I just hope that you'll forgive me, and forgive the way I acted here to-day a little while ago, and—O, Rosalind! I'm so glad to be friends with you again.”

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Finkelstein, entering from the shop. “Hugging and kissing each udder! Vail, my kracious! Vail, if I aifer! Vail, dot beats de deck! Oh! you needn't take no notice of me. You needn't stop on my account. I don't mind it. I been dere myself already, when I was your age. You needn't bloosh like dot, Rosie; dough it's mighty becoming to you, dot's a faict. And, Kraikory, you needn't look so sheebish. You ain't done nodings to be ashamed of. And I'm awful sorry I came in shust when I did, and inderrubded you; only I didn't know what you was doing, as you haidn't notified me, and I vanted to speak to Kraikory about a little maitter of business. Dere's an old feller outside dere in de store what cain't talk no English; and I guess he was a Frenchman; so I tought I'd get Kraikory to come along and aisk him what he vants, if you could spare him, Rosie—hey?” So Rosalind and I followed Mr. Finkelstein into the shop.

A tall, thin, and very poor-looking old man stood before the counter, resting his hands upon it—small and well-shaped hands, but so fleshless that you could have counted the bones in them, and across which the blue, distended veins stretched like wires. His stove-pipe hat was worn and lustreless; his black frock coat was threadbare, and whitish along the seams. His old-fashioned standing collar was frayed at the edge; and a red mark on each side of his neck, beneath his ears, showed that the frayed edge had chafed his skin. His face was colorless and emaciated; his eyes, sunken deep under his brows, had a weary, sad, half-frightened look in them that compelled your pity. His moustache and imperial were as white as snow. A very forlorn, pathetic, poor-looking old man, indeed. Yet there was also something refined, dignified, and even courtly in his appearance; and I thought to myself that he had seen better days; and my heart ached for him. It was with an unwonted gentleness that I inquired: “You are French, Monsieur? I put myself at your service.”

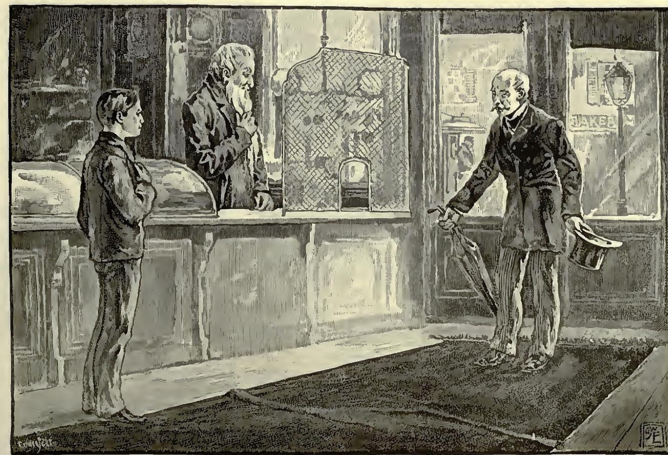
His sad old eyes fixed themselves eagerly upon mine, and in a quavering old voice he answered, “*Je cherche un jeune homme qui s'appelle Grégoire Brace*”—I seek a young man named Gregory Brace. “*C'est ici que il demeure?*”—It is here that he lives?

“*Mais oui, monsieur: c'est moi*” “—it is I,” I said; and wondering what in the world he could want with me, I waited for him to go on.

His eyes opened a little wider, and a light flashed in them. He seemed to be struggling with an emotion that made it impossible for him to speak. His throat, I could see, gave two or three convulsive swallows. Then his lips parted, his eyes grew dim with tears, and very huskily, bending forward, he demanded, “*Et—et vous ne me connaissez pas?*”—And you do not know me?

I scanned his face carefully. I could not recognize it. I shook my head. “*Mais non, monsieur*—I do not think that I have ever seen you before.

“No, that is true. But I hoped that you might know me, nevertheless.... Gregory, it is I; it is thy uncle—de la Bourbonnaye.” And he stretched out his two arms, to embrace me.



“GREGORY, IT IS I—IT IS THY UNCLE—DE LA BOURBONNAYE.”

“What!... Thou!... My—my Uncle—Florimond!... Oh!” I gasped. My heart bounded terribly. My head swam. The objects round about began to dance bewilderingly to and fro. The floor under my feet rocked like the deck of a ship. There was a loud continuous ringing in my ears.... But still I saw the figure of that sad old man standing there motionless, with arms outstretched toward me, waiting. A thousand unutterable emotions were battling in my heart; a thousand incoherent thoughts were racing through my brain. This poor old man my Uncle Florimond! This poor old man—in threadbare cloth and tattered linen.... Then suddenly an impulse mastered me. I rushed forward, and threw myself upon his breast, and—like a schoolgirl—fell to weeping.

