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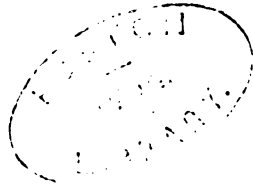


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AN

OLD-FASHIONED BOY



BY

MARTHA FARQUHARSON,
AUTHOR OF "ELSIE DINSMORE," "HOLIDAYS AT ROSELANDS,"
ETC: ETC:

PHILADELPHIA
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PREFACE.

SEVERAL other writers having undertaken the task of setting forth the faults and foibles of the *Girl of the Period*, and furnishing her with a model for imitation, the thought arose in my mind that it might not be amiss for me to try to do the same service for the Boy.

This book is the result of that thought, and the effort to carry it out.

I do not offer Fred Landon to you, my young friends, as a perfect example; he has his faults, like the rest of us, and you may improve upon the model as much as you will. But if my little story shall amuse and instruct you, and while it does this, shall also convince you of the beauty of *old-fashioned* obedience to parental and other

lawful authority, respect for superiors, and chivalrous conduct towards the weak and defenceless, and above all, shall stir up those of you to whom the trust will one day be committed—earnestly to watch over and defend the liberties of our beloved land, putting down every form of lawlessness and vice, and seeing to it that our laws are made and executed by good men, and true—it will have accomplished its mission.

M. F.

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AN OLD-FASHIONED BOY.

CHAPTER I.

FRED'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

“**F**RED, my son, you are not angry with your mother?”

The low pleading tones of the voice he loved best on earth, sent a keen pang to the boy's heart; yet he could not control his own to answer on the instant. A fierce battle was raging within his breast, and, until the victory was gained over pride and resentment, he dared not trust himself to speak. He stood still before one of the windows of his mother's dressing-room, his back toward the little sewing chair in which she sat by the other, and his face resolutely averted from her.

“Oh, my boy, my dear boy,” she sighed, “will you turn against me?—you who have been my earthly stay and support through all my dreary widowhood?”

“I think it is rather that my mother has turned from me,” he said, bitterly. Then, with a

burst of grief: "Mother, mother, you don't need me now!"

"Don't need you, my son! Oh, Fred, such a reproach from you!"

The pain in the beloved voice was more than he could bear.

"I'm a brute!" he said, turning quickly and coming to her side, with a face full of penitence, though the angry flush had scarce died out of it yet: "Forgive me, darling little mother!"

"My dear boy, I meant it all for good," she whispered, drawing him down to embrace him, and laying her cheek to his, while he felt her hot tears on his neck. "Oh, believe your mother when she tells you that she sought her children's welfare, as well as her own. I thought we all needed a guide and protector, Fred; it is my nature to seek to lean upon a stronger arm, and you cannot realize how sorely I have missed your dear father."

"Don't, mother dear; I can't bear to see you cry; but, oh, could you not have leant upon your son? I have tried to supply his place to you, and to Lena also, as he bade me with his dying breath."

"And you did nobly, my darling boy," she said, smoothing back the rich chestnut locks from his broad, white forehead, and pressing her lips upon it. "But you are young—only seventeen—and could not advise me about business matters, and"—

"And Mr. Rush can, and, as a specimen of his wise management, persuades you"—

But the pained look on the dear face stopped the angry outbreak, and he closed his lips firmly.

"Oh, Fred, will you make trouble between us? trouble and sorrow for your mother?" she asked, in tones tremulous with emotion.

"No, no, mother, no, no, God helping me, that I never will. But you don't know what a disappointment it is to me to give up my studies just now, when two more years would have taken me through; and I hoped to graduate with high honors, and make you and Lena so proud of me. And it was what my father planned and approved, too. Oh, it's hard, very hard, to give it all up! You cannot guess how hard."

"I think I can, my poor, dear boy," she said, softly stroking his hair; "but Ullman is quite certain it will be best for you in the end. And it is to be only for a time, you know; probably a year at farthest; and then you will go back to your studies; and twenty will be quite early enough to graduate. Besides, will it not be some comfort—does it not help to reconcile you to the change of plans—that you will be constantly with your mother and sister, while you are out of college? That thought brightens the new future very much for me, my son, and I'm sure it will for Lena, too, when she hears of it."

"Yes, darling mother," he answered, caress-

ing her; "and for your sake I will try to be content with the new arrangements. But it must be hard even for you to leave this sweet home provided by my father, and where we spent so many happy years with him."

"Even for me, Fred? Do you then think I love the dear home, or your beloved father's memory, less than you do?" she asked in gently reproachful tones, while again a tear rolled down her cheek.

"Ah, mother," he answered, "forgive me the thought, but it will come when I remember that you have allowed a stranger to step into his place, and that stranger one who would tear us all away from this dear spot."

"Well, my son," she said, "it may be that I would have done better to remain as I was; but it is now no longer worth while to consider that question; and it is always unwise to allow ourselves to grieve and fret over what cannot be helped. Let us try now to look at the bright side. We three, who love each other so dearly, will continue to be together, sharing our joys and sorrows, comforting and helping one another; the year of active, outdoor life in the pure sweet country air will, I hope, strengthen and invigorate your constitution; while at the same time you will be realizing something from your exertions; and the money that would be spent on your education will more than double itself—so Mr. Rush assures me—by being invested in hops. His home is in Wisconsin, which has

become a great hop-growing state, and the hop crop pays so well that the growers are rapidly making their fortunes."

The lad's face brightened, and he began to listen with a good deal of interest and pleasure as his mother went on unfolding to him her husband's plans, and her own hopes for her son.

It was now nearly three years since the death of Mr. Landon, the father of Fred and Elena. These two were the only children, and very tenderly attached to each other and to their parents; and when the father was taken away, they clung with increased affection to their bereaved mother. They were left in very comfortable circumstances, having a home of their own—a beautiful cottage in one of the most picturesque spots on the shore of Long Island Sound—and an income sufficient for the gratification of every reasonable desire. Three years had by no means effaced the image of their beloved father from the hearts of the brother and sister; but they knew that he had been a follower of Jesus, and had gone to be with that dear Saviour in the better land; and gradually they had learned to think more of his blessedness and less of their own grief, and to be glad and happy in the enjoyment of all that was still left to them; especially in their love to each other and to their almost idolized mother.

But it was now barely a week since something had occurred which distressed Fred and Elena

greatly. They felt as if the happiness of their home was quite destroyed by the sudden and unexpected marriage of their mother. She had been absent from home for several weeks, visiting some friends, and on her return was accompanied by a stranger whom she introduced to them as her husband, Mr. Ullman Rush.

She had known him years before, but they had never seen or heard of him till that moment, and his face was not one to win their love or confidence. Its expression was cold and hard, they thought, while his manners were distant and reserved; and altogether he was so utterly unlike their own dear father, that to see him in that father's place caused them bitter sorrow. And now Fred, who was half way through his college course, had just been told by his mother, that he was to give up his studies for a year or two, go out to Wisconsin with them, and help Mr. Rush on his farm. Elena was to go too, and the dear cottage home to be rented, or perhaps sold to strangers.

It was a great disappointment to the boy, and pride and resentment rose strongly within him. He could not feel that this stranger had any right to a father's authority over him, and it took all his sense of duty toward his mother, and his ardent affection for her, to enable him to submit with anything like patience. But as she talked to him of the great western country, and all that an enterprising young man might do and become there, he

grew a little more reconciled to the changes his stepfather had decreed.

They had been conversing for more than an hour, and the afternoon sun was getting low, when Mrs. Rush said: "Now, my son, you may leave me. I wish to lie down for a little rest before tea, and you may go and break this news to your sister, as gently as you can, dear, for she will feel your disappointment even more than if it were her own."

"So she will, poor darling, so fond of me as she is; but we mustn't let her fret; nor you either, precious little mother," he added, with a tender caress. "Please to forget all my angry, rebellious behavior, and believe that your son means to be loyal at least to you."

The questioning, admonishing, pleading look seemed to say, "and to another also?" But he ignored it, and hastily left the room, muttering as he passed down the stairs, "No, not to him. What right has he to my father's place?"

Elena Landon sat in the bow window of the library, gazing out with an air of sad abstraction upon the waters of the sound, as they glowed and sparkled in the rays of the descending sun, and idly watching the progress of some half dozen vessels, of all sizes, from a brig to a tiny sail boat, some standing out to sea, others coming in toward the land. It was a beautiful scene, and one that never lost its charm for the soft brown eyes that

were drinking in its loveliness; yet ever and anon they filled with tears, which a little soft white hand was again and again lifted to dash away.

"Oh, you are here, Lena," said her brother's voice at her side. "Will you go with me for a stroll on the beach?"

"Yes, Fred, I will take all I can; there'll not be many more," she answered sadly, while the tears fell faster than before.

"Not this summer, certainly, sister dear," he said tenderly, putting his arm about her waist as she rose to her feet; "but perhaps a great many some few years hence. We will hope so, at least; and now we must try to be brave and cheerful for our dear mother's sake."

"I will, Fred, and for yours too," she whispered, hugging him close, and looking up fondly into his face; for he was taller, and three years older than she. "Oh, Fred, what ever would we do without each other?"

"I hope it will be very long before we need to learn that," he said, trying to speak cheerily, as he drew her on to the hall, and brought her hat and his own from the rack.

As they crossed the little velvety lawn in front of their cottage home, the soft evening air came to them laden with the breath of flowers from the garden on their right, and the orchard behind the house, where the apple trees were now in full bloom. They passed through the gate, which

opened upon a well trodden path. A few yards beyond, the ground descended abruptly to the beach, and here steps had been cut in the bank for the convenience of those who wished to pass up and down.

Fred ran lightly down, then turned to give his hand to his sister, but found that she had not followed him. She stood at the top of the bank, leaning against a tree, with her face turned toward their home. In a moment he was by her side again.

"How sweet it looks!" she said, putting her hand into his, but still gazing straight before her with eyes half blinded by tears; "the roses and honeysuckle are just in their prime, and almost all the shrubs and the summer flowers in full bloom. Oh, Fred, Fred, I can't bear to leave it all! Oh, if mother only hadn't"—

"Hush, hush, Lena darling; don't let us allow ourselves to blame the dear little mother," interrupted the lad, drawing his sister's arm within his own, and leading her down the hill. "She is at the window now," he went on, "and I would not have her suspect how you are grieving over what she has done."

"Nor I, brother; and indeed I do try to be cheerful before her, and not let her suspect how hard, oh, how hard it is to see another in our dear father's place. Who could have believed it possible that she could! She who, we both thought,

loved him even better than we ourselves, though we almost idolized him."

"Yes, I have noticed your efforts, and thought what a brave little woman my sister was," he said, with playful tenderness. Then with a sudden change of tone, "Yes, it is hard to see another, and one so totally different, in that beloved parent's place, the place that with his dying breath he charged me to fill, and which I had hoped I did fill in some measure. And, Lena, it was such a pleasure to feel that my darling mother leant on me for support; such a terribly rude shock to find that another had supplanted me there."

He dashed away a tear with the back of his hand as he spoke. "But," he went on, "I think you mistake in fancying that this sudden second marriage proves her love to our father to be less than we believed. Our father was like a strong, sturdy oak, our mother a beautiful vine clinging lovingly to him for support; and when death tore them rudely asunder, the lovely tendrils, reaching out in their blind, helpless agony, laid hold of a tree of a less noble kind, vainly hoping to find in it another oak. No, it was because she could not live without what she had lost in being separated from my father, that she did this which has brought such grief to us."

"And yet we ought not to grieve if it has added to her happiness," murmured Elena.

"If!" sighed Fred, turning away his face; "ah,

that doubt is the thorn whose sting is the sharpest with me now, sister. The more I see of Mr. Rush, the more thoroughly convinced I am that he is not the sort of man to make a gentle, sensitive, refined woman, like my mother, happy; and—I fear she is beginning to find it out. I have been with her half the afternoon, and I am sure she is not happy; and we, sister, must do all we can to supply to her all that she finds lacking in her husband,—the tender protecting love and care our father ever lavished upon her.”

“Oh, Fred, it breaks my heart to think of the possibility of what you suspect!” cried Elena, with a fresh burst of tears. “Flowers could as well live without sunshine as our precious mother without love. But she shall never be without it while her son and daughter live. Ah, if she had only been satisfied with what they could give! We were so happy here together; and now the dear home must be forsaken, and all for what?”

Fred did his best to soothe and comfort his sister, and told of his own disappointment in such a way that she almost doubted if he really felt it to be one; eager as he had formerly been to push on rapidly with his studies. Yet it was a sore trial to her; her sisterly pride in him was so great; and she so longed to see him outstrip all his companions and carry off the highest honors in the gift of his alma mater.

But Fred's nature was of a cheerful, sunny kind,

that never looked long at the dark side of any picture, and he was already forming plans for their mutual pleasure and profit; and as he talked of the walks and rides they would take together, how they would improve themselves in botany and geology by making acquaintance with the flowers, plants and stones of the new region into which they were going, and of other studies that they would pursue in the long winter evenings, etc., etc., Elena forgot half her sadness, and with him grew for the moment almost reconciled to the anticipated changes.

Then her brother went on to tell her some things which he had just learned from their mother in regard to Mr. Rush's family and circumstances,—that he owned and lived upon a large farm near the little village of Brookville; that he was investing largely in hops, on which he had already made a good deal of money, and confidently expected to make a great deal more,—and that he had three children of his own, Albert, aged fifteen, Thaddeus—or Thad, as he was called “for short”—six, and a little girl of three, named Margaret. Also, that a maiden sister, Miss Silence Rush, had kept house for him ever since the death of his former wife, and would probably continue to make her home there.

“There! she'll be the biggest thorn in our poor mother's side. I'm just sure of it!” cried Elena with sudden passion and half stamping her foot as she spoke, “a detestable, meddlesome old maid, interfering in everything.”

"Why, Lena, dear, as we know nothing at all about her, we cannot say that she will not prove a priceless treasure," said Fred; "and that speech does not sound at all like my usually amiable, kind hearted little sister."

"No, Fred; but oh, it will be so different a life from the happy one we have led here in our own dear home, with no one else to claim a share with us in our darling mother," she murmured, turning away her face to hide her blushes and the tears that filled her eyes.

"Yes," sighed Fred; "but it's useless to fret about what we can't help; and we'd better make up our minds to try to like those we have to live with as well as we can; for our own sakes if not for theirs. But I suspect it's time to go in; the sun has fairly set, and there's the carriage at the gate with Mr. Rush in it. By the way, Lena, mother just hinted to me this afternoon that she would like to hear him called something else, but I told her I couldn't possibly make up my mind to it; and she didn't insist; though it hurt me to see how my refusal pained her. Oh dear! I would do almost anything else to please her, but I could not give him the"—a choking sensation in his throat caused the sentence to be left unfinished.

"No, no, nor I either, Fred," whispered Elena, squeezing gently but lovingly the arm on which she leaned.

Mr. Rush stood on the pretty vine-covered Go-

thic porch, watching them as they came up the path from the gate.

"Been taking a walk, eh?" he said as they reached his side. "Don't you grow a little tired of the beach and that water view sometimes?"

"Never!" cried both in a breath. "Our home and its surroundings are far too dear and lovely for us ever to weary of," added Elena warmly.

"Ah, now, I think the change to prairie and wood land might prove an agreeable variety. I prophesy that you will find it so a few weeks hence," Mr. Rush responded with an unpleasant laugh, as he turned away and went into the house.

The brother and sister exchanged glances; the eyes of the one flashed, while those of the other filled with angry, indignant tears, as they slowly followed their step-father into the dining-room; for the tea bell had rung.

They found him and their mother already seated at the table.

"Come, sit down, dears," she said, in her usual gentle, affectionate tone; "your— Mr. Rush must be hungry after his long drive."

They obeyed in silence, and scarcely spoke during the meal.

Mrs. Rush retired early to her own apartments, complaining of headache. Elena soon followed, longing for a little private chat with her mother, and sure of finding her alone, as she had left Mr. Rush smoking his cigar in the porch below.

"May I come in, mamma?" she asked, tapping lightly at the half-open door of the dressing-room.

"Surely, darling," answered her mother's sweet voice, and Elena glided in, pushing the door to behind her.

Mrs. Rush, arrayed in a loose white wrapper, and with her beautiful and abundant hair all unbound and hanging like a golden cloud over her shoulders, reclined in an easy chair before a window that looked out upon the Sound. She was a lovely blonde, small, delicate, fairy-like in form and feature, and so very youthful in appearance, that no one would have taken her for the mother of Fred, or even of Elena, the latter of whom, though only fourteen, was already both taller and stouter than her parent.

Mr. Landon had been a large and very handsome man, dark-haired and dark-eyed. Fred resembled him, and was well grown for his years. There was a great deal of chivalry in the boy's nature, and since his father's death he had gradually come to look upon his tiny, delicate, fragile mother, as something to be petted and protected by him; while at the same time he cherished a deep reverence for her moral and intellectual worth, her unaffected piety, and gentle sweetness of disposition and manner. He seldom resisted her will in matters either great or small, obeying from both love and sense of duty, as he and his sister had been trained to do from their earliest infancy.

And Elena, not less obedient, was quite as loving as he. Her mother was her idol, and a shade of sadness on that dear face, especially if caused by any misconduct of hers, filled her with grief.

"Darling mamma, is the poor head very bad?" she asked tenderly, as with quiet, noiseless step, she drew near the easy chair.

"No, daughter, this cool refreshing sea-breeze is relieving it very fast," answered Mrs. Rush, smiling up at the tall, graceful figure and fresh young face bending over her.

"I am so glad," murmured Elena, and her voice broke with the thought that soon that remedy would no longer be at hand. She sank down on her knees beside her mother's chair, hiding her face among the rich golden tresses.

"Dearest, it makes my heart very sad to see you grieving so," whispered Mrs. Rush, laying her hand caressingly on the bowed head; "it seems like a reproach to your mother. Ah, I little thought to make my beloved children wretched."

"No, mother, no, we are not! we will not be! we must be happy with you!" cried Elena, starting up to throw her arms about her mother's neck.

Mrs. Rush strained her to her heart, murmuring words of deep tenderness. "My pet, my precious one, my Herbert's child, nothing shall ever rob you of your mother's love. Tell me, darling, that you do not love me less because"—

But Mr. Rush's step was heard coming up the stairs, and the sentence was left unfinished.

"No, darling, dearest, precious little mother; oh, no, no, never!" whispered Elena, hastily returning the fond embrace, then hurrying from the room by one door, as her step-father entered by the other.

CHAPTER II.

THE NEW HOME.

“NO, just you let that shirt alone, Bridget, and exercise your powers on something else; I always iron my brother's shirts myself. There, that iron's too hot, and you'll turn the clothes yellow, if you don't scorch 'em outright; set it to one side on the stone hearth, and try another. But first put in a stick of wood, and turn the bread in the oven,” said Miss Silence Rush, issuing her orders from the shaded back porch, where she was sending her churn dasher up and down with vigorous and energetic strokes.

It was a busy day, churning, baking, and ironing all going on at once; and even for little Thad and his baby sister, some light work had been found. They sat on the clean porch floor, almost at their aunt's feet, beside a great basket of fresh green peas, which they were shelling into a bright tin pan. In Miss Rush's eyes there was no sin so great as that of idleness; it was her firm conviction that work—useful employment—was the chief end of man, and woman too, and that the sooner children were made to understand and practise

upon that doctrine, the better both for themselves and for the community at large. "Oh dear, I'm so tired shellin' these old peas! there's so many of 'em they won't never get done!" sighed Thad, throwing a handful into the pan, and leaning back against the wall.

"And so am I," chimed in his little sister: "I don't like to shell peas; I want to go play."

"Work away, children," said their aunt, reprov-ingly; "work away, both of you; it's wicked to be lazy, and want to play all the time. Those that won't work, mustn't eat; and you'll want the peas at dinner, I'll warrant."

"There's Al!" cried Thad, suddenly, straight-ening himself up, and looking out across the front yard: "he's got back; he's getting out of the wagon; and there's a letter in his hand."

Miss Silence turned her head, too, but without allowing her dasher to pause for an instant. Yes, there was Albert coming up the path from the front gate, his eyes fixed upon a letter which he held in his hand.

"Come, make haste!" called his aunt; "you move as if you had the day before you. Who's it from?"

"From father. It's for you, Aunt Silence," he answered, stepping into the porch, and handing it to her.

She took it, glanced at the post-mark and ad-dress, and thrust it into her pocket.

Albert looked at her wistfully.

"It'll keep," she said, shortly; "I'll read it when this job's done."

"I'd like to know when he's coming home," said the lad, half timidly. "I'll take a turn at the dasher, if you'll read it now."

"Go and put your horses away, and then fetch in some potatoes for dinner," ordered the aunt. "By the time that's done, I may be able to tell you."

Albert turned silently to obey.

"Oh, Al, let me get in and drive to the barn!" cried Thad, jumping up.

"Me, too; I want to go, Al," pleaded the little sister. "Please take me."

"No, those peas must be finished; you'll neither of you stir till they are," said Miss Silence, setting down her foot resolutely; and, with some pouting and fretting, the children obeyed.

The butter had come, and, when Albert came in with the potatoes, Bridget had already carried it to the spring-house, and was washing out the churn, while Miss Silence stood, hastily reading her letter. She had not time to sit down.

"Any news, aunt?" Albert ventured to ask.

"Yes, news enough," she answered, gruffly, as she refolded and thrust the missive into her pocket again, with an impatient gesture, and an angry scowl.

She snatched a holder from the table, caught up

an iron from the stove, and set to work upon a shirt with almost desperate energy.

"Does he say when he's coming home?" asked the boy, half hoping for a sight of the letter.

"Yes; they're to be here to-morrow afternoon, somewhere about tea-time."

A puzzled look came over the boy's face. "They?" he repeated; "who's coming with him?"

"Your step-mother, and step-brother and sister. There! Now you know as much as I do; so go off to your work in the field, and don't bother me with any more questions."

"My step-mother?" exclaimed the boy, in great astonishment. "Why, she's been dead this year and better."

"There; don't be a simpleton, Albert Rush, if you can help it," cried the aunt, sharply. "I s'pose he could marry again, couldn't he? Go off to your work, and be s'pry about it, too. There's a good bit your father'll expect to find done, that isn't done yet."

"A step-mother!" muttered the boy to himself, as he went out, and with the word, there rose up before his mental vision, a tall, dark woman, with a fretful, peevish expression of countenance, a perpetual frown for him; and he seemed to hear the querulous tones of her voice whining out: "There's so much work on a farm, and boys are such an everlasting torment. I wish you'd go off

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with your noise, Albert! I declare I'm tired to death with it, and the work, too!"

"I wonder if it'll be the same thing over again? I s'pose likely, or may be worse," he sighed; "but, then, 'twont make so much difference, now that I'm most grown up, and have learnt to be pretty quiet about the house."

So he consoled himself; yet his heart was heavy, with a strange, undefined, yearning desire for the tender mother-love his infancy had known, and whose memory came to him, at times, like a delicious, but half-forgotten dream.

"A fine lady, one of the upper tendom that never did a stroke of work in her life," muttered Miss Silence to herself, as she sent her iron swiftly hither and thither. "A wise choice for you, Ullman Rush, I must say. A pretty farmer's wife she'll make, wont she? But, the money she brings makes it all square, I s'pose; particularly as the law there gives it all to him, and he's got possession. Well, if I was a man, I'd scorn the meanness of taking advantage of such iniquitous laws; as if a woman hadn't a right to her own, or couldn't have sense enough, after being tied to a man, to know how to take care of it as well as she did before. If I'd been in her place, I think I'd a had sense enough to keep out of the scrape. What a fool to give up a good home of her own to marry a man with three children, and come out here to live on a farm. But I'm to stay and take

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the heavy end, it seems. Well, if I do, I'll not be bossed around by her, that's certain, sure!" and the iron was set down on the stand with an emphatic thump.

Active and energetic as Miss Silence was always acknowledged to be, by those who had the honor of her acquaintance, she outdid herself during that day and the next. The ironing was speedily put out of the way, and then such a scrubbing and cleaning, such a baking and brewing as followed! The children were banished from the house, and to their infinite delight, allowed to spend the long sunny hours of those delicious June days in wandering at their own sweet will through garden, meadow, and orchard; and even beyond into the woods, where they gathered sweet wild flowers, and lovely mosses; and down by the pretty brook, to watch the minnows, and to fish for them with a crooked pin and a bit of string made fast to a stick; to sail bits of bark too, or throw in stones to see the water splash, or to pull off shoes and stockings and wade about in it. What enjoyment it was, and how they wondered and rejoiced at the pre-occupation of Aunt Silence, which left them so free. Only very light and easy tasks had ever, as yet, been assigned them, but they had sometimes found even those irksome. So they exulted and rejoiced in their liberty, not caring to inquire too closely into its cause. To hunt eggs in the barn was the only work they were asked to do in those two

blissful days, but that was deemed the best of fun, quite equal to any of the sports that followed.

In the meantime Albert plodded on with his work in the field, his thoughts as full of the expected arrival as those of his aunt. He was not glad, nor yet was he certain that he was sorry; he only wondered and waited, saying to himself over and over that it could make, or need make, but little difference to him,—this sudden, unexpected marriage of his father; he could keep out of the way of his step-mother, and perhaps of her children too.

As the time drew near his aunt thought fit to become a little more communicative on the subject. "They're rich folks, Albert, used to the best of everything, your father tells me," she said, with half unconscious pride in the brilliant match her brother had made; "and he wants us all to look our best and not disgrace him. I've set the whole house to rights; they'll not be able to find a speck of dust, or a pin out of its place; and I'll have a supper for them fit for a king."

"Who, Aunt Silence?" asked little Thad, opening his big grey eyes very wide indeed; "are we goin' to have company?"

"Your father's coming, child, and some folks with him," she answered shortly. "Albert, you're to go in to Brookville with the carriage, to fetch 'em; and Bill Shade must take the cart for their trunks; there'll be a lot of 'em, no doubt; perfect

Noah's Arks too, like enough. You know the cars are due at five; so you must come in at four, give yourself a good wash, and dress up in your Sunday best, and be spry about it too, or you'll not get to the depot in season."

The younger children began clamoring for permission to go with their brother, but were speedily silenced by a peremptory refusal of the request, and a threat that they should be sent from the table, if not more quiet.

"There's no call for either of you to go," continued Aunt Silence, her tone softening a little, "and there wouldn't be room in the carriage coming back; but you may play out doors till I call you; which won't be till a quarter past four; and then, if you've been good children, I'll dress you up in your best to see the folks; and I'll tell you then who they are."

"Oh, tell us now! tell us now, Aunt Silence!" they cried in chorus.

The answer was a decided refusal, followed by an order to be off out of the way, as she rose and set her chair back against the wall.

Thad ran after Albert, who was already on his way to the hop-field, where he and Bill Shade, the hired man, had been employed all the morning in tying up the vines. "Al, Al; I say, Al!" called the little fellow, "stop a minute, stop, won't you?"

"Well, what is it?" asked Albert, turning round.

"You know who's comin', don't you? and wont you just tell me now?"

"No, Thad; Aunt Silence wouldn't thank me for it; she likes to tell her own news," and Albert walked on.

The shrill whistle of the locomotive, and the rush of the approaching train, startled Albert's horses as he reined them in at the Brookville depot. He sprang from the carriage, and went to their heads, speaking to them in kindly reassuring tones, while he stroked and patted their sleek sides. In another moment the train had stopped. Albert looked wistfully towards it. Was the expected arrival to bring sunshine or shadow into his life? But had they come? Yes, there was his father stepping from the car, then turning to give his hand, and afterwards his arm, to a little, slender figure clad all in grey; while close behind them came a dark-haired handsome youth, and a graceful rosy-checked young girl, with soft brown eyes and rich clustering curls of the same hue in the shade, but looking like burnished gold where the sun's rays struck them.

"So here we are, Albert. How d'ye do, my boy? All well at home, eh?" said Mr. Rush, giving his son a more cordial grasp and shake of the hand than he was wont to bestow even after a prolonged absence. "I've brought you a new mother. What do you say to that? Helen, this is my eldest son." And he turned to the little lady by his side.

"And now my son also, if he will give the little new mamma a corner in his heart," she said, with a look out of her beautiful eyes, before which doubts and fears vanished as morning mist is scattered by the bright rays of the ascending sun.

He made no reply in words, but the flash of joy that lighted up his rather plain features, and the eager grasp of his toil-hardened hand spoke volumes.

She smiled, as though well pleased; but he dropped her hand and stepped aside, blushing and embarrassed, wondering how he had dared to take the liberty of squeezing it so hard.

"These are your new mother's son and daughter, —Mr. Fred and Miss Elena Landon, Albert," said Mr. Rush, placing his bride in the carriage, and turning to the others. "Fred, help your sister in, and get in yourself."

"Shall I not see to the baggage, sir?" asked Fred, shaking hands with Albert, and obeying the direction in regard to his sister; who on her part, seeing the painful embarrassment of the country boy, had contented herself with a friendly little nod and smile.

"No, we will just give all the checks to Albert, and he will attend to it. You have Bill Shade and the cart here as I directed?"

"Yes, sir; all right. I'll have 'em out there most as soon as you are." And eagerly seizing upon the checks, Albert hurried away, while Mr. Rush followed the others into the carriage, and taking up

the reins, turned the horses' heads towards home. "What's up now? Got a fortin' left ye, Al?" inquired Bill Shade, as the boy came running toward him jingling the checks, and with such a glad light shining out of his great grey eyes as Bill didn't remember having ever seen there before.

"Oh, Bill, but isn't she a regular beauty? and just the sweetest, kindest looking little lady that ever you saw? How in the world did father ever get her to have him!" cried the lad, in a burst of enthusiastic admiration. "But hurry up with that cart; bring it right along. I've got the checks, and they'll be wantin' their baggage."

"Who? what? You don't say the old chap's married *agin*?"

But there was no answer. Albert was off to claim the trunks which had been deposited by the roadside, while the train again went on its way.

"A third wife, eh! I wonder now if she knowed he'd two afore," muttered Bill, slowly following in the wake of the excited boy. "I don't think myself I'd want to be anybody's third husband."

"Well, Helen, here we are at last; this is my place," said Mr. Rush, reining in his horses at the gate; "and here's Silence to welcome you."

The ladies looked eagerly out. A large frame building presented itself to their view, its gable end to the road, a portico before the front door, and a wing on one side with a long, low, vine-covered porch. A wide grassy yard, shaded by maples,

oaks and silver poplars lay between it and the little white gate which Miss Silence Rush was holding open.

"So you've come," she said, addressing her brother. "Well, I've done my best to get everything ready for you and—and your new wife."

"Here she is, Silence, and I don't think you can find fault with my choice," he said, handing out his bride.

"Humph! Who said I wanted to?" grunted the spinster, with a grim look. But it changed to a gentler, kindlier expression as it fell upon the sweet, fair, upturned face, framed in with rich masses of wavy golden hair, and lighted up by a pair of large, lustrous eyes, that seemed to plead for love and tenderness. Miss Silence seldom bestowed a caress upon any one, but she could not resist the pleading of those eyes, nor the attraction of the fair round cheek, and ruby red lips. The new sister received an affectionate hug and resounding kiss, and her son and daughter a cordial shake of the hand, as each in turn was presented by their stepfather.

"Where is Midge?" he asked, "and Thad? Oh, here you are, hiding behind Aunt Silence. Come, speak to your new mother." And he drew them forward, the little girl, with her finger in her mouth, blushing and hanging her head, while the boy held his up with a look in his eye of oddly mingled dread, defiance, and curiosity.

Bridget had been scolding him for a bit of mischief, winding up with the information that a new mother was coming to teach him better manners. His aunt too had let fall a similar hint, on finding him restive under the vigorous scrubbing, combing and brushing she had administered as a necessary part of the preparations for the expected arrival, thus, perhaps quite unintentionally, rousing feelings of fear and dislike in the young heart, which if left to itself might have known nothing of the kind. But one of Mrs. Rush's sweet smiles, one tender motherly caress, seemed to undo all the mischief, and he threw his arms about her neck, crying, "Oh, I didn't b'lieve you'd be half so nice! I mean to love you ever so much."

"Thank you, dear," she said, "I'm sure we shall love one another."

"Me too, me too! me'll love you lots," lisped Midge, clinging to the new mother's hand, while Aunt Silence led the way into the house, and to the room she had prepared and adorned for the reception of the bride.

"I've done the best I could, but I'm afraid 'twill all seem very poor and mean to you; you're used to having things so much grander about you," she remarked, pushing forward a large armchair. "Sit down here, won't you? and let me take your things."

"Thank you; oh, this is sweet. Those roses over the window, just peeping in between the

white curtains, how lovely they are; and the flowers in the vases on the mantel, how beautiful, and how tastefully arranged. Everything is as neat as wax, too, and the air full of such delicious perfume. Oh, I thank you a thousand times for all the trouble you have taken to make me comfortable and happy."

"No trouble at all; nothing's a trouble that we do willingly," returned Miss Silence, warming still more toward her new sister. "I suppose you're some tired with your journey, and will want to wash off the dust, too. So I'll just leave you, and go out to the kitchen and see about tea; it'll be on the table in half an hour. If you want anything, just call, and I'll bring it, or send Bridget or one of the children with it. Come, Marg'ret, you're not wanted here just now."

The child submitted rather unwillingly to be led from the room. She wanted to stay with the new mamma.

"Mother, the trunks have come," said Fred's voice at the door, "which shall I have brought in to you?"

"The smallest that has my name on it, my son; that will do for the present."

"Mamma, dear, you look very weary," said Elena, "let me be your waiting-maid. I fancy I could almost supply Susan Gantt's place."

"Well, daughter, I will rest here in this chair for a little, while you attend to your own toilette,

and if you can get through with it in time to help me, I shall be glad to have you do so, as I feel very tired."

Elena found the children waiting outside to show her to her room. Aunt Silence had directed it, and they obeyed most willingly, for "the new sister," as they called her—comparing notes in a whisper—seemed to them almost as charming as "the little new mamma."

The room was only across the hall from her mother's, and its neat matting, white muslin curtains, and snowy counterpane, looked very inviting, spite of the absence of many a luxury and ornament to which the young girl had all her life been accustomed.

"Is it a nice room? do you like it?" asked Thad.

"Yes, it looks very pretty and comfortable," she answered, smiling down at him.

"And do you like Midge and me? We like you firstrate, 'cause you look so pretty and kind."

Elena laughed. "Yes," she said, gaily, "I think we shall be very good friends. But here comes my trunk, and now you may run away for a little while, because I must dress."

"Yes, we will. Come Midge." And he took his sister's hand to lead her away. But turning back at the door, "What shall we call you?" he asked; "you're our new sister, aint you?"

"You may call me so, if you like. Lena is the

name my brother Fred gives me, and you may use the same if you choose."

Albert's eyes—which met hers for an instant, as he and Bill Shade set down the trunk—seemed to request a share in the privilege; but he only asked bashfully if there was anything more he could do for her.

"Nothing, thank you," she said, and he withdrew with the others, leaving her alone.

Meanwhile Miss Silence, moving briskly about dining-room and kitchen, making ready the evening meal, with Bridget's assistance, was busied with her own thoughts. "What a beauty she is, to be sure! and so young looking, too; I declare, I feel like bein' as a mother to her, and don't know how to realize that she's the mother of that great boy—man, he calls himself, like enough—and girl. She's pretty, too, and a good bit like her mother, for all her eyes and hair are quite another color. And the boy—he's handsome as a picture, too; and they're all pleasant mannered—it's rather soon to judge, maybe, but I've a notion it wont be as disagreeable havin' them here as I thought. And I'm right down glad I fixed everything up nice for 'em."

Miss Silence was an excellent cook—could boast of having won the reputation of being the best in the county—and it was with pardonable pride that she surveyed her completed preparations for the entertainment of the bridal party.

"Will you take the head of the table to-night?" she asked, addressing her sister-in-law.

Mrs. Rush was about to plead fatigue, but her husband answered for her, "Of course she will. That's her proper place," and she silently took the offered seat.

"Mamma, are you not too tired?" asked Elena, glancing half angrily at her step-father. "I am sure Miss Rush would relieve you for this once."

"Never mind, dear, I can manage. And it is the post of honor, you know," Mrs. Rush answered, in a sprightly tone; adding to Miss Silence, with a winning smile, "My Lena is very careful of her little mother, as is Fred, also," and she glanced with loving, motherly pride, at her handsome son.

"I should think you'd grown about old enough to be able to take pretty good care of yourself," remarked Mr. Rush, with his disagreeable laugh.

Fred bit his lip to restrain an angry retort. Mr. Rush's actions had said the same thing all through the journey, and it was the son and daughter, not the newly-made husband, who showed constant thoughtfulness for the comfort and enjoyment of their delicate mother; and it was that care for her, more than anything else, which now led Fred to put aside vexation, and exert himself to be genial and entertaining; in which he succeeded so well, that he walked straight into the good graces of Miss Silence, Albert, and the little ones.

"My dear boy, what a comfort and blessing you

are to your mother," Mrs. Rush whispered to him, resting her head on his shoulder for a moment, as she bade him good night.

She could have given him no greater reward than those words of loving thankfulness. And, as he dwelt with delight upon them, he resolved that he would bear a great deal from Mr. Rush, before he would allow himself to be driven from that loving and beloved mother's side. "It's my business to watch over her and Lena, and smooth away the roughnesses from their path in life, as far as lies in my power," he said to himself; "and, God helping me, I mean to do it."

He was, however, doing his step-father some injustice. Mr. Rush was grasping and covetous, and meant to make what use he could, for his own advantage, of his wife's children, and the property which was rightfully theirs, but, otherwise, he had no wish to illtreat them, or in any way to make his house an uncomfortable home to them.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE HOP-FIELD.

MISS SILENCE found no reason to change the good opinion she had formed of the new members of the family. Mrs. Rush proved, on a further acquaintance, just as sweet and lovable as she had seemed at first. She took her step-children to her heart at once, and speedily won her way into the warmest corner of each of theirs; Fred and Elena being not far behind her—especially with the little ones, to whom they were extremely kind. To Miss Silence herself Mrs. Rush was sisterly and affectionate, and, while taking her own proper position as mistress of the family, and presiding over it with gentle dignity and grace, she gladly resigned to her stronger—and, in this respect, more capable—sister-in-law the whole oversight and responsibility of the kitchen and dairy.

It was not a pleasant discovery to Mrs. Rush that help was so scarce and poor in this region of country, that, instead of the numbers of good servants to which she had all her life been accustomed, she must now content herself with one, whose ability was equal to nothing but the rough-

est of the kitchen work. This was, certainly, no small trial to a delicate lady, reared in ease and luxury, but it was borne uncomplainingly, and even cheerfully.

It seemed quite shocking to Elena, when she first learned that such was the state of affairs, and that upon either her mother or herself would now devolve many of those household duties which, hitherto, she had been used to consider servants' work. But she was too reasonable and right-minded a girl, and far too fond of her mother, to fret, repine, or put on the air of a martyr, because she must make use of broom and duster with her own fair hands, if she would enjoy the luxuries of cleanliness and order. As soon as she understood the necessity, she cheerfully took up her burden, only anxious to save her mother from over-exertion, and not at all willing to allow Miss Silence to do more than her just share.

And she had her reward; for tasks undertaken in such a spirit, proved far less irksome than she had expected. She was of an active temperament, and, though unaccustomed to housework, had never been taught to despise it. She soon found that she had both taste and talent for it, and, by begging to become the pupil of Miss Silence in culinary and housewifely arts, and proving herself an apt scholar, she speedily won a high place in that lady's regard.

Fred's duties in the hop-field were undertaken

in the same spirit as his sister's in the house. He was interested, diligent, and cheerful, respectful to his step-father, and friendly and sociable with Albert. In the family he seemed always on the watch to be helpful, not only to his mother and sister, but to Miss Rush also, paying her those little chivalrous attentions which his father had, by both precept and example, taught him to bestow on the weaker sex, and doing so in an unobtrusive, matter of course way, that made them all the more agreeable.

It was something new to Miss Silence to be treated thus, but none the less pleasant on that account, and it was not long before Fred also became a prime favorite with her, and the model she was constantly holding up to Albert for his imitation.

With many natures this would have had a very bad effect, puffing the one up with vanity and pride, and exciting in the other feelings of jealousy and dislike toward him who was considered so superior to himself. Such evil consequences the little mother feared, and so gently tried to put a stop to this undue exaltation of her own son, and to show Albert that she esteemed and loved him also.

Albert was deeply grateful, but too humble to be jealous of Fred, whom he admired with all his heart, and was as earnestly desirous to imitate as his aunt could wish him to be. The boy was

naturally reserved, and lacking in self-confidence, and could not, for the first few days, feel quite at ease with so superior a person as Fred. Elena seemed still farther above him, by reason of her sex, he having seen but little of other young girls; while, as for Mrs. Rush, he thought her almost an angel. No other woman had ever smiled so sweetly upon him or spoken to him in such gentle, affectionate tones. How much sunshine she had brought into his life! He could not remember that he had ever been so happy before, and, gradually overcoming his bashfulness, he at length vied with Fred and Elena in delicate attentions to "this darling little mother," as he, too, began to call her in his secret heart.

As for Thad and Maggie, they rejoiced greatly in being entirely given up by Aunt Silence to the care and control of this new mamma, who thought little children needed a great deal of play, and ought not to be expected to do much work, and who made lessons so short, and so interesting, that they were never a weariness to infant flesh.

To love and to be loved seemed essential to the very existence of this gentle little lady, and finding herself united to a cold-hearted, undemonstrative man, she clung the more closely to her children, and to his, endeavoring to be an equally good and tender mother to each and all.

Fred and Elena, though making much of the little ones from the first, began by thinking Albert

stupid, awkward, and hardly worth noticing, yet ended by pronouncing him "a diamond in the rough," so unassuming, full of native simplicity and kindness of heart, generous, brave and true did they find him.

All three were kept so fully occupied with work that very little time was left for pleasure. The walks and rides they took were few in number, and Fred and Elena made but little progress in botany and geology. Study was therefore necessarily, though reluctantly, put aside for the present.

As August drew near they became much interested in the preparations for the hop-picking which they saw going on all around them. Scarcely anything else was talked of; and all hands were busily engaged in laying in stores of provisions, and getting quantities of beds and bedding ready for the accomodation of the pickers, who were expected in large numbers, and must be well fed and comfortably lodged.

"Well," remarked Mr. Rush, coming in from a delighted survey of his fields, "we've a magnificent crop this year, the finest hops I ever saw! They're in fine order for picking now, and we must begin next week."

"Have you pickers engaged?" asked his wife.

"Oh, yes; I'm not the man to put things off to the last minute. They were engaged months ago; some to come from quite a distance; but they are all to be on the spot bright and early Monday

morning. All but those that are here already," he added, with a glance around the little circle that seemed to take in every one present.

"And you have three here counting yourself," said Fred, pointedly.

"Three!" rejoined Mr. Rush, with his disagreeable laugh, "the mathematical part of your education must have been sadly neglected, master Fred. You and Albert certainly count two; even Thad is big enough to be of some assistance, and must be; but leaving him out, with my wife, your sister and mine, and myself, we have six good hands."

Fred sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing and the hot angry blood dyeing cheek and brow. "My mother and sister to be sent out into the fields to work? Never, sir! They shall submit to no such degrading treatment while I live to protect them."

"Oh, Fred, my son," remonstrated his mother, mildly, and with a deprecating look at her husband.

"Mother," cried the boy, "I can't see you and my sister abused, and I won't."

"But listen to me, my son. Don't be angry, Ullman; it is all because of his deep love to us," pleaded the wife and mother.

"Oh, let the boy rage, if he likes; it's all one to me," laughed Mr. Rush; "but when his beard is grown, he'll perhaps have sense enough to withhold his opinion till he knows something about what he's discussing."

"Yes, Fred, you don't understand this thing."

remarked Miss Silence, goodnaturedly. "Hop-picking isn't like other field work; the very first ladies in Brookville—and there are plenty of real ladies there too—come out to the country in hop time and help with the picking. It gives 'em a nice lot of pocket-money—for you see they're paid by the box, and a right smart picker can earn from two to three dollars a day; and then it's considered very good for the health—bcin' out in the fresh air so, and the smell of the hops and all."

"And we have real merry times, I tell you," said Albert, "especially when we get through, on the last day. And Aunt Silence gives us the very best of her cookery, and plenty of it."

Fred glanced doubtfully at his mother and sister.

"I shall not mind it, Fred, if other ladies are there, and I can get with them and not with the lower class," said Elena.

"I'll take care of that, if I can do no more," he muttered, with a look of disgust and dislike directed at Mr. Rush.

"Well," observed Miss Silence, "I like the work right well, myself, but I don't believe, Ullman, its worth while for you to count much on Lena or me; we shall be so busy with our cakes, pies and puddin's. And as for sister Helen, maybe she'll be able to do a little if she fancies it, and likes to leave what she mostly does in the house to the rest of us. Otherwise, she's not strong enough to do any at all, and I'm sure there's no occasion."

"She can do as she likes, of course; there'll be no force put upon her inclinations," answered Mr. Rush, gruffly.

"I intend to try it, my dear," said his wife, laying her hand caressingly on his arm. "I believe it will benefit me, and I think I shall like it; indeed, I am almost sure I shall, if I have pleasant companions."

Fred made no further objection, and even brought himself to apologize slightly to his step-father, but was answered in a way that increased the dislike he had from the first felt toward the man who ever seemed to him a usurper of the place of the departed parent he had so tenderly loved and revered.

Elena had developed quite a genius for housewifery; delighted in pickling, preserving, making cake and nice desserts, and did not even despise the plainer and less interesting work of cooking vegetables and meats, and baking bread and pies. Miss Silence began to assert laughingly, that she trembled for her own laurels. She was evidently very proud of her pupil, whom she found a cheerful, pleasant companion, also, in spite of the difference in their years.

The two were kept very busy within doors during the hop season; but occasionally found time for an hour or so at the picking. Elena would not let her mother go without her, so fearful was she of over-fatigue for her; but both pronounced it "rather pleasant employment when one had not

too much of it, nor was annoyed by the proximity of the rude and vulgar."

It was on the afternoon of the second day that they made their first appearance in the field.

Fred came forward to meet them. "So you have come," he said, cheerily. "Well, I am willing, since I find some of the nicest, most refined and agreeable, of our lady friends among the pickers. This way, if you please; I am pole puller, and have reserved a place for you between Mrs. Hall and her son Charlie, on one side, and the Misses Frost on the other."

"What are the duties of pole puller?" asked Mrs. Rush.

"To run at the cry of 'hops,' and furnish the pickers with a new supply. He must cut off the hop vine and tie it to prevent bleeding, then carry pole and all to a box, lay it slantingly over, and leave it to the pickers, who strip off the blossoms into the box till it is full; then cry 'Hopsack,' when another man, called inspector, must run and pronounce the box full, if he finds it so. It is his place to walk about among the pickers and see that there is no cheating by putting in leaves—more of them than necessary; you can't help a few getting in—or in any other way."

"What other way? I want to fill my box in a hurry, for I can't be spared long from my duties as cook," laughed Elena.

Fred colored. "Don't speak so loud, Lena," he

said in an undertone; "some one may overhear you; and I could not bear to have it noised abroad that my sister has become a kitchen drudge."

"But that she is not, my child," said his mother, mildly; "nor shall she ever be reduced to that while you and I live."

"No indeed," he murmured. "But here we are," he added in a louder key, "and I must leave you, for I hear the cry of 'hops.'"

"There, he's off without telling me how to fill my box quickly," cried Elena.

"Rapid picking, I presume you will find to be the very best plan, my child," said her mother, returning the greeting of the other ladies. "So let us to work. I don't think we will find it an unpleasant task."

"I do not," said Mrs. Hall, "the smell of new hops is quite refreshing to me."

The Misses Frost were lively, chatty girls, somewhat older than Elena, with whom they had nevertheless exchanged calls several times. They were in a very merry mood to-day.

"Look!" exclaimed Miss Lizzie, in an amused tone, "there comes old Mother Biddle, with her ancient lover in tow."

"Lover! *she* is that, but not he, I'm afraid," said her sister, laughing. "Do you know them, Miss Landon?"

"Not at all. Are those they coming up the road?"

"Yes. My sister spoke of him as her ancient lover. He is sixty-two; but she is eighty."

Elena laughed as she looked. "How absurd! And what a comical figure she is," she said.

"Yes; and even more comical in speech and behavior."

"She is not coming to pick hops, surely?" remarked Elena, interrogatively.

"Yes; oh, she's as active and strong as most women of forty. She's coming to pick, but she'll go into the house first for her cup of tea. She's devoted to tea, and Miss Silence knows it, and always gives it to her good and strong."

"Do you know her?"

"Oh yes; like a book. She's to take this next box, and we'll have some tall fun."

Mrs. Rush was chatting with Mrs. Hall, and hardly noticed what the young girls were saying.

"Tell me something more about her, won't you?" said Elena. "Surely she is not going to marry that man, eighteen years younger than herself?"

"She's very much in love; that's all I know about it," answered Lizzie. "She's a near neighbor of ours; not an overly agreeable one; she's a regular Paul Pry—questions your servant as to how much is required of her, and what wages she gets—thinks people should keep their floors bare, as she does hers, and calls them proud and stuck up if they have them carpeted. Her children are all married off, and she lives alone, except that this Mr. Barlow boards with her. He's a widower,

and has married children. She wasn't happy with her husband—who has been dead for some years; she says he always grudged her her tea, and never let her have enough. But here she comes."

The subject of their remarks was a little woman, quite below the medium height, and arrayed in a manner that gave her a decidedly grotesque appearance; her dark calico dress was very scant and short, showing blue yarn stockings, and coarse leather shoes below it; she wore a broad-brimmed straw hat, and underneath it her grey hair fell in scanty ringlets about her sallow, wrinkled face and skinny neck.

"Good day, girls," she said, as she came up. "Did you see where Mr. Barlow went?"

"Why, Mrs. Biddle, I thought I saw him coming up the road along with you," said Mary Frost.

"So he did, Molly; but you see I went into the house to get my cup o' tea, while he came on into the field. Oh, there he is over yonder, pickin' along with the 'Piscopal minister; now I wanted him to jine with me. Well, well, I always was unlucky." And the look of delight at discovering his whereabouts, changed to one of disappointment and chagrin.

"Never mind, I'm sure he likes you, and would rather be by your side than anywhere else; but probably the minister asked for his help, and he didn't like to refuse to give it."

"Well now, Lizzie, like enough that was it. I

b'lieve he does kind o' like me," she said, with a simper. "But ain't he a nice-looking chap? handsome as a pictur'?" And the amorous glance she directed toward him was quite ludicrous in one of her years.

The young girls tittered.

"When is the wedding to come off, Mrs. Biddle?" asked Mary Frost.

"Oh, I don't know. I can't say as it'll ever come to that." And the old crone shook her head and sighed dolorously.

"Why, I thought you said he liked you?"

"Well, yes, in a way, I think he does. I'm indefatigable in tendin' to his comfort; his tea is always good an' strong, an' pipin' hot, and so's his buckwheat cakes, or bit o' toast, and vegetables an' meat; the cookin' I set him down to is superior to the best, and I'm as spry as a kitten; but for all that he 'pears to think I'm too old for him; an' so I'm afeared I can't never be nothing but mother, or grandmother to him," she concluded, with a heavy sigh.

"Oh, but you mustn't get discouraged, Mrs. Biddle," returned the laughing Lizzie, half averting her face to hide its amused expression; "there's an old saying, that 'faint heart never won fair lady,' and I dare say the rule works both ways."

"Mebby so. I told him he'd git his board free gratis—for—nothin'—his buttons sewed on, and stockins darned, into the bargain, and that made

him look pleased like ; so mebby he'll come round yit."

"A becoming dress helps amazingly sometimes, Mrs. Biddle," remarked Elcna, with a merry twinkle in her eye, as she glanced at the odd little dried-up figure.

"Sure enough, Miss Landon. An' now I jist mean to try that manoever. I'll git a yellow buff dress like your'n, Lizzie, the one you had on to meetin' last Sunday. *He* said he thought it was so purty an' becomin.' Now that's jist what I'll do. Where did you git it, and how much did you have fur to give a yard?"

"Three and sixpence, Mrs. Biddle; and I bought it at Thatcher's."

"That's a good bit to pay; but," with another loving glance at her greyhaired boarder, "I reckon mebby it'll pay. There, they've got their box full; an' now I'll jist go an' fetch him here to help me."

She trotted off, and the three girls burst into a merry laugh. "Oh, dear, dear me! but isn't that rich?" cried Lizzie, stopping work to put her hands to her sides, and laughing till the tears ran down her cheeks. "Just think of her, with her sallow, wrinkled skin, in a yellow dress. Oh, it's too much, 'twill be no end of fun to see her."

"And how will you like yours after that?" asked her sister.

"I'll never wear it again where she's been seen in hers."

Elena caught a look of gentle reproof from her mother, and hung her head, with a blush of shame.

"My dears," said Mrs. Rush, "don't let your youthful spirits carry you too far. We should show some respect to grey hairs, you know."

"One hardly can, when they hang in girlish ringlets round such a neck as that, my dear Mrs. Rush," said Lizzie, wiping her eyes, and going on with her work.

"The poor old creature is probably in her dotage, my dear, and we must not forget that such a time may come to each of us," said the gentle lady; "let us try to treat her as we will then wish to be treated ourselves."

"Your reproof is deserved, I acknowledge, Mrs. Rush," said Miss Mary, frankly; "and I, for one, shall try to profit by it."

"I, too," said her sister; "but," she added, in a whisper to Elena, "I'll have to keep eyes and ears intent upon my work when mother Biddle's about, or I'll be sure to be at it again."

The old lady was now drawing near, bringing her friend with her; but the girls virtuously refrained from even a glance in her direction, and did their best to suppress the mirth excited by the honeyed accents which they could not help overhearing, as every now and then they fell from her lips.

"What! Mother and Mrs. Hall doing all the talking, and you young ladies as quiet as mice.

How's that?" exclaimed a voice at Elena's elbow.

"Oh, is that you, Fred? Come to tell me about the cheating, eh?" she said, looking up at him with a smile.

"I have just found a set of pickers who are so extremely honest, that they have been cheating themselves," he remarked, stopping beside their box for a little, and picking into it while he talked: "a poor minister and his wife and children. They have been taking such very great care to keep out even the smallest leaf, that their work has progressed very slowly indeed, and they have packed down their hops till really their boxful made one and a half when thrown lightly in as they should be."

"But how were they cheating themselves? I should think it only honest to do as they did," said Mrs. Rush.

"No, mother; a few small leaves don't do the least harm, and as the size of the boxes and the price of the hops are fixed but low, and it is not expected that the hops are to be packed down, their doing so is no gain to the farmer who employs them to pick; but rather the contrary, because, as the pickers have to be boarded as part of their pay, fast workers are the more profitable."

"I understand; and Elena and I will not be over careful about the leaves or the quantity of hops."

"No; and I want to learn how to cheat," repeated Elena. "Come, Fred, aren't you going to tell me?"

"I have already told you that putting leaves in, in large quantities, is one way," said her brother; "another way is to tie strings across near the bottom of the box, and by means of them shake up the hops to make them lie lightly."

"Hop-sack! hop-sack!" was at this moment shouted from a distant part of the field.

"What does that cry mean?" asked Elena.

"That a box is full, and they wish the inspector to come and pronounce it so. He must go on the instant, and after he has pronounced it full, it must pass as such, no matter how much the hops may afterward sink down, showing that there has been cheating by lightening it up in the way I have described. I know you'll not try that; but let me tell you, the faster you work the fewer hops it will take to fill your box, and the more profitable your work will be both to yourselves and—to Mr. Rush."

"Then I'll work with all my might, as I see Miss Lizzie and Miss Mary are doing."

And the white taper fingers of the lively girl moved with surprising celerity, while still she laughed and joked, and now and then warbled snatches of songs, for she was young and full of health and animal spirits, all care and sorrow forgotten for the moment, as if they had never been.

And ever and anon Albert, working near by, cast furtive glances of admiration at her, thinking that, except the little mother, he had never seen anything half so fair and sweet.

Both Elena and Fred found hop-picking much more agreeable than they had expected ; pleasant, refined, intelligent people, their friends and neighbors, came to share in it, and while the hands were busied with the work, the tongues were free, and improving conversation, gay badinage and lively repartee made the time fly swiftly, and in some instances ripened mere acquaintance into warm friendship. Then when they had finished work for the day, the evenings were given up to innocent amusement, mirth and gayety ruled the hour. Merry games were played, the elders joining in with the children and youth ; and the piano, harp and the "human voice divine," adding their charms to the entertainment. There were some very fine singers among them, in particular a young Tyrolese, whose beautiful songs, sung in a rich mellow voice, greatly delighted his auditors. There was an Irishman too, whose comic songs were very amusing. On the last evening—which was the time of the greatest hilarity, their task being now entirely completed—while he was in the midst of one, a hop-sack was suddenly thrown over his head from behind, and he found himself a prisoner, in the hands of his laughing fellow pickers. The sudden breaking off of the song in the middle of a stanza, the shouts and laughter of the captors, and the struggles of the hapless victim to free himself from their grasp, formed an amusing scene, and with it closed the hop-picking sports at Mr. Rush's.

CHAPTER IV.

GOING TO COLLEGE.

"**T**HERE, that job's done for this year anyhow," remarked Miss Silence, in a tone of great satisfaction, as she saw the last wagon load of pickers depart. "Elena, child, how you have worked both in-doors and out! and you look tired, too; and you, Helen, you've had more to do than you were fit for."

"I think no one has done so much as you yourself, sister Silence," was the smiling rejoinder.

"I'll tell you what!" exclaimed Miss Silence, energetically, "I vote that we all take a play spell, and go on a picnic out to Devil's Lake. 'Tis a pretty spot, and will be new to these eastern folk."

The young people and children were delighted with the proposal. Mr. Rush growled a little, but presently yielded to his sister's determined persistence in carrying out her wishes, and consented to the plan.

Miss Silence had grown very fond of her new sister, as well as of her son and daughter, and had been for weeks planning to give them this treat,—

a day in the woods, and a sail on the beautiful little sheet of water she had mentioned, and which lay not many miles distant.

They went the next day, had a pleasant drive to the spot, a dinner in the woods, and a sail on the lake; after which, while the little ones played on the shore, and the older ladies sat under a tree watching them, and enjoying a quiet chat,—Mr. Rush and Albert being engaged in fishing,—the brother and sister had a long delightful ramble together, talking, as they walked, of how they would spend the coming winter.

Elena was discouraged at the thought that in all these weeks and months she had found no time to study.

"Nor have I," said Fred, "but we will have our evenings to ourselves in the winter; both mother and Mr. Rush have promised me that; and then we will study together. Albert intends to join us too, he says, if you do not object."

"I? Why no, why should I?"

"Yes, why should you indeed, or I either? But he's such a modest fellow, he's always fearing to intrude."

"He must be far behind you in his studies."

"Oh yes; for though he has plenty of intellect and talent, his advantages have been so far inferior to mine. He wants me to play tutor to him, and I have consented."

"So you'll have two pupils. You will help me

with the ologies, mathematics and Latin, while mamma will give me instruction in French, German, music and drawing; and I shall do as well or better than if I were at boarding-school or had a governess; and shall be able to help mamma and Aunt Silence, and to teach the little ones occasionally, too."

"What time do you expect to have left for sleep or recreation, if you undertake all that?" laughed Fred.

"Oh, well, haven't you often told me that it was best to aim high? and that those who plan to do no more than they can easily accomplish, will be sure to do less than they could?"

"Very true, sister mine, and I rejoice to see that my sage advice has not been wasted."

Elena did not find herself able to do all she had planned, but both she and the boys accomplished a good deal in the way of study, and also of work. The winter was a busy and happy one to all; but the coming of spring sent the boys into the hop-fields again, and for several months books were laid aside almost entirely. The hop-picking of this year was very much like a repetition of that of the last, except that, more land having been planted with them, and the crop being excellent and abundant, everything was on a larger scale than before. The demand too was great, and the price high, and many thousands of dollars were added to Mr. Rush's wealth.

And now Fred was to go to college again, and to stay until he took his degree. The last load of hop-pickers was hardly out of sight, when his mother called him into her room and told him so. She had arranged it all, and gained Mr. Rush's consent, without waiting for her son to urge his wishes, or remind her that the year he was to spend on the farm had fully expired.

Fred thanked her warmly, and willingly consented to attend a nearer college than old Yale, where his first two years had been spent. He was almost as loath to go so far away from her as she to allow him to do so.

"And you shall not be stinted for means, my son," she said, fondly stroking the hand she had taken in her own; "the sum that would have been spent on you during the last year, had you passed it in college, I had Mr. Rush invest for you, and it has more than doubled itself, so that it alone would carry you through your two remaining years; but it is not all I can afford to give my only and darling boy, and he shall have a liberal supply of pocket-money."

"Thank you, dearest and best of mothers," he answered, gratefully. "I will try not to abuse your liberality."

"No, my dear son, never forget that money is a talent for the use or abuse of which we must at last render up a strict account, as are also time, intellect, and educational advantages."

"Ah, yes, mother dear, I'll try to bear all that in mind; but really, you have no idea of the many temptations that assail every boy and young man at school and college."

"My dear boy," she said, tenderly, "your mother's prayers will follow you wherever you go."

The college term did not begin till early in November, and before that Fred had learned that two of his Brookville acquaintances were to be his fellow-travellers. One was Robert King, a lad about a year older than himself; the other, Richard Hall, an older brother of Charlie's, fifteen years of age, and now leaving home and parents for the first time; having been prepared for college by his pastor, who pronounced him fit to enter the freshman class. King had already spent a year at the institution, and was now a sophomore.

A day or two before the boys were to leave, Mrs. Hall sent for Fred, and in a private interview, earnestly commended her son to his brotherly care.

"It will be his first experience of life away from the good influences of home," she said; "and oh, do watch over him and try to keep him from falling into wicked ways! He has the greatest respect for you, Fred—excuse me, Mr. Landon."

"Call me Fred," interrupted the young man; "I am but a boy yet, and prefer that name from my mother's friends."

"Well then, Fred," she continued, with a pleased smile, "my son respects you and looks up to you. I do think he would bear advice from you better than from almost any one else except his parents. He says, 'Fred Landon's the right sort of a fellow; he likes a bit of harmless fun as well as anybody, and can joke and laugh, and is good too.'"

Fred looked grave, "I'll do my best for him, Mrs. Hall," he said, "but I feel that I too need some one to keep me straight. I am only three years older than Ritchie, you know."

"And you *have* some one to guard and guide you, One who is mighty to save," she answered, earnestly; "but my poor boy has not yet learned to know and trust that heavenly Friend. And I think," she added, "that the responsibility of keeping another straight may be a help to you in your journey through life."

"No doubt of it, and many thanks for the trust you repose in me," replied Fred, rising to take leave.

He had gone but a few steps from Mr. Hall's door, when he met King, with whom he was slightly acquainted, slowly sauntering up the street, puffing away at a cigar, with his hands in his pockets, and his hat stuck jauntily on one side of his head; the very picture of an idle, good-for-nothing loafer.

"Oh, ah, Landon, how d'ye do? How d'ye find yourself to-day? So you are going to Hamilton,

too, I hear?" he said, addressing Fred with a patronizing air, both amusing and provoking.

"That is my expectation," replied Fred, shortly, feeling somewhat disgusted with the manner of the address.

"Ah, indeed! freshman I suppose, of course? Well, I shall be a soph this year; can't expect to be much together—different classes you know—but shall be happy to render any assistance in my power."

"Thank you. Good morning; I have a good deal to attend to and must be going," answered Fred, hurrying on his way.

At the next corner Albert was waiting with the carriage. The two had come into town together, and while the one made his call, the other attended to various commissions for the ladies of the family.

"What's the matter, Fred?" asked Albert, looking keenly into his friend's face, as they drove briskly along towards home.

Fred laughed and his face resumed its accustomed pleasing expression. "Oh, a mere trifle, not in the least worth minding," he said, cheerily, "but it is not agreeable to be patronized; especially by a fellow without brains."

"Who is it? Bob King? I thought I saw you meet. Yes, he's good at that; you see his father has made money very fast—mostly on hops—the last two or three years, and Bob has been off to college; and so he feels very large and grand.

Has he offered to take the oversight of you at Hamilton."

"No; but regrets that—as he is to be a soph, and I, of course, only a freshman—it will be impracticable."

They both laughed, and Albert said, "I should like to see how he will look when he finds his mistake, and sees you among the juniors."

"I wish you could. I wish you were going with me, Al," said Fred, heartily.

"I should like it vastly, so far as being with you is concerned, Fred," returned Albert; "but I don't really care to go through a college course; and I think father is right in his decision that, as I intend to be a farmer, it is not worth while, and that, as we now have an excellent academy in Brookville, I need go no further from home than that, to get all the education necessary for me."

"Yes, I daresay you are right; though I should like to have you bear me company, I am very glad, on some accounts, that you are to remain behind. I entrust my mother and sister to your care, Al, and confidently too; for I believe you think almost as much of them as if they were your own."

"Quite as much, I am certain," answered Albert, coloring with pleasure; "and I promise to do my very best to supply your place."

The lads had become brothers in affection, and constant intercourse with Fred had done a great deal for Albert's improvement in mind and man-

ners. He had lost much of his shyness, and was rapidly becoming gentlemanly and refined in looks and behavior.

It was Albert who drove in to the Brookville depot with Fred and his luggage, on the morning appointed for setting out upon the journey to Hamilton. They picked up Richard Hall on the way.

"Be a good boy, Ritchie; study hard, be obedient to your teachers, kind and obliging to your mates, and live always in the fear and love of God," whispered his mother as she bade him good-bye.

"I mean to be a man, mother," answered Richard, forcing himself to smile, and to speak lightly though his lip quivered slightly, and there was a little tell-tale moisture in his eye. He squeezed her hand very hard, kissed Charlie and his sisters, and ran down to the gate calling out, "I say, Al, you're a brick to come for me; I was expecting to walk to the depot."

"Pooh; 'twas only neighborly," said Albert. "Where's your trunk? it can go too."

"Just sent it off this minute."

"Good morning, young gentlemen. Richard, do be careful to wear your overcoat when the weather's very cold," said Mrs. Hall, coming down to the gate for a few more last words. "And choose your friends wisely, my son; don't make an intimate of Robert King."

"Catch me, mother; do you suppose I fancy such fellows as that? Not much. I prefer brains

and morals, to money. But, good-bye again, we must git, or we'll miss the train ; won't we boys?"

"Well, don't talk slang, that's another thing I want you to remember," said his mother, as they drove off.

"There he is now, large as life, and twice as natural," remarked Richard, as they neared the depot.

"Who? Bob King?" asked Albert.

"Yes, cigar in mouth, hands in pockets, and hat stuck on one side of his head, just as usual. See how the wreaths of smoke curl up from under that delicate moustache, so fine and fair, 'tis hardly visible to the naked eye. But Bob's mighty proud of it for all that, you'd better b'lieve. Halloo! here we are," he cried, leaping to the ground as Albert reined in his horses.

"Ritchie's whistling to keep up his courage," said Albert, as he and Fred prepared to follow.

"No," answered Fred, "I think his spirits are real, judging by myself."

"Ah, but you're used to it, and he's never gone from home before."

"So much the more excitement then, you know. There's not much time to spare, is there?"

"Ten minutes, maybe, before the train's due. You get the tickets and I'll see to the checks."

"Thank you ; Ritchie is attending to the buying of his, I see."

"Good morning, Landon. Fine day this for our

little trip. Have a smoke?" said King, taking out his cigar-case as Fred drew near.

"Thank you, no, I never smoke," returned Fred, stepping past him into the ticket office.

"You don't smoke, eh? nor drink, nor swear either I s'pose?" remarked King, as he and Hall came out again. "Well, I'll wager you'll learn to do all three before you've been in Hamilton as many months," he added, clinching his assertion with an oath.

"I hope not. I do not assert that there is any sin in smoking, though it seems to me both a useless and dangerous habit; but as to the other two, I shall consider myself neither a gentleman nor a Christian if ever I fall into them."

So saying, Fred turned upon his heel and walked away to the other end of the building.

"Whew! One of the saints, eh?" ejaculated King, taking his cigar from his mouth with a loud mocking laugh.

"He's a bad fellow, and a lazy one, as every body in Brookville knows," said Richard, following his friend. "'Tisn't much I'd trouble myself about his opinion of me."

"Remembering the 'woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you,' I think I should be rather more troubled by his good, than his bad opinion," answered Fred. "But there's the train, and here comes Albert with our checks. Many thanks for all your kindness, brother," he added, addressing

the latter. "Don't forget your promise to write often," and the two shook hands warmly as they parted.

There was abundance of room in the car, and each helped himself to a separate seat, King taking possession of one at some distance from the others and on the opposite side.

But at every station new travellers poured in, until not a single seat was without one or more occupants. A boy came in and claimed a share of Ritchie's, a white-haired old man and woman followed, and passed up and down the car vainly searching for a vacant seat.

Fred rose and offered his with a manner as kindly and respectful as he could have used had they been evidently persons of distinction, instead of the very plainly dressed and ordinary looking old couple that they were.

They accepted it with thanks, and he sat down by King; rather unwillingly, but it was Hobson's choice—that or none.

"Catch me giving up my seat to anybody; much less a couple of old codgers like those," growled King.

"I have always been taught to show respect to age, and polite and kind attention to the weaker sex," replied Fred; "and thankful I am for the lesson given me by a father who was himself the most chivalrous and polished of men, teaching even more by example than by precept."

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"Stuff and nonsense," muttered King; "first come first served, and let every fellow take care of himself, I say."

"How far do you travel on this road?" asked Hall's companion.

"I'm going to Hamilton to enter college."

"Eh? are you really? Well, so am I. My name is Ned Schaffer—what's yours?"

Richard gave it.

"Yes? Well, I'm glad there's two of us."

"There's a fellow just coming in that looks as if he might be another," remarked Richard; for the train had stopped again.

As he spoke, a man left the seat in front of Schaffer, and the new comer took it. Then a poorly dressed woman, with a babe on her arm, and a heavy satchel in the other hand, came pushing her way along, in a vain search for a seat. She looked weary and troubled.

Fred rose.

"Sit down, Landon; no occasion for you to get up; and I say I won't have that creature and her brat beside me!" muttered King, angrily, giving Fred's coat a twitch as he spoke.

"I shall give her my seat. You can do as you like about retaining yours," replied Fred, coolly. And he beckoned to the woman, who was at some little distance, gave her his seat, walked to the other end of the car and stood until, at the next stopping place, another seat was vacated.

Meanwhile the other lads were rapidly making acquaintance. The name of the new comer was Perry Davis, as he presently informed the other two, and as they had surmised, he also was bound for Hamilton College. Not, however, like themselves, for the first time; he had already spent a year in the institution, as he announced with some pride and pomposity.

Then he assumed very patronizing airs as he went on to describe the buildings and grounds, the routine of study, the gymnastic exercises, and the games in vogue among the students, to all of which Hall and Schaffer listened with eager interest. Yet they did not relish his manner, and neither felt disposed to make an intimate friend of him.

Richard had been carefully trained and instructed by intelligent Christian parents, and was remarkably well behaved and gentlemanly. Schaffer seemed to care little for anything but his own ease and enjoyment, and was evidently a glutton. His pockets were filled with apples, gingerbread, and peanuts, with which he was continually stuffing himself, while he never offered a mouthful to either of his companions.

"So you have found some friends already, Ritchie, eh?" remarked Fred, as the two walked in company from the depot at Hamilton, to the institution whither they were bound.

"H'm! yes—no—I don't know."

Fred's look was inquiring.

"Well, one's a glutton, and a mean, stingy fellow too, and the other thinks he's vastly my superior, and—and I don't like to be patronized, that's a fact."

"Ah, that's the trouble? Well, Ritchie, I don't blame you; I always feel my dander rising under such treatment; yet really it is not worth while to resent it, I've learned that the best plan is to let it pass unnoticed. But here we are in full sight of the college buildings. Quite imposing in appearance, are they not?"

CHAPTER V.

COLLEGE CHUMS.

THEY were shown into the presence of Dr. Nevins, the principal of the institution. The interview was short and entirely satisfactory to all parties.

"There, that's over; and I'm glad of it, though it wasn't half so bad as I expected," said Richard, gleefully, as they left the presence. "He's splendid! looks the head of the faculty every inch, doesn't he?"

Davis regarded him with a smile, half contemptuous, half patronizing. "The doctor's well enough; but, when you've cut your eye teeth, young man, you'll not be so easily sent off into school-girl raptures."

Richard looked angry and indignant.

"Come," said Fred, cheerily, "let's see what rooms we can secure; there must be some choice, I suppose."

"Yes," replied Davis; "but you can't be together—freshs, sophs, juniors and seniors, all on separate floors, you know; the lower your class, the higher you go to roost, you see. Here, I'll show the way, and give all needed information. Up one

flight, and this is your floor, Landon. Hall, Schaffer, and I, being freshs, go up two flights of stairs more."

"How's that? I thought you'd been here last year. Aren't you a soph?" asked Richard.

"Well, no; you—you see I didn't pass on the examination, and they put me back," answered Davis, coloring. "Too bad it was, too; all embarrassment and that, you know; got half frightened out of my wits."

"He doesn't appear very bashful now," thought Richard; but he said nothing more.

The selection was soon made.

As they came down from the upper story, Fred stepped into his room, where he had left his valise, to pen a hasty note to his mother, just to let her know of his safe arrival.

The others went on to the lower hall, from whence they had a view of the playground, where a game of ball was in full progress. They stood watching it, and Davis pointed out one and another of the players, telling who they were, and the nicknames by which they were known among their fellows, and also giving his opinion of the characters of several.

"There, that fellow that has just hit the ball—his name's White—Nig, we call him; and the one that's after it is Joe Decamp, alias, Git, alias Git-out, alias Beoff, alias Skedaddle."

Hall and Schaffer both laughed, and Richard

asked what sort of fellows they were, and how they liked their aliases.

"Oh, good enough sort o' chaps, and don't kick up a row about a nickname; that's not the way, you see; the right thing's to pay the fellows back in their own coin. There, the one that's after the ball now; d'ye see—the sandy-haired chap? He's Will Carter, alias Drayman. He's one of your saints—wouldn't use an oath to save his neck, or touch a cigar if you'd pay him for it."

The description was given in a sneering, contemptuous tone, and Richard winced at the thought that, if faithful to his convictions of duty, he, too, must expect to be subjected to this species of persecution; sometimes harder to endure than physical pain.

"We have both beasts and birds here," Perry went on. "Yonder's a boy named Fox; and the one opposite is Lyon, but he's not a bit dangerous. Then there are two named Sparrow, cousins. Henry, he's Hen Sparrow, and, of course, t'other's Cock Sparrow. Here comes a fellow to speak to us. Halloo, Johnnie! how are you?"

"First rate. How d'ye find yourself, Commodore? Glad to get back, eh?"

A shrug of the shoulders was Perry's only reply to the query.

"Here's two new fellows, Johnnie," he said; "Entry, and—and Stuffer. Master Johnnie Little-doo, gents."

"Schaffer," corrected the owner of that name, coloring, somewhat angrily, while Richard looked puzzled for a moment, then said, with a laugh: "Richard Hall, at your service, sir."

"And I'm Johnnie Doolittle," said the other, shaking hands in a cordial way that won Richard's regard from the first.

"And here come Fleahy-warbler, Rock, and Snowball, alias, Fatzinger, Stone, and Black," continued Davis, as several others came running toward them, the game having come to a conclusion.

Greetings and introductions were exchanged. There was much laughing, joking, and loud talking; and, in the midst of it all, came a sudden din and roar that startled the new boys off their feet, at which there was a shout of laughter from Perry, and two or three others.

"It is only the gong sounding for supper; we all eat together in the one dining-hall here," said Doolittle.

A rush was made for the dining-room, and Richard presently found himself seated at a long table, between Schaffer and Doolittle.

What an array of strange faces, almost all masculine, and how different from the little home circle he had just left. He was sorry to miss the dear ones there, and yet his heart swelled with exultation at the thought that he was at last a college student, a distinction he had been looking forward to for years. He caught sight of Fred's

pleasant, familiar face at an opposite table, returned his nod and smile, then made a vigorous attack upon the viands, finding himself very hungry, but not too much so to enjoy the sly jokes and fun going on about him, as thoroughly as if he had been an inmate of the institution for months instead of scarcely an hour.

"I'm going into the town to see what it is like, and to mail a letter," said Fred, tapping him on the shoulder, as they left the room. "Shall I have the pleasure of your company?"

"That you shall, if it isn't contrary to rules; and, of course, you wouldn't propose it if that was the case," replied Richard, following his friend across the lawn that lay between the building and the road.

"No; I hope not. Do you know who is to be your room-mate, Ritchie?"

"Not I. And you?"