Well, as the French proverb says, everything comes at last to him who knows how to wait. To me at last had come the moment for which I had waited so many years; and I stood face to face with my Uncle Florimond, with the hero of my imagination, the Marquis de la Bourbonnaye. But in place of the rich and powerful nobleman whom I had dreamed of, the dashing soldier, the brilliant courtier, I found the poor decrepit aged man whom you have seen. “Thou knowest, my Gregory,” he explained to me. by and by, “since the overthrow of the legitimate monarchy by the first revolution, our family has never been rich. In 1792, upon the eve of the Terror, my father emigrated from the beautiful France, and sought refuge in Sweden, where I and my sister were born, and where he remained until 1815. Upon the restoration we returned to our fatherland; but our chateaux of which we counted no fewer than three, had been burned, our hôtel in Paris sacked, our wealth confiscated and dissipated, by those barbarians, those assassins, those incendiaries, and we possessed scarcely even the wherewithal to live. It was for that that we consented to the misalliance made by our Aurore in espousing thy grandfather, Philip Brace. American and bourgeois that he was, in admitting him to our connection, our family suffered the first disgrace of its history. Yet without dowry, my sister could never have married her equal in France, and would most likely have become a nun. But that excellent Brace, he loved her so much, her station was so high, his own so low, he was happy to obtain her hand at any terms. She, too, reciprocated his affection; he was indeed a fine fellow; and the marriage was accomplished.... It is now some ten years since, by the goodness of my beloved sister, I was enabled to amass a sufficient sum to purchase for myself an annuity of six thousand francs as a provision for my age. But behold, the other day—it is now about two months ago, perhaps—the annuity company goes into bankruptcy; and I am left absolutely without a *sou*. So I am come to America to seek an asylum with my sister's son, Peter. I am arrived to-day even, aboard the steamship La Touraine. Figure to thyself that, fault of money, I have been forced to make the passage second class! To-morrow I shall proceed to Norr-veesh.”

“Have you written to Uncle Peter to expect you?” I inquired.

“*Mais non!* I have not thought it necessary.”

“It is a man altogether singular, my Uncle Peter,” I went on, “and truly I think that you will do better to rest here at New York a few days, in attending a response to the letter which I counsel you to send him. He loves not the surprises, my Uncle Peter.”

“I shall do all as thou desirest, my good Gregory,” said Uncle Florimond; and he dispatched a letter to his nephew, Peter Brace, that very evening, setting forth the state of his affairs, and declaring his intention to go to Norwich.

That night and the next he slept in Mr. Finkelstein's spare bedroom. On the evening of the third day an answer came from Uncle Peter, professing his inability to do anything to assist his mother's brother, and emphatically discouraging his proposed visit to Norwich. Uncle Florimond could hardly believe his senses. “Ah! such cruelty, such lack of heart,” he cried, “it is impossible.”

“Vail, Kraikory,” said Mr. Finkelstein, “de only ting is, he'll haif to settle down here, and live mit me and you. He can keep dot spare room, and we'll make him as comfortable as we know how. Tell him I be prout to haif him for my guest as long as he'll stay.”

“No,” I answered, “I can't let you go to work and saddle yourself with my relatives as well as with me. I must pitch in and support him.”

“But, my kracious, Kraikory, what can you do? You're only fifteen years old. You couldn't earn more as tree or four tollars a veek if you vorked all de time.”

“Oh! yes, I could. You forget that I've been studying short-hand; and I can write sixty words a minute; and Mr. Marx will get me a position as a short-hand writer in some office down-town; and then I could earn eight dollars a week at least.”

“Vail, my kracious, dot's a faict. Vail, dot's simply immense. Vail, I'm mighty glaid now you kept on studying

and didn't take my advice. Vail, ainyhow, Kraikory, you and him can go on living here by me, and den when you're able you can pay boart—hey? And say, Kraikory, I always had a sort of an idea dot I like to learn Frainch; and maybe he'd give me lessons, hey? Aisk him what he'd sharsh.”

“Ah, my Gregory,” sighed Uncle Florimond, “I am desolated. To become a burden upon thy young shoulders—it is terrible.”

“I beseech you, my dearest uncle, do not say such things. I love you with all my heart. It is my greatest happiness to have you near me. And hold, you are going to gain your own livelihood. Mr. Finkelstein here wishes to know what you will charge to give him French lessons.”

“Well, I guess I join de class,” said Mr. Marx, when he heard of his father-in-law's studies.

“So will I,” said Mrs. Marx.

“Well, I guess I come in too,” said Mr. Flisch.

“And I want to learn French ever so much,” said Rosalind.

[Ill 0006]

So a class was formed; and a Marquis de la Bourbonnaye, for the first time, no doubt, in the history of that ancient family, ate bread that he had earned by the sweat of his brow. It was a funny and yet a pathetic sight to see him laboring with his pupils. He was very gentle and very patient; but by the melancholy expression of his eyes, I knew that the outrages they committed upon his native language sank deep into his own soul. He and Mr. Finkelstein became great friends. I think they used to play cards together quite six hours every day. Uncle Florimond had studied English as a lad at school; and by and by he screwed his courage to the sticking place, and began to talk that tongue. It was as good as a play to hear him and Mr. Finkelstein converse together.

In due time, surely enough, Mr. Marx procured a situation for me as stenographer in a banking-house down-town. My salary, to start with, was seven dollars a week. Joining that to what Uncle Florimond earned, we had enough to support us in comparative comfort and without loss of self-respect.

And now Mrs. Gregory Brace, who is looking over my shoulder, and whose first name is Rosalind, and whose maiden-name was Earle, warns me that the point is reached where I must write

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MY UNCLE FLORIMOND ***

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