"As ignorant as yourself, and a little anxious in regard to both yours and mine, I must confess. There'll be some bad fellows here, Ritchie—there always are in every such public institution—and you and I must keep upon our watch-towers."

"Well, Fred, I mean to do about as near right as I can. And now for a race. This place seems countryfied enough to allow of it—the houses are so few and far between. Do you see that big brick, about a quarter of a mile off? Yes? Well let's see who'll get there first."

"With all my heart," answered Fred, and they started off in gallant style.

It was neck and neck most of the way, but Richard's wind failed him first, and Fred beat by a yard or so. They stopped for a moment to recover breath, then went on talking gaily of feats of agility and strength, of gymnastic sports and exercises, and various other matters such as are apt to interest lads of their age.

Returning from his walk, Fred found that his room mate had arrived. A tall angular figure, arrayed in coarse, ill-fitting home-spun apparel—garments that hung about his spare form as if they had been meant for a man of twice his size—leaned over the stove, spreading out a pair of huge bony hands to catch the warmth of the fire, for the night was chill and frosty.

He turned his head at the sound of the opening and shutting of the door, showing a very homely face, large featured, and lantern jawed, with high cheek bones, and shaggy eyebrows; yet not altogether unpleasant in expression, since one might read there, both sense and kindness.

"Good-evening," he said, without changing his attitude in the least, but scanning Fred from head to foot, with his great greenish-yellow eyes; "I hope, sir, you'll not mistake me for an unwarranted intruder; since I was directed by the most undoubted authority to take up my domiciliary residence in this apartment, and the adjacent bed-chamber on



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yonder side ; which I took some pains to ascertain was not the one selected by yourself as your sleeping apartment."

"All right, sir. I chose the other one," replied the person addressed, with a twinkle of fun in his eye. "I suppose we will have to introduce ourselves. My name is Fred Landon. And yours?"

"Is Jonathan Bruce, at your service."

And the tall angular form towered above Fred, while the great, hard, bony hand took his into a vice-like grasp, and shook it vehemently.

It was with some difficulty that Fred suppressed a cry of pain, and hastily disengaging his hand, he drew up a chair and seated himself on the opposite side of the stove.

"You are, I presume, like myself, a stranger here?" he remarked, furtively examining the features of his new acquaintance as he spoke.

"I have this day crossed the threshold of this institution for the first time, sir," was the reply, in a deep, sonorous tone.

"And yet, I strongly suspect that he will never again see his thirty-fifth birthday," thought Fred, giving him another stealthy, but searching glance.

Fred had invited Richard to accompany him to his room, but declining the invitation, the lad sauntered into a recitation room, whence sounds of mirth were issuing. Fred's "preaching"—as he mentally called it—at the beginning of their walk

had made him uncomfortable, and he had no mind to hear any more of it just then.

He found Schaffer slumbering on a bench, after a supper that proved him not unworthy of the name bestowed upon him by Perry Davis. A number of sophomores and freshmen were there also; some standing idly about with their hands in their pockets, whistling, humming, or silently listening to the chatting and laughter of others, who were gathered in groups here and there, discussing various matters of interest to them as students,—the laws of the college, the tutors and professors, old and new—for there had been some changes since the close of the last term,—arrangement of classes, hours of recitation, etc. etc. There were reminiscences too, of past frolics, and practical jokes, doubtless more amusing to the perpetrators than to their victims.

Richard caught a word or sentence now and then, which gave him some insight into the characters of the speakers, among whom were most of those Davis had pointed out to him on the playground; but he was not in the mood, at the moment, to make the first advances toward friendship or acquaintance; and they did not seem to notice him.

The first who did so, and that not in the most agreeable manner, was a lad about his own age, whose name he had not yet learned, and who was in full chase of another; the two leaping lightly

over benches, creeping underneath them, or pushing them hastily aside, yet taking care not to make so much noise as to bring a tutor upon the scene.

At the second or third round, the pursuer took Richard in his path, and as he passed, poked him slyly in the ribs. Richard seemed to take no notice, but in his next round the boy trod on his toes; whether by accident or design, he was uncertain; so, though vexed and irritated, he contented himself with a silent shrug of his shoulders, and a rather cross look sent after his tormentor. But again the boy came round, and this time gave him a fair broadside with his shoulder, almost knocking him down.

Richard, who was quick tempered and very strong for his age, seized him and flung him over two or three benches, so that he fell heavily upon the floor beyond.

The lad picked himself up, and looking with good-humored astonishment at his antagonist, remarked: "Well, young Samson, you've waked up, haven't you?"

"Yes," said Hall, smiling in spite of himself; "and I'd advise you to let me alone for the future."

"What's your name? Entry?" asked the boy, approaching him with a "hands off" air.

"No, Richard Hall. What's yours?"

"Allan Beardsley Crawford, written out in full, contracted,—A. B. C. Give us your paw, lad;

let's shake and be friends ; we're quits now, and here's mine," and he held out his hand.

He had a frank, good-humored face, very intelligent too, and lighted up by a pair of roguish blue eyes, that fairly danced with fun. Richard could not resist their sparkle, took the offered hand in a cordial grasp, and from that moment they were fast friends.

A bell began to ring.

"There! that's the signal for ascending to the upper regions, and preparing to fall into the arms of Morpheus. Come along, old boy." And Crawford raced out of the room, Richard following somewhat more leisurely.

CHAPTER VI.

STUFFER'S DUMPLING.

FRED LANDON'S first impressions of his room-mate were not very favorable; Bruce was so rough and uncouth in appearance and manners, so precise, stilted and pedantic in his talk,—always selecting the longest words and most high-sounding phrases that could be found to express his meaning,—and Fred so heartily despised anything like pretension, and was so thoroughly polished and refined in every way, that in these respects, there was the greatest possible contrast between the two.

From the first moment, Jonathan admired Fred intensely, and showed a strong desire to be on friendly and intimate terms with him; but to his disappointment and chagrin, the latter held aloof from him for a time, receiving all his advances with freezing politeness, shunning his society whenever it could be done without rudeness, answering his remarks in monosyllables, and keeping himself very busy every moment that they were together.

But by slow degrees a friendship sprang up be-

tween them, as Fred discovered that Bruce was not without sterling qualities of heart and mind. Pompous and pedantic he certainly was, but he knew thoroughly well all he professed to know; he was a hard student, and never failed in a recitation; was obedient to all the rules of the institution, respectful to superiors, and obliging and generous to equals and inferiors. Then, too, he was a capital hand at cricket and base ball, in both of which Fred also excelled; so that after all they found they had several things in common. And indeed, on making the acquaintance of the other members of the class, Fred congratulated himself on having Bruce for his room-mate rather than any one of them. They were mostly careless and indifferent students, while some were quite wild and reckless.

Of the latter sort perhaps the worst was one named Stanton. He was the bosom friend of Robert King. Belonging to different classes, they were debarred the privilege of being room-mates, but were together as much as circumstances would permit. Their tastes were similar; both cordially hated study, and shirked it as far as practicable; both smoked and swore; both loved strong drink, and the company of the idle and vicious.

Miller, Stanton's room-mate, was free from the worst of these vices, and rather more inclined to observe rules, and to make use of his opportunities for mental culture; yet, yielding to the evil influence of such companionship, wasted much precious

time, and was occasionally led into other wrong doing. King was often with them when in accordance with rules he should have been busy in his own study.

"There!" cried Miller, starting up in dismay, as the bell sounded for a recitation in algebra; "what shall I do? I'm not half prepared with this lesson. King, you've been vastly amusing this morning, but you've got me into trouble."

"I haven't looked at mine," remarked Stanton, with a laugh, "but the class won't recite to-day."

"They won't?"

"No, I'll manage it, just leave it to me. Prof. Ainsworth is easily hoodwinked, and I know a trick that will serve our turn. So come along, or the chance will be lost."

They hurried to the class-room, and were just in time to take their places with the others.

"Well, young gentlemen," said the professor, glancing along the line to see that all were there, "I hope you come to me to-day with a well-prepared lesson."

"If you please, sir," said Stanton, "Miller and I would like an explanation of this example in yesterday's lesson; we do not like to pass over anything without a perfectly clear understanding of it."

"Certainly not, Stanton, and I am always ready to do my best to assist you to such an understanding." And the professor rose, and went to the

blackboard, where he worked out the example, explaining the process with great clearness, while Stanton stood gravely by, pretending to be deeply interested, and now and then answering, "Yes, sir, I see, sir," yet not able to arrive at a perfect comprehension of the whole thing, until the hour allotted to that recitation had expired.

Fred noticed an exchange of winks and nods between Stanton and Miller, and at once understood the manoeuvre. It excited his contempt, and met with his hearty disapproval.

"Is it not mortifying to be classed with so stupid, so unintellectual a young man as Mr. Stanton?" remarked Bruce in an undertone, as they retired from the room. "Did you find that a difficult example, Mr. Landon?"

"No; and I doubt if either Stanton or Miller did."

"Of course they didn't, but thought it a good way to escape to-day's recitation, probably not prepared for. But wasn't it a capital joke?" said Perkins, another member of the class, laughing. "It's an easy thing to pull the wool over the eyes of that old mush."

"And in cheating him, cheat ourselves to a far greater extent," answered Fred, with a mixture of scorn and indignation in his tone at the deception thus practised.

"Was that it?" cried Bruce, opening his eyes. "Well, I am surprised, and feel that I have been

defrauded by the young man, my fellow student, who has seen proper thus to interfere with my just rights in depriving me of the benefit of this day's recitation, for which I had prepared with extreme care."

King, who had taken a special dislike to Fred Landon, overheard these remarks, and presently reported them to Stanton and Miller.

"Well," laughed the latter, "it gave Bruce a fine opportunity to air some of his big words; so he needn't complain."

"I'll pay them off for calling me a cheat and a liar," cried Stanton, angrily. "I'll treat them to some more of the same, and maybe to something worse."

"Here's Stanton, red hot. What's the row now?" exclaimed a merry voice, and Crawford's curly head looked in at the door.

"None of your business, A. B. C.," was the elegant retort. "You young freshs, just attend to your own concerns, and remember you've nothing to do with the affairs of the juniors."

"We haven't, hey? But the rule don't hold with a soph, eh? Not when he's King of the *Gittights*, and finds a bird of the same feather among the juniors." And with this parting shot, and a derisive laugh, Crawford vanished.

The shot told. King and Stanton exchanged glances, while each face darkened with rage and mortification. It was not, then, the dead secret,

they had fondly hoped, that more than once they had been out late at night, and returned in a state of partial intoxication.

Presently, with a muttered oath, King left the room. Stanton rose to follow his example, and Miller, as he did likewise, hastily concealed a half sheet of paper between the leaves of a book in which, for the last few minutes, he had seemed deeply interested. "Pretty good, I think," he murmured, with a half smile.

"Miller, the Graphite;" his mates had dubbed him, because of his skill in drawing.

Crawford went racing up stairs, whisked into his own room, and out again, with paper and pencil in his hand.

"Halloo, Entry!" he cried to Hall, who was in the act of opening his own door. "I say, may I come in there to write this composition?"

"Glad to have you, A. B. C., if Dawson's no objection," answered Richard, as he hung up his hat, and closed the door after Crawford.

Dawson, Richard's room-mate, a mild-tempered, not over bright English lad, the unconscious butt of half his class, looked up with:

"I? Oh, I've not the least objection in the world."

"What are you at, Johnnie?" asked Crawford, seating himself, and taking out his knife to sharpen his pencil.

"Benjamin, if you please," corrected Dawson.

"I'm over an hexample that 'as puzzled me more than a little. I don't see has I shall hever get it right."

"Here, I'll help you," cried Crawford: "let's see what it is."

Crawford had a decided talent for mathematics, understood the difficulty at a glance, and soon made it clear to Dawson, who was very grateful.

"Thank you, Crawford," he said, warmly. "I wish I could do something to 'elp you in turn."

"You can, Johnnie"—

"Benjamin, hif you please," again corrected Dawson.

"Oh, ah, well, I referred to your nationality, Johnnie, you see. But I'll tell you what you can do, to return the favor I have just done you—give me a little help now and then with my spelling. I'm rather poor at that, and you're first rate, I know."

"Here's a dictionary, A. B. C.," said Hall, looking up from his exercise, and pushing the book toward his friend.

"Thank you, Entry," said Crawford, "but it'll be less trouble just to apply to Dawson, and I've not much more liking for the dictionary than the old woman, who said she could not see what made folks think so much of it, for her part she'd tried to read it many a time, but never could get the hang of the story."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Dawson. "She was a

bright one. Well, go to work, Crawford, and I'll 'elp you hall I can."

For some minutes Crawford's pencil went racing over the paper, while the other two bent over their books; then, without lifting his head, lest Dawson should see the merry twinkle in his eye:

"I say, Johnnie, how do you spell saloon?" he asked.

"With a hes, a hay, a hell, two hoes, and a hen," answered Dawson, promptly.

"Thank you," returned Crawford, gravely, while Richard shook with suppressed laughter.

Silence in the room for five minutes, then Crawford's voice again:

"Excuse me, if I am very troublesome, but *could* you tell me how to spell eagle?"

"Heagle? ho, certainly. He, hay, g, hell, he."

"Now, hen, Johnnie, h"—

"He, hen," added Dawson, as Crawford paused.

"Home?"

"Hach, hoe, hem, he, 'ome," replied the unsuspecting Dawson. "But whatever can you be writing about, Crawford? and what do you suppose Prof. Winslow would say, if he knew you needed 'elp with such small words?"

"Why, don't you know, Johnnie, that the smallest words are the hardest to remember—slipping through the holes in one's memory, where the big ones would stick fast, I suppose. But I am sorry to have been so troublesome, and will consult the

despised dictionary for whatever further information I may need," replied Crawford, with a slightly injured air. "Please push it along, Entry."

"Oh, I beg pardon, Crawford, I meant no hoffence, and ham proud to be called on to 'elp you," cried Dawson, eagerly; for he was sincerely grateful for the assistance Crawford had rendered him.

"All right, Johnnie. I'll not be afraid to apply, if I want it," answered the latter, good-humoredly.

He worked away in silence for some time, the others doing likewise, then, suddenly throwing down his pencil:

"Boys," he said, "isn't there any way to teach Stuffer a lesson on the sin of gluttony? He gobbles up everything good within reach of those long arms of his, getting full twice his fair share, and that of the very choicest morsels. Even Fleshy-warbler, fat and good-natured as his name imports, is beginning to rebel, and Skedaddle and Littledoo declare they can't stand it much longer. And to-morrow's apple dumpling day—one apiece, you know—and Stuffer always sticking his fork into the biggest, before the rest of us are fairly seated. Now, can nothing be done? that's the question."

Some moments of consultation, but no satisfactory conclusion arrived at; then Richard starts up with an exclamation: "I'll go to Fred Landon. He's the very fellow to contrive it for us; nobody likes a joke better, and he'll enjoy seeing Stuffer

taught some regard for the rights of others. Come along; he's in his room, and there's no time like the present."

The case was laid before Fred, and duly discussed in all its bearings.

"You think it would be right to give the fellow a lesson?" said Richard, interrogatively.

"Certainly I do; both for his own sake and that of the unfortunates who sit at the table with him."

"Them's my sentiments 'xactly," cried Crawford, rubbing his hands; "and now since your high mightiness has decided as to the morality of the thing, the only remaining question relates to ways and means."

"And what shall they be, Fred? Have you anything to suggest?" asked Richard.

"Let me see, I must think a moment. Ah, I have it!"

"What? What is it?" cried a chorus of voices.

"Beans," answered Fred, sententiously.

"Beans?" echoed the others; "but what about them?"

"Don't you take? Well, wait and see."

"You are terse and laconic in the expression of your views, my honored friend Landon," remarked Bruce, with a wave of his hand, looking up from an exercise with which he was busied, and speaking for the first time since the entrance of the three freshmen.

"Thank you," answered Fred, laughing. "Leave

it all to me, lads; I will try to make the arrangements for the carrying out of my idea, and if successful, will let you into the secret in due time."

"All right!" cried Crawford, capering about. "I think I have caught your idea, and it will be capital fun; just the thing. But come, Johnnie and Entry, we must git; I see we're hindering these juniors."

Landon's unaffected kindness of heart, obliging disposition, and genial, pleasant manners, had rendered him a general favorite in the institution, and not one of the employees but would have felt it a pleasure to do him a good turn; he was so considerate toward them, and his sympathy and assistance were so ready when any of them were in trouble.

"He's such a pleasant spoken young gentleman, Mr. Landon is, and never growls about his wittals as that Stanton and the fellow they calls Stuffer does," remarked the cook to a fellow servant as they were washing the supper dishes that evening; "nothing aint never good enough for them, though the last-named eats twice as much as any o' the rest. I don't want Mr. Landon to get sick—no indeed!—but if he does, I'll take the greatest pleasure in life a cooking the nicest broths an' jellies, an' the like, to set him up again."

"Thank you, cook," said a sprightly voice at her elbow.

"Oh!" she cried, with a start, "is it you, Mr.

Landon? Well, I never! I hadn't the least idee you was anywheres 'round, and I was talkin' about ye too. Good luck it was, I wasn't sayin' nothin' bad, though; but that's 'cause there's nothin' but good I could have to say o' you."

"Speak of angels, you know," said Fred, laughing. "I'm not sick, cook, in spite of all the indigestible stuff you force us to put into our stomachs; nor do I intend to be, if I can help it; but for all that, I've come to ask a favor of you, and one that's entirely in your line."

"And you a calling my wittals indig—what's the rest of it? I can't mind your big college words, nohow 'tall; and wouldn't be hired to listen to that big, lanky, lean fellow as rooms with you, sir, and can't put a sentence together without a dozen or more o' them jawbreakers."

"But is a very good fellow for all," returned Fred, much amused. "Well, never mind the big word. Your cooking is excellent, and I'd be the last one to find fault with it; and yet I've come for the express purpose of asking you to make a slight change in to-morrow's dinner."

He then went on to state, in a few words, what he wished her to do.

"You couldn't have asked anything I'd like better to do," she said, with a burst of hearty laughter. "Yes, I'll do it; and obleeged to you for the hint; that Stuffer, as the young gents calls him—I don't know if it's his right name or no—that Stuffer's a

despicable fellow, for he's just a pig, and that's the solid truth."

Fred was not long in communicating to Richard the news of his successful treaty with the cook. The latter at once went in search of Crawford and Dawson, and finding them in company with Davis, Doolittle and Decamp, told his story to all. There was much chuckling over it, and it was agreed that all who sat at their table—Schaffer of course excepted—should be duly informed of the treat in store for their greedy fellow student, lest some one should unwarily deprive him of it. Nor were they tardy about carrying out their resolve; the secret was too good to keep from any one who might safely be entrusted with it.

There was much more than the ordinary amount of impatience for the sounding of the gong for dinner the next day, and with the first stroke there was a general rush for the dining-room, Schaffer, as usual, being one of the foremost. How his eyes glistened at sight of the huge piles of apple-dumplings, and how did his heart bound with delight as he saw in the dish placed directly in front of his plate, one nearly double the customary size.

"I'll have it," was his secret resolve, and quick as thought he had seized his fork, stuck it into the coveted prize, and transferred it to his own plate.

Instantly every other boy at the table had followed his example, and not a dumpling remained upon any of the dishes, a moment before so full.

And now every fork was dropped, while all eyes were fixed upon Schaffer, he, in his eagerness, perceiving nothing of it. He helped himself to butter, drew the sugar bowl towards him, caught up his knife, half wondering at the sudden silence, and cut his dumpling in two. How his countenance fell, while peals of laughter rang out on all sides of him. "Ha, ha, Stuffer, you don't know beans!" "Yes, he does when the bag's open." "It's a total wreck, aint it? eh, Stuffer!" "Your dumpling's red hot, and you can't eat it; better make haste slowly another time, and leave the biggest plum for some one else," were some of the exclamations that fell tauntingly upon the ears of the mortified and wofully disappointed boy.

He sent a hasty glance around, saw a dumpling on every plate, none on either dish, and fairly burst into tears. Ridicule was far from pleasant, and beans were but a poor substitute for apples.

Carter and Hall had not joined in the jeers, but looked their disapproval; and Crawford was beginning to cry "Shame! don't hit a fellow when he's down," but the unmanly tears caused him to close his lips, and turn away with a look of contempt and disgust.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT HORRID OLD GONG.

“**T**HAT horrid gong!” muttered Davis, suddenly roused out of a delightful morning nap by the almost deafening roar. “I can’t abide it, and I’d like to put it out of the way. I declare, I believe I’ll try it, and maybe they’ll contrive some decenter way of waking a fellow in the mornings.”

The thought haunted him all day, and was still with him when he went to bed at night; it kept him awake long after all had grown quiet within and without the house, and at length his resolve was taken. The clock was striking twelve. He waited till the sound of the last stroke had died away, then slipped out of bed, stole noiselessly to the door, and listened. Nothing to be heard but an occasional snore, that told him his roommate, Green, was fast asleep. He stepped back, drew on his dressing-gown, and in another minute was groping his way through the long halls, and down the stairs, pausing at the head of each flight, to listen anew, and trembling involuntarily when a board creaked under his foot. At length he

reached the outer door, cautiously unbarred it, and stepped out into the starlight and the keen, frosty air.

The gong hung on a nail driven into a tree, not ten feet distant. In a trice he had it in his hand, and was speeding across the play-ground to another tree, which he knew was hollow. It was there he had planned to hide the obnoxious article. He put it in at the opening, and forced it up till it seemed to be wedged in so tightly that there could be no danger of its own weight bringing it down again.

He regained the house, secured the fastenings of the door, and reached his own room in safety. "Ha! ha! what a wonderment there'll be to-morrow morning! What a vain search for the odious old thing!" he chuckled, half aloud, as he drew the bed-clothes up about his neck, and settled himself to sleep.

A thundering rap on their study door, and the voice of a waiter summoning them to rise, roused both Green and himself.

Davis leaped out of bed, ran to the door and threw it open, shouting, "Halloo, Verdant! I say, what's the row? Why are we knocked up in this fashion?"

"Just what I was opening my lips to ask you," responded Green; "do you 'spose that old musical instrument of ours is done gone broke or stole?"

"Dun no, guv it up!" cried Davis, rushing back to attend to his toilette.

An old cracked bell which had been thrown aside as no longer fit for use, gave the signal for breakfast, and the boys came trooping down from their dormitories, and flocking into the dining-room, everybody asking everybody else what had become of the gong, and each and all asserting their utter ignorance of the cause of its mysterious disappearance.

A most rigid inquiry, and thorough search, instituted by Dr. Nevins, alike failed to elicit the least information on the subject, or furnish the slightest clew to the perpetrator of the mischief. Davis kept his own counsel, looked the doctor in the face, and boldly asserted that he knew nothing whatever of the matter; and there was no apparent reason for suspecting him more than any one else in the establishment—pupil or servant.

The old bell did duty for several days, when at last the gong was accidentally ferreted out by Dawson, who bore it in triumph to the house, exhibited it to professors and fellow-students as a valuable trophy, then hung it up in its accustomed place on the tree before the back hall-door.

"Hurrah for the old gong!" cried Crawford, tossing up his cap; "but I say, Dawson, where did you find it? I thought the premises had been thoroughly searched."

"In the hold 'ollow tree," answered Dawson.

"How did you come to think of looking there?"

"Why, you see, I 'ad a book in me 'and, that I wanted to put in a safe place, while I took part in the game with the hothers; and I didn't care to run to the 'ouse with it, so I poked it into the 'ollow in the tree, and when I went to take it out again, 'appening to look up to see if the 'ollow extended half the way to the top, what should I discover but the gong, wedged in till I 'ad to use considerable strength to loosen it, and bring it down."

"Good for you, Johnnie! And now, who do you think put it there?"

"I 'avent the least hidca, Mr. A. B. C., and wouldn't tell it, if I 'ad."

"Nor would I," said Davis, who stood near, busily whittling a bit of stick; "if there's one thing meaner than another, in my opinion, it's telling tales. I'd die before I'd peach on a chum, or on anybody else."

Some inquiries were instituted by the authorities, as to who had been seen in the vicinity of the hollow tree, about the time of the disappearance of the gong; but no discoveries were made, and there the matter dropped.

There was, however, in Davis's character, a sort of dogged determination to succeed in anything that he had once undertaken, and a fortnight had not passed by, when again the gong was missing.

Another excitement, another searching of the premises and rigid examination, and cross-que-

tioning of the students succeeded. There were threats of severe measures against all, if the guilty one was not delivered up to justice; but ere they were carried out, the missing property was found secreted in the hayloft of Dr. Nevins' barn; where it might have lain for a long time, had not accident brought it to light. The doctor's little son, climbed up into the loft in chase of a pet squirrel; his sister followed, they began tumbling and rolling over the hay, gathering it up by the armful and throwing it over each other, and at length stumbled upon the gong.

Davis had hidden it there, stealing from his bed in the dead of night, as on the former occasion. Still suspicion did not fasten upon him particularly, and still keeping his own counsel, he vowed within himself to try it again.

The College fronted on the river, the road leading to the town passing between. The soil of the whole region was rather light and sandy; and particularly was this the case with a portion of the river bank nearly opposite the buildings; there was quite a stretch of level, loose-lying sand, partially concealed on the landward side by a clump of bushes. This was the spot selected by Davis for his third experiment in hiding the obnoxious gong.

It was past eleven o'clock, on a clear, star-light, but windy night. Miller, the Graphite, Stanton's room-mate, had gone to bed, closing the door be-

tween his sleeping apartment and the study. Stanton had done the same an hour before. Yet he was not sleeping, nor even undressed, but had merely thrown himself down upon the outside of the bed, where he lay listening intently, till all had grown quiet within the building. He then rose, drew on his over-coat and returned to the study as noiselessly as possible. As he did so, a very slight sound caught his ear, and he softly unclosed the door opening into the hall.

"Is it you?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Yes; are you ready?"

"Quite."

"Come along then; we've no time to lose." The voice was King's.

They crept down stairs, out of the house, through the grounds, and gaining the road, walked briskly toward the town. Two hours later they returned, walking unsteadily, and talking with thickened tongues and an occasional hiccough between the words.

"What—what was that?" stammered King, clutching his fellow-student's arm, as they drew near their destination.

"What was what?" asked Stanton, steadying himself against a tree. "You're drunk, man, I—I didn't see anything."

"You didn't, you fool! Then you're the one that's drunk. I tell you, I saw a figure glide across the road from (hic) the bank to the College."

"A ghost, eh?" returned Stanton, with a jeering laugh.

"No, ghosts (hic) are said to walk in white (hic). Aren't they? And this was a dark figure, as dark as—as we are (hic). Some fellow's up to mischief."

"Well, come on, then, and let's find out who it is."

They hurried forward, as fast as their state of semi-intoxication would allow, entering the grounds, and passing round to the rear of the building, as Perry Davis had done before them; for it was he whom King had seen returning from the river bank, where he had buried the gong in the sand.

They were not quick enough to catch up to him, but thought they perceived a dark figure passing in at the back door, which they were approaching.

"There, we've lost him! and I'd give a sixpence to find out who he is," said King, speaking under his breath.

"Hevings tu Detsey! what's this?" whispered Stanton, starting forward and snatching up something white that lay on the ground, just at the threshold. "What'll you bet that we haven't got a clew, now? There, shut the door softly, and come to my room, till we see what this is."

They groped their way up to Stanton's study, where he struck a match, and lighted a candle,

when they discovered their prize to be an old envelope, with the name of Perry Davis on the back. He had dropped it in pulling out his handkerchief to stop a sneeze.

"So 'twas the Commodore, eh? Well, we've got the whip-hand of him now, if he saw us, and should show any signs of meaning to peach."

"Yes, I'll preserve this with care," said Stanton, putting it into his writing desk.

The next morning the gong was missing again. On learning the fact, Stanton and King exchanged glances, and it presently began to be whispered about among the students that Davis was suspected as guilty of the abduction. But, of course, this was not communicated to the authorities, who were so incensed at this third repetition of the offence, that the students were required to raise sufficient funds, among themselves, for the purchase of two new gongs, and all were deprived of recreation until the culprit should be discovered.

A week passed. The young men and boys grew restive under the confinement, which they found exceedingly wearisome, and Davis received many a surly look and word, and more than one hint, that this was all owing to him, and he would do well to confess, and thus save the innocent from suffering along with the guilty.

He grew very uncomfortable, and, while wondering how suspicion had come to fasten itself upon

him, began heartily to wish he had let the gong alone.

Green, coming in from recitation, one afternoon, found him seated in their study, idly drumming on the table, and looking sullen and morose. Green said nothing, but merely gave him a look of disgust, as he threw down his books, and began pacing to and fro, with his hands in his pockets.

"What d'y'e look at me that way for?" growled Davis.

"Because I feel contempt for a fellow that wont own up to his bad deeds, but lets the whole college suffer for them."

"What have I done?"

"You know better than I can tell you. Why are we all deprived of our recreation, till we're almost ready to mutiny against the authorities?"

"If you mean to imply that I took the gong, and hid it, you're mistaken, that's all," replied Davis, growing very red and angry.

Green sat down and opened a book, and neither spoke again for some minutes.

"Well, I can't stand this!" cried Davis, at length. "Here you are all suspecting me, and pointing the finger of scorn at me, and I as innocent as a babe unborn."

"I admire truthfulness and sincerity," returned Green, in a sarcastic tone.

"Don't see the point," muttered Davis. Then, in a louder tone: "I say, Verdant, will you lend

me an X? I'll return it in a week. I'll be sure to get it from the governor in the course of that time."

"Can't do it; am nearly out of pocket myself," answered Green, shortly.

Davis presently rose and left the room. "Then I can't help it," he muttered. "I'm just shut up to it, for I've tried half a dozen fellows, and can't borrow a cent; and it's a moral impossibility to stand this thing any longer."

He walked with a quick but cautious step down two flights of stairs, that led to the floor occupied by the juniors. This was the hour when they all were in the recitation room, yet he trembled and turned pale, as he softly pushed open the door of Fred Landon's room, and entered. He glanced about to satisfy himself that it was quite deserted, as he had expected; then stealing on tip-toe to Fred's desk, he raised the lid, searched eagerly for a moment among the contents, found what he wanted, hastily thrust it into his pocket, and closing the desk, hurried from the room as quickly and noiselessly as possible, but with a wildly beating heart, and a look of guilt and shame upon his face; for never before had he been guilty of theft to nearly so large an amount, and conscience was loudly upbraiding him, while he vainly tried to stifle its reproaches with the assertion that he was not stealing, but merely borrowing, to repay again as soon as it should be in his power; and that he

was not to be blamed, since no one would lend to him voluntarily.

Davis was missing at the supper-table, and a rigid inquiry being instituted, the fact was at length elicited that he had been seen by one of the servants to leave the college, and walk rapidly away in the direction of the railroad depot.

One of the professors immediately started in pursuit, but the train had left some minutes ere he reached the depot. He learned that a boy answering to Davis's description was on board, and that another train would leave at midnight. He then telegraphed to the next station an order for the lad's detention there, until he should come for him, then returned and consulted with the other authorities.

In the meantime, Fred, looking for his money—a ten-dollar bill, received that morning—discovered that it was gone; and a servant girl testified to having seen Davis coming out of that room, at the hour when the junior class was reciting. His flight corroborated this evidence of his guilt in regard to the theft; and while the matter was under discussion, the lost gong was brought in by a lad from the village, who had found it while digging in the sand by the river side; and Stanton and King coming forward with their testimony, the case was considered so clear, and the misconduct so flagrant, that Davis was at once expelled. A letter was written to his parents, his trunk was

packed, and taking it in charge, the professor pursued, overtook the culprit, and sent him home in disgrace.

Doolittle, who was from the same town, spoke of the parents of Davis as worthy people, and expressed his hearty sympathy with them in the grief and mortification they must undoubtedly feel on their son's account.

A week or two after Davis's departure, a letter, directed in his handwriting, came to Doolittle.

"A cheat, a liar, and a thief! I want no more to do with him!" exclaimed the latter, on reading the missive, and throwing it down in great disgust as he spoke.

"What is it?" asked Fred, who stood near with an open letter in his hand. "This is from Perry Davis's father, returning my ten dollars, and asking me not to prosecute his son. A thing I had not the slightest idea of doing."

"Mine is from the rascal himself, owning up to everything, but begging me not to tell the facts at home; he 'has cooked up a story to satisfy his mother,' and made her believe him very little, if at all, to blame; in fact, that he is a sort of martyr to his sense of honor toward some imaginary confederates. I wash my hands of him henceforth. I choose my friends among the honest and truthful; no sneaking, underhand doings for me."

CHAPTER VIII.

A HIGH OLD TIME.

A CHANGE had come over our friend Richard Hall; not suddenly, but by slow degrees he had altered for the worse; his father, in former days ever mentioned with affectionate respect, was now spoken of as, "the governor;" while his mother was styled the "old woman," or the "maternal ancestor." He had learned to smoke, to bet, to season his talk with slang words and phrases, and occasionally even with something very nearly resembling an oath; and to waste much precious time in idle sport. The cause of this sad declension was to be found in the evil communications which corrupt good manners. Richard had chosen his boon companions, not, it is true, from the ranks of the openly vicious and profane, but among those who were devoid of steady principle; the careless and pleasure loving, who thought it showed manly independence to neglect their studies to some extent, to speake disrespectfully of absent superiors, making sport of their peculiarities, and to ape the follies and smaller vices of men, who fear not God, nor keep his commandments.

And just in proportion as Richard wandered from the right way, he forsook his friendly counsellor, Fred Landon, treating him with coldness and neglect, and avoiding his observation as much as possible.

Fred, feeling it his duty to act in some sort as monitor to the wayward boy, tried by many an act of thoughtful kindness to win back his regard.

"Will you go with me to church this afternoon, Ritchie?" he asked, persuasively, as they left the dining-hall, one stormy Sunday in March.

"No! thank you, Landon, I was out this morning, and that's enough for such a day as this."

"Pooh! Ritchie, you are not afraid of a little wet and cold," returned Fred, with a smile; and he laid his hand affectionately on Hall's shoulder as he spoke.

Richard shook it off. "No, but I don't choose to expose myself to it this afternoon," he answered, in a surly tone. "And what's more, Landon, I'd have you to understand that I'm out of leading strings, and able to look after my own morals and manners."

Fred colored and turned away without another word, but with a look of pain, that haunted Richard for the rest of the day.

"So Landon's been lecturing you, has he, eh?" said Crawford, in his careless, merry tones, as he linked his arm in Richard's and drew him on toward one of the class-rooms.

"Yes, I ventured into his den yesterday, and feeling in a pretty good humor, let out a few slang phrases, and spoke of Hall, senior, as the old man and the governor; and you should have heard the going over I got for it. Slang was low and vulgar, altogether ungentlemanly, and the names and titles given him, showed want of proper respect and affection for my father."

"Humbug! But who cares for Fred Landon's opinion?" cried Crawford, reddening, for conscience gave him a twitch for his frequent use of such expressions, as memory recalled a time when he would have shrunk, in filial love and reverence, from the very thought of them. "How did you take it, Entry?"

"Just walked off in silent contempt for his preaching; but I thought I'd give him a bit o' my mind to-day."

"And very right and proper that you should," said Crawford.

"Is that Landon you're complimenting?" asked Stanton, coming up behind the two, as they passed into the class-room. "I say, he's a confounded muff."

"When and where? On the cricket, or base-ball ground, when he's playing against you?" asked Doolittle, tossing up a marble and catching it as it fell.

"I say, you young freshs and sophs had better restrain your inclination to indulge in impudence

to your betters," returned Stanton, angrily, walking off arm-in-arm with his friend King.

"Good riddance of the *Gittights*—King and subject," Crawford called after them; but they affected not to hear.

"Now for some fun, lads," continued the lively boy, turning a somerset over a bench, and coming up standing on the other side, "I'm *spoiling* for it; I've had to be so *powerful* good and quiet all the morning; sitting still in church is the very *wust* to a fellow like me. Well, Drayman, what is it? You look as if you wouldn't disgrace the parson's desk or gown yourself."

"Let me beg, Crawford, that you will not forget that these are sacred hours; that you will remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," answered Carter, in a gentle, persuasive tone.

"Now don't preach," retorted the other; "it's very good and benevolent of you, no doubt, but one sermon a day's as much as I can stand—digest, I should say—and I'm awfully afraid of mental dyspepsia."

Carter returned to the book he had been quietly reading in the window-seat, and the others went on with their jokes and laughter.

"I'm *spoiling* for a bit of fun," repeated Crawford. "Skedaddle, Entry, Nig, Hen Sparrow, Cock Sparrow, Stuffer, Fleshy-warbler—one and all—have you nothing to suggest?"

"Oh! do be quiet, A. B. C., and let a fellow have

a little rest!" said Schaffer, tipping his chair back against the wall, and folding his arms.

The words were hardly out of his mouth, when he came down with a crash upon the floor. Decamp had adroitly tripped up his chair.

The others set up a shout of merriment over his downfall, and he got up looking flushed and angry.

"I'd like to know who did that," he exclaimed, glancing fiercely from one to another.

"'Twas your humble servant, Stuffer; shall I try it again?" laughed Decamp.

"You? You'd better not, Skeddaddle; I'll not stand it from anybody!" And Stuffer walked off in indignant anger.

Hall, who was laughing uproariously, caught a look of sorrowful rebuke from Carter, to whom he had once, when his heart was softened with thoughts of home, spoken of his pious parents, and their anxiety lest he should be led aside from the strait and narrow path, into the broad and easy road of sin and folly.

Richard's face flushed, and he turned away, feeling guilty and condemned. But he refused to listen to the warning voice within him.

Cock Sparrow was trying the lock of the door leading into the next room. "Let's go in here, lads," he said; "old Kerr's off to church, and you know the saying, 'when the cat's away the mice will play,' the new rendering of which is, when the cur's away the lads are gay."

But the door refused to yield to his efforts.

"Can't come it, old Cock. It's locked, aint it?" said Decamp. "May as well guv it up."

"Not I. Did you never hear of picking a lock, Skedaddle? Difficulties always have the effect to spur me on; so here goes," he added, taking out his knife.

The rest gathered around, watching his efforts with interest; and as the door presently flew open, they rushed in pell-mell, and scattered about the room in search of amusement. A tripod was dragged into the middle of the floor, then hoisted upon the platform behind the professor's desk; a cloak was thrown around it, a skull brought out of a cupboard, and set on its top, pieces of chalk put into the empty sockets where the eyes once had been, and a cap placed on above the bony forehead.

"There, he looks the professor to perfection, don't he?" cried Crawford, laughing and clapping his hands, then bursting into song:

"List to the barking cur,
List to the barking cur,
Bow, wow, wow!"

the others all coming in on the chorus.

"No; now that's really too bad! I wouldn't have done it, if I'd given myself a minute to think," he said, looking very red and ashamed, as the sounds died away.

"Nonsense!" cried Decamp: "what's the harm in a bit of fun? Sing, brethren, sing!" and he set the example, singing through his nose, to the tune of Bonny Doone, the others joining in promptly:

"There were three crows sat on a tree,
And they were black as crows could be."

"Sing, brethren, sing!" he repeated, in an absurdly nasal tone, and again they sung:

"Said one old crow unto his mate,
What shall we do for grub to eat?"

"Sing, brethren, sing!"

"There lies a horse in yonder plain,
Who's by some cruel butcher slain."

"Sing, brethren, sing!"

"We'll perch upon his bare backbone,
And pluck his eyes out one by one."

They wound up with a hearty laugh, and into Richard's mind, even while he joined in the wicked sport, there darted a text: "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool."

"Once more, brethren. We'll close the meetin' with Antioch," again cried Decamp, and instantly started the tune, to the words:

"There was a man in our town,
And he was wondrous wise,
He jumped into a bramble bush,
And scratched out both his eyes.

And when he saw his eyes were out,
 With all his might and main,
 He jumped into another bush,
 And scratched them in again."

"There, I think that'll do," remarked Crawford.
 "Boys, I'm afraid this is really wicked."

"Oh, pshaw! what if it is? We're in for it now,
 and may as well be killed for sheep as lamb!"
 exclaimed White. "Once more. Now, brethren,
 let us have Greenville for a doxology :

'Saw my leg off,
 Saw my leg off,
 Saw my leg off *short!*'

"Meetin's dismissed."

Hall and Crawford silently withdrew, the reproaches of conscience would no longer be stifled. They turned away from each other, when they had ascended the stairs, Crawford entering his room, and Richard, by mistake, going into Carter's, instead of his own.

"Oh, excuse me," he said, retreating in haste, "the intrusion was quite unintentional."

"Yes, I am sure of it," replied Carter, turning round from the window, where he was standing. "But don't go, Ritchie, don't; I'd be so glad to have you sit with me for a while. Come, take a seat, won't you?"

Richard did not want to stay. He was afraid of what he called a sermon, from his pious fellow-

student; and yet he seemed unable to decline the urgent invitation. He sat down, saying, with a forced laugh:

"You missed a good deal of fun, Carter."

"Did you enjoy it, Ritchie? and will the recollection of it be sweet in, after years?"

Richard's eyes sank under the mild, searching look accompanying the words. But he made no reply to the gently spoken inquiry, fraternally affectionate and earnest in its tone, and his friend went on:

"Oh, Ritchie, you and I have been blessed with better teachings, holier home influences, than most of our mates, and, therefore, are far more worthy of blame, when we turn aside to forbidden pleasures, or set at nought the commandments of our God. But I beg your pardon. I did not mean to preach; and yet, if I do, Ritchie, believe me it is only because I see that you are in the way to bring sorrow on yourself, and those you best love, and because I do most earnestly desire your happiness and prosperity."

"Thank you, Will, I know you mean all you say, and I wish from the bottom of my heart that I was as good as you are," returned Richard, in a low, half tremulous tone, and squeezing cordially the hand held out to him by his friendly monitor.

Carter shook his head.

"No, Ritchie," he said, with unfeigned humili-

ty, "I am far, very far from being what I ought, or what I desire to be."

A moment's silence, in which each seemed lost in thought; then Richard remarked, "How is it you're in this afternoon, Will? I thought you taught a mission class somewhere."

"I do, but was ordered to keep within doors on account of the storm, and a cold, and sore throat. Landon, too, offered to do double duty, by taking my class into his for to-day. It's likely neither will be very large. Landon's a good fellow in the best sense of the word, and quite as friendly with me as if I were a junior like himself."

"Yes, you're the most intimate friend he has, I believe; he don't seem to take to the fellows in his own class."

This was true; the two had become warm friends, drawn together by similarity of tastes. Landon had inquired of Hall who Carter was, and an introduction had followed. Then they met frequently in the gymnasium, and on the playground in the base-ball and cricket games, at which both were reckoned excellent hands.

They and Bruce, Hall, and Crawford now all belonged to the college eleven, and it would have been difficult to say which of them took the keenest interest and enjoyment in the sport. "The Saints," Stanton, King, and some others of the more reckless sort, sneeringly styled Landon and Carter; yet two more genial, merry, happy lads,

never entered the halls of the institution or shared the amusements of its campus.

Richard was heartily ashamed of his late behavior to Fred Landon, his hasty and unkind words; yet he would not have owned it for the world; but he resolved to return to his former fraternal manner, to seek Fred's society again, and to follow—at least to some extent—his good advice. "They say 'actions speak louder than words,'" he said to himself, "and that'll show him I take back that unlucky speech, and want him to continue my friend and adviser."

But Fred, though anxious to do right himself, and to be of use to Richard, had his faults also; he was very high-spirited, quick-tempered, and sensitive; and Richard's words had wounded him deeply. "I have done my duty by him, and that is all that can be asked of me. He rejects my counsel, scorns my most kindly-spoken remonstrances, and now I leave him to himself. I will never force any good offices upon him. Let him express some regret for the past, some slight desire to have me resume my duties as friendly counselor and monitor, and I'll do so; but till then I shall let him alone, to go his own way."

Such were the reflections and resolves of the young man as he left the presence of the angry boy; and knowing nothing of what was passing in Richard's mind, his manner to him when they met again was so cool as to effectually check the

friendly advances the lad had intended to make. Thus Fred lost the opportunity of winning him back to habits of steady industry, and respectful behavior towards parents and superiors.

And the breach between them widened daily, as the conduct of each acted upon the other, and through its effect upon him, reacted upon himself; and Richard, with the good influence which had hitherto been some restraint to him, now withdrawn, wandered farther and farther from the right path.

CHAPTER IX.

FORBIDDEN PLEASURES.

THE spring vacation came, and joyfully our young friends set out upon their homeward journey; something like the old cordiality toward each other reviving as they found themselves seated in the same car and bound for the same place. To Richard it was peculiarly delightful as being the first home-coming; while Fred's ardent affection for his mother and sister, rendered it scarcely less so to him. He found them both at the Brookville depot, eagerly awaiting his arrival. Mr. Rush and Albert being very busy in the hop-fields, Elena had driven in with her mother and the two children. They were the only occupants of the ladies' room, and Fred was almost overwhelmed with caresses and exclamations of delight on the part of the little ones, while his mother and Elena showed their joy and affection in a manner quite as unequivocal, if somewhat less demonstrative.

"The dear old boy, how manly he grows," cried Elena, with her hand on his arm, and her soft, bright eyes looking up lovingly into his face. "Oh, 'twill be so delightful to have you at home again!

It has hardly been home without him, has it mother?"

"We have missed you, greatly, my son," said his mother, "and have looked forward longingly to this re-union."

"And nobody has talked more joyfully about it, or made greater preparation for it, than Aunt Silence," said Elena, giving a hand to each of the children, and leading the way to the carriage.

"How beautiful she is, mother, and how womanly she grows?" remarked Fred, gazing after her with eyes beaming with fond, fraternal affection.

"Yes; and she is so dear, so sweet and unselfish, so helpful and kind to all, that no one can help loving her. Ah, I thank God every day for my two dear, dutiful, affectionate children!" said Mrs. Rush, leaning proudly on his arm, while he led her to the carriage and handed her in with a tender, respectful manner, that bespoke him an old-fashioned boy indeed—as he had been not unfrequently styled in contempt, by those who felt his example a reproach to their rudeness and want of thought for others.

"It is a busy time on the farm?" he said, half inquiringly, as he seated himself by Elena's side, and took the reins from her hand.

"Yes, my son; but you have been working hard all winter, and must be left free to enjoy yourself in your vacation. Ullman is abundantly able to

hire all the help he needs," answered Mrs. Rush, quickly, as if she feared to see him abused.

"I think change of work is pretty much all the rest I shall need, mother, dear," he said, smiling back at her. "But I shall always be at your service, when you want a driver, or anything else that I am good for."

"Not a bit spoiled; eyes as clear, honest and truthful as ever, and with the same little twinkle of fun in 'em, too," was Miss Silence's greeting, as she caught the hand of our young collegian in her vice-like grasp, and shook it with hearty good will.

"You deserve a reward for so complimentary a speech, and shall have it, auntie," responded Fred, laughingly, catching her around the neck and bestowing a resounding kiss upon her sunburnt cheek.

"You young scapegrace! how dare you! There, take that for your impertinence!" she cried, boxing his ears, in pretended rage, that ill-concealed the pleasure she really felt at such a demonstration of affection from him.

Mr. Rush greeted his step-son in a friendly manner, inquiring after his health, and success in the winning of prizes, etc., while Albert shook hands warmly, and with eyes beaming with joy and affection.

As bed-time drew near, Fred followed his mother into her room.

"May I stay for ten minutes?" he asked.

"You don't know, mother, how I am longing for one of our dear little private chats."

"May you stay, my dear boy!" she said, winding her arms about his neck, and laying her head on his breast. "Ah! how sweet it is to have you here! Yes, that is right, hug me close; how I love to feel the clasp of your strong, manly arms, so changed from the tiny, tender ones that used to creep about my neck seventeen years ago." And she looked up into his face with her proud, fond, motherly smile.

"Darling mother," he whispered, pressing his lips on her smooth, white forehead, "how tenderly you loved and cherished me in my helpless infancy and wayward childhood; how patiently you sought to guide my feet into right paths; how you bore with my faults, and loved me in spite of them all. The thought of all this, and the bitter grief my fall would cause you, has helped to keep me steadfast to the right in many an hour of temptation."

"And you have come back to me honest, true, and pure as ever?" she said, gazing with earnest, questioning look into his eyes. "God be thanked for that, my boy, my dear, dear boy."

"Yes, mother, honest and true as ever, yet not pure and holy, but guilty of many sins of omission and commission."

"As your mother is," she answered, with a sigh. "'There is none that doeth good, no, not one'

But tell me of your young friend Ritchie. I hope you have been a faithful counsellor and friend to him?"

"I'm afraid not, mother. I fear that there I have been sadly wanting. He was impatient of my warnings and advice, and I grew angry and left him to take his own course."

Fred's eyes fell, and his check grew hot with shame.

"I am very sorry, my son," said Mrs. Rush, gently; "but I suppose he tried your patience very much, more, perhaps, than any one but a mother could bear."

"My pride, even more than my patience."

"Ah, yes, my son, that I think is your besetting sin; you have a great deal too much of it. But you will begin anew with poor Ritchie when you go back?"

"I fear my influence is gone."

"Then sacrifice your pride, and try to regain it."

"Doubtless it is what I ought to do," he murmured.

The holiday weeks slipped away very fast. They seemed all too short to Mr. Rush, to whom Fred had made himself very useful in the work of the farm, to his mother and sister, who prized his society, and missed him sorely in his absence, and indeed, to all the members of the family; for they found him still the same kindly, genial, help-

ful person he had been six months before, and felt it a delight to have him among them.

He returned alone. He had seen nothing of Richard Hall during the vacation, which, on account of sickness in the family, had been spent by the latter away from home. When they met at the college, Richard was cool and distant in his manner toward Fred, repelled his advances, and sought the society of the same set who had exerted so bad an influence upon him the previous term.

"Ah," sighed Fred to himself, "it is not so easy to repair the mischief wrought by our wrong doings; but I must try what patient, persevering effort can do to win him back."

"That young freshman of whom you appeared to take some sort of oversight during the earlier part of last term, seems to be conducting himself badly," remarked Bruce, one day as they sat together over their study table.

Fred looked up inquiringly:

"Richard Hall?"

"Yes; I have noticed him several times lounging about in the vicinity of Clevinstine's grocery, in company with Crawford and two or three rather wild fellows; and I am informed that Clevinstine has a room over his store fitted up as a billiard saloon. The thing is kept quiet, and the room reached by a back staircase; and I have ascertained to a certainty, that Stanton and King frequent it, and there imbibe something stronger

than water; and also that they have introduced a number of the freshmen to the same practices."

"Is it possible? Poor Ritchie! and poor Mrs. Hall!"

Fred pushed his book aside and leaned back in his chair, with a pained and troubled look. "Stanton and King! What worse companionship could he have chosen? They will teach him nothing good, but everything that is bad."

"Why do you not then exert your influence to induce him to forsake their society, and to cease to follow their pernicious example?"

"My influence? Alas, it seems to be quite gone. Ritchie now shuns my companionship, and repels all my advances."

"Don't give up the ship," quoted Bruce.

"No, I'll not," cried Fred, springing to his feet. "Where is the lad now? Do you know, Bruce?"

"I cannot affirm that I do, though my suspicions point to the billiard-room over Clevinstine's grocery. I saw Hall, Crawford, and some half dozen others, including Stanton and King, the two *Gittights*, (what an appellative!) moving in that direction, perhaps an hour ago."

Hardly knowing what he intended to do if he found Richard there, Fred took his hat and started for the grocery mentioned by his room-mate. He strode rapidly down the road toward the town, which he had nearly reached when he heard hasty steps in his rear, and a voice, which he instantly

recognized as that of Prof. Kerr, asked, "Whither away so fast, Landon?"

"Into the town, sir," answered Fred, respectfully, turning with a bow to his questioner, as he spoke.

"Humph! But to what part of it, if you please?"

"Into State street, sir."

"The very locality to which I am destined; so let us bear each other company."

The proposal was not agreeable to Fred, but no choice was given him, and as he was far too honorable to betray a fellow student, he instantly determined not to stop at Clevinstine's, but to make an errand at a stationer's half a block beyond. "Landon," said the professor, turning a keen, searching gaze upon the young man, "do you know anything of a room over Clevinstine's store, fitted up as a billiard saloon?"

"I have never seen such a room, sir," answered Fred, evasively; but surprised into confusion by the sudden and unexpected query, and conscious of a departure from his usual straight-forward frankness, he blushed and stammered as he spoke.

His manner roused the professor's suspicion. "I am sorry, Landon," he said gravely; "I could never have believed it of you. I thought you a young man whose principles were far too good to permit him to take part in deceit, and disobedience to the laws of the institution; and whose tastes would never lead him into the low company usually to be found in such places."

It was precisely the address to rouse, in one of Fred's peculiar temperament, the besetting sins of pride and anger. He drew himself up haughtily.

"It is perhaps scarcely worth my while to defend myself against accusations brought without a shadow of proof to build them upon," he said, with flashing eyes; "but I have never entered Clevinstine's house, never so much as heard of the room you speak of till within the last hour." Then with a sudden recollection of whom he was addressing, "I beg your pardon, sir," he added, coloring deeply. "I was forgetting the respect due to your position, as my superior in the college."

"Granted, Landon," returned the professor, kindly; "we are quits; for I plainly perceive that my suspicion was unjust. But here we are at Clevinstine's; come in with me, I am in search of some of our sophis and freshmen, who, I have reason to believe, are at this moment at play in that very room."

Fred obeyed, though rather reluctantly. He feared Richard Hall was there, and did not wish to seem to have a share in bringing him to conviction and punishment.

The proprietor of the grocery, a burly broad-shouldered Dutchman, stood behind his counter, weighing out sugar and tea to a customer.

"Good day, sirs," he said; "mine poy ish out, but I waits pon you in one lectle moment."

"I merely wish to be allowed to go up stairs, sir," replied the professor, blandly.

"Up stairs in mine house? Vell, sir, what for would you go up mine stairs? Dere is nothing dere as pelongs to you."

"I think there is. I feel pretty well convinced that some of my pupils are playing billiards there at this moment."

"That ish von grand mistake, sir. I keeps no billiards here."

The click of the balls could be distinctly heard overhead, yet Clevinstine looked the professor full in the face with unblushing effrontery, as he made the assertion.

"Then what is that noise I hear?" asked the professor, indignantly.

"That ish not mine business, sir, to tell you what you hears. I hear very many sound in doors and out."

"Will you permit me to go up stairs and see for myself?"

"What for would you go up mine stairs?"

"To look for my boys, as I said before. I have been told you have a billiard saloon here, and from the sounds overhead I have every reason to believe the report to be true."

"It ish not true. I keeps no billiard saloon. Mine wife and childer ish up there, that ish all. Do you wish to see mine wife? She is very busy; but if you wish to see her, I calls her down."

"No; I have no business with your wife, but I must find my pupils," returned the professor, begin-

ning to lose patience and temper ; " and if you continue to refuse to allow me to look for them where I have every reason to believe they are, I shall be compelled to take out a search warrant."

" Very vell, sir ; ven you prings the search warrant, you goes up mine stairs, but not pefore," replied the grocer, coolly, turning away to wait upon another customer, who came in at that moment.

" Insolent wretch ! utterly devoid of truth or conscience !" muttered the discomfited teacher, making a hasty exit.

" Did you ever hear such bare-faced lying, Landon ?"

" Never, sir. But you don't expect to obtain a search warrant ?"

" Pooh, no ! That hint was thrown out merely by way of intimidation ; but, unfortunately, he knew as well as I, that it could not be carried out. The only thing that can be done now is to hurry home in time to see who are late to dinner," he added, consulting his watch, then setting off almost upon a run.

Fred followed somewhat more leisurely, while turning over the situation in his mind, and trying to find some way of befriending Hall, and regaining his influence over the boy, yet without encouraging him in wrong doing, or assisting to defeat the ends of justice.

Fred was barely in season for dinner, and the meal was half over, when some half dozen others—

among whom were Stanton, Miller, King, Hall and Crawford—came stringing in one after another, and seated themselves with an air of assumed indifference.

There was an almost imperceptible gleam of triumph in Prof. Kerr's eye, as he marked their entrance. They felt, rather than saw it, and trembled in their shoes. Nothing was said to them at that time, but they withdrew to their rooms with the uncomfortable consciousness that a sword was hanging over their heads.

"Well, we're in for it now," remarked King, following Stanton and Miller into their study. "The old professor smells a rat, I'm certain, and we'll have to do some tall lying to get out of the scrape; eh, Stanton?"

"Well, we've had some practice on one or two former occasions; indeed, I'm not sure it don't come rather more natural to you now than speaking the truth; eh, King?"

"Then, suppose you try the latter for once," said Miller, seating himself to his work. "I, for one, am inclined to think it the best and safest plan to own up, beg pardon, and promise obedience to law for the future."

"What! D'y'e mean to peach on us?" cried King, turning fiercely upon him.

"No, that's not in my line. I shall speak for myself, and leave you to do the same."

"You show the white feather early; I really

thought better of you, Miller. I'd no notion you were such an arrant coward," remarked Stanton, with a sneer.

"In this case I am decidedly of the opinion that the truth requires more courage than the lie," replied Miller, coolly.

"But you've no right to tell, and so let the faculty into the secret, that there's a billiard saloon at Clevinstine's," said King, waxing wroth, and in his anger raising his voice to a dangerously high pitch.

A step startled them, and some one tried the door. But Stanton had taken the precaution to bolt it.

"Open this door immediately," commanded the well-known voice of Prof. Kerr.

They looked at each other in dismayed silence, and as Stanton rose to obey, King darted into a closet, Miller turned the key upon him, hastily resumed his seat, and was apparently deeply engaged in study as the professor entered.

"Where is King?" demanded the latter, sending a searching glance about the room.

"He does not room here, sir; he is a sophomore, and has his study in the story above," answered Stanton, in a respectful tone.

"No evasion, sir; it will not avail in this instance," said the professor, sternly. "I heard King's voice in this room not five minutes since."

He stepped to the closet door and threw it open.

There stood King, looking very crest-fallen and sheepish.

"Come out, sir," commanded the professor, "and go directly to your own room. Nay, stay a moment; there is another matter that requires investigation. Where were you, young gentlemen, during the last hour before dinner to-day?"

His glance directed the query to all three, but Stanton answered:

"We took a walk into town, sir, and were a little later in returning than we were aware; my watch was slow, and it happened to be the only one in the company to-day."

"You took a walk; but where did you go?"

"Into the town, sir, as I said before."

"That is not sufficiently definite. What house or houses did you enter while there, and what were you doing?"

"Nothing, sir, but talking and making a few purchases at a bookseller's and a dry goods store."

"I am sorry to be obliged to doubt your word, Mr. Stanton. King, is this true?"

"True as gospel, sir."

"Miller, is this true?"

"I beg to be excused from answering, sir."

"You are not excused, I must have a reply to my query."

"I'll answer for myself, sir, but cannot in honor do anything more."

"Were you at Clevinstine's this morning?"

"Yes, sir," reluctantly.

"Were you playing billiards in a room over his store?"

"Yes, sir," very reluctantly.

"I knew it, I was satisfied of it," said the professor, glancing sternly from one to another. "Miller, you will be reprov'd and admonish'd in presence of your class. Stanton and King, you two, having added falsehood to your other offence, shall be summon'd before the faculty, there to answer for your misdemeanors. King, you will now retire to your own room, and in future observe the law which requires you to spend the hours of study there."

With a muttered, "Yes, sir," King left the room, darting a furious, threatening glance at Miller as he stepped behind the professor and passed out of the door. Crawford, Hall and the other delinquents were called to account in like manner, but by a prompt confession—each of his own guilt—and a promise not to repeat the offence, they escaped with no heavier punishment than that meted out to Miller. But King and Stanton, being called before the faculty and found guilty of lying and tipping, in addition to the other breach of law, were suspended for a time, and threatened with expulsion if they continued in such evil courses.

CHAPTER X.

A SWIM FOR LIFE.

ONE beautiful bright afternoon in May, a grand match game of base ball was played between the first nines of the rival college clubs, the "Invincibles" and the "Excelsiors." Hundreds of gaily dressed people were assembled from the neighborhood to witness the contest.

Landon, Crawford, and Carter were all members of the first named club, and took part in this game; they were reckoned fine players, and did themselves credit on this occasion, whilst Bruce and Hall were considered the best in the rival nine.

The game was hotly contested. The Invincibles having won the toss, sent the Excelsiors first to the bat. The first man tipped out; the next was nervous and shaky, and was readily caught on a fly-foul. The captain cried, "Steady, boys, steady." The third man gave a regular *crusher*, followed by a yell from many throats, and cries of, "Go it, Sandy! Go for third base! Home run! No! Stay there! Hold your base!" But, alas, too late; the ball was quickly fielded, and Sandy

out, the first inning resulting in a blank for the Excelsiors.

The Invincibles came in with smiling faces, already beginning to feel that they had easy work before them, but they reckoned without their host. Their weakest players came first to the bat, and though they tried their best, out they went in one, two, three order, to the great delight of their opponents.

The second and third innings resulted in nothing better than three "white-washes" to each club, and many were the consultations held, as each nine took their turn at the bat. You could hear such cries as, "Go to your work, boys! This is no soft thing! Roll up your sleeves to it! Oh, Fred, give them a sky-scraper!" And nobly did Fred do his duty. Over the fence, and a home run; the ice was broken, and a loud hurrah given for "first blood" to the Invincibles. This was quickly followed with three more runs before their side was out; and as they again went to the field, some of their friends cried, "Now, boys, you've got them demoralized, mind your eyes, and the victory is yours."

But not so fast, my lads. Bruce and Hall were in the next inning. The first led off with a daisy-cutter to the right, and a home run, followed by a beauty from Hall, right between the second and third bases. New courage inspired the smaller guns of the Excelsior nine, who succeeded in counting

five runs before their side was out, with three men on bases.

Now the game stood one ahead for the Excelsiors; and again the Invincibles went to the bat, and soon succeeded in wiping out the odd count, and adding two more runs to their score. But I will not attempt to give the details of the remaining innings. Had I the ability of the talented author of "Tom Brown's School Days at Rugby," for the painting of such word pictures, I should certainly go into a fuller description of the game; but lacking that ability, I leave it to your imagination, indulgent reader, feeling that if you are at home in such matters, it will serve you far better than I could, and if not, you will be spared the infliction of some pages of doubtful interest to you.

Suffice it to say, that when the ninth inning opened, the Invincibles had scored fourteen runs, whilst the opposite nine could count but thirteen, all depending now on their coming up to time on this, their last chance to win. One run at least must be made to tie, and two to win the game for the Excelsiors, even should they be fortunate enough to give their opponents another white-wash. First man strikes out; second caught on a fly, and now comes Hall at the bat. With a calm, steady eye, waiting for a good ball, he quickly sends a hot-liner to second base.

"Oh, Fred, are you there? Hold it, and the game is ours," cries the captain.

But Fred was watching for the ball, and jumping from his base, caught it in the air, hot from the bat. Bravely did he try to hold it, but it drops to the ground, when, quick as a flash, he picks it up with his other hand and throws it accurately to first base, who holds it fast, and touches his man just in time to put him out, thus winning the game with an inning to spare.

Amidst the shouts of the crowd, sick and faint with sudden pain, Fred was seen to stagger into the strong arms of Bruce, for he had broken his little finger in his attempt to win the game. He soon recovered from his momentary dizziness, to find Hall standing by his side as pale as himself, and looking quite distressed.

"Never mind, Ritchie," said Fred, cheerfully, and forcing a smile; "'tis only a finger, and the doctor will soon set it all right. I must go in, I believe. That was an awkward catch of mine."

"It was the fault of my bat, I'm afraid," returned Hall, steadying his voice with some difficulty.

"It was purely an accident; nobody to blame, unless it may be myself," answered Fred, quickly.

"Let me give you an arm." "Lean on me, and let me help you to the house," said Carter and Hall, both speaking at once.

"No, no, thank you; I am quite able to help myself; a broken finger is not a thing to knock a man up so completely as that," said Fred, coloring at the thought of his momentary weakness.

"Then I'll go for the doctor," cried Richard, setting off on a run.

But Fred called after him. "Don't, Ritchie: come back and let me take care of myself."

"The doctor's in the 'ouse now," added Dawson; "hold 'Opkins is hill, you know."

Fred walked steadily to the house, submitted without a moan or groan, or the movement of a muscle, to the painful operation of setting the broken bone; and at the ringing of the chapel bell for evening service, rejoined his companions with as serene and cheerful a countenance as if nothing were amiss with him.

But Richard could not forgive himself, and in his penitence sought a renewal of the old friendship, while Fred, rejoicing in this opportunity of regaining his lost influence, met his advances fully half way.

Hardly a better thing could have happened to Richard, taking him as it did from the society of King, Stanton, and others of the same sort, into that of Landon and Carter, who had now become so intimate, that to be with one in the hours of recreation, was generally to be with the other.

Richard did not, however, give up Crawford, but instead drew him on with himself into a purer moral atmosphere. Crawford, though often led into folly and mischief by his love of fun, was really at heart a boy of excellent principle, and was far from regretting the change.

One lovely Sunday afternoon, early in June, Landon took advantage of this happy state of affairs, to persuade Hall and Crawford to accompany Carter and himself to a little country Sunday school they had established at the distance of a mile or two from the college.

"Whither away, lads?" asked Bruce, meeting the party as they passed out of the gates.

Fred explained, extended his invitation to him also, and Bruce accepted it for the sake of the walk.

Bruce was an upright moral man, a respecter of religion, but a stranger to the power of vital godliness; and he watched Landon and Carter with a mixture of wonder and curiosity, as he saw them so zealously engaged in what seemed to him the thankless task of instructing a set of uninteresting children. Carter's look and manner were particularly earnest, and Bruce softly drew near and listened, without attracting the attention of either teacher or scholars.

It was the old, old story of redeeming love, the sweet story of Jesus' life and death, which the young man was pouring forth in words and tones of such tender pathos, such true, deep feeling, that every eye in the little group was fixed upon him in rapt attention, and tears stole silently down the cheeks of one and of another.

"I don't understand it," said Bruce to himself, "how he seems to love, with his whole soul, Him he speaks of; and how he pleads with them to love

Him too, as if his very life depended upon his success."

Very pleasant was the walk home through the lengthening shadows, and the sweet summer air, laden with perfume from green and smiling fields, orchards in full bloom, and gardens gay with roses and many a bright-hued and sweet-scented flower. The young men sauntered dreamily along, hardly caring to speak, though Carter was softly humming to himself something of which Bruce caught only a word or two here and there.

"What is that, Will," he asked, "that you are singing so softly? I want to know the words, if they are worth hearing. I've heard you hum them before, in your absent moods, and when you look your happiest, I think."

"Ah, 'tis a simple little thing, but somehow very sweet to me, Jonathan," answered Carter, turning toward his questioner a face beaming with joy and peace.

While here below, how sweet to know,
His wondrous love and story;
And then, through grace, to see His face,
And live with Him in glory!"

"How happy you look," remarked Bruce, after a moment's thoughtful silence; "I wish I could catch your enthusiasm. I can't imagine what pleasure you can find in teaching a parcel of bare-footed country lads, whom almost any other young

gentleman of your attainments and prospects would think hardly worth his notice."

"I want them for jewels in my crown," answered Carter, with a bright, sweet smile so irradiating his features, that Bruce thought of the shining of Moses' face as he came down from Mt. Sinai. "Jesus died for them as well as for me; then what must not He have deemed them worth? And shall I not be at the trouble of telling them of His wondrous love and sacrifice? And oh, there is such a little while to work for Him! so little time, that I long to labor for Him with both hands earnestly."

Bruce sighed. "Such a little while," he repeated; "ah, it always makes me melancholy to think of the shortness of life. How is it with you?"

"Melancholy? ah, no; no indeed. How could I be sad at the thought of going home? 'Tis so sweet to work for Him here, that I could gladly spend a long life at it; and yet, so delightful is the prospect of seeing Him, no longer 'through a glass, darkly,' but face to face, that if He should call me at *this moment*, I think I could obey the summons with unspeakable joy and gladness."

They had fallen a little behind during this conversation, but now hurried on as they saw the others waiting for them.

Late on the following afternoon, Landon and Carter, returning from a walk, were hailed by Crawford and Richard Hall.

"Stop! Hold on a minute, lads, we've something to say to you."

They came up panting with running. "We're getting up a party for a moonlight row on the river. You will join us, of course?" they said, inquiringly.

"Yes," said Carter, "if it's considered quite safe. It is not right to risk our lives for mere pleasure, you know."

"Oh, perfectly safe, unless we get up a row, or something, and overturn the boat," replied Crawford.

"I have a letter to write to my mother," said Landon; "it is my regular evening for doing so, and she will be disappointed and anxious if it fails to reach her as usual."

"Nonsense! You can write to-morrow," said Crawford.

"Ah, happy fellow in having a mother to write to," sighed Carter; "don't do anything to cause her a pang. Fred, or you'll lay up for yourself a bitter store of unavailing regrets when, like mine, she has gone to a better world."

"But you can write after we get back; 'twill only be losing an hour or so of sleep, and I think you'll find it pay," urged Richard. "Come, now, say you'll go."

"Yes, I will; but I will try to write the letter first," said Fred, consulting his watch, and hurrying into the house.

They set forth a gay, gladsome party, full of mirth and wild youthful spirits, little dreaming how they would return. There were a dozen or more of them, all to go in one large row boat, owned by a man named Benton, who was in the habit of fishing for miles up and down the river, and so had become very well acquainted with all that portion of the stream which they would pass over.

"Now, young gents, have a care of the snag in the middle of the river, about a mile up stream," he said, as they trooped past him into the boat.

"What is that, Benton? A snag, did you say?" asked several voices.

"Yes, and a pretty bad one, if you strike it. But there's no need of that, if you're careful to keep a sharp look out for it, and steer close to the shore just along there; for it's about mid-stream, right in the current. It ought to have been took up long ago; but it hasn't been, and that's all I can say about it."

"You don't think it's a dangerous expedition we're going on, Benton? Because I hold that a man has no right to risk his life for mere pleasure."

The voice was Carter's; and Stanton muttered quite audibly, "A coward, eh? like all the saints."

"Well, I won't say but 'twould be somewhat safer by good, honest daylight—moonlight's so deceivin', like. But you'll come out all right

enough, if you mind the snag, and don't take to cuttin' up, and so overset the boat."

"Thanks for your advice, and we'll try to follow it," said Fred Landon, as they pushed off, and began pulling lustily up stream.

"There!" said Bruce, presently, "why didn't we think of going down stream instead, and so avoid the snag altogether?"

"Why, because the scenery is far finer in this direction, and we also prefer taking the hard part first, and going down with the current on our return," replied several voices.

Benton's warning had rather sobered them, and they were tolerably quiet and watchful till satisfied that the danger was past for the time. After that they grew very merry again. Now and then they were in comparative darkness for a moment or two, as the boat passed into the shadow of the trees, which here and there grew thickly along the river's bank. On such occasions King drew something from his pocket, held it to his own lips, or passed it slyly to Stanton, who used it in like manner.

"Gittites," whispered Crawford, leaning towards them, "your breath betrays you. Better throw that bottle into the river."

"Hold your — tongue, or I'll pitch you in," muttered Stanton, angrily. "We're about old enough to attend to our own affairs."

"But if the boat should upset, sober men would stand a decidedly better chance than the Gittites."

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"The boat's not going to upset; so take care of yourself, young un, and let us do the same," growled King.

Crawford offered no further remonstrance, and the bottle was presently drained to its dregs, leaving the two just sufficiently intoxicated to be very noisy and reckless.

On the return trip they were not sensible how fast the current was carrying them down stream; the snag was forgotten; suddenly the boat struck it. Stanton and King sprang up in alarm, and in so doing destroyed the equilibrium, tipping the boat so much to one side, that the whole party were thrown into the water.

It was Stanton's voice that uttered the loudest, most piercing, terror-stricken cry for help, as they grappled with each other in the water, in the mad struggle for life. He laid hold of King, who shook him off fiercely, as he struck out for the shore.

The first wild plunge had sobered them both completely, but all that either cared for at that moment, was to secure his own life; letting others take care of themselves.

Most of the young men were expert swimmers, and after a brief struggle to free themselves from their entanglement with each other, and to stem the current, reached the shore with little difficulty. But one was missing.

"Are we all here?" asked Fred, looking from one dripping figure to another; "Ritchie, Crawford,

oh, there you are ; but Carter, where is he ? Will ! Will ! where are you ?”

His voice rang out upon the still night air, and every ear in the startled group was strained to catch the answer. But none came, save the gentle ripple of that treacherous water, and the sighing of the breeze in the tree tops.

“He must have gone down,” whispered Crawford, hoarsely, shuddering as he spoke ; “but perhaps it’s not too late to save him yet.” And he sprang down the bank, Landon, Bruce, and Hall following.

“Oh, for one glimpse of the sun, one moment of daylight !” cried Fred, in a voice of agony, as he leant over the stream, vainly seeking to see below the surface of its inky blackness.

“He’s in there, and we must search for him. The last spark of existence may not yet be extinct,” cried Bruce, tearing off his clothes and plunging in, Fred following his example.

“Be careful, oh, be careful !” called Crawford after them. “I remember now to have heard of that snag, and that there’s a deep hole just a little below it, and I dare say he’s been sucked in there.”

“Come out, you fools, you’re only risking your own lives,” yelled Stanton ; “and it’s enough to have to report one man drowned.”

“Go for help,” shouted back Fred. “Go, run for your lives, all of you ! Bring men and boats,

torches, poles, grappling hooks, anything, everything that can be of any service."

What an age it seemed, though it was in reality but a few moments till help came. It was as Crawford had surmised; and with the aid of the torches and grappling hooks, the body was presently dragged from the water, and laid upon the grass, with its still, white face upturned to the pale moonbeams, that shone down upon it as calmly and quietly now as when, one hour ago, it was instinct with life and health.

"No, no, not that way! Turn him over on his face, and hold his head lower than his body to let the water run out of his mouth," cried Landon, springing forward and carrying out his own directions as he spoke. "Strip off his wet clothes, some of you. Oh, we want towels and blankets and bottles of hot water."

"They're all of them ready and waiting at that house over yonder," interrupted Bruce, "and the best plan would be to carry him there at once."

"He's dead, dead as a stone; and 'taint no use to do nothin'," said one of the men, who had come to assist in dragging the river.

"No, I wont believe it," cried Fred, in a voice of agony. "I wont give him up without trying everything that can be thought of. Oh, Will! Will!"

"Well, sir," replied the man, drawing his hand across his eyes, "we'll try all we can; but I tell

you aforehand 'twont do no good whatsomever. He's been in that hole at the bottom o' the river a half an hour and more, and 'twould be nothin' less than a miracle if there was a spark o' life left in him."

Fred's reason was convinced, but not his heart; and not till he had spent hours in unavailing efforts, would he resign the hope of restoring the life which had become so dear to him; for the two had taken such sweet counsel, one with the other, that their souls were knit together as the souls of David and Jonathan. Bruce shared his labors to the end, for he too had, of late, entertained a very sincere affection for Carter. Hall and Crawford longed to do the same, but were obliged to return to the college, whither the rest of the rowing party had already preceded them.

Not a word was spoken till they had reached and passed through the great gate, but as it swung to behind them, Crawford turned and grasping Hall's arm, "Ritchie," he said, with a burst of grief, "do you remember how gay and light-hearted he was, and how handsome he looked as we went through here three or four hours ago? And to think what he is now! Oh! oh!"

"A saint in glory," whispered Hall, dashing away the scalding tears.

"Yes, yes; I haven't the least doubt that he's just as glad, and as happy as he can be; and we've no need to mourn for him; he was the very one,

and the only one of us, unless it might be Landon, that was quite ready to go ; so what a mercy that 'twas he instead of any of the rest."

They hurried into the house, and each to his own room ; but it was little that they, or indeed almost any one else in the college, slept that night. Not even Stanton or King could at once shake off the feelings of awe and dread inspired by this sudden snatching of one of their number from their very midst, and their own narrow escape from a like fate.

The sun was just up when Crawford burst into his friend's room.

" They've brought him back, and—and laid him out. I've seen him, and you'd think he was only sleeping ; they've got his own Sunday clothes on him—it makes him look so perfectly natural—and—come with me, Ritchie, I want you, I've got leave ; there'll be no recitations to-day—and—so come ; we couldn't have a better time." And he hurried away, drawing the wondering Richard after him.

" What is it, Al ? " he asked at length.

" Flowers ; there ought to be some, and there shall be. They put them 'round my little brother when they laid him out, and *he* has the same heavenly look on his face. Parker has lovely tube-roses ; I saw them the other day, and I've some pocket money left."

" Mine is all gone," murmured Richard, regretfully.

"Yes, I knew it, else I should have come alone. I want the expense to be all mine. O, Entry, I can't forgive myself for the way I answered him, the other day, when he ventured to say a word to me about—about, you know what; it was all out of the love and kindness of his kindest of hearts, and so sweetly and gently spoken; and yet I answered him roughly, and told him I heard preaching enough from the doctor, beside what I got in my mother's letters. I'd give anything to take it back now. I never thought to feel so dreadfully about a few rough words, uttered in the excitement of the moment."

They had reached the florist's gate. Richard opened it, and they passed in. Presently, they came out again laden with geranium leaves, lilies of the valley, and tube-roses, and silently wended their way back to the college.

Worn out with his exertions, excitement, and grief, Fred Landon left his almost untasted breakfast, retired to his room, threw himself down on his bed, and slept heavily for several hours. It was late in the afternoon when he awoke, and the sun was near its setting, as he stole softly into the room where lay the remains of his loved friend.

He found Bruce there, standing with folded arms, and bowed head, his eyes riveted upon the marble face of the dead.

"Ah, how kind and thoughtful of you, Jonathan," whispered Fred, pointing to a half open rose

that lay on the sleeper's breast, while other fragrant flowers were tastefully disposed about him.

Bruce shook his head. "'Tis not my work," he answered, in the same subdued tone; "some woman's hand has doubtless been busy here, preparing him for his mother's loving eyes. Poor lad."

"No, his mother went before him; thank God for that. And oh, Bruce, don't think of him as poor. Poor? Nay, he is richer than all the gold of earth could make him; he has gone to an inheritance incorruptible and undecayed, and that fadeth not away."

"True, most true," and then Bruce repeated what had passed between Carter and himself on the way from that little Sunday school, only two days before. "Who could have thought," he added, that he was so near the realization of his hopes and wishes:

'Through grace to see His face,
And live with Him in glory?'

The words haunt me, Landon; nor can I any more forget some other and most earnest words that he addressed to me, later in the evening, upon your leaving us alone together for a time."

"What were they?"

"He spoke of Jesus as the sinner's only hope, and asked if I had accepted him as my Saviour. I said I had thought but little about it, hoped I was safe enough, having always lived a moral, upright,

honest life. Then he besought me, almost with tears, to resign all other hope and trust, and cast my soul on Jesus. Salvation is a *free gift*, said he, and only by accepting it as such can we have it."

"And no truer words could he have spoken, my friend. 'The just shall live by faith.'"

Carter had lost his father in early infancy, his mother some years later; and the only near living relative was an uncle, who was also his guardian. To this gentleman, Mr. Rumsey, a telegram, informing him of his loss, was sent as soon as all hope of restoring animation had been given up. He came at once, arriving on the day before that appointed for the funeral. He was evidently a very sincere mourner, seeming literally bowed down with grief. Before leaving, he sought out Bruce and Landon, and returned them his heartfelt thanks for their efforts in behalf of his "dear boy," and they in turn told him what Carter had been to them.

"Ah, it was like him," he said, with trembling lips. "My poor Will! He was a good son to his mother and to me. She gave him to me when she died, and he was all I had. I've been working and saving for him these many years, and now I've nobody to leave it to. But the will of the Lord be done. And shall I complain because he has missed the paltry sums I had hoarded for him? or because I must now travel on alone through this

dreary world? No, no; 'tis better so; and though he can't come back to me, I shall go to him. Good-bye, lads, and may the Lord bless you both, and grant that you too may enter into peace at last, as he has."

He shook hands with them, and went away.

CHAPTER XI.

A FALL IN HOPS.

“NO ill news, I hope, Landon?”
Bruce’s tone was full of kindly concern.

“My poor mother! my darling, precious little mother!” murmured Fred, in low, broken tones, rather as if unconsciously thinking aloud than answering the query.

He sat with his elbow on the table, the fingers of that hand tightly compressing his temples, while the other held an open letter. His looks were pale, anxious and troubled.

“I trust your highly respected and esteemed parent is not ill, my good friend?” said Bruce, inquiringly, after a moment’s perplexed silence, which Fred did not seem inclined to break.

“No, thank you,” he at length answered, with an effort. “I am truly thankful it is not that. But— Have you heard of the crash in hops in Wisconsin? What fools men are, sometimes! It would seem that any one with common sense might have foreseen the result of such management, or mismanagement, rather; so many going into it, and raising them in such immense quanti-

ties as to completely overcrowd the market, even had the crop failed elsewhere in our own country and in Europe."

"Well?" asked Bruce, as Fred paused, and sighed deeply.

"Well? Why hundreds have been utterly ruined, my step-father among the rest. He had been making money very fast on hops—was considered very wealthy; but it is all gone except the land—perhaps that too will have to go; my mother writes that she can hardly tell yet the full extent of the calamity; and her fortune— But I don't know how much I have a right to disclose. The shock has cost Mr. Rush a stroke of paralysis. He was not man enough, it seems, to bear up against such a blow to his pride and avarice," added the lad, bitterly.

"Your step-father is no favorite with you, I perceive."

"No."

"Has he been abusive to your mother, your sister, or yourself?"

"No, not abusive; he has simply failed, utterly failed to appreciate them; especially my mother, who is so greatly his superior, that I cannot imagine how she ever could bring herself to marry him."

"Your feelings are very natural, but"—and Bruce shook his head gravely—"do you think they are quite Christian?"

"No; but I am by no means perfect. I don't profess to be," replied Fred, coloring.

"No, but you profess to be striving after perfection?"

"True."

"And are you not allowing yourself to feel too much as if this illness of his were a voluntary act? Too much as if you were certain you would not have succumbed to the trial as he has?"

"You are right, quite right, Bruce. Thank you for your faithfulness; you almost take poor Will's place to me now," returned Fred, with emotion, grasping his friend's hand across the table as he spoke.

"No, no; I can never do that, though I have begun, I hope, to serve his loved Master. The term is almost completed, Fred; do you remain till its conclusion?"

"Yes; my mother bids me do so, and I obey. I believe I have never disobeyed her since I was a very little child, and I hope I never shall, though I long to go to her at once, in this her time of sore distress. She would lean on me, and I know I could be some help and comfort to her."

"And you will not return next year?"

"Oh, no; of course that will now have to be given up, and I must endeavor to find some way of earning a support for my mother and sister."

"I'm truly sorry for you, I know what poverty is, for I have had a hard struggle with it myself,"

said Bruce. "But cheer up, lad, you'll battle through, and come out a great man in the end, I am sure; and a rich one, too, in all probability."

It was agreed that the matter should be kept secret between them; but Hall had received the same news from home, and presently came to express his sympathy, and to say that his father too had lost in the same way, though much more lightly.

King also had heard from home, and his supercilious manner toward Landon, when next they met, showed his appreciation of wealth and its loss. However, no one but Stanton followed his example, and a lad of Fred's manly, independent spirit, was not likely to be very deeply wounded by such treatment coming from such a quarter.

He had some difficulty in giving proper attention to his studies during the few remaining days of the term; for his heart was with his mother, and he was longing to help and comfort her. He did not delay an hour after he was at liberty to leave, but hastened home with all speed. He was met with open arms.

Mr. Rush's mind was almost entirely gone, and he lay helpless and useless on his bed. Fred was older and more self-reliant than Albert, and all now looked up to him as the head of the family; even Aunt Silence consulting him on matters of business, or referring them entirely to him, in a way that was very flattering to his vanity; for it was not

that stout-hearted maiden's wont to lean heavily upon the stronger sex.

Fred enjoyed it hugely; yet it was as nothing to the pleasure of feeling that he was once more the chief earthly stay and support of the sweet, fragile little woman to whom he owed his existence, and whose tender love and care had shielded him in his helpless infancy.

As she led him to her room on the day of his arrival, and he looked upon the pitiable object stretched upon its bed, the boy's heart smote him for the unkind feelings he had sometimes indulged toward his step-father; yet, on learning the whole truth in regard to the failure, his anger waxed hot against him.

Mr. Landon had willed all his property to his wife, trusting to her to care for her loved children. But she, not knowing that the laws of Connecticut gave a wife's property entirely to her husband, unwittingly let it pass into Mr. Rush's hands. He took possession (having in fact married her for her wealth), invested the whole in hops, and now it was all swept away.

It cost Fred, and Elena also, a severe struggle ere they could forgive the wrong done to their beloved mother. And then, as weeks and months rolled on, without making any sensible change in Mr. Rush's condition, and they learned from the physician that he might live on thus for years, the lad chafed sorely against the fact that his

sweet mother was tied to this senseless, helpless, mass of humanity, her beauty and grace hidden in a sick room, and her slender strength taxed to its utmost to wait upon him,—the man who had so wronged her; wronged her more deeply, more foully, in making her his wife from motives so base, than in robbing her of the means of support provided by him who had been her true and loving husband.

Her patience and submission under the trial, and her tender wifely care and solicitude, were beautiful to behold; and to her son's lamentations on her account, she answered: "My dear boy, such murmuring is sinful. 'Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' Let us trust in Him, and He will bring it all out right in the end."

During that fall and the succeeding winter, the struggle was a severe one; but each set about his or her part of the work of supporting the family with patient, cheerful energy. Who could have done otherwise, in after days they asked each other, with the dear, lovely little mother, setting them such a beautiful example of faith and resignation?

Fred obtained a situation, for the winter, as book-keeper and clerk in a large dry goods establishment in Brookville; Albert, that of teacher in the nearest public school, while in the mornings and evenings, he attended to whatever out-door work was needed on the farm; Elena took scholars on

the piano and harp, soon collecting a large class, though obliged to take them at a low rate; Aunt Silence dismissed the one servant girl and did the housework herself, with a little assistance from Elena; and Mrs. Rush plied her needle, and waited on her afflicted spouse.

Their days were full of toil, but not, therefore, unhappy; and in the evenings, when Fred was at home, and all gathered together about the fireside, they had many hours of true and pure enjoyment.

Early in the spring Mr. Rush died. Widow and children mingled their tears over his grave, and for a time felt as if a leaf had been dropped out of the book of their daily lives; but his affection for them had been either so slight, or so undemonstrative, that they soon ceased to feel conscious of the blank made by his absence, and learned to live contentedly and happily without him.

A part of the land had been sold to pay off some debts, but there still remained a goodly number of acres, as many indeed as the two lads were well able to manage. They turned farmers again that spring, and raised wheat enough to provide seed for the next year, and to keep the family through the coming winter.

Fred was looking about for employment for that season, his mother secretly mourning because she had not the means to give him his senior year at college, when they were unexpectedly provided.

She received a legacy from a distant relative, which would just suffice to accomplish her wish.

She told the news first to Elena, asking what should be done with the money.

"O mother, if you could spare it," cried the sweet girl, clasping her hands together in an ecstasy of delight, at the thought of her brother's joy, "do let it pay for Fred's last year at Hamilton. We are not going into company now, you know, and neither of us will need much for this winter; and what we do need, my music bills will supply."

Her mother kissed her with warmth and tenderness. "My dear, unselfish darling," she said, her eyes sparkling through glad tears; "yes, that is what shall be done with it. Now go and bring Fred here."

Elena ran joyously to do her bidding, and the next moment returned with her brother, playfully telling him he deserved a lecture from mamma, and must prepare himself to receive it.

"Of what crime of omission or commission have I been guilty, little mother?" he asked, placing himself at her feet, and lifting her soft white hand to his lips with a most graceful gesture of affection and respect, peculiarly his own; growing out of his chivalrous love, half filial, and half protecting.

She did not answer for a moment, but laying her other hand lightly on his head, looked down with a proud, fond motherly smile into the handsome hazel eyes uplifted to hers.

“I sent for you to hear your sentence of banishment,” she said at length. “I am going to send you away from me for another year,” and she sighed involuntarily.

“What!” he cried, springing upon his feet, and looking from her to his sister, and back again, with a face full of wonder and delight. “You cannot have the means to send me to college?”

“Yes, my son; see here,” and she placed the lawyer’s letter in his hand.

He glanced hastily over it. “But, mother, there is barely enough to carry me through; and it is yours; and you need it; and do you think I would rob you of your little all? Oh, no, never, never. How could you believe it of me, my dear, precious little mother?”

“No; I do not, did not think any such thing; for I know that my boy is the soul of generosity, and of love to me. But I think the money is my own to use as I like; and that my boy is my own, and will never forget that he owes obedience to his mother’s commands; and so will go off to college and apply himself to his studies there, when I order him to do so.”

“I am your liege subject, mother mine; if you give commands, I am bound to obey. But please do not compel me to take what you can so ill spare.”

“You do not take, Fred. I spend on my son’s education; thus using my means in the way that

gives the greatest amount of pleasure to me, and to your sister; and therefore ought to give the most to you, if your filial and fraternal affection is as strong as it should be."

"And we know it is," cried Elena, clasping her arms about him, and laying her pretty head on his shoulder. "Oh, Fred, Fred, I'm so glad, so glad for you! Though we shall miss you sadly."

CHAPTER XII.

A KNOCK-DOWN ARGUMENT.

HALLOO, old fellow! What, you back again? Wasn't expecting it; but glad to see you the very wust!"

Fred laughed and shook hands heartily. "Thank you, Ritchie; and I'm not sorry to find myself here. You are not direct from home, I believe?"

"No; ran down to Chicago, for a little visit first; so missed your pleasant company on the trip."

"Been here long?"

"Two or three hours probably."

"Well, what changes have taken place since I left? And who of my old acquaintance are still here?"

"One question at a time, if you please, old boy. The Graphite and the Gittites."

"What! Miller and Stanton not through yet? How's that?"

"Well, the last-mentioned individual was put back a year by the faculty; the Graphite lost half of last year by a broken limb, and other mishaps. So King has caught up to 'em, and all three are

now in the senior class. Stanton and King room together this year, to their great contentment, doubtless. A. B. C. and I do the same, to our great contentment. We're juniors, as are Stuffer, Green and others; Skedaddle, Nig, Fleshy-warbler, Snowball, Hen and Cock-Sparrow, and Doolittle are seniors, like yourself. But what are we standing here for? Come in. Come to my study; we've a splendid fire, and A. B. C. 'll be as delighted to see you as I am."

"Thank you, Ritchie; but I'll go to my own den first, arrange matters there, and get rid of some of this superabundance of dust and cinder."

Fred was not left long alone after the news of his arrival had spread through the house. Rap followed rap upon his door, in quick succession, as his old friends crowded in to shake hands and congratulate him on his return, and themselves on having him again among them. A merry set they were, full of life and fun, cracking their harmless jokes, talking over past frolics, toils, successes and failures, and laying plans for the future, both in regard to study and amusement; their literary societies, their base-ball and cricket clubs, etc., etc.

In the midst of it all, Crawford, glancing from the window, cried out, "Halloo, here comes a new boy! A regular muff, I should say. Has his mother with him, dy'e see? Just look how he's bundled up!"

"Come, lads; now don't let us judge too hastily,"

interposed Fred, as the others crowded about the window and joined in the laugh. "Probably it's all owing to ill-health, rather than to want of manliness."

"Yes; he's a delicate plant, I dare say."

"Should not venture into this wintry climate then."

"Eh! Stanton and King will make it hot-house enough if they get hold of him."

"And you'll all stand by and see him abused? eh!" cried Fred, indignantly.

"No, not I," said Crawford. "I'll not stand by and see it; but a fellow has to take care of himself pretty much in such a place as this, for one can't be on the watch to protect the babies at all times of the day and night."

The new freshman made his appearance at the supper table; a pale, slight boy of fourteen, but from the extreme delicacy of his features, and complexion, looking scarcely more than twelve. He was fair as a girl, had large lustrous eyes of the deepest blue, and a remarkably intelligent countenance. But he seemed nervous and ill at ease; his color came and went, and his hand trembled visibly, as he lifted his cup to his lips.

Fred's interest and compassion were excited. He sought out the stranger immediately upon the conclusion of the meal, introduced himself, took the embarrassed little trembler under his wing, made him acquainted with Hall, Crawford, and

several others of the better disposed among his own friends, conducted him to chapel for the evening service, and afterwards to his study, which, as yet, he had to himself.

There the grateful lad recovered his self-possession, and poured out all his heart to his new friend, telling, briefly, the story of his short life, and talking of his home, his mother and sisters, in a way that fully enlisted Fred's sympathy and interest.

Louis Walbridge was his name. He had been frail and delicate from his birth, and in consequence always a petted and indulged child; never away from home or mother until now. But he loved books, had an intense thirst for knowledge, and a wonderful memory; and by the assistance of his mother and older brothers, had been thoroughly prepared for college, as far at least as his studies were concerned.

"My mother could hardly be persuaded to let me come, or to leave me here when she went away," he said, in conclusion. "She seemed to fear that some one would abuse me; but I cannot see why they should; as I am not of a quarrelsome disposition, and only want to be let alone. So I'm not afraid, though a good deal bashful, I confess."

"There are apt to be some bad, unscrupulous fellows in every college, who find a strange pleasure in tormenting freshmen with practical jokes," replied Fred, in a tone of assumed indifference; "and lest there should happen to be such here, I

advise you to keep your door fastened as securely as you can, whenever you are alone in your room. And remember I am your friend, and ready to stand by you in every such emergency; if you can but let me know."

"It wouldn't do to inform the authorities, and appeal to them for protection?" he asked, timidly, and with a look of alarm.

"Oh, no. You'd never get over it; they'd call you a sneak and tell-tale—the students, I mean—and send you to Coventry at once."

A rap at the door, and Hall's voice asking for admittance.

"Come in," said Fred. "No, Louis, don't go."

"Thank you, but I think I must. I'm not strong, you see, and am used to early hours, which I promised mother I would continue to keep. I am a good deal wearied with my journey, too, and have not unpacked yet. So I must bid you good-night, with many thanks for your kindness, including your advice."

"Well, what do you think of him?" asked Richard, as the door closed on Louis.

"That he's a fine little fellow; bright, intelligent, remarkably well-informed for his age, conscientious and good in the religious sense, and not at all wanting in manliness, except the lack of physical strength."

"Why, he's got into your good graces, that's certain. But he'll need to be looked after, if he's

to be kept safe from harm. Sneers and taunts he'll have to bear. Stanton and King have already dubbed him Sarah Jane."

"Shameful!" cried Fred, his eyes flashing with indignation.

"Your room-mate's arrived," said Richard, poking the fire.

"Well, what sort is he?"

"Hardly to your taste, I should say; yet not such a bad fellow, either; fat, good-natured, but purse-proud and lazy, as fellows with their pockets full of money are apt to be."

Fred looked gloomy. To be thrown into such close companionship with a rich, purse-proud boy, just now when his own purse was so scantily furnished, was indeed a trial to one so proudly sensitive, and as yet but new to the privations and mortifications incident to poverty. Then he said to himself, "What a coward you are, Fred Landon, to shrink thus at the thought of sneers and contempt coming from such a source; what an ungrateful wretch, to murmur at such trifles, when your blessings are so far beyond your deserts." And with a determined effort, he resumed his cheerfulness.

"There he is!" cried Richard, springing up and throwing open the door, as a step was heard in the passage without.

"How d'ye do, Hal? Let me have the pleasure of introducing you to your room-mate, and my

friend, Mr. Fred Landon. Mr. Henry Pendleton, Fred."

"No, Entry, that's too formal. Harry or Hal Pendleton, at your service, Mr. Landon," said the new comer, shaking hands with them in turn very cordially.

He was a gay, handsome, well dressed fellow, and as he threw himself into a chair, with an air of easy nonchalance, and began pouring forth a stream of lively gossip about college friends and town acquaintances, Fred could not help thinking what a strong contrast he presented to his former room-mate, Bruce. Truly a far more agreeable face and figure to look upon, yet was not handsome Harry Pendleton half the man that honest Bruce was, or possessed of half the intellect.

"Have a cigar, Landon?" he asked, producing a case of very fine ones, and holding it out to Fred.

"No, thank you; I never smoke."

"Don't, eh?" and the arching of the eyebrows, and slight shrug of the shoulders, seemed to express both surprise and contempt.

"Well, you will, Entry? You're one of the jolly fellows that knows something of the worth of a good cigar."

"Thank you; I don't make a practice of it, but can't resist the temptation of your Havanas, as you know to your cost, I think."

"Never mind cost; pitch in, old boy; there are

plenty more where these came from," returned Pendleton, lighting his own.

The moment Louis Walbridge entered his room, he secured his door carefully. He was greatly fatigued, and his head had scarcely touched the pillow ere he fell into a profound slumber, which lasted till rudely broken by the sound of a gong, which seemed to rush and roar along the passages till it had filled every nook and corner with its horrid, uncarthly noise.

Louis had never heard one before, and he sprang up in alarm, leaped from his bed, and stood for a moment, listening, in fear and dread. Then, as the thought of what it really was flashed upon him, he laughed aloud.

"What a fool you are, to be frightened at a gong?" he said to himself, as he snatched up his clothes and began making a hasty toilet.

He was in a happy frame of mind as he left his room in answer to the summons to the morning service in the chapel; quite enjoying the thought that he was at length out of leading strings, and in some sort knocking about the world for himself. But on his way he encountered Stanton in the lower hall.

"Morning to you, Miss. How d'ye find yourself this morning, ma'am?" said the latter, giving him a nod.

"Sir?" exclaimed the little fellow, flushing to the very roots of his hair.

"Good morning, Miss Sary Jane. Hope you find yourself in good health this morning," repeated Stanton.

"Sir, do you mean to insult me?" cried Louis, drawing up his slight figure to its full height, and looking defiance at his big, burly tormenter.

"Why, now, what a cocky little mite it is! Who'd have thought it? Quite feminine in its rage; got its back up mighty high. Wants to fight with its betters, does it, eh?"

Louis controlled himself with an effort.

"No," he said, quietly, "not with my betters, nor with such as you. I don't fight; I have not physical strength for it. Please let me pass," for Stanton stood directly in his path.

"A saint, eh? one of Landon's sort," sneered the bully. "Then keep out of my way, youngster; muffs and spooneys are no fit company for me."

"Nor Gittites for Landon, Walbridge or me," cried a voice behind them, and Crawford came bounding down the stairs, gave Stanton a look of cool contempt as he passed, and drawing Louis's arm within his own, led him away.

"Come," he said, in a kindly tone, "he's not worth minding. But we must hurry in to chapel, or we'll be late."

"I'll pay you off, both of you," muttered the bully, following. He was cogitating all through the chapel service, the sullen scowl on his face and the occasional angry glance of his eye toward

Crawford and Walbridge indicating the probable subject of his meditations.

In the afternoon, he unfolded his plans to King, as they strolled arm in arm toward the town.

"No, no; not to-night," returned the latter. "Don't you see that Crawford will be wide awake now? and Landon, and Hall too, no doubt. No, better wait a week or two. That'll give time to lull them into security."

Stanton reluctantly agreed to defer his "sport," and for a fortnight Louis was left undisturbed. His letters to his mother and brothers were gay and sprightly. "College was a splendid place;" no one ill-treated him in the least, his lessons were easily mastered, he seemed to be liked by the professors and tutors, and had found three or four excellent friends among the students. Two were juniors and one a senior. Landon, the senior, was giving him lessons in gymnastics, and all three helped him with base ball and cricket. He was careful though not to exert himself too much now in the beginning, but hoped the exercise he was taking would soon make him as well and strong as other lads of his age.

He had just finished such a letter, and coming in from mailing it, had spent an hour over his books, then retired to bed, where he presently fell asleep.

Meanwhile some half dozen of the wildest and most reckless fellows in the institution had collected together in the study occupied by Stanton

and King. They were talking in low tones, interlarding their speech with many a slang phrase, and now and then an oath.

"Will he peach, d'y'e think?" asked one.

"I don't know. There's no telling what these snivelling, canting hypocrites will or wont do; but if he tries that game, I'll make him rue it!" cried Stanton, savagely. "It might, however, be a good precaution to mask. What say you, pals?"

"How many of us have masks?" asked Miller. "Nobody but you and King, I presume."

"Not I," "Nor I," "Nor I," returned the others.

"Then trust to me, and I'll throw a light upon the subject, that will prevent awkward recognitions, and heighten the effect of other performances."

Louis did not know how long he had slept, when he was roused by a confused noise and a sense of suffocation. He opened his eyes to find six or eight dark figures surrounding his bed, each sending up volumes of smoke from a lighted pipe, till the air was stifling with the stench of the most execrable tobacco, while every face looked ghastly in the strange unearthly light that filled the room.

"Am I in hell?" cried the lad, starting up, gasping for breath, and looking wildly about him.

"Yes!" hissed a voice close to his ear, and a pipe was thrust into his very face.

"No such thing. I'm awake now, and understand what's going on," cried Louis, thrusting it aside; "sophs and juniors tormenting a freshman,

and calling it good fun. But what right have you here? How dare you break into my room? You're suffocating me with your horrid tobacco; it always makes me deathly sick. Do, please, go away and leave me in peace."

But no one stirred, and a growl, or snarl from one or two was the only reply to question and entreaty; and when in very desperation, Louis tried to push them aside, and leap from the bed, they forced him back, and held him down, puffing their stifling smoke in his face, till at length he fell back in a dead faint.

"Couldn't stand it, eh?" sneered Stanton. "Didn't I know he was a chicken-hearted girl? Come away, boys; Sary Jane's a total wreck, and no more sport to be got out of her to-night."

"What if he shouldn't come to?" whispered one, as they hurried from the room in guilty haste and fear.

"Die of tobacco smoke, eh? Well, that's a good one. Go back and look to the lass if you've a mind," Stanton answered roughly, and the young man, a little less hardened, or a little more fearful of consequences, stole back again, threw up a window to admit the fresh air, and sprinkled some water on the white face of the insensible boy.

He waited till he saw unmistakable signs of returning consciousness, then slipped away before Louis had so far recovered as to be able to recognize him.

Louis appeared at the breakfast table looking

wretchedly ill and worn; but when Fred expressed surprise, and kindly concern at the sudden change for the worse, he merely replied that "he had had a bad night, he sometimes had."

The poor child, sensitively alive to any reproach against his manliness, and always a sufferer from weak nerves, could not readily shake off the effects of that night's abuse. He shrank from encountering Stanton, or any of that set, who, he was morally certain, were his tormentors, though he had not been able fully to recognize any one of them. He thought they despised him for his weakness, and because of it looked more contemptuously on him than before; and he winced at the thought. Then he no longer felt safe, even in his own room, and with his door locked; for he was sure it had been so when he went to bed that night; and that therefore they must have picked the lock; and if they had done it once, when might they not do it again? This sense of insecurity caused him to sleep uneasily and awake unrefreshed, and thus he was rapidly losing all, and more than he had gained in health and strength.

"I say, King, I think Sary Jane wants a cold plunge bath to strengthen her nerves. 'Spouse'n we give her one."

"Capital idea! Of course she needs it. When shall it be administered?"

"No time like the present," quoted Stanton. "Let's gather the fellows together, pitch in, and

give Sary Jane the benefit of this new treatment at once."

The Gittites were on their return from a spree, and the hour well on toward midnight. They were just drunk enough to be ready for any mischief, to do and dare without regard to consequences to themselves or others.

They entered the building, and quietly groped their way to the dormitories of several of their boon companions, and others, who deemed excusable almost anything short of murder when "a greenhorn of a freshman" was the victim; for had they not suffered the like in their freshman days? One after another was roused, and urged to join in "the fun."

Some few declined, but the majority sprang up at once, and followed the Gittites, who were now picking the lock of Louis Walbridge's door.

This was soon done, and they crowded into the room, arousing Louis by their entrance.

"What's wanted?" he asked, starting up.

"You," answered Stanton, gruffly.

"And what do you want with me? This is no time for visiting each others' rooms. You all know it's contrary to the laws of the institution," replied Louis, firmly.

"Tush! That for the laws of the institution," cried King, snapping his fingers in Louis's face. "Come, out o' bed with you. You're to take a walk with us, this pleasant starlight night."

"Thank you, but I prefer to remain where I am."

"No choice, Miss Sary Jane, my dear; may as well giv it up at once, and come along, for you've got to, I tell you." And Stanton seized the boy by the shoulder as he spoke, and fairly dragged him out upon the floor. "There, huddle on your clothes, or we'll take you as you are."

"Do you call this gentlemanly treatment?" asked Louis, indignantly.

"No questions or remarks, youngster; we're in a hurry," said one who had not spoken before.

"And the only query is, will you dress, and go peaceably? or will we have to take you as you are, and drag you along by main force?" said another.

"Since I must go, I will go peaceably; but under protest," said Louis. "I yield to superior numbers and strength. This is truly a brave deed you are doing to one so much younger and weaker than any of yourselves," he added, in a tone of scorn and contempt, that angered, while it shamed them.

They hardly allowed him time to put on his clothes; growing impatient at the slow progress made by the weak, trembling hands he vainly tried to steady. Throwing a cloak around him, they hurried him down the stairs, out of the house, and away across the meadows and fields, and over the hills, to a deep spring whose waters were almost icy cold even in summer, and now partially frozen over.

It was a strange spot to Louis, who had not yet thoroughly explored the vicinity, and he shrank back in fear and horror as the cry arose: "Now for it! pitch him in! head foremost or any how at all."

"Oh, don't!" he shrieked, throwing an arm about a tree that grew hard by, and holding on to it in mortal terror. "Don't! Would you murder me?"

"In with him!" shouted Stanton. "Pitch him in, boys; and let's see what sort of stuff the spoony's made of." He seized Louis, as he spoke, and tried to wrench him away from the tree.

But terror lent momentary strength to the delicate boy, and he clung to it with a vice-like grasp, crying out wildly, "Help! help! murder!"

The cry rang out upon the still, night air, waking he echoes of the woods and rocks, and was answered instantly, by a ringing shout, "Coming, Louis; courage, lad, help's at hand."

Then a tall dark figure swung itself lightly down the bank, at the foot of which they stood. "Hands off. What are you doing to the boy, Stanton?" it cried, and a powerful blow from Fred Landon's fist laid the bully sprawling on the ground.

"None o' your business, sir; mind your own affairs. I'll pay you for this," he muttered between his clenched teeth, as he slowly picked himself up.

"None o' my business, eh? You mistake, sir; I tell you it is my business, and the business of all

the strong to protect the weak. And let me say, furthermore, that none but a bully and a coward would be found at such business as this."

"Do you mean to apply those names to me, sir?" asked Stanton, threateningly, strutting up to Landon, and shaking his fist in his face.

"I do," was the rejoinder, in a tone of cool contempt. "Have you not proved your right and title to them, by this wanton attack upon one that is weak and helpless? For shame! for shame, all of you!" and the scornful glance accompanying the words, caused Stanton's confederates to shrink still farther back into the shadow of the rocks and trees, where they had stood silent spectators of the discomfiture of their leader.

"And now," continued Fred, throwing an arm around their trembling victim, "understand that I constitute myself the protector of Louis Walbridge; and whosoever lays a finger on him, to harm him, shall answer for it to me."

"Ha! you'll fight, will you? A saint fight, eh?" sneered Stanton.

"I'll not seek a quarrel, Stanton," answered Fred; "but if attacked, will most assuredly defend myself; and shall hold myself equally ready to espouse the cause of the weak and helpless, when I see them exposed to unjust violence and oppression."

Fred turned to his protege. "Come, Louis, lad, how you shiver and tremble! You'll be getting your death of cold. Let me take you back to the

house." He took off his own cloak, and threw it about him. Louis in vain protesting against the proceeding. "You'll take cold yourself, Landon; and that would be worse than all."

"Tut! tut, lad! I'm tough and strong; never fear for me. But what a state he is in! Pretty business this for those calling themselves gentlemen. But touch him again at your peril!" This to Stanton, and his fellow helpers, and in a tone of withering scorn, changing to one of defiance, in the last sentence, as again throwing an arm round Louis, he drew him away.

But the boy's breath came pantingly, his knees seemed to give way under him, and he was near falling.

"Why, what have they done to you, the cowardly wretches? You're hardly able to stand, much less to walk. I shall have to carry you," said his friend.

Louis sighed, but submitted.

"How strong you are," he said presently; "but set me down now. You will kill yourself."

"Not I; and the exercise is keeping me warm."

"You're the best fellow in the world. I believe you've saved my life," whispered Louis, clinging to him. "Do you know that spot? Were you ever there before? Was it a pit? or well? or what was it? It looked so deep and dark in the uncertain light; I thought they meant to murder me outright."

"Oh, no; not so bad as that. 'Tis only a spring, not nearly deep enough to drown you. But I'm glad and thankful I was at hand to save you from the plunge; as the sudden shock and the wetting, might have cost you a fit of sickness, if nothing worse."

But the necessary exertion of carrying such a burden was taking all Fred's breath, and no more conversation passed between the two until they found themselves safe within the walls of his study.

He placed Louis in a large easy chair,—the property of Pendleton, whom they could hear snoring away in the next room—built up a rousing fire, and prepared a tumbler of hot lemonade, which he made him drink, while he toasted his feet and got thoroughly warmed before retiring for the second time that night.

"But how did all this come about, Louis?" Fred asked, at length; "did you forget to fasten your door?"

"No; I locked it carefully, and that after making perfectly sure that no one else was in the room. Oh, Fred, I shall never feel safe again. I'd write to-morrow to be taken home, only—only I'm ashamed."

"Tush, man! What, run away from a parcel of cowards? Didn't you see how quietly Stanton took my knock-down argument?" and he laughed slightly at the recollection. "No, no; you mustn't think of such a thing. To-morrow we'll have two

stout bolts put to your door, which they'll not be able to pick, as I see they did the lock."

"But to-night?" queried the boy, with a shiver.

"To-night—there's not much of it left—you shall stay with me. You're not fit for the exertion of climbing the stairs, or in a state to be left alone either. So you shall share my bed, and I'll take the responsibility of answering to the broken laws."

Louis gave a sigh of relief, and looked his thanks. "But do tell me how you came to be at hand just when I needed you so much?" he said, with a sudden eager curiosity.

"It was certainly a special Providence," answered Fred, in a serious, thoughtful tone. "I had been with a sick man, the father of one of my Sunday school class. He was in great distress of mind, and I was detained much longer than I had anticipated. Now, if you are thoroughly warmed, I will help you to bed."

"And you; are you not coming too?" asked Louis, as Fred turned away after seeing him made comfortable.

"Not yet; I'm not fully prepared for Professor Henckle, and we recite German to-morrow morning, you know; so this is the only time I have to give to the lesson."

"And you have been devoting your precious time to that sick man and to me; and now have to lose your sleep to make it up, you dear, good old boy." A tear of gratitude twinkled in Louis's eye,

as his friend left the room with, "Pooh! pooh! the loss of a few hours of sleep is nothing to a strong, healthy fellow like me."

For the next half hour Fred worked diligently at the German, then pushing his books aside he took out some writing, which kept him busy for twice that length of time.

"Done at last," he said half aloud, as he threw down his pen, and leaned back in his chair, with a weary sigh. He looked tired and a little sad, though it was a rare thing to see a cloud on his usually bright and cheerful face. But Fred had his own troubles as well as poor little Louis. He was battling with poverty, and finding the struggle a hard one, full of trials and mortifications. His room-mate's ostentatious display of wealth and indifference to expense; his covert sneers at the thrift and economy Fred's conscience required of him, now in his reduced circumstances, were galling to the latter's sensitive pride.

Landon knew that his mother and sister were pinching themselves to give him the means of education, and he would scarcely allow himself an hour for pleasure. Sleep and exercise enough to keep him in vigorous health, he conscientiously took; but that done, the rest of his minutes were hoarded like gold, for study, and for work that would bring in money to add to the common stock. He had procured copying from a lawyer, and to that he devoted hours formerly given to innocent recreation.

In his junior year he had been an occasional visitor in Dr. Nevins' family, as well as in several others, and had become rather intimate with the doctor's eldest daughter, a pretty girl of sixteen. She had several times been his partner in drives and rides, and boating excursions up and down the river; and when he went away, hardly expecting to come back again, he was surprised to find how keen a pang he felt at the thought of parting with her, not knowing but it might be for years, or forever. A year had added very much to her beauty and grace, her ease of manner, and conversational powers. She had shot up into a charming young lady, and well nigh took Fred's heart by storm on their first interview after his return.

But he had scarcely seen her since, while handsome Harry Pendleton was often by her side; he had now neither time nor money to spend in attentions to his fair friends; but Pendleton had abundance of the latter, and was very prodigal of both it and the former.

"I wonder what she thinks of me?" sighed Fred, laying his head down on his writing desk. "I wonder if she knows, and whether she pities or despises me, or both?" And he writhed at the thought.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIXING THE GERMAN PROFESSOR.

“THE insolent hound! I've a great mind to horsewhip him within an inch of his life!” muttered Stanton, looking after Fred Landon, as he toiled up the hill with his rescued protege.

“Better not try it,” remarked one of his companions, with a laugh. “You'd be pretty sure to come off second best in a fight with him; he's brave, strong, and active.”

“And what am I, hey?” retorted Stanton, angrily; “weak and cowardly, ch?”

“I didn't say that; but your manner of life isn't calculated to increase a man's wind and strength of muscle. Landon's temperate habits are in his favor, and you'd give out sooner than he, in a fair fight, you may depend upon it. I wouldn't like to tackle him myself; and I think we'd better let his precious Sary Jane alone.”

“You'd better, certainly, Smith, if you're afraid of the saint,” sneered Stanton, leading the way back to the road.

“I, afraid?” cried Smith, indignantly. “If you weren't, why didn't you pay him off at once, when he knocked you as flat as a flounder? Catch *me*

taking the like of *that* from any student in the college."

This rejoinder, and a murmur of assent and approval from the others, King excepted, stung Stanton to the quick. "I—I'm no coward," he stammered, "not a bit afraid of that sneaking Landon; but—but that was no place for a fair fight; one couldn't see how or where to strike. But I'd challenge the fellow to-night, if 'twasn't that I know his principles wouldn't allow him to accept; and that the laws of the college are such that we'd both be expelled instanter, if he did."

"Oh, ah; is that it?" replied Smith, in a tone of undisguised contempt and incredulity.

"It is the law," said King, feeling called upon to defend his friend's character from the suspicion of cowardice.

"Of course; and such laws are mighty convenient on occasion."

No one contradicted this sentiment, and they pursued their way in silence, creeping stealthily into the college in the rear of Fred and Louis.

"There's that German lesson," said King, as he struck a light and saw the books lying on the table. "I've hardly looked at it; have you?"

"No, and I don't intend to to-night," growled Stanton.

"It's almost the first thing in the morning."

"What of that? I'll fix it so there'll be no recitation."

“Then I’ll be hanged if I’ll stay up to study it to-night.”

The next morning King reminded Stanton of his promise, and asked how he expected to prevent the recitation of the class in German.

“Patience, patience, man, and you’ll see,” was the rather unsatisfactory reply; and King, not over confident in the success of the effort, whatever it might be, set to work at his lesson; though with little hope of being ready for the recitation, as it now wanted but a few minutes of the time.

Stanton left the room, and came back almost immediately, grinning and chuckling. “I’ve done it,” he said, “and if Prof. Henckle can stay in that room, he’s a deal tougher than most folks; that’s all.”

“Why, what have you done?”

“Put a piece of assafœtida on the stove, ha, ha!”

“Whew! A nice scent it must be making. Faugh! I think I smell it even here. Hevings tu Betscy, Stanton, but that was an idea! I say, you’re a regular brick, and red hot at that.”

“The stove was,” laughed Stanton; “and the old boy’s temper will be too, or I miss my guess.”

“There’s the bell!” cried King, jumping up. “Come along. Now for some fun. This recitation will be a total wreck.”

“Don’t be in a hurry; let the rest get there first,” said Stanton, hanging back for a moment, then proceeding leisurely toward the class-room,

managing to be just in season to see the others come rushing out, holding their noses.

"Faugh!" "Faugh!" "Whew!" "Whew!" "Horrible stench!" "What is it?" "Who did it?" "What a shame!" Everybody was exclaiming or asking questions which nobody seemed able to answer.

In the midst of it all came the professor, a tough, weather-beaten veteran, once an officer in the Prussian army, and wearing honorable scars, from wounds received in battle.

"Faugh! Faugh! What ish all dis? One horrid, bad shmell!" he cried, glancing from one to another in stern displeasure. "Who has done dis von shabby trick? Nopody, hey? Vell, young shentlemans, if you can stand it, I can. I'm an old soldier, and not so easy to vanquish. Come in and take your seats, sirs. The lesson vill proceed as usual."

The class was composed principally of seniors, but with a sprinkling of juniors and sophomores, and one freshman—Louis Walbridge, who had paid a good deal of attention to the language before coming to Hamilton.

The young men exchanged glances of disgust and dismay, but followed the professor, and took their seats as directed. Stanton's triumph had been short; he avoided King's eye, and would have given something to be able to undo his work, and get rid of the stench, which was so overpowering

that more than one face grew pale under the ordeal.

The professor began the lesson, with the remark that he should probably be able to judge by the manner in which they acquitted themselves, who had done this bit of malicious mischief; as, no doubt, the object had been to escape a recitation for which he was unprepared.

"I don't know, professor," replied Fred Landon, respectfully; "it seems to me one's memory might play him false in such an atmosphere as this."

"I shall know dat ish de case if you fail, Mr. Landon. Your lesson ish always perfect, or nearly so, and pesides dat very goot reason, I know you be much too honorable for such shappy dricks as dis," returned the old gentleman. "But I cannot say dat much for all my pubils." And he glanced meaningly toward Stanton and King who sat together.

Louis, already ill and weak from the effects of the rough treatment of the past night, had lost every particle of color; his very lips were turning white, and he felt himself growing dizzy and faint. He half rose from his seat, reeled and would have fallen, had not Fred sprung forward and caught him in his arms.

"Carry him out, Mr. Landon; give him to charge of de matron; and come pack to your recitation, sir," directed the professor; and Fred obeyed.

"Two mortal hours! the longest recitation we

ever had," remarked Crawford, consulting his watch, as they filed out of the class-room and down the hall. "The professor has punished us all pretty severely for the scurvy trick of some member of the class."

"And your precious pet couldn't stand it, eh?" said King, looking at Landon. "There's too much of the woman about him."

"Very little of the *man* about you," retorted Fred. "If I thought you a fair specimen of our sex, I should certainly prefer to belong to the other."

"Hang it, if I don't pay old Henckle off for this!" exclaimed Stanton, as he tossed his books down on the study table. "I'll find some way to make him smart for it. I'm as sick as a dog."

"And deserve to be," growled King. "I never spent such a two hours in my life."

"And this is your gratitude for my effort to stave off a recitation you weren't prepared for?"

"Much you cared for me; 'twas yourself you were looking out for; and if it hadn't been for your promise to prevent the recitation, and your silly scheme in regard to young Hopeful, last night, I'd have had my lesson ready."

Both were angry, and for a day or two they scarcely spoke. Then they made it up over a plan to trick the professor, "sell him," as they phrased it.

The class had taken their seats, the business of

the hour was about to begin, when a rap was heard at the door.

Stanton rose and opened it.

"A letter for the professor," a voice was heard to say, and Stanton handed the missive to his preceptor.

The professor took it with a pleased smile. "At last, hey!" he murmured, glancing hastily at the stamp and address. Then aloud, "De class will please excuse me for a moment."

He rose, walked to the window, took off his glasses and wiped them, replaced them, and opened the envelope. It contained one word only, "Sold."

Stanton and King watched him with eager delight at the success of their trick. They had managed to secure an old envelope, directed to him by some German correspondent, had imitated the handwriting in directing a new one, and stuck on an old foreign stamp.

The professor colored violently, as he perceived the deception which had been practised upon him; but thinking it wisest to pretend that it had not been successful, he hastily thrust the sheet back into its cover, and returned to his seat, saying, "Dat vas no letter, as anypody could see py de stamp. Now, young shentlemans, we vill pegin de lesson. Hepercite Stanton, you vill please read und dranslate dat first sentence."

The young man colored angrily, in his turn, but obeyed, and with tolerable success.

But the old gentleman's temper had been a good deal ruffled by the "sell," and he was unusually captious and cross that day. No one could please him sufficiently to gain a word of commendation, and most of them were scolded roundly. In correcting a slight mistake made by Crawford, who, because of his perfect lessons and sunny temper, was generally in high favor with him, he said testily: "I tole you dat *tree tousand* times."

When calm and collected, the professor's English was almost perfect, but in moments of excitement it was apt to become very broken.

"Oh, not three *thousand* times, professor," returned Crawford, looking up at him, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Vell, vonce then, sir; and now be pleased to remember it."

"Ha, ha, he *was* sold, the old chap, though he pretended not to know it," laughed Stanton, the moment he found himself alone with his confederate.

"Yes," said King; "but it made him as cross as a bear. Whew! how he did scold."

"Landon, what d'ye say to a sleigh-ride?" cried Hall and Crawford, bursting into Fred's study, where he sat poring over his books.

"That it would be capital fun, no doubt; but that I have no time for it at present."

"Oh, pshaw! that's all in your eye, man. What's the use of this eternal grinding?" cried

Crawford, pushing the student's books unceremoniously aside, and seating himself on the table. "I say, it won't do to turn hermit at your age. Come, you *must* go; we can't let you off this time. Why, it's the third sleighing party this winter, and you've backed out of every one."

"A slight mistake, A. B. C. I never backed in," returned Fred, good-humoredly.

"Well, you must go now, positively. Why, man, you'll be a total wreck before you know it, if you keep on at this rate."

"I'll risk it," said Fred, laughing.

"Pitch into him, Dick," said Crawford. "I've tried my hand and failed."

"Don't guv it up yet, A. B. C.," said Richard. "Landon, we really must have you along. Why, Louis, your pet and protege, wants to go, and needs you to look after and protect him."

"Then he'd better stay at home, for I can't go; indeed, boys, it's a fact."

"We've reserved Isabel Nevins for you," said Hall, as a last and irresistible plea. "We want you to go right over and engage her as your partner; get ahead of Hal, who means to see her half an hour hence, on his way from town, where he's gone to engage the team. It's to be an omnibus sleigh, and we're to start at sundown. We'll have a glorious time; the moon's at the full, and the sleighing's perfectly splendid."

The temptation was very strong. Fred's genial

temperament made social pleasures very attractive to him, and fancy drew a bright picture of the enjoyment of gliding swiftly over the snow, in the beautiful moonlight, with sweet, pretty, Belle Nevins by his side. It cost a hard struggle to give it up, for an evening of solitude and toil in his study. But sense of duty triumphed, and the tempting invitation was regretfully, but firmly, declined, and at last his friendly tormentors left him; a good deal disappointed at their failure too, for Fred was generally the life of every company fortunate enough to secure his presence.

But, in this instance, he felt that he could not afford it. He could not, would not be willing to go without sharing the expense, which would be considerable; and his purse was far from full. Besides, he was working hard to earn enough to buy a set of furs for his mother, which he knew she needed, and some useful and pretty gift for his sister. He sat down to his copying with the sound of the merry sleigh-bells in his ears, and being anxious to finish his job, was still at work when his friends returned, about eleven o'clock.

"What; at it yet, old boy?" cried Crawford, rushing in, with Hall and Pendleton.

"Just done," answered Fred, wiping his pen and laying it down.

"You don't know what you've missed," said Pendleton and Hall in a breath.

"No, that you don't; we had a jolly good time;

haven't had so much fun since I had the measles," cried Crawford, jumping up and down, and throwing his arms about to restore the circulation.

"And that was first-rate fun, eh?" laughed Fred.

"The very wust. I say, Hal, you and Miss Nevins seemed to be on excellent terms to-night. I never saw her so merry or so pretty before."

This was a sly stab at Fred, and he winced under it, while Pendleton chuckled, and looked highly gratified.

"Yes," he said, "I flatter myself Miss Belle does not find my company or attentions particularly disagreeable."

"Well, friends, I must bid you all a very good night, and retire to bed; for its growing late, and I'm very weary," said Landon, lighting Pendleton's lamp and taking away his own.

The afternoon study hours were over, and laying aside his books with the happy consciousness of lessons thoroughly prepared for the morrow's recitations, Fred Landon buttoned up his overcoat, and started out for a brisk walk in the bracing, winter air. He went into the town; for he had an errand there at a lawyer's office,—to return a roll of copied manuscript and to receive another of uncopied.

On his return, he overtook Belle Nevins, and had the delicious privilege of walking for a quarter of a

mile by her side, chatting with all, and more than all the old freedom and cordiality.

She had never seemed so winning and attractive; he had never seen her so beautiful as she was that day, with her eyes sparkling with animation, and her cheeks glowing with the keen air, and the healthful exercise.

She rallied him playfully on his "hermit-like life," so different from the one he had led in his junior year, and asked if he had quite given up society,—If he had become altogether disgusted with it?

"Oh, no," he said; "I should enjoy it quite as much as ever, had I time to spare for it. But, Miss Nevins, I am working hard for my degree; and—and that is not all; the death of my step-father, leaving me the eldest male member of the family, has thrown a good deal of care on me."

She turned her bright eyes on him with a look of admiring respect, that thrilled his heart with delight.

"And I am sure it is very noble in you to be willing to assume such burdens at your age," she said, in a low earnest tone, standing still for a moment at her father's gate, while he opened it for her. "But drop in on us whenever you have time to spare; my father and mother will always be pleased to see you; for they have a high opinion of Mr. Fred Landon," she added, with an arch smile, and holding out her hand for a cordial good-bye.

"And don't deny yourself all recreation, because you know, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.'"

He lifted his hat, with a bow and a smile, stood watching her graceful figure as it tripped lightly up the path, and disappeared within the doorway, then hurried on with bounding pulses, and heart throbbing with delight. Surely, handsome, wealthy Harry Pendleton had not yet supplanted him entirely. And who could say that she might not, after all, prefer energy and brains to wealth?

Fred was not vain, and as far removed as possible from coxcombry, yet he knew that he was not lacking in good looks.

The gong was sounding for supper as he crossed the campus.

"You are late," said Pendleton, passing him in the hall.

"Yes, rather; but I'll be there in a moment," answered Fred, hurrying on into his room.

He pulled off his overcoat and hung it in his closet, quite forgetting, in his haste, that he was leaving his purse in one of the pockets. He did not think of it till the meal was half over; then a chance remark, seemingly not meant for his ear, but reminding him of his poverty, brought it to his recollection. Some of the young men were planning another sleighing party. He heard his own name mentioned, and in reply the sneering words, "Don't ask him; he's either too poor, or too close,

to spend a dollar for the entertainment of the ladies, or even for his own amusement in any way."

Fred colored with wounded pride, and presently rose and left the room, ashamed, and angry with himself that he should feel so deeply the contempt of those whose good opinion was, after all, worth so little.

"Why should I care, so long as I have the approval of my own conscience?" he muttered, as he passed into his study, and from there to his bedroom, to get his roll of manuscript, which he meant to set to work upon at once.

His pocket-book too he must secure, for it contained twenty-five dollars, just paid him for the work he had carried home. It was in bills; two tens and a five. He had the pocket-book in his hand, and was about to open it to see that they were all there, when some one called to him from the hall, and thrusting it hastily into the pocket of the coat he had on, he went out, laying the roll of manuscript on his study table as he passed.

Crawford had received a box of good things from home, and wanted him to see and share them. He spent half an hour in his friend's room, then went to work at his copying. On putting it away for the night, he again thought of his money, and looked to see that it was all safe. The five dollar bill was gone.

"What's the matter?" asked Pendleton, looking

up from his book at Fred's exclamation of surprise and dismay.

Fred explained.

"There must be a thief in the house," said Pendleton, nonchalantly. "I lost ten the day before that sleigh ride; and last year I missed small sums, say from one up to five dollars, several times."

"And did you not complain to the faculty or any member of it?"

"Not I; what's the use of kicking up a row about such trifles?"

Fred colored and was silent for a moment, then asked, "Do you suspect any one in particular?"

"No; haven't the least idea who the thief may be."

Months afterward they both remembered that Miller had risen from the table, and left the dining hall five or ten minutes before Fred did the same.

CHAPTER XIV.

POWER OF ELECTRICITY.

I DECLARE! if there isn't Hosmer's darkey coming up the road, with something in his hand that looks very like a bill," said King, glancing from the window. "What'll you bet 'taint for you, Stanton, eh?"

Stanton looked, and muttered something that sounded like an oath.

"You must have a pretty long account there now," King went on. "You've hired his best span and finest sleigh the dear knows how often this term. I hope you're prepared to foot the bill."

"Not I; and he's no business to hurry me up so, the ungrateful wretch. Why, I'm the best customer he has, except Hal Pendleton. I'll not see the bill, I'll make myself scarce, and you may see the colored gentleman, and tell him I'm out."

"Stop," cried King, as Stanton was about to hurry from the room; "I've an idea."

"Better keep it for a nest-egg, then," laughed the only other person in the room, Edward Lester, one of the senior class, who was very fond

of the natural sciences, and at this time engaged in making some experiments with a magneto-electric machine, while King and Stanton stood idly by as spectators.

"None of your impertinent insinuations, Ned," retorted King. "I shall not meanly and ungenerously keep an idea that is going to be such an assistance to a friend in need."

"Out with it, then; there's no time to lose," cried Stanton, impatiently.

"Well, you stay here, and I'll go and meet old Pete, and tell him he'll find you in this room; that he's to come up this little back staircase and knock at this door."

"Well, I don't see anything very brilliant in all that," interrupted Stanton, more impatiently than before.

"Wait till I'm done then; children and fools judge of unfinished work. I've heard of knocking people down stairs with electricity."

"There; I knew it couldn't be original," put in Lester.

"And what's to hinder you from trying the experiment on this black rascal?" King went on, without noticing the interruption. "It really seems as if everything had been made ready to your hand; here's the machine, quite near the door. You've only to keep quiet, and not answer the fellow's raps, but merely charge that brass door-knob heavily with electricity, and as he lays

hold of it to let himself in—I'll tell him to do so in case you don't seem to hear his rap—why, he'll get a shock that will send him down to the bottom of the stairs, and he'll never know what hurt him."

"Capital, capital!" cried Stanton, clapping his hands. "I say, Bob, you're a brick, and no mistake. Now run down quick, to meet the fellow, and give him his instructions."

The negro was just coming up the steps to the main entrance, as King passed down the hall that led to it. They met upon the threshold.

"Halloo, Sambo! What's wanted?" asked King.

The negro pulled off his hat, with a low bow.

"My name's Petah, sah; and I'se sent for to see Massa Stanton, sah. How shall I ascertain if de gentleman's in, sah?"

"Oh, he's in. Here, I'll show you where to find him. Go down that hall, turn to the left and you'll see a flight of stairs; walk up them to the door at their head, and knock. Mr. Stanton is in there, and he'll probably open the door; but if he should not happen to hear your knock, just open it yourself, and walk right in."

"Yes, sah; thank you, kindly, sah."

The negro turned in the direction indicated, and King, stepping softly after him, entered a small room nearly opposite the back staircase, and keeping the door ajar, stood behind it, waiting to enjoy "the fun."

He heard Peter go up the steps and knock. A minute's silence, then a second knock; another moment of silent waiting, then a sudden outcry, accompanied by a sound as of a heavy body tumbling, sliding, or rolling from the top to the bottom of the flight of stairs.

King stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth to stifle his laughter, while the other two, in the room above, were doing the same. Then a groan from their victim startled them with the fear that their "practical joke," as they were pleased to call it, might have a tragical ending; they held their breath in alarmed suspense for a moment.

But the poor old black man, though a good deal bruised, was more frightened than hurt; he presently gathered himself up, and muttering "De debble's yere for shuah," limped away as fast as possible, never once looking back till he was far on his road toward the town.

His tormentors enjoyed a laugh at his expense; but Stanton soon found that he had only put off the evil day for a very little while. Hosmer met him in the street that same evening, presented his bill, and demanded immediate payment, on pain of being reported to Dr. Nevins as having broken the rules of the college, in hiring horses and conveyances without the permission of any officer of the institution.

The young man grumbled, said he hadn't the money, and begged to be trusted a little longer.

"Not another day nor hour," answered his creditor, firmly.

"Then I'll have to pawn my watch and chain; and if you compel me to that, I'll take my custom elsewhere in future."

"Do," said Hosmer. "The fewer such customers I have, the better."

So the watch was pawned, the bill paid, and Stanton went home in a rage with Hosmer. He told King he was determined to be revenged, and revealed to him a plan he meant to carry out that night.

But King persuaded him to defer its execution for a fortnight; as to attempt it immediately would be a sure way to arouse suspicion against himself.

"Very well. I will, on condition that you promise to assist me then," replied Stanton.

"Of course; aint I always a friend in need?" said King. "Besides, 'twill be jolly good fun, and pay off that mean old sneak nicely."

They chose a bright starlight, but moonless night, as best suited to their purpose, and stealing from the college after every body else was in bed, went to Hosmer's stables, picked the lock, led out two of his finest horses, mounted them, rode two or three miles into the country, tied them to a fence in a lonely, out of the way spot, and leaving them there, walked back very quickly into the town.

Then, instead of returning at once to the college,

they entered a gambling hell, with which, unfortunately, they were but too well acquainted.

This place was reached by a flight of outside stairs, and also from the inside by passing through an eating and drinking saloon. This latter they entered first, refreshing themselves with a plate of oysters and a glass of brandy and water each, before going farther. Then passing up the inside stairs, they spent an hour in play, at the same time continuing their potations moderately; so that when they rose to go, their steps were a little uncertain.

"Come the outside way, Bob, or you'll be sure to stop below to call for another plate of oysters; and, besides, I think they're beginning to shut up," said Stanton, taking the lead.

"Ha, ha; that's a good one. As if you didn't take two plates to my one always," laughed King, following. "Now be careful, old boy; you're about half seas over, and these steps are apt to be slippery."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when Stanton, slipping on a bit of ice on the topmost step, came down hard upon its edge, then on, bump, bump, bump, to the very bottom of the flight, taking a momentary seat on the edge of each step as he went.

He picked himself up slowly, feeling a good deal battered and bruised, and very crestfallen and angry, at finding King still standing on the landing above, convulsed with laughter at his expense.

"There, old fellow, you're recompensed for the trick you played off on old Pete; aint you?" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "'Pears to me that's what might be called poetic justice; aint it? Are you a total wreck, eh?"

"Not so much that I can't thrash you, if you don't stop your insolence," growled Stanton, with a volley of oaths. "Let's see *you* try it now, and if there's any justice in the case, you'll get it worse than I did."

"We'll see," said King, taking hold of the railing to steady himself, and with its aid reaching the ground in safety.

The next day printed handbills were stuck up in a number of conspicuous places, offering a hundred dollars' reward for the arrest of the person, or persons, who had entered Hosmer's stables and stolen two of his finest horses; and an equal amount to any one who should give information that would lead to the recovery of the stolen property. It created a great deal of talk, but the culprits were not discovered. The horses were found, after several days, nearly dead with cold and hunger.

CHAPTER XV.

FARMER JONES' FAMILY.

FRED LANDON had continued Louis Walbridge's steadfast friend, and under his powerful protection the delicate young freshman enjoyed peace and security from personal violence, though many a covert sneer caused his cheek to burn and his eye to kindle with honest indignation. But from such trials Fred himself was by no means exempt.

Louis was very grateful; and his home being much nearer than Fred's, and the Christmas holidays short, he persuaded the latter to spend them with him. Fred found the family a delightful one, and would in all probability have lost his heart to Louis's sister, had he not left it behind in the possession of Isabel Nevins; who, by the way, was quite unconscious that such was the fact.

The spring vacation found our hero at the farm again, enjoying the society of the dear home circle, and laboring diligently for their and his own support.

The first event of the summer term, of any interest to my readers, was a visit of the college

eleven to the country to play a match game of cricket with the club of that neighborhood.

Our friends, Landon, Hall and Crawford, all belonged to the club, and were of the party, as a matter of course. White, Miller, Fatzinger and the two Sparrows also; while our old acquaintance, Bruce—who, though we have not mentioned his name for some time past, was studying law in Hamilton, and now and then dropped in to have a chat with his old room-mate—went as an invited guest. Decamp, Doolittle and Lester made up the number. The day was bright and clear, and they set off in high spirits, riding all together in an omnibus chartered for the occasion.

“Now for a song, lads,” cried Fred, as they found themselves fairly in the beautiful open country.

“Peter Grey,” proposed two or three voices at once; and Fred started the air, White taking the tenor, Crawford the bass, and the rest joining in right lustily on the chorus:

“Once on a time there was a man,
His name was Peter Grey;
He lived way down in that 'ere town
Called Pennsylvania.

CHORUS.

Blow ye winds of the morning,
Blow ye winds, Heigho!
Blow ye winds of the morning,
Blow! blow! blow!

An Old-Fashioned Boy.

Now Peter Grey, he fell in love,
 All with a nice young girl,
 The first three letters of her name,
 Were L. U. C. Anna Quirl.

CHORUS.—Blow ye winds, etc.

But just as they were going to wed,
 Her papa he said "No,"
 And consequently she was sent
 Way off to Ohio.

CHORUS.—Blow ye winds, etc.

And Peter Grey he went to trade,
 For furs and other skins,
 Till he was caught and scalp-y-ed,
 By the bloody Indi-ans.

CHORUS.—Blow ye winds, etc.

When Lucy Anna heard the news,
 She straightway took to bed,
 And never did get up again,
 Until she di-i-ed.

CHORUS.—Blow ye winds, etc."

Then followed, "Mary had a Little Lamb," sung
 to the tune of the "Battle Cry of Freedom:"

"Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow,
 Shouting the battle cry of freedom.
 And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go,
 Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

The Union forever! Hurrah, boys, hurrah!
 Down with the traitors, and up with the stars.
 And everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go.

It followed her to school one day, which was against the rule,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

It made the children laugh and play, to see a lamb at school.
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

The Union forever! etc.

And so the teacher turned him out, but still he lingered near,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

And waited patiently about, till Mary did appear,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

The Union forever! etc.

What makes the lamb love Mary so? the eager children cry,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

'Cause Mary loves the lamb, you know, the teacher did reply,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom.

The Union forever! etc."

The ride was a long one. They were to stay over night, taking supper and breakfast at a farm house, belonging to Caleb Jones, the captain of the country club, against which they were to play. They dined on the road, upon sandwiches, crackers and cakes which they carried with them.

They found the skill of their antagonists about equal to their own; the struggle was long and severe, but resulted at last in favor of the collegians. It had, however, been nearly a drawn game, and the rustics bore their defeat with great good humor.

A few moments were given to shaking hands and talking the affair over, and then Jones carried

the strangers all off to his house, which was close at hand.

"We are a large party for one house," said Fred. "I'm afraid we'll crowd you and your family out, Mr. Jones."

"Oh, never fear! We can't 'commodate ye as if ye were to a first-class hotel in one o' our big cities, but we'll make ye heartily welcome to what we've got; give ye plenty o' grub, an' make up some beds for ye on the floor o' the hop-house. Haint no other use for't this year."

"But are you the only hospitable personage in the neighborhood?" asked Bruce.

"Not a bit more hospitable than any o' the rest; but you see they're down sick over yonder at Weavers', and at Cobb's, just beyond the hill, they buried their little girl last week, and 'twouldn't seem just the thing to 'em to have you youngsters a cuttin' up around the house. And as for the other houses, why they're too fur off."

Jones was leading the way as he spoke, and having now reached his own door, he ushered them into a neat, plainly furnished room, where an elderly woman sat in a big rocking-chair, knitting.

There was nothing attractive in her appearance, except her perfect neatness; her face was thin and sallow, rather lacking in intelligence, and full of lines; her scanty grey hair combed straight back from it, and tucked up under a muslin cap.

"Wife," said Caleb, going close to her side, and

speaking in a loud tone, "these 'ere are the young collegers that's been playing 'gainst our club, and whipped us, too. You must take care o' them a bit, while I go to see after the cattle."

"All right; but you go and call Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen; tell her to come down right away. I aint no hand to talk to strangers, but she kin; and Sary Jane Elizabeth'll tend to the supper. Tother one aint no use in the kitchen, no how."

He left the room, saying to his guests, "Now make yourselves at home, young gents;" and the next minute they heard him shouting up the stairs, "Meel! I say, Meel! come right down and entertain these here collegers. I've got to go and tend to the cows, and your sister's gettin' the supper. Come, be spry, now; you needn't be so long a slickin' up, for you won't catch none of 'em, and 'taint worth while to try."

"Oh, father, do be still, or they'll hear you. I'll be down in a minute," was the impatient reply, in a loud whisper, quite audible in the sitting-room, as Caleb had left the door half open on making his exit.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Jones had begged her guests to help themselves to seats, and never mind her, "she was only a sickly old woman, and of no account, no how."

"What seems to be the matter, ma'am?" asked Crawford, taking a chair near her side.

She leaned towards him, with her hand to her ear.

"What did you observe? I'm awful deaf."

He repeated his question.

"Oh, it's the browncheatus. I've had it now better'n five year, and I aint good for nothin' no more. I used to be as hard workin' a woman as the next one; but now I feel so bad I often wish I could die, for I'm nothin' but a burlesque on my family."

Crawford's eyes twinkled with suppressed merriment, while Landon and Hall had great difficulty in controlling their risibles, and several of the others fairly giggled outright.

But Mrs. Jones did not seem to notice it. "Yes," she repeated, meditatively, with her eyes on the floor, her scrawny yellow fingers going slowly on with their work, "it's the solid truth that I'm no longer nothin' but a burlesque on my family; and I've said so to Jones, time and agin; but he's very good, and always tells me to never mind, he'd a heap rather have me, browncheatus and all, than anybody else."

"To be sure," said Crawford, rising with a low bow, as a younger woman, in double skirt and panner, ruffles, bows and frizzes, plaits and curls, came sailing into the room.

"How do you do, gentlemen?" she said, with a sweeping bow and courtesy, and a boisterous tone and manner; "I shall have to introduce myself, as

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"No, sir; that is the name of my older sister. I should have introduced myself as Miss Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen Jones, as I'm not the oldest."

"Now, don't be backward in comin' forward and showin' off your larnin', Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen," said the mother, adding to her guests, "she's quite a lit'ry lady, a real, true blue."

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"My stars! what odd names!" she whispered, in an aside to him, behind her fan. But he did not seem to hear.

"Well, Miss Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen

Jones, to answer your question," he resumed, "I have not read the book, but, as I've been told, it has sold well, I presume there are a good many of your opinion. You are an admirer of long words?"

"Yes, I am; I don't believe in that ridiculous rule somebody lays down, never to use a six-penny word when a three-penny one will answer your purpose as well. I'd have 'em all worth fifty cents or a dollar."

"Sure enough, why not? and it don't make any particular difference if they shouldn't happen to come quite close up to the meaning. If they're only big enough, half your readers wont understand 'em, and wont care to take the trouble to hunt 'em out in the dictionary to see whether you've used 'em exactly in the correct sense."

Mrs. Jones' dull ears just caught the word dictionary, missing all the rest.

"Yes," said she, "that girl o' our'n would have a dictionary; she wouldn't give her pap no rest till he bought her one; and he paid — well now, I don't mind just how much, but I think 'twas all of five dollars. And what's the use? 'taint nothin' but a string o' words, after all. I'd rather read the Bible or 'Pilgrim's Progress;' or set and knit, for that matter."

"La, ma! Now do be quiet, if you can't talk sense," exclaimed the respectful daughter, adding in an undertone to Crawford, "You mustn't mind

ma, Mr. A. B. C.; we never do. She's awful ignorant; but she's good-hearted, though."

"Certainly, Miss Jones, and your literary attainments, doubtless, are sufficient for the whole family. Did I understand you to say that you are something of an authoress?"

"Oh, no; I don't do much in that way," she answered, with assumed modesty; "but now and then I take my pen in hand to indite a bit of poetry, or a little sketch of our rural life, for the county paper. I've been wanting to get that book that made such a talk, three or four years ago, *Chronicles of the—* the something family, I can't think of the other words."

"Gutta Percha?" suggested Crawford, wickedly.

"Oh, yes, *The Gutta Percha Family*. No, *Terra Cotta*, wasn't it?"

"Well, yes, I think that does sound more like it." And Crawford exchanged a mischievous glance with Fred, who shook his head at him, but was obliged to turn away to hide his amusement.

"I'm so much obliged to you for telling me the name again," said Miss Jones. "I shall inquire for it the next time I go into town. I ought to go soon, for I haven't went for a good while."

"Supper's ready, Sary Jane Elizabeth says; please to walk right out gentlemen," said Mr. Jones, throwing open the door into a large, airy kitchen, where stood a long table loaded with such fare as

notable housewives in the country are won't to spread before their guests.

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“You are more fortunate than me then,” she said. “Mr. Fleshy-warbler, may I trouble you to transport my cup to my sister? Sarah Jane Elizabeth, the saccharine matter is entirely too abundant here; please to manipulate, without weakening the beverage, and please add a little more of the lacteal fluid.”

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“Fire! fire!” cried a chorus of voices, Jones adding in hurried and alarmed accents, “It must be Cobb’s house, just below the hill yonder,—wife, girls,

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"Look at me and be thankful," said Crawford, wiping his dripping hair with his pocket-handkerchief. "What a shocking bad hat, decidedly the worse for the suds." And he picked it up from the grass as he spoke. "I shouldn't like to be always in 'em, as some folks are said to be."

"Nor to have them in you, eh?—your eyes and mouth?" said Fred, still shaking with laughter.

"Not much."

"Come along back to the house, gents, and I'll

ma would never think of doing it for me. I'm Miss Jones."

"Miss Sary Jane Elizabeth?" queried Crawford, as he gallantly placed a chair for her.

"No, sir; that is the name of my older sister. I should have introduced myself as Miss Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen Jones, as I'm not the oldest."

"Now, don't be backward in comin' forward and showin' off your larnin', Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen," said the mother, adding to her guests, "she's quite a lit'ry lady, a real, true blue."

"Ma means literary and a blue stocking, but I never could get her to pronounce words right, or get things straight," remarked Miss Jones, addressing Crawford, who had taken the chair nearest to the one he had resigned to her. Then to the company in general, "How did your game result, gentlemen? I would have went out to act as spectator, but could not, consistently, with other and more pressing demands upon my time."

"Yes, I suppose there must be many demands upon you, your mother being ill, and the farm so large," said Landon.

"Ah, you quite mistake, sir; my labors are of another kind; I am quite taken up with literary pursuits," she answered, volubly.

Her manners were exceedingly brusque and boisterous, and struck Fred as a very disagreeable contrast to those of his gentle, refined mother and sister.

"I suppose you're fond of books?" she continued, still addressing him.

"That depends very much upon their character, just as does my liking for people," he answered, with a smile.

"Well, I adore books, and I supposed folks being educated at college would feel the same. Have you read *St. Elmo*?" turning to Crawford again. "It's the finest written book I have ever read."

"That's saying a good deal, if you have read much," he remarked. "What is it you so greatly admire about it?"

"Oh, the language, it's perfectly splendid! it's gorgeous! Why you need a dictionary right alongside of you all the time, to hunt out the words. She must be awful learned; I'd give anything if *I* could write like that. Don't you think her style's splendid, Mr. — excuse me, but I don't know what to call you."

"Mr. A. B. C., at your service, miss," answered Crawford, with the merry twinkle in his eye again. "And if you'll allow me, I'll introduce the others. Mr. Landon, Mr. Nig, Mr. Hen-Sparrow, Mr. Cock-Sparrow, Mr. Fleishy-warbler, Mr. Skedaddle,—Ah, the rest have skedaddled into the garden, I see."

"My stars! what odd names!" she whispered, in an aside to him, behind her fan. But he did not seem to hear.

"Well, Miss Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen

Jones, to answer your question," he resumed, "I have not read the book, but, as I've been told, it has sold well, I presume there are a good many of your opinion. You are an admirer of long words?"

"Yes, I am; I don't believe in that ridiculous rule somebody lays down, never to use a six-penny word when a three-penny one will answer your purpose as well. I'd have 'em all worth fifty cents or a dollar."

"Sure enough, why not? and it don't make any particular difference if they shouldn't happen to come quite close up to the meaning. If they're only big enough, half your readers wont understand 'em, and wont care to take the trouble to hunt 'em out in the dictionary to see whether you've used 'em exactly in the correct sense."

Mrs. Jones' dull ears just caught the word dictionary, missing all the rest.

"Yes," said she, "that girl o' our'n would have a dictionary; she wouldn't give her pap no rest till he bought her one; and he paid — well now, I don't mind just how much, but I think 'twas all of five dollars. And what's the use? 'taint nothin' but a string o' words, after all. I'd rather read the Bible or 'Pilgrim's Progress;' or set and knit, for that matter."

"La, ma! Now do be quiet, if you can't talk sense," exclaimed the respectful daughter, adding in an undertone to Crawford, "You mustn't mind

ma, Mr. A. B. C.; we never do. She's awful ignorant; but she's good-hearted, though."

"Certainly, Miss Jones, and your literary attainments, doubtless, are sufficient for the whole family. Did I understand you to say that you are something of an authoress?"

"Oh, no; I don't do much in that way," she answered, with assumed modesty; "but now and then I take my pen in hand to indite a bit of poetry, or a little sketch of our rural life, for the county paper. I've been wanting to get that book that made such a talk, three or four years ago, *Chronicles of the— the something family*, I can't think of the other words."

"Gutta Percha?" suggested Crawford, wickedly.

"Oh, yes, *The Gutta Percha Family*. No, *Terra Cotta*, wasn't it?"

"Well, yes, I think that does sound more like it." And Crawford exchanged a mischievous glance with Fred, who shook his head at him, but was obliged to turn away to hide his amusement.

"I'm so much obliged to you for telling me the name again," said Miss Jones. "I shall inquire for it the next time I go into town. I ought to go soon, for I haven't went for a good while."

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"Nor to have them in you, eh?—your eyes and mouth?" said Fred, still shaking with laughter.

"Not much."

"Come along back to the house, gents, and I'll

see what can be done for you," said Mr. Jones. "I'll see if I can't find an old coat for each o' you to put on, while the women folks rench your'n out and dry and iron 'em."

They told him he was a brick, accepted his offer, with thanks, and considered themselves repaid for their mishap by the fun of seeing each other in the odd-looking old garments—twice too large for them—which the farmer brought out for their use.

"Now, young gents," he said, addressing the whole party, as the shout of merriment excited by the first appearance of Hall and Crawford in their novel attire died away, "I'm thirsty with that ere long run, and I'll warrant you be too. So just come down cellar. I've got a barrel o' cider and one o' beer; and there's lots o' pans o' milk, with such cream on the top as your city folks never see. Come along down, and help yourselves to all you want of ary one, and every one. Here, fetch us a lot of tumblers and cups, you Sary Jane Elizabeth."

"Hevings tu Betsey, but you're a brick of bricks, Farmer Jones," cried Crawford, making a flying leap down the stairs. "I'll take the cream. Never had such a chance before."

The others were not slow in following, nor at all backward in accepting the farmer's invitation to help themselves. Fred's choice was the same as Crawford's, and no one took enough of the stronger drinks to be in the least danger of intoxication.

Fortunately for Jones' supply of those, the Gittites were not of the party.

In accordance with his promise, beds were spread for them all in the hop-house; but they being in a very frolicsome mood, the night one of the sultriest of the season, and the musquitos both numerous and voracious, there was little sleeping done till long after midnight.

Fred, at last, feeling the need of rest, slipped away, threw himself down in a corner, and had just fallen asleep, when Crawford's voice roused him.

"Landon, I say, Landon, look here, old fellow, where are you?"

Fred rose with a slight exclamation of impatience, and went to the window. By the light of the moon he could see Crawford at some little distance, standing in front of a large gate opening upon the road.

"What's wanted, Al?" shouted Fred.

"Oh, there you are. Why, I want to borrow a quarter."

"A quarter? What on earth can you want with it in the middle of the night, out here in the country?"

"I want it to pay toll to a musquito that's keeping this gate. He wont let me through without, and the road beyond looks inviting."

Fred could not help laughing, in spite of his vexation at being robbed of his rest for such folly and nonsense.

The party left early the next morning, after having partaken of an excellent breakfast.

"Well, we've had a jolly time, haven't we, lads?" remarked White, as they drove off.

"That's so," rejoined Crawford. "I haven't had so much fun since I had the measles."

"That favorite expression of yours, A. B. C.," said Fred, "reminds me of a remark my father once overheard an Irishman make, on coming from a fight where his face had been beaten almost to a jelly: 'The purtiest spot o' fun I've seen since I left the ould country.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

A MIDNIGHT EXPLOSION.

I SAY, Miller, will you take a dare?"
"A dare? Who's daring me?"

"Well, Dr. Nevins was heard, the other day, to assert that nothing could be done in this institution, and he fail to find out all about it. Now, I say that's equivalent to daring every man of us; and, as I never would take a dare, I'm bound to— to do something," concluded Stanton, seating himself, tipping his chair back till it rested on its hind legs only, putting his feet on the mantel-piece, his hands into his pockets, and puffing away at a cigar.

Miller was busy with pencil and paper, making a clever caricature of one of the professors.

"Well?" he said, interrogatively.

"I'm bound to do something, I say," repeated his visitor; for they were in the Graphite's study, Stanton having just walked in upon him.

"What?"

"Dun no yet. But here comes King. Thought of something, eh, old boy?"

"Yes."

"Let's have it, then."

Stanton's feet and the chair-legs came down, with a thump, to their proper position on the floor, Miller's paper was hastily pushed aside, King helped himself to a seat, and the three heads met over the table, while for some minutes a consultation was carried on, in low, earnest tones.

An hour later the three set off together for the town, where one bought a half pound of gunpowder, another a quantity of thick brown paper, and the third a lot of strong twine and some cotton.

With these they returned to the college, and shut themselves up in the rooms occupied by Stanton and King. They made two parcels of the powder—one a good deal larger than the other—and wrapped each in several thicknesses of the paper, winding the cotton and the twine tightly over that; then hid them away for future use. They were too wary to carry out the whole of their nefarious scheme at once. For the remainder of that week they were seen together much less frequently than usual, and the powder was not permitted to report itself.

On the appointed evening, Stanton went down to the town alone, and Miller retired to bed earlier than was his custom, and went to sleep. King made his preparations for retiring, then, near ten o'clock, seized his opportunity when the hall on which his rooms opened was quite deserted, slipped out, stole on tip-toe to the farther end, laid the larger torpedo on the floor, lighted a slow match,

hastened noiselessly back to his room, and sprang into bed, where he lay listening in almost breathless suspense.

He had not long to wait; in five minutes the explosion came, shaking the whole house till many a pane of glass came crashing to the floor, and scattering bits of burning cotton here and there.

Professors, tutors and seniors, juniors, sophomores and freshmen, sprang from their beds, or study tables—some having not yet retired—and rushed upon the scene in various styles of dress and undress. There were sounds of running hither and thither, of the opening and shutting of doors, and of many voices asking, "What's the matter?" "What has happened?" King's louder and more eager than any other. Every one was asking information, but no one seemed able to give it.

The burning cotton was extinguished, the broken glass swept up, and the excitement in a measure calmed down; so that the halls were again empty and silent; nearly every light was put out, and every head laid upon its pillow, when a second, though less violent explosion, brought them all out once more.

The excitement was now intense, and the angry and indignant professors threatened the severest penalties known to the college code of laws, if the offence was again repeated. But, unfortunately, they could as yet find no clue to the culprit.

The remainder of the night passed without fur-

ther disturbance, and the next day efforts were made to discover who was the author of the mischief, but without success; and this continued to be the posture of affairs for the next fortnight.

The guilty parties had begun to feel quite secure, and to exult in secret over the apparent impunity with which they had taken up the gauntlet thrown down by the president. But security is not safety, and exposure was even then at hand; their sin was soon to find them out.

One day Miller left the dinner table without waiting for the last course. He had been observed to do so quite frequently of late. Also there had been numerous complaints of missing valuables—trinkets, money, etc.

Prof. Kerr had been thinking the matter over carefully; and putting this and that together, his suspicions had become aroused. He presently rose quietly, and with noiseless tread, followed Miller. He was just in time to see him go into the study used by Landon and Pendleton.

"Ah ha! I think I am on the right track now," muttered the professor, hurrying on, but still with care to make no noise. With that in view, he had taken the precaution of encasing his feet in India-rubber shoes.

He found the study door on the latch, slipped in, and perceiving that Miller had gone into Landon's bedroom, himself stepped into Pendleton's, and closed the door, which, fortunately for his

purpose, had a large crack in it. Putting his eye to this, he found that it gave him a view of the whole room.

He had scarcely taken his position, when he saw Miller come out of the opposite door, with a look of disappointment on his face. He sent a hasty glance around, stepped up to the table, and tried to lift the lid of Fred Landon's writing desk, which stood there. It resisted, but he coolly took a little key from his pocket, unlocked it, and began rummaging through its various compartments. Presently his face lighted up, and the professor saw a roll of bank notes in his hand.

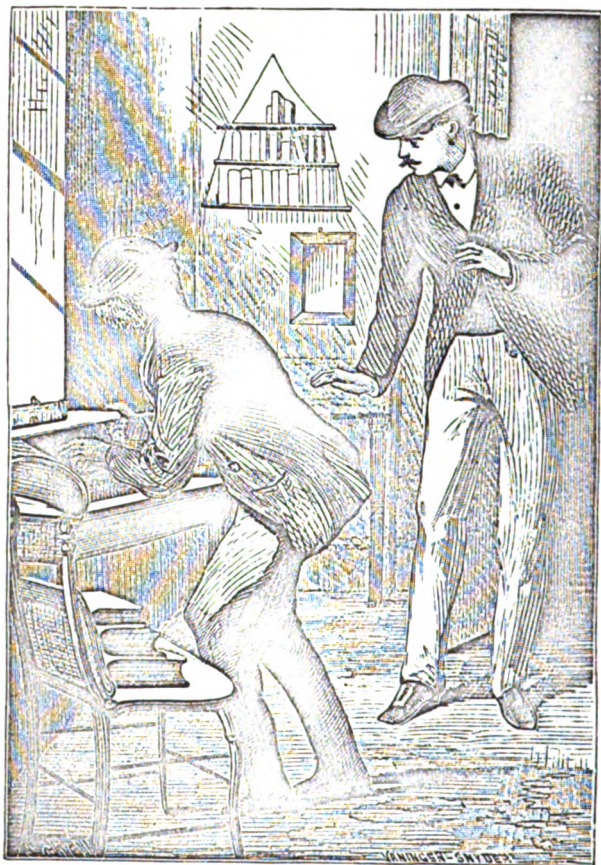
He was about to step out and seize him in the very act, when the door leading into the hall opened, and Fred walked in.

Surprise, indignation, anger and scorn, swept by turns across the young man's handsome features, while Miller's countenance expressed terror, shame, and abject fear.

For a moment neither spoke. Fred's flashing eyes were fixed full upon the culprit, whose own sought the floor, as he stood cowering and trembling before him he had been about to rob of his hard earnings.

"And so I have at last learned who is the college *thief!* have caught him in the very act," at length came from Fred's lips, in tones of anger and contempt.

"I haven't taken anything," answered Miller, in



CAUGHT IN THE ACT.

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a voice hardly raised above a whisper. "O Landon, be merciful, and do not betray me. See, your notes are all there."

He here dropped the roll into the desk again, and stood with his hands hanging by his sides.

"But how many would have remained to me, had you been left undisturbed to carry out your evil designs?"

"I should not have taken more than five dollars, and that only for a time. I meant to pay it back."

"Indeed! You have not paid back what you took from me last winter, nor any of the numerous sums you have *borrowed* in this same way, from time to time, from Pendleton and others."

"Who accuses me? You, you have no proof," stammered Miller. "And how rich you are, Landon; where did you get so much?"

"Worked for it," answered Fred, shortly.

"And you never spend—never treat your lady friends to an ice, or a drive, or make them presents, as the rest of us do; and so you are getting the name of being a stingy dog; especially since you've let it be known that you don't intend to conform to the fashion of giving a supper to your classmates and friends on coming to your majority. But—"

"Do you forget that you are in my power, that you venture to taunt me thus?" interrupted Fred, in a tone of suppressed passion.

"No; but I was going to tell you that, if you'll

keep quiet about this, I'll take your part and say to the fault-finders, that I believe you'd be generous if you had the means; and that you're not to be blamed for your poverty; nobody is. I'm poor myself; and so there's some excuse for me, if I now and then take a little from those who are richer than myself."

"Or more willing to work, eh? And you would engage to *lie*, in order to escape the consequences of *stealing*; for you have just called me rich. I own that I have been weak enough to feel shame on account of my poverty; and keen mortification, that to be just to mother and sister, I have had often to seem ungenerous towards others; but these are things to be gloried in, in comparison with a character for generosity bought at the expense of meanness and dishonesty."

Fred's tone was full of scorn and contempt.

"But I never could endure to be thought mean and close," muttered Miller. "Don't expose me, Landon, and I'll return all I ever took from you."

"I'm perfectly sure I left this desk locked," said Fred, rearranging the contents and shutting down the lid. "How did you get it open?"

"I have a key that fits the lock."

"A regular burglar."

"You'll let me off, Landon, wont you? You profess to be a Christian, and it's a Christian duty to forgive, and refrain from taking revenge."

"I know and acknowledge that; but one has a

duty to perform to the community, also. I must take time to consider."

"You need not, Landon. I take this matter in hand," said the professor, suddenly throwing open the door of Pendleton's room, and stepping out before their astonished eyes. "Miller, you will come with me, sir."

"What's the row, Landon?" asked Pendleton, coming in, with Hall and Crawford in tow, as the professor and his prisoner passed out.

"Miller's in disgrace; but I would prefer to say nothing further on the subject."

"Not worth while to be so secret, old fellow," returned Pendleton, rather nettled. "I've suspected for some time that he was the college thief, and now you and the old professor have caught him at it. I'll wager my head that that's just what's up."

"Done, Hal; any trifle among friends," said Crawford. "We all know Fred doesn't bet, so I venture to take you up."

"None o' your nonsense, A. B. C. Come now, Landon, own up that I've hit the nail on the head."

"His own account of the matter is that he merely wished to *borrow* a small sum, which he meant to return at some future time."

"*Borrow*? Ha, ha; that's a good one! Well then, may be there's some hope that I shall recover various small sums that it seems have been *borrowed* from me."

Miller was taken before a magistrate, and in his

fright at the thought of being sent to prison, offered to confess all his own crimes, and tell all he knew about the torpedo affair, and everything else ; if they would but promise to let him go free.

He confessed that ever since he entered the institution, he had been in the habit of taking small sums from his fellow students, now amounting in all to several hundred dollars. He also revealed all that the reader already knows of the evil deeds of the Gittites, thereby clearing up more than one mystery that had heretofore baffled the penetration of the members of the faculty.

Stanton and King, on being arraigned before that august body, stoutly denied nearly every charge against them, and talked loudly of the injustice of their superiors in giving credence to the testimony of one who acknowledged himself a thief.

But other evidence was not long wanting. A lady living opposite the store where the gunpowder was purchased, remembered having seen the three enter it at the precise time Miller asserted that they did ; and the woman of whom they bought the twine, identified both the young men, and the pieces of it that were found in the hall after the explosion.

All three were expelled and sent home in disgrace. Miller being suffered to escape prosecution, as his father at once refunded the stolen money.

"And so we have seen the last of the Gittites, and the Graphite," remarked Pendleton, looking

after the omnibus which was conveying them and their baggage to the depot.

"Miller the *Grabite*, rather," said Crawford. "Well, I wish he'd turned out better for his poor old governor's sake."

"You don't call your own father that, I hope, old fellow," said Fred, clapping his friend affectionately on the shoulder.

"Well, yes, now and then. Where's the harm?"

"I don't *like* it," answered Fred, emphatically. "It seems to ignore all a father's love for his son; all his parental pride in him, and to take account of nothing but the hard hand of authority. Don't use it, Al, if you would spare yourself bitter regrets when—you are fatherless."

Fred's voice grew husky; and as the last word left his lips, he turned and walked hastily away.

"What a queer, old-fashioned chap that is," laughed Pendleton, who stood with his back against a tree, and his hands in his pockets, while wreaths of blue smoke curled lazily up from the cigar in his mouth. "Odd notions, hasn't he, A. B. C.?"

"I'd be glad if you and I were more like him," answered Crawford, sauntering away, with a face much graver than its wont.

Fred found Louis Walbridge in his study, evidently waiting to speak with him.

"Well, Louis, lad, what is it?" he asked, cheerily. "I see you've something on your mind."

Louis flushed deeply, walked to the window and looked out, came back again, cleared his throat two or three times, and at last burst out vehemently, "I say, Landon, don't think I mean to hurt your feelings; I wouldn't do that for the world! you've been the kindest friend to me that ever was: but I can't stand it the way some of the fellows are talking about you—calling you mean, stingy, close, and all that. There; what a precious muss I'm making of it!" as Fred's brow contracted, and the color mounted to his very hair. "But don't mind 'em; they're not worth minding, I'm sure. But—but if you'd only agree to do as the rest do, and give a supper on your birthday, all would be satisfied."

"I have already said that I will not and cannot do it, Louis," interrupted Fred, drawing himself up, and speaking with a good deal of haughtiness; "and if you really care for me, you will never mention the disagreeable subject again."

"I beg ten thousand pardons," stammered Louis. "But—oh, Landon, I—I don't think poverty's anything to be ashamed of, I don't, indeed; and I couldn't honor you more if you were a millionaire; but if you'd just consent to do as they wish, and let me bear the expense. You know I'm rich, and I owe you so much—so much more than I can ever repay; and nobody need know but ourselves, and"—

He stopped in confusion and alarm—his listener

seemed so agitated, flushed so hotly, and looked so pained and humiliated.

"Oh, Fred," whispered the little fellow, feeling as if he could cry, if it were not for the fear of disgracing his manhood, "forgive me, I would not have hurt you so for the world."

Landon controlled himself with an effort, and grasping the boy's hand, but turning away his face, said, "I know it, I'm sure of it, Louis; you—you meant nothing but the greatest kindness; but, dear boy, I'm dreadfully proud, and couldn't bear to— to receive such a favor even from you. No, Louis, I can't afford to spend so much in so useless a manner. I think, in my present circumstances, it would be actually a sin; and I could not bring my pride to submit to accept your generous offer. No, I must bear to be misunderstood and misjudged; trying to be satisfied with the approval of God, and my own conscience."

Louis was grievously disappointed, and went away only half comforted by the assurance that his friend was not in the least hurt or offended by anything he had said.

It was the custom at the college, for every student attaining his majority while there, to give a birthday supper to his class, and such other friends as he might see fit to invite. There was a rivalry among them in regard to the cost of the entertainment, and some had been known to spend as much as two hundred dollars. Harry Pendleton, who

had given his in his junior year, boasted that it had cost even more than that.

Fred Landon's twenty-first birthday would occur a few days before the commencement. He had been urged to observe it according to custom, but had firmly declined doing so; frankly avowing his inability to meet the expense. It was galling to his pride to have to make such an admission, and still more so to endure the covert sneers and taunts of his mates, because of this, and the known fact that this year he had denied himself every luxury; had never treated, or made presents to his lady friends, and had worked at copying in his leisure hours.

Pendleton told the others that Landon certainly had money; he had seen him with a good deal, and that he must be "a confounded skinflint and miser," to be so unwilling to spend it.

Yet Fred's was in reality a most generous nature, the inability to give was more painful to him than any other thing connected with poverty; and all this work and self-denial was for the sake of the dear ones at home—especially his mother and sister. Through all his college course they had looked forward to seeing him graduate; and now, in the reduced circumstances of the family, they could not, unless he could provide the means.

Left alone by Louis, Fred locked himself in his bed-room. "Is it true?" he asked himself, bitterly, "*is it true* that I am selfish and niggardly in

this thing? Since I first entered college, with what eager joy my precious little mother has talked of the time when she should see me graduate; and shall she be deprived of that pleasure?—she who loves me so dearly that she would lay down her very life for me—that these friends of an hour may feast and enjoy themselves at my expense, and praise me for a jolly, generous fellow? No, never! It would be the greatest selfishness, and moral cowardice, to buy their good opinion at such a price. It is hard, *very* hard to bear their sneers and contemptuous looks; but my darling mother's delight, when she learns that I have earned this pleasure for her, will more than make amends for it all."

CHAPTER XVII.

AN AFTER-DINNER TALK.

“SO Fred's not to be persuaded, eh?”

“No; and I dare say he's right, A. B. C. I've a deal of confidence in his goodness, and sense too.”

Hall and Crawford had been desirous that Landon should give the birth-day supper; partly for his own sake, and partly for theirs. They were attached to him, and wanted him to retain his popularity; while at the same time they expected to enjoy the entertainment if it were given. Crawford knew, or suspected, that Louis had been sounding Fred on the subject, and had come up to Louis's study to learn what had been the result of his effort.

“He says he can't afford it,” continued the latter; “and of course he knows best about that.”

“Yes, certainly. Entry and I offered to go shares in that; but he seemed both hurt and angry; said he couldn't in conscience accept such an offer, even if his pride would let him, which it wouldn't; because it wouldn't be true to call it his entertainment, if he did not bear all the expense. And be-

sides, he thinks it's a custom that ought to be put down, as a temptation to fellows that are too poor to go through with it, except by running into debt, or wronging those at home. And I don't know but he's right."

"And who could enjoy eating a supper got up by such means?" exclaimed Louis, warmly. "Just think of the meanness and hard-heartedness of the scamp that could abridge his poor mother's comforts, for months perhaps, or oblige his sister to go shabbily dressed, that he and his mates might spend an evening in feasting and carousing, which would not only do them no good, but actual harm. I should think such a fellow ought to choke on the first mouthful."

"I say, Al, it's time for you to *git*," said Hall, looking in at the door. "Do you know that the evening bell sounded an hour ago?"

"Come in, Entry," said Louis; "here's a seat waiting for you."

"Thank you; it'll have to wait some time, then, for I'm going back to my den. Come along, A. B. C."

"Oh, pshaw! Let me alone. I'm no baby to be looked after in this fashion. There's a nice breeze up here, and I mean to stay a bit longer; if Louis is not in a hurry to get rid of me."

"Never a bit," answered Louis; and Hall left them together.

They fell into a long talk, and had no idea how

time was flying, till, an hour later, Hall again appeared upon the scene.

"The lights are all out long ago, and the clock's striking twelve," said he. "Are you coming down to-night, or not?"

"I do actually believe the child's afraid to be left alone in the dark," laughed Crawford. "But it must be cured of such idle fears, and learn to be brave. No, I've concluded to stay all night, if the Bridge will lend me the loan of this couch till the morning."

"With all my heart, sir," said Louis. "Couch or bed, either one."

"No; he shall go down, if I have to carry him," said Hall, stepping toward his room-mate, with the evident intention of seizing him.

"You'll have to catch him first then, my fine fellow," cried Crawford, springing past him and rushing out into the hall.

Richard darted after him, and the chase became exciting.

The halls were lighted by a sky-light; the opening in the floor of each of the upper ones surrounded by a rather low railing; and as Crawford rushed on in the darkness, unable to see, and utterly forgetful of their existence, he suddenly struck against the railing, and with such force that he was instantly thrown entirely over it; but as he fell he threw out his hand, caught the railing, and in another moment he had drawn himself up, regained

the floor from which he had fallen, and was speeding on again.

He rushed down the stairs, and never paused till he had gained his own room, and locked himself in. Then he dropped into a chair, hid his face and shuddered.

It had been indeed a hair-breadth escape from a sudden and terrible death, which must have been the result of an unbroken fall from the fourth story to the ground-floor; and he trembled and grew sick with horror, as he seemed to see himself lying there a crushed and mangled corpse.

It brought eternity very near to the giddy, thoughtless young man; and the question, "Where would I be now, but for that almost miraculous escape?" again and again forced itself upon his mind. He could not forget it; he could not turn away from hearing it, or close an eye in sleep.

"Sudden death was gain to Will Carter," he said to himself. "But to me? Ah, to me, what a fearful loss it would have been. What a mad fool I am to be risking such a loss. 'What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?' I am resolved I'll never rest till I've secured the safety of mine."

"Come, Landon, try a cigar for once."

"No, thank you, Pendleton. Surely you know I never smoke."

"Take a chew, then. I've some splendid chewing tobacco here."

"Worse and worse," returned Fred, good naturedly; "none of the weed for me, thank you."

"How on earth do you do without it? I believe I'd about as lief do without my dinner, as the cigar after it," observed Fatzinger, puffing away with an air of ineffable content.

"One does not miss it, if he has never formed the habit of using it," said Fred.

"Come, Landon, just try it for once," urged Pendleton. "I've heard you object that it's an expensive habit; but this wont cost you anything. Come, I dare you to do it."

"I can take a dare," replied Fred, coolly, quietly ignoring the sneer at his economy, though it had brought the hot blood to his cheek for an instant.

"Your mother wont let you, eh? Is that it?"

"I should be sorry to pain my mother by acquiring a habit which I know she dislikes and disapproves; but if that were not the case, I should still abstain from my own love of cleanliness and health," answered Fred, with some difficulty compelling himself to speak calmly, as well as firmly.

It was an unusually hot day for the season, and the young men were taking an after-dinner lounge under the trees in the campus.

"What an odd chap he is!" laughed Pendleton. "What do you think, lads? We two were walking up the road yesterday, when we met a white-headed old codger—poor as poverty, judging by his rig—a wood-sawyer in fact, for he had his saw

in his hand, and the wood-horse over his shoulder; and what does Landon do but lift his hat and salute him with such an air of respect you might have supposed he was the President."

"He was an old man, and a good one," said Fred.

"Well, you're an old-fashioned chap, to give such a reason as that. Don't you know it's an exploded notion that old men are of more account than young ones?"

"It ought not to be, and I hope I shall always be old-fashioned enough to remember and obey that ancient command, to 'rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man.' Besides, that old man is a king's son."

"What! related to the Gittite, you don't say?"

"No, better than that: he's really heir to a crown."

"You don't mean to say he's that old fellow that claims to be Louis XVII. of France? But he's dead, isn't he?"

"That was not my meaning. I meant that he is a son of the King of kings."

"Bosh!" muttered Pendleton, turning away his face. "I say, A. B. C., what's the matter with you? You've been grave as a judge this day or two past."

"Life's a serious thing," answered Crawford, sententiously. "Landon, what an industrious fel-

low you are, always busy about something. I thought you were only whittling, but I see that bit of wood's going to turn into something."

"A tiny chair for little Midge's baby-house," answered Fred, smiling absently, as he seemed to see before him the pretty, child face sparkling with delight at receiving the gift.

"Do you think it a duty to be always busy?" asked Fatzinger.

"Working or resting," answered Fred; "both are necessary; the one to prepare and strengthen us for the other. Boys," he cried, in his earnestness, throwing down knife and stick, and turning toward his listeners, with flushing cheek and kindling eye, "let us live with all our might, while we do live, as 'tis said President Edwards resolved to do in his youth. Most of us are now just about finishing our preparations for entering upon the active duties of life; let us resolve to live for God and our country."

"What a flourish of oratory," interrupted Pendleton, mockingly. "For my part, I mean to take life easy, look out for number one, and leave the country to do the same."

"Pretty much what a large portion of the American men seem to be doing at present," remarked Fatzinger, nonchalantly, "busying themselves about the almighty dollar, and leaving our incomparable institutions to take care of themselves."

"Forgetting that 'the price of liberty is eternal vigilance,'" quoted Hall.

"Fine sentiment, that. Who was the original author, as our friend, Miss Amelia Amanda Malvina Fitzallen Jones, would say?"

"Don't know, and don't care," answered Pendleton, lazily."

"Whoever may have been the author, the sentiment is certainly a very true one," said Fred, earnestly. "Would that I could persuade all my countrymen to lay it to heart, and practise upon it. They have shown themselves ready to fight bravely for the land of their birth, yet woefully negligent, in political affairs, of her interests at the ballot-box."

"What! you'd have us all red hot politicians, sacrificing everything for our party?"

"No, no *indeed*, Hal. I detest what I presume you mean by a red hot politician—a man who would do anything, no matter how mean, underhand and dishonest—who would even sell his country for party; but I wish I could persuade you all to be ardent lovers of our dear native land, for which our fathers fought and bled; and vigilant guardians of her liberties."

"Hear! hear!" cried Pendleton, clapping his hands. "Hark to the orator from Brookville, the brave and patriotic gentleman whom a few weeks will see one of the sovereigns of the land!"

"Now, Hal, I can't believe you really deem this

the unimportant matter you seem to pretend," said Fred, warmly.

"I really do believe that the good ship of state is perfectly able to keep steadily on her course without any help from me, Landon."

"Perhaps so, if you were the only one who felt and acted thus; but if you may, why may not others?"

"Well, and who said they mightn't?"

"But can't you see the danger, if many pursue such a course?"

"No, not I. A fig for danger to a country with such institutions as ours,—free press, free speech, free ballot-box, and all that."

Fred's only reply was a look of extreme disgust.

"Surely, Fred is right," remarked Louis Walbridge, speaking for the first time. "No ship, however strong, or well-built, can be safely trusted to take care of herself; there must be an experienced hand at the helm, to steer her aright, and keep her clear of the rocks and shoals; and gallant tars are needed to reef and unfurl the sails, if she is not to be left at the mercy of the winds and waves."

"Good for you, young un," said Fatzinger, patting Louis on the back with one hand, while he threw away the end of his cigar with the other; "you'll do; we'll make you second mate of the craft one o' these days, p'raps, eh, Hal?"

"It's too little and weak," said Pendleton, shak-

ing his head; "' might about as well 'lect one o' the female sect,' as old Polly, my nurse, used to say."

Louis flushed hotly. "I may live to be as strong as you, some day, Hal Pendleton," he answered, indignantly. "And why should you boast of your superior strength, as though you had bought it, or earned it, or got it in any way but as a free gift?"

"Softly, softly, now, Sary Jane," returned Pendleton, laughing. "Have I said a word about my superior strength?"

"Never mind, Louis, lad," said Fred, laying his hand on the boy's shoulder. "It is easy to call names and to ridicule; but 'mind is the measure of the man,'—as Dr. Watts once said to a lady who was making sport of him, because of his under size,—and 'knowledge is power,' far more truly than mere brute strength."

"And Louis has no lack of brains, and is laying in a goodly store of knowledge," said Hall, good-naturedly.

"Well," remarked Crawford, "this is quite a discussion. Has the honorable member from Brookville finished his exhortation?"

"Not quite, if the house will kindly permit a few further remarks," returned Fred, in a playful tone. Then changing it to one more serious: "The fearful increase of crime in our land, the corruption in every department of government, the illegal voting,

the bribery, perjury, wholesale frauds and robberies, the many murders, and the frequent escape of the criminals from the punishment due to their misdeeds, make me tremble for the future of my country."

"It's awful, that's a fact," said Fatzinger, meditatively.

"It is," said Fred. "And then there's the profane swearing, so fearfully prevalent, the Sabbath breaking, drunkenness—"

"Come, come, man, your list's long enough now, in all conscience!" exclaimed White. "Let's have the application, or whatever you may call it, and turn to pleasanter themes."

"The application I would make," said Fred, "is an earnest appeal to you all, to resolve to do what in you lies to put down all this wickedness, as every lover of his country should, for 'righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.'"

"Who's that you're quoting?" asked Pendleton.

"Solomon, the wisest mere man that ever lived, and here speaking by inspiration also."

"Oh, ho; Bible, eh?"

"You ought to blush for your ignorance in not knowing it, Hal," coolly remarked Crawford.

"Never mind, A. B. C., I'm not more of an ignoramus in that line than half our Congressmen. Just call to mind what awful blunders some o' them have made in trying to quote scripture."

"What do you think about getting the ladies to

help us?" asked Hall, addressing his question to the company in general. "Female Suffrage is one of the questions of the day, you know."

"No objection," yawned Pendleton. "Not the least in the world."

Landon shook his head.

"What! Wouldn't let that highly respected mother of yours help to take care o' the country?"

"She has been taking care of it by training her son to love it, and to feel his responsibility in regard to it. But she has no desire for the right of suffrage; nor, I suppose, has one in a thousand of the educated, intelligent portion of the fair sex; and if it were granted, they would not vote, unless from a stern sense of duty, feeling that they must do what they can to counteract at the polls the evil influence of the bold and bad women, who would use the right."

"Yes, considering how many bad and ignorant women there are who would vote, how many of the intelligent and good who would not, I think the granting of the right of female suffrage would increase the peril of the country to an indefinite extent," remarked Crawford.

"It's in our great cities crime is most apt to go unpunished," said Hall.

"That's owing to the inefficiency of the police," remarked Pendleton.

"And to what is it owing?" asked Fred. "To what, but the culpable negligence and indifference

of the better class of citizens, who leave the nomination of the municipal officers to the rowdies and pot-house politicians. Really, when I think of these things, I'm not surprised that some of the 'strong-minded' among the fair sex feel an itching to take hold and set matters straight."

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN OLD LOVE AND A NEW ONE.

TWO weeks before commencement, Fred had the great pleasure of writing to his mother and sister, inviting them to attend it, and enclosing a check for an amount amply sufficient to cover the whole expense of the trip.

The money was all his own earning; a part of it made by copying done for the Hamilton lawyer, but much more than half by the same kind of work, for some unknown person at a distance, who sent both it and the pay, which was surprisingly liberal, through Dr. Nevins.

There seemed some mystery about it; but though that somewhat excited Fred's curiosity, he was content to leave it unsolved, doing the work promptly and well, and receiving the promised remuneration.

He had kept the whole thing secret from the home circle; and Mrs. Rush, having no suspicion that Fred was providing the means, had quietly resigned the hope of being present on the important and interesting occasion. She had said scarcely anything about her disappointment, but Fred

knew it was keen, and had resolved to remove it if possible.

And now, as he pictured to himself the surprise and delight of his dear ones on opening his letter, he felt more than repaid for his labor, self-denial, and patient endurance of the sneers and contempt of his fellow students, on account of his supposed parsimony.

An answer arrived in due time; just such an one as he expected, and, as he thought, in his warm, affectionate heart, that no one but his own "precious little mother" could write,—overflowing with love and joy, and motherly pride in her only son. They would come, as requested, a week before the important day; were rejoicing in the thought of seeing much of him during their visit, and of bringing him home with them on their return. And Aunt Silence, Albert and the little ones were planning grand preparations for receiving him on his arrival at the farm.

Fred had taken this letter from the office himself, and read it as he walked from the town toward the college.

As he refolded and put it into his pocket, a sweet girlish voice, close in his rear, hailed him with, "Good afternoon, Mr. Landon."

"Miss Nevins!" cried Fred, in a tone of delighted surprise, as he turned and lifted his hat, while his eyes sparkled, and the ruddy glow of health deepened slightly on his handsome face.

The young lady was tastefully arrayed in a new fall walking costume and coquettish little hat, whose colors set off her rich brunette complexion to great advantage.

She looked very charming in her lover's eyes.

"Ah, you did not know we were so near? You had not heard our footsteps?" she said, gaily, her eyes dancing with mirth. "We have been following you for some little time, waiting to speak when you should finish your letter. You remember Mr. Ramsay?" and she turned to her companion, a middle aged gentleman, in whom Fred recognized the uncle of his deceased friend and college companion, Carter.

They shook hands cordially, the elder gentleman with a fatherly manner that moved Fred with a sudden pang of remembrance of the touch of a hand, and the glance of an eye, he should see and feel no more upon earth. For a moment the lover was lost in the son, whose heart bled at the thought that his approaching triumphs would not be shared by that loved and honored parent.

Mr. Ramsay's thoughts, too, were of the loved and lost, as was shown by his first words, and a slight tremble in his manly voice, as he spoke, in low earnest tones.

"My dear fellow," he said, "I have always remembered you as my poor Will's most intimate and valued friend. You looked upon me as a stranger when last we met; but I felt that I knew

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you; my boy had said so much about you in his letters."

"We had become very strongly attached," said Fred. "He was more to me than any other school-fellow, or college-mate, I have ever had."

"Ah, his equal is not often found. But here we are at your father's gate, Miss Isabel; and let me bid you good afternoon. I wish to have a little talk with Mr. Landon, and will walk on with him."

"Come in, and take it here, sir, will you not?" she asked, with a glance at Fred, which included him in the invitation.

But they declined, and continued their walk; Fred seeing that such was Mr. Ramsay's desire, though his own inclination would have kept him as long as possible by Miss Nevins' side.

"Well, my young friend," Mr. Ramsay began, after a moment's silence, "you have now about completed your preparation for entering upon the active duties of life; and what do you purpose doing next? I ask it, not impertinently, but as one interested, *deeply* interested, in your welfare," he added, with earnest kindness, as Fred's heightened color seemed to say, that his pride was on the alert to repel any intrusion into his private affairs.

"Thank you, I ought to have been certain of it, without such an assurance," he answered, frankly. "My plans, sir, are very crude as yet. The law

would be my chosen profession, were I in circumstances that would admit of my beginning my preparation for it at once; but at present I must try to find some employment that will enable me to support my mother and sister."

Mr. Ramsay's next words greatly astonished our hero.

"I am glad to hear of your predilection for the law. I came here on purpose to ask you to study it with me; and more, to beg you to take poor Will's place, and be to me as a son;—become my heir—and—there, don't interrupt me, let the old man have his say, and afterward the young one may have his."

He then went on to tell, in a few brief sentences, how he had become interested in Fred, through his nephew's enthusiastic description; and frequent mention of his friend, as one to whom he had given his warm affection, and who was in every way worthy of it. How this interest had been deepened by their personal interview at the time of that nephew's death; how, through a regular and frequent correspondence with Dr. Nevins, he had made himself still better acquainted with the young man's character, and at length fully satisfied himself that he was just the one to fill the void in his home and affections made by the removal of his dearly loved relative.

"And now," said he, in conclusion, "I repeat my offer to make you my heir, if you will come and

live with me, filling the place that was to have belonged to that dear boy; calling me father or uncle, whichever you like. I never had a son, never married, never expect to," he added, with a sigh.

"Sir," stammered Fred, almost overwhelmed with surprise and gratitude, at the generous offer, "I—I don't know how to express my sense of your goodness; nor what pleasure it would give me to be as a son to you, if I had not already a dear parent whom I cannot forsake for anyone else."

"No need to forsake her; bring her along. I have a big house, and nobody in it but the house-keeper and servants, and a lady's society would be a great addition to the comfort and happiness of our home."

"But there's a whole family, sir; and—and besides, my mother would never consent to live as a dependant on any one but her son or daughter."

"Well, you shall support her. I am very rich, have no near relatives—none at all that care particularly for me, or need my help—and I will gladly give you a salary of two or three thousand dollars, just in return for your pleasant company in my desolate home, and the pleasure of calling you my son or nephew. Then, when you have completed your legal studies, and are admitted to the bar, I'll take you into the firm, and your means will be increased. Will you accept my offer? You are of age, are you not?"

"Yes, sir, I reached my majority last week. But,

sir, I could not think of taking so important a step without consulting my mother. She is as much that as she ever was; and 'tis not only till we are twenty-one that the Bible bids us honor our parents," he added, with a smile. "And she's a sensible little woman, who loves me with all her heart."

"Where is she?"

"On a farm, near Brookville, in Wisconsin. But she will be here in a few days, to see me take my degree."

"Oh, then we'll wait till she comes, and in the meantime you can consider my offer. I think none the worse of you for your dutiful conduct toward your mother. And allow me to say, she must be a wise and worthy woman to have trained up such a son."

"Thank you, a thousand times," said Fred, flushing with joy and pride; pride in the precious little mother; scarcely thinking of the implied compliment to himself.

And now he was doubly eager for that mother's coming. He met her and Elena at the depot, conducted them to the boarding-place he had provided, and the first moment he found himself alone with them there, he poured out the whole story of his late interview with Mr. Ramsay, the kind friend Providence had raised up for him, and of the wonderfully generous offer he had made him.

"Is it not surprising, mother, dear?" he asked,

pressing the hand he held in his, as he sat on the sofa by her side.

"Wonderful that a lonely, childless old man should covet such a son as mine?" she asked, looking at him with a proud and loving smile. "Truly, your mother can see nothing surprising in that; it is such riches as money cannot buy. Yet I do think it an exceedingly generous offer; but"—

The door opened, and the landlady's voice announced, "A gentleman to see Mr. Landon and his friends."

Fred sprang up:

"Mr. Ramsay! We were just speaking"—

But he stopped in wonder and astonishment.

Mr. Ramsay did not seem to hear a word he was saying, or to see anything in the room but Mrs. Rush. How he started, and flushed with glad surprise, when his eyes first rested on the sweet, fair face; how he sprang forward and caught her hand in his, and held it in a close, loving clasp, while his eager eyes looked full into hers, and he murmured, in tones tremulous with emotion, "Helen, my lost Helen! Miss Mowbray, can it be you?"

And she blushed, and trembled, and cast down her eyes, as her daughter might have done under a lover's ardent gaze.

But only for an instant; the next, she looked up frankly and fearlessly into his face, and with her

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tiful of children. I would not exchange with you, or with anyone."

"No, not exchange, but share with me. I've set my heart upon having Fred to brighten my lonely home. And yet, I would not rob you. But I think—I hope we shall be able to come to some arrangement which will be satisfactory to all parties," he said, taking the chair Fred had silently placed for him. "Ah, I did not know what attracted me so strongly to this boy; but I see now that it was something of his mother about him; a nameless something, for he can scarcely be said to look like you. But I thought you were living in the East."

"So we were until my second marriage."

"And would you not be willing to return thither?"

"Quite, if I saw that it would be for my children's interest. Indeed, I prefer it to the West; though my life in Wisconsin has been very pleasant."

"My mother is of a very contented disposition," remarked Fred.

"As I knew her in other days, Master Fred."

"Let me thank you for all your generous kindness to my son," said Mrs. Rush, earnestly.

"No, no; it is nothing. But—ah, Helen, if"—

His eyes looked into hers with an expression of tender, yearning affection; he rose up hastily, without finishing his sentence, walked to the win-

dow, stood there a moment, then turning and bidding them an abrupt "Good-morning," with a muttered word or two about calling again soon, he hurried from the room.

As he went out, Mrs. Rush rose, and moved across the room, turning her face away from her children. For several minutes she stood leaning against the mantel, and they could see that her slight figure trembled with emotion.

"What does it all mean?" whispered Fred, seating himself by his sister's side.

A silent squeeze of the hand was her only reply, and following the direction of her gaze, he saw that their mother was moving toward them again. Her face wore its usual sweet, calm expression, but there was a dewy look about her eyes, as if she had been shedding a tear or two.

Fred sprang up, seated her between Elena and himself, and both waited in silence for her to speak.

She took a hand of each, and pressing them fondly in hers, said, low and tremulously, "My two dear children, I would wish always to be taken into your confidence, and will now be as frank with you as I desire to have you be with me. Mr. Ramsay is an old admirer of mine; indeed, at one time I expected to marry him; and doubtless should have done so, had I not met your father, and found that I loved him better still. I am not sure that I was altogether blameless, for I liked

Henry Ramsay well, and had allowed him to pay me a good deal of attention; but we were not actually engaged; no words had passed between us, and I could not give my hand to him, when I knew that another had won my heart; nor could I refuse to give the hand where the heart had already gone."

"Did he know my father?" asked Fred, very low, and hesitatingly.

"No, I think—indeed I am quite sure they never met. Nor did I ever meet Mr. Ramsay, after my marriage, until to-day. Poor fellow! I have always felt badly in thinking of him; for I heard he was quite a changed man from the time that he knew I was lost to him."

"And it has been love of my darling little mother that has kept him single all these years? I like him better than ever for that."

"And what do you think of your mother's treatment of him, Fred?"

"I would knock any man down that dared to hint that she was to blame!"

"No, no, my boy; I want no such violent championship as that," she said, smoothing back the hair from his flushed, indignant face, and gazing with fond motherly pride into his sparkling eyes. "It would be altogether wrong and foolish; but it is as a cordial to my heart, that my children can learn my youthful follies and mistakes without losing either their respect or love for their mother."

Fred took a proud delight in introducing his

mother and sister to his numerous friends and acquaintances, and in perceiving how evident and universal was the admiration they excited. The sweet, fair mother, and her blooming daughter soon became known in the place, as "Landon's Lily and Rose;" and it was an open question, which was the lovelier of the two, all agreeing that the one looked almost as youthful as the other.

The day after their arrival in Hamilton, Mrs. Nevins and her eldest daughter called, and insisted upon taking them home with them to become their guests during the week of their stay; an arrangement which was extremely satisfactory to Fred, bringing into daily and hourly intercourse those whom he ardently wished to know and love each other, and giving him many an unhopcd for opportunity of seeing her who had got possession of his heart.

His secret was soon imparted to his mother, and he was delighted to learn that she approved his choice; and the more so the more she saw of the young lady; whom she found to be a simple, unaffected, warm-hearted girl, full of innocent gayety and mirthfulness; but ever ready to sympathize in both the sorrows and the joys of others.

Isabel and Elena became warmly attached in that week, and Fred's cause did not suffer from the intercourse of his mother and sister with his lady-love. Yet he was not sure that he was favored above others, but often feared that Pendleton would prove a successful rival. In vain Elena laughed at

these fears, and assured him he was paying a very poor compliment to Miss Nevins' good sense and good taste; he set that all down to the partiality of sisterly affection, and grew quite wretched when he heard Pendleton joked by their fellow-students, about his attentions to the president's daughter, and noted the air of quiet assurance with which he received all their bantering.

We have not space to describe either the commencement, or the festivities which preceded and accompanied it; suffice it to say there were several entertainments given, by the students and others; that Hall and Crawford passed a good examination, and Fred Landon graduated with high honors.

The day of departure had come. Fred having finished his own packing, ran over to Dr. Nevins, to see if his mother and sister needed any assistance with theirs.

He met Pendleton coming out of the gate, with such a crest-fallen and mortified air, that the thought that it could have been caused by nothing less than a rejection of his suit sent a thrill of joy through Landon's heart. He stepped silently aside, and his rival rushed past him with a muttered oath.

Fred made no reply, but hurried on, found the front door open, knocked twice, and receiving no answer walked in, and rapped again at the half open parlor door.

Still no one seemed to hear or heed ; and peep-
ing in he saw that Miss Nevins, and she alone, was
there.

Again a thrill of delight shot through his whole
frame, and stepping softly in, pushing the door to
after him, he drew noiselessly towards her.

Her face was half averted ; she was bending low
over a piece of embroidery, and he thought he had
never seen so rich a bloom on her cheek.

"Isabel, Miss Nevins," he murmured, close at her
side.

She started, looked up at him, and reading his
purpose in his face, sprang to her feet, and seemed
about to run away.

But he caught her hand, and entreated her to
stay, just one moment ; for he was to leave Hamil-
ton in an hour, and had something to say that must
be said before he went.

She yielded herself passively to his will, and he
led her to the nearest sofa.

What followed we will leave to the reader's im-
agination ; but it ended by a rapturous embrace, a
"Then, dearest. I may speak to your father?" A
timid, blushing, "Yes." And she flew up stairs to
her own room ; while he sought the doctor's study,
told his tale, and pleaded his cause with all the elo-
quence true and ardent love could inspire ; yet with
the modesty becoming one who knew the value of
the gift he craved, and felt it to be beyond his
deserts.

"I have one objection, Landon," said the doctor, gravely, but with a twinkle in his eye, which the embarrassed lover did not perceive.

"And may I ask what that is, sir?" stammered Fred. "I—I am poor, but I wont ask you to give her up to me till I am fully able to support her."

"No, I shouldn't consent to any such folly, if you did. But I was not thinking of that; my objection is the youth of both parties."

Fred drew a long breath. "Time will obviate that, sir."

"True; and I don't know any young man I would trust my child's happiness to sooner than yourself, Fred," returned the doctor, cordially; holding out his hand in a fatherly manner as he spoke. "But if you want her, you must wait for her, though not quite so long as Jacob served for Rachel."

"Sir, I would wait twice as long, rather than not have her at all," answered Fred, ardently.

Then he poured out his thanks, and was about to withdraw, when the doctor invited him to sit down again, and tell him of his plans and prospects.

But of these Fred soon found that the doctor knew nearly as much as himself, being entirely in Mr. Ramsay's confidence; and he now learned for the first time that it was the latter gentleman who had given him so much employment, at such liberal rates. Since the day of Mrs. Rush's arrival, Mr. Ramsay had said nothing further to her or to

Fred about his plans for him ; but he had been so constantly by the pretty widow's side, and had paid her such marked attentions, that every one had noticed it, and Fred thought that he understood why the arrangement of his affairs had been dropped for the present.

Hall's voice summoned him from his talk with the doctor. "Come, Landon," he cried, "we'll have to hurry, or we'll miss the train. The ladies have said their good-byes and walked on with Mr. Ramsay and Crawford. I told them I'd call you, and we'd catch up before they got to the depot."

"Yes, I've kept you entirely too long, and you'll have to run for it," said the doctor, taking out his watch with one hand, while with the other he shook Fred's with hearty good-will and affection.

Fred glanced eagerly about as he ran down the stairs, and through the hall, but could not catch a glimpse of her he so longed to see. Isabel was hiding her tearful, blushing face in her own room. Why was it that the tears would come when she was so happy, so much happier than ever before in all her life? She crept to the window, and half hidden behind its white muslin curtains, looked after her lover and his companion as they hurried down the street. What had been the result of the interview that was just over? If she could only have heard it from his lips! But she should know from her father's face when she met him at the tea-table ; till then she must endure this

torturing suspense; and yet—how could he say anything else than Yes to such a wooer as Fred Landon?

“And Mr. Ramsay is going with us?” Fred said, inquiringly to Richard, as they hastened onward toward the depot.

“Yes; he has business in Brookville, he says,” laughed Richard. “But I suspect if he said at Rush’s farm it would be a little nearer the truth; eh, Landon?”

Fred made no reply in words, but his answering thought was, “Well, if he makes the little mother any happier, or more comfortable, why should I object? And he surely deserves her. Think of that long waiting,—twenty-two years! Ah, but would I not wait even that long for my darling, rather than give her up and take another.”

CHAPTER XIX.

ELENA'S ALPHABET.

CRAWFORD was going to Brookville to be the guest of his friend Hall, whose invitation had been all the more eagerly accepted, because Elena Landon's home was in that vicinity. Crawford privately thought her the prettiest and most bewitching young lady he had ever met; and this opinion his actions had made tolerably evident to any observant looker-on. Elena, however, was remarkably free from self-conceit, and received his attentions as little more than kindness and politeness shown to the sister of his friend, accepted them as such, and regarded him only as a pleasant and entertaining acquaintance; for he was always full of his jokes and fun. They were a merry party on that homeward journey,—Mrs. Rush and Mr. Ramsay scarcely less so than the others.

Albert was waiting for them at the Brookville depot. The carriage had been sold, with other superfluities, at the time of their reverses, and a little light, covered wagon did duty instead. The horses were apt to take fright at the noise of the locomotive, and Albert did not dare to leave them;

but standing at their heads, some hundred yards or more from the track, watched our party as they alighted, stood chatting gaily for a moment, then came toward him; Mr. Ramsay escorting Mrs. Rush, and Crawford, Elena, while Richard and Fred brought up the rear.

Mrs. Rush shook hands with her step-son, introduced him to the two strangers, then allowed Mr. Ramsay to assist her to her seat in the wagon, Crawford doing a like service for Elena.

Albert watched the latter askance—a slight cloud on his brow—and carefully refrained from seconding Fred's warm invitation to him to let Hall bring him out to the farm the next day, and to make himself at home there during his visit to Brookville.

"Mr. Ramsay, my kindest of friends, you cannot doubt that you will always find a warm welcome with us," added Fred, shaking hands with that gentleman. "Come as often as you can."

"Thank you, my boy; you may reckon on being somewhat filled with my company, should I tarry long in this neighborhood," returned the person addressed, bidding a cordial adieu to the ladies, and lifting his hat to them as they drove off.

The next morning Elena was in the act of sweeping the portico at the front door—the two children at play near by—when the sound of voices and steps, and the opening of the gate, caused her to look up.

Hall and Crawford were coming in. "Good-morning, Miss Landon," they said.

"Good-morning, gentlemen," she answered, with a flush and smile, that Crawford thought very charming. "You find me just done my sweeping; how fortunate that you did not come a minute sooner. Here, Thad, run to the kitchen with this broom, that's a good boy. And Midget, dear, draw your little wagon out of the way, and let the gentlemen pass."

"Your little sister, I suppose, Miss Landon?" said Crawford, interrogatively, patting the child's head quite paternally as he spoke.

"Yes; the only one I have."

"What a cute little wagon," he remarked.

"Yes; my big brother Fred made it," said Maggie, with an air which seemed to imply that he was a little superior to anybody else's brother; "and mamma bought me the doll, and sister Lena dressed it."

"Did she, though?" he exclaimed, examining it with the air of a connoisseur. "Well, it's splendidly done; I never saw one as well dressed before; though of my twelve sisters, each one has 'em by the dozen—which makes a hundred and forty-four—more or less—in the family, you know. Yes, you're a remarkably fortunate little girl, Miss—Miss—what is it? Bridget?"

"Bridget? No; I guess it aint," cried the child, indignantly. "I aint a Irish worker-girl."

"Never mind, Midge, he's only teasing you," said the laughing Elena. "Will you walk in, gentlemen? Fred and Albert have gone out to the field," she added, as she led the way to the parlor.

"But one of them has returned, called back by Thad," her brother's voice answered from the hall.

"Ah! well, come in then, and entertain your visitors."

"Quite as much yours as his, Miss Lena," said Hall, benevolently speaking a word for Crawford, who, he knew, had not come there solely or principally for the enjoyment of Fred's society.

"Indeed! I feel highly honored," she answered, lightly; "but, most unfortunately, I have an engagement—a music lesson to give—and there is my scholar just coming in at the gate."

The young men beat a hasty retreat, as a gawky looking country girl was seen walking up the path toward the front door.

They spent an hour or more in rambling about the farm, and chatting with Albert and Fred, then returned to find Elena and Miss Rush in the back porch; the one paring apples, the other churning.

"Good-morning, auntie," said Hall, addressing the older lady, with whom he was rather a favorite. "Allow me to introduce my friend Crawford, or A. B. C., as we fellows at Hamilton mostly call him. P'raps you mightn't think it from his looks, but he's a real nice fellow. May we come in?"

"Humph! yes, Master Ritchie, of course you

may; and I don't see but your friend's quite as well-looking as yourself; perhaps a trifle better," she answered, dryly. "How d'ye do, Mr. Alphabet? Help yourselves to seats; I never like to let go of my dasher till the butter comes."

"Thank you; we're able to do that," returned Crawford, laughing, as they availed themselves of the permission. "But let me take hold and help you there; that looks like rather tiresome work for a lady."

"Much obliged; but fellows like you always make a muss of such work. You'd splash yourself with milk, and the floor too. Where's Fred?"

"Here, auntie," answered his pleasant voice, from the other side of the morning-glory vines that shaded the porch; for he had followed his guests from the field almost immediately. "What can I do for you?—take hold there?" he asked, stepping to her side.

"Yes," she said, relinquishing the dasher to him, "you may; for I want to turn my bread in the oven."

Hall and Crawford had found seats near Elena.

"Always busy, Miss Landon," said the latter, admiringly. "Might I venture to offer my assistance in that fancy work? There's no milk there to splash about."

"But you might drop the parings on the floor," she answered, demurely.

"No, mum, I'll be as careful as possible; and if

I should be so misfortunate as to drop 'em, I'll pick 'em up again."

"And what if you cut your fingers?"

"The pain of the wound shall be borne with the unrivalled heroism of an American patriot, who feels that he sheds his blood in a good cause."

"Even that of apple-dumplings, and pies, an' things. But I don't think your blood would improve any one of them. Well, sir, on those conditions, I accept your offered assistance. Fred, get us another knife and tin pan, wont you?" she said, as Miss Silence returned, and again took possession of the churn-dasher.

"Two of 'em, or three, if you're going to help," Hall called after him.

"Gingerbread and sawdust! What an odd-looking customer," exclaimed Crawford, with a low whistle, some ten minutes later. "Who on earth is she?"

"Mother Biddle, I declare," said Fred, following the direction of his glance, and seeing the old woman approaching through the orchard, which lay beyond the door-yard, and on that side of the house. "Now for some tall fun, as Miss Lizzie Frost would say."

"But who, or what is she, that she dresses in that outlandish style?" asked Crawford; "deranged, I suppose; a harmless sort of lunatic, eh?"

"She seems sane enough, except on one or two

points," answered Fred. "She's over eighty, and dead in love with a man, eighteen years younger, who boards with her."

Crawford whistled again. "My stars and garters; but wouldn't they make a jolly pair of lovers?"

"Mother thinks she has reached her second childhood, and that, therefore, we should have a great deal of charity for her," observed Elena.

"Certainly; I'll try," said Crawford.

The old woman stepped upon the porch as he spoke. "Good mornin', young folks. Mornin', Aunt Silence," she said. "So you're a churnin'. Guess I'll get a taste o' fresh buttermilk."

"Yes, Mother Biddle, and a cup o' tea too, if you'll wait till I can make it. The butter's just come," said Miss Rush, lifting the lid of the churn, and taking a survey of the contents. "But what's up? You look as happy as a queen," she added, glancing up into the face of her visitor, who had drawn close to her with the eager air of one who brings joyful tidings.

"And so I be, Aunt Silence, so I be," was the answer, in a loud ecstatic whisper. "For he says he's willin'. He's made up his mind that there aint nobody as would take as good care o' him as Mother Biddle, and thinks we mout as well jog along together for the rest of our two lives."

"Well, I don't know but you might; you *are* good to him."

"To be sure I be; aint I allus awaitin' on him?"

"Take a chair, Mother Biddle; it's as cheap sitting as standing," said Miss Rush, hurrying into the kitchen.

Fred sprang up and brought a chair. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Biddle," he said. "I'm afraid I'm losing my manners; but my back was toward you, and I thought you had taken a seat on the bench yonder."

"All right, youngster. I'm spry enough yit to help myself, if I'd a mind to."

"Now, Aunt Silence," as that worthy reappeared, butter bowl and ladle in hand; "it's a comin' off right soon—secin' there aint no gardecens nor nothin' in the way; as I tell Barlow."

"No, you're both of full age, I should judge," interrupted Miss Rush, drily.

"Yis; so we be," returned the other, with a joyous chuckle. "Well, I'm a right down savin' body, and don't often git a new dress; but secin' as taint likely I'll ever git married agin', as I tell Barlow, I've 'bout made up my mind I'll have one now; an so I jist thought I'd run over and insult you 'bout it,—what to git, and how to hev it made."

A mirthful glance was exchanged among the young folks, who, as by one consent, had dropped all conversation, and sat silently listening to the chatter of the old crone.

Miss Rush was bending over her churn, dipping out her butter, and did not answer for a moment.

When she did speak, there was not a trace of amusement in her voice. "I don't like to be insulted, Mother Biddle," she said, in her ordinary tone. "Children, what brings you out here just now?" addressing Thad and Maggie, who came out of the dining-room together. "I thought you were at your lessons."

"A gentleman's come to see mamma, and she said we might go and play awhile," answered Maggie, getting behind Elena, and slipping an arm round her neck.

"Yes; and he's a nice lookin' old codger, too; and when he shook hands with mother, you ought a seen what a pretty red color came in her cheeks," remarked Thad, hanging on Fred's chair.

"Codger, Thad?" said the latter, exchanging a furtive glance with Elena. "That's not at all a nice way for a little boy to speak of an old gentleman."

"Well, what shall I call him then?"

"A gentleman, Thad; that's what he is."

"Well, I 'spose you're lookin' forward to a very happy time now, Mrs. Biddle," observed Miss Silence, working away energetically at her butter. "Thad, you go and fetch me a bucket of cold water right out o' the well."

"Yes, Aunt Silence, that I do. I reckon on a heap more conjugal felicity than ever I knowed with Biddle; he allus grudged me my drop o' tea, so he did, the old miser," grunted the dame, taking

a short, clay pipe from her pocket and filling it with tobacco.

"Conjugal felikcity," repeated Thad, catching the word as he came out of the kitchen, bucket in hand. "Conjugal felikcity; what's that, Mrs. Biddle?"

"Somethin' mighty nice, that mebbe you'll git acquainted with when you've growed to be a man, sonny," she answered, and stepping to the kitchen fire to light her pipe.

"Aunt Silence, what does she mean?" asked Thad.

"Nonsense, child; mind what you're about, and hurry up with that bucket o' water. I'll be waiting for it in a minute."

Thad ran on to the well, and Mrs. Biddle reappeared with her pipe in her mouth.

"Execrable tobacco!" muttered Hall. "Such stuff would never tempt me, though I succumb at once when Hal Pendleton produces his splendid Havanas."

"What do you think of the use of the weed, Miss Landon?" asked Crawford, with difficulty resuming his gravity, which had been totally upset by Mrs. Biddle's original pronunciation and definition.

"I don't think much of it, Mr. Crawford," said Elena, looking up with a merry twinkle in her eye. "However, I do not at all mind the smell of a really good cigar; but such stuff as that is, I think,

as Mr. Hall says, execrable," she added, in an undertone.

"Hark! there's more fun coming," whispered Fred, as the old woman began again.

"Well, now, Miss Rush, you haint told me your 'pinion 'bout the weddin' gownd yit. 'Sposin I'd buy an alapacky; what would you think o' that?"

"I should think it would be about as suitable for you as anything you could select," answered Miss Rush.

"Well then, that's what I think I'll git. It don't take so overly-much to make me a dress; I'm kind o' small, and don't care for flounces an' furbelows, double-skirts and sich. And then alapacky's sort o' genteel, looks e'en a most as well as a silk, and aint half so costive neether."

Elena hastily set down her pan and disappeared, escaping through the hall to her own room, shaking with suppressed laughter, while the young men—dropping each his apple—made a sudden rush for the yard, and gaining a safe distance from the house, gave way to a simultaneous explosion of their long pent-up merriment.

"What's the matter? What's sent the youngsters all off in sich an awful hurry?" asked Mrs. Biddle, in surprise.

"Oh, some o' their nonsense," answered Miss Silence.

"Well, it does beat all what fools children is now-a-days."

Elena came back presently, gathered up her apples and carried them into the kitchen.

"I'll make the pies, Aunt Silence," she said, "and the dumplings; you have enough else to do."

"Oh, pshaw! child. What's the use o' your worryin' yourself? I'm a right smart worker, if I do say it, that shouldn't, and there aint a bit more work than I can 'tend to," answered Miss Rush. "And you'd better be studyin' your alphabet," she added, in a whisper close to Elena's ear, as she stood for a moment by the young girl's side. "You'd ought to know him well, 'fore you make up your mind. They're a deceivin' set."

"You are talking in riddles, Aunt Silence," said Elena, laughing and blushing.

"Oh, you needn't pretend to be stupid, for you can't make anybody believe it, try as hard as you will. But it's easy to see what *he's* after."

Their aged visitor was stooping over the fire, emptying the ashes out of her pipe, preparatory to replacing it in her pocket, and heard nothing of this by-play.

"Well, I must be goin'; it'll be gettin' nigh on to dinner time," she remarked, straightening herself, and leaning back in her chair.

"Oh, no, 'taint eleven yet," returned Miss Rush, glancing up at the clock; "just wait a little; the kettle's boiling, you see, and I'll put your tea to draw this minute."

"Besides, we want to hear all about your wed-

ding, Mother Biddle," said Elena, rolling up the sleeves of her neat calico morning dress, and tying on a large check apron, preparatory to her culinary operations; "you haven't told us yet when and where it's to come off."

"Well, I go for havin' it in the church next Sunday mornin', right away after the preachin's done with," she answered, with a chuckle of intense delight; "'cause, you see, I'm gettin' a right down smart lookin' feller, and I'd like a good smart sprinklin' o' folks there to see us takin' each other fur better fur worse."

"Proud o' your conquest, eh?" said Miss Rush, with a grim smile, setting cup, saucer and sugar-bowl on the table, and motioning to her guest to draw up to it. "But don't you feel any misgivings, thinking how deceivin' these men folks are? And then the old saying, too, you know,

'Change the name, and not the letter,
Change for the worse, and not the better.'

"Oh, that's meant for gals, like her there," returned the crone, with another chuckle, pointing to Elena as she spoke. "They've got to look out sharp; but I aint no chicken to be took in that sort o' how. Besides, Barlow's been a boardin' with me nigh onto five year, and I know him like a book."

"Well, that's not saying so much, considering 'taint likely she's read half a dozen in her life," so-

liloquized Miss Rush, as she filled up the tea-pot and set it on the table.

"Better go back and finish up the job, hadn't we, lads?" suggested Crawford, as he and his companions found themselves recovering from their first uncontrollable paroxysm of laughter.

"Not worth while," answered Fred; "we were about through, and there's Lena gathering up and carrying off the fruits of our toil, implements and all. But you'll want to remove the traces of your philanthropic labors—as Bruce would say—otherwise, wash your hands. Follow me to my private apartment, where you will find yourselves accommodated with everything necessary to the proper performance of your ablutions."

"Good for you, Fred! Old Jonathan himself could hardly have expressed it better," returned Crawford, laughing.

Fred led them to his room, and, excusing himself, left them alone there for a moment.

"It's about time we were making tracks for home, A. B. C.," said Hall, consulting his watch.

"No, no; you must stay for dinner; we're not going to let you off so," said Fred, coming in again, just in time to overhear the remark. "I know you both have a weakness for apple-dumplings, and I've bespoken one or more for each, as sizeable as Stuffer's of ludicrous memory, and far more inviting to the palate."

"Yes, I can testify to the truthfulness of that last

assertion," said Hall; "to quote Mother Biddle, 'Aunt Silence can't be beat on cookery; and her dumplings is allus superior to the best.' By the way, there goes the old dame now," he added, glancing from the window. "But wont it be rich to see that wedding come off. I say, chums, we must all be sure to be on hand."

"Of course; I wouldn't miss it for a good deal. But you'll stay, boys?" said Fred, inquiringly. "I can't promise you a specimen of Aunt Silence's skill, as far as the dumplings are concerned; as I find my sister has undertaken them to-day. But we never expect to fare any worse on that account."

Fred was growing proud of Elena's housewifery. Crawford's eyes sparkled. "Better and better," thought he.

"We couldn't decline after that," said Hall. "Yes, we'll stay, and thank you too. Eh, A. B. C.? Such splendid country cream as we'll get on those same dumplings!"

"Wouldn't old Stuffer envy us?" laughed Crawford. "Landon, you're a brick. 'Tisn't in mortal man to resist such an invite as that."

CHAPTER XX.

CUPID'S FREAKS.

MIDGE, Midge," called Elena, softly, from her chamber window.

The child was playing with her doll on the grass-plot beneath. "What, Lena? what do you want of me?" she asked, looking up.

"I want you to run out to the barn and tell Albert there's going to be company here to dinner. Wont you? There's a good child. Perhaps he'd like to know in time to come in and brush up a little."

"Yes, I'll do it; I'll tell him you sent me." And the little feet carried their owner briskly away out of sight round the corner of the house.

"Who is it?" asked Albert, gruffly, when the message had been delivered. "That chap from Hamilton?"

"I don't know; Lena didn't tell me. Which is he?"

"The one Ritchie Hall brought with him this morning."

"Oh yes, I guess it's him; 'cause he's on the

porch now with Ritchie an' Fred. I don't like him."

"No more do I," muttered her brother to himself; then asked aloud, "Why not, Midge?"

"'Cause he called me Bridget—just as if I was a Irish Biddy."

Albert laughed at the indignant tone of the little voice.

"Who sent you out to tell me?"

"Lena."

"That was good of her; but she's always good, always thinking of other folks."

"I guess there's more company," observed the child; "an old gentleman with some grey in his hair; he's in the sittin'-room talkin' to mother."

Albert's countenance expressed more surprise than pleasure. "Well, sis, I'm much obliged to you for coming to tell me," he said. "But run in now. I'll follow presently; in time to fix up a little, so she'll not be ashamed of me," he added to himself, as the child skipped away, leaving him alone. "And so the old fellow's here, too—visiting the little mother," he went on, with a lowering brow. "Have they a mind to rob us of both?"

Midge was right. Albert, coming down from his own room to the parlor, in his Sunday coat, and with nicely brushed hair, found there Mr. Ramsay, Hall and Crawford, in addition to the usual home circle. The first named gentleman sprang up and shook hands with him with a warmth and kindness

that more than half won the lad's heart, in spite of his suspicion of the errand on which he had come, and his more than unwillingness that it should be successful.

Mrs. Rush looked on smilingly. It struck Albert, as he turned to her, that he had never seen her look prettier or more youthful.

"I'm glad you have come," she said to him. "And now I will leave you to entertain Mr. Ramsay for a few minutes, till I go out and see if Aunt Silence is not in need of a little assistance."

"If she is, I can give it as well as you, mother; for 'tisn't likely to be anything but what's more men's or boy's work than a lady's," he answered, moving towards the door.

"No, stay," she said, smilingly. "I want you and this old friend of mine to get acquainted. Sit down and talk to him. I shall not do anything that you or Fred would rather I should not. My boys are very careful and tender of their mother, Mr. Ramsay," she added, as she turned and left the room.

"As they ought to be," he said, giving Albert a look of approval.

"As no decent fellow could help being," answered the boy, almost roughly; again waxing wroth at the thought that this man had come there with the intent to rob them of her; and that another was equally desirous to secure and carry off a still greater treasure.

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Soon after breakfast the next morning the two older ladies of the family were in the dining-room, engaged in the grave discussion of some knotty question in houschold economy, when Elena appeared before them, coming from the front part of the house, and with a face in which amusement and annoyance were strangely blended.

"Well, daughter, what is it?" her mother asked, as she stood waiting, in respectful silence, for a pause in the conversation of her elders.

"Mrs. Biddle, mamma," replied Elena, laughing; "she wants me to take her to town, and help her to select the materials for her wedding dress and bonnet."

"Well, my dear, I suppose you can grant her request; this is one of your more leisure days, and a delightful one for a drive. Fred is going in, and will be glad of his sister's company."

"But, mother, think of going round to all the stores in company with such a fright."

"And cannot my daughter endure a slight mortification for the sake of the luxury of doing a kindness?"

"O mamma, you would not hesitate a moment, I know. I wish I were more like you. Yes, I will go."

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They found their aged neighbor rather tiresome than amusing, prating incessantly of the virtues and attractions of her bridegroom elect.

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"All right." And so they parted; the young men lifting their hats, then moving off in an opposite direction to that taken by Miss Landon and her aged convoy.

The latter returned punctually almost to the minute, and found all three of the former waiting to accompany them home, Fred having invited his chums to go out to the farm to spend the day, or what remained of it.

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Fred, setting the others down at the gate of the

farm-house, politely drove Mrs. Biddle on to her own home, distant half a mile beyond.

Returning, he sought Miss Rush, and delivered the letter he had taken from the post-office.

She was busy dishing up her dinner, and slipped it into her pocket with scarcely a glance at the superscription. There it lay till the table had been cleared away after the meal, the dishes washed, and dining-room and kitchen made neat.

While attending to all these matters, Miss Rush's thoughts had been very busy; principally with the future of those around her.

Fred had already told her of his new-found hopes and joys, giving her a glowing description of his Isabel, and receiving in return her warm sympathy and hearty congratulations. Mr. Ramsay had spent the morning of this day, as of the previous one, in the sitting-room with Mrs. Rush, both he and Crawford had again partaken of the family dinner. She could hear at this moment the merry tones of the voice of the last named, mingling with those of Elena, Fred and Hall, as the four sat in the portico, gaily laughing and chatting, while Albert had gone off to his work again, moody and disconsolate; nor had she failed to notice an occasional furtive glance of jealous dislike bestowed by her nephew upon this new aspirant for Elena's favor.

"It's the old story, that's been actin' over and over ever since the world began, and will till the

end of time, I 'spose," she muttered, as, finding herself at last alone and at leisure, she took her letter from her pocket. Before opening it, she carefully scrutinized the postmark and address.

"I 'spose I'd ought to know that writin', but I don't. Howsomever, I may just as well find out at once who it's from, and what's wanted," she continued, as she tore it open, and began to read.

"Land sakes, 'taint possible!" she cried, on finishing the first sentence. "Yes, it's him, as sure as the world!" turning the page, and glancing at the signature. "Well, I never! 'pears like it's an epidemic—going in the air, as you may say; but who'd a believed 'twould come my turn."

"Conjugal felickcity," said Thad, slowly passing through the room.

"What d'ye mean by that, sir?" asked his aunt, sharply, peering at him over the top of her letter, with indignant reproof in her eyes.

"Oh, nothin', Aunt Silence, only they're such funny words, and keep a runnin' in my head."

"Let 'em run out, then, and done with the nonsense!"

"So I am a doin', Aunt Silence; didn't you hear 'em just now runnin' out o' my mouth?"

"Come, come, sir, that's a little too saucy!"

But the boy was already out of sight and hearing.

The guests remaining through the evening, after tea all gathered in the family sitting-room,

and spent a merry hour or two in playing squalls and authors. All but Albert, who, excusing himself on the plea of weariness, withdrew into a corner, where he sat in silence, jealously watching all that passed between Elena and Crawford, longing the while to kick the latter out of the house, and forbid him ever to enter it again.

He thought himself quite unnoticed and uncared for; but both the little mother and Fred were uneasy and anxious on his account, as was testified by a furtive glance now and then sent in his direction.

"My dear boy, I fear you are working entirely too hard," said Mrs. Rush, laying her hand on his arm, and gazing affectionately into his face, as she bade him good-night; "can't you take a holiday for a little while, and enjoy yourself with the others?"

"Too much to be done, mother," he answered; "but don't worry about me, it's not hurting me a bit."

"I ought to have been helping you," said Fred, coming up, candle in hand; "it's too bad to leave you to work alone. I must go at it to-morrow."

"No, you need a holiday after all that hard work at college—studying and copying too. And I don't grudge it to you, Fred; you know I don't."

"No, I never thought for a moment that you did, Al; but something's wrong with you, old fellow—something more than the work," replied

Fred, following his step-brother into his room, and setting down his candle with the evident intention of having a talk. "Come, out with it, and you may be sure that if I can help you, I will."

"Then don't ask him to come here again."

"Him?"

"Yes, that chum of yours. I can't bear the sight of him, nor the sound of his voice; and I want to knock him down, or turn him out doors and order him off the premises, every time he laughs as if he felt so good and at home, or looks at Lena in that way he has, as if he'd some sort of right in her, which he hasn't, I'm sure."

Fred's eyes were opened, and he wondered that he had been so blind. It was not a pleasant discovery he had made; for though he had a really fraternal affection for Albert, he could not help feeling that his charming sister would be almost thrown away upon him.

He was much puzzled to know what answer to make, but at length said, soothingly, "No, he certainly has no right in her, and you have a brother's; so I think she would say. But it is strange you have taken such a dislike to Crawford. He's really a capital fellow, and almost a universal favorite. If you knew him better, I think it would be impossible for you to close your eyes to his good qualities. We're talking of going hunting one day this week, and fishing next. Wont you go along?"

"No, thank you, not if he's to go too; 'twould spoil all the fun for me."

"Well, if you will stay at home and work, I'm afraid I ought to do the same."

"No, that doesn't follow; and I'd rather you'd go, for 'twill be the only way to keep him from hanging round her all the time. And I couldn't stand it. Lena likes him already a great deal better than she does me."

"Oh, no, Al; that's certainly a mistake. She has a sisterly regard for you, while she only thinks of him as a pleasant fellow to laugh and joke with; he's always full of his fun."

Fred continued his reasoning and persuasion, until he succeeded in gaining Albert's promise to make one of the hunting party two days from that time. The promise was kept, and, after the day's sport, Albert acknowledged that he found Crawford a little more endurable when Elena was not present.

Then one day was given up to fishing, and after that Fred devoted himself to assisting his step-brother in the necessary work of the farm; laboring diligently day after day, while resolutely curbing the impatience he naturally felt for the settlement of his own affairs in regard to Mr. Ramsay's generous offer. He thought it but properly respectful to that gentleman, to wait for him to revive the subject.

Mr. Ramsay's business in Brookville did not

seem to occupy much of his time, for not a day passed without a lengthened visit from him.

None of the older members of the family doubted on what errand he came, but except some private talk between Fred and his sister, no remark was made, no question asked. The little mother was unusually silent, but seemed at all times serenely happy.

Crawford's visits continued to be almost as frequent as Mr. Ramsay's; but in reply to a jesting remark from Miss Rush, Elena said she did not appropriate them to herself; she believed he came to see Fred; and he was so full of mirth and careless gayety, that she doubted if he ever thought seriously on any subject.

Miss Rush smiled, and let the matter drop. She had not spoken to any one of the contents of her letter, but watching Mr. Ramsay and her sister, said to herself that it would not hurt the writer to wait a little, and she would answer it by and by.

Thus one, two, three weeks slipped away, and the suspense he was called to endure was becoming almost intolerable to an ardent, impulsive nature like Fred's.

It was a beautiful, bright morning early in October. The woods had begun to put on their rich autumnal robes; but the grass in the front yard was still green, and the parterres were gorgeous with crimson, purple, scarlet and gold. Elena was wandering here and there among them, gathering

flowers to replenish the vases in the parlor and the pleasant family room.

There the little mother sat, diligently plying her needle, the sunlight, as it came shimmering through the honeysuckle over the window, falling on the rich masses of her beautiful hair, making them look like molten gold; and a lovely smile playing about the sweet mouth, as a ripple of gay, glad, girlish laughter came now and then to her ears; or it might be the silvery tones of Elena's voice in merry repartee, or the deeper ones of Fred and Crawford, who were, somewhat officiously, offering their assistance in the arrangement of the boquets.

For once Fred had lingered behind, and allowed Albert to go to his work alone. He could scarce longer brook this suspense, and felt that he must at least throw himself in Mr. Ramsay's way, if, as usual, he should call that morning.

Presently he saw him coming up the road, and stepping to the gate, he held it respectfully open for him to pass in.

Mr. Ramsay did so, bidding his young friend a kindly "Good-morning." Then pausing, with a hand on Fred's arm, "I fear I have been trying your patience sorely," he said, with a slight tremble in his voice. "I could not well help it, but I think the crisis has come. Fred, my dear boy, you have great influence with your mother; you—you will not use it against me? Remember my

long, weary waiting—twenty-two years, lad; *twenty-two long, weary years!* She has told you the story of—of our early acquaintance?”

“Yes, Mr. Ramsay; and—and I think your long-tried faithfulness has shown you worthy of her,—the best little woman that ever lived. You need fear no opposition from me or my sister. We would have opposed the second marriage, had we been consulted. It was hard indeed to know that she had resigned our honored father's name; but—since she can no longer wear it—I would rather she wore yours than any other.”

“Thank you, lad; a thousand thanks. You shall never have cause to repent of consenting that she should give me the right to call you my son.”

He wrung Fred's hand as he spoke, then hurried into the house, without knocking, for doors and windows stood invitingly open, the day being a very warm one for the season.

Mrs. Rush looked up as he came into the room where she sat alone, and stepped quickly toward her. Her eyes fell as they met the eager look in his, and read in them what was coming, and a rich color mantled her cheek.

He drew a chair to her side; he leaned over her, and his voice was low and pleading in its deep bass tones, as he said, “Helen, Helen, have you forgotten the past? I thought you were lost to me forever on earth, but I could not tear your image from my heart, and learn to love another.

Ah, dearest, these twenty-two long, weary years of waiting—are they not enough?" pleaded he, very earnestly.

"I was not worth the sacrifice of the best years of your life, Henry," she answered, low and tremulously.

"A thousand times, Helen! But now you will reward me, and give me a right to do all that is in my heart for you and your dear children?"

"Henry, I once engaged to be a mother to those also, and to Albert," she said, glancing from the window at Thad and Maggie, busied together over some flowers they were transplanting to house for the winter, "and I cannot go back from my word."

"I don't ask it; I do not wish it. I have a large house, a large and well-filled purse, and a large heart, too, I hope—room enough in each for them all. But give me the priceless treasure I crave, Helen, and I will care for you and them while I live."

"And Silence?"

"Room for her too, good, honest soul! Room for all. O Helen."

He held out his hand entreatingly, as he spoke. She let the work fall into her lap, and silently—but with a world of love and trust in the eyes, half filled with tears, which she lifted to his—laid hers, so small and white, in his broad open palm.

With a thrill of delight, he clasped his fingers

over it, and lifted it to his lips. "At last, at last!" he murmured in tones tremulous with emotion.

"O Henry, yours is indeed a large, warm, loving heart," she said; and as he dropped on one knee by her side, threw his arm about her, and drew her head to a resting-place on his broad heaving breast. "This is rest; ah, I think I shall be as happy as I ever was."

"God bless you for those words, my own Helen," he answered, with deep tenderness.

But the sound of gay young voices and approaching footsteps recalled them from love's elysium to the sober realities of this present life. Mr. Ramsay resumed his seat, and the little mother her sewing, as Elena came tripping in with hands filled with flowers, and followed by Crawford and her brother.

No further opportunity for private conversation; but a glance at the faces of his elders told Fred how matters stood, and a whispered word to Elena, as she placed her flowers in the vases, caused her to carry Crawford off to the garden again to assist her in gathering seeds.

Thus left alone with Fred and his mother, Mr. Ramsay unfolded his plans to them in detail. There was nothing now to interfere with his wishes in regard to the son of the woman he had wooed and won.

"She has given, or is going soon to give me a right in you, my boy," he said, clapping Fred affectionately on the shoulder; "and since we are all to

live together, there will be no difficulty in sharing the pleasure of your society."

"I'm glad to hear it, sir," returned Fred, warmly; and his mother's eyes shone with pleasure.

"From this time forward I shall, as a matter of course, look upon you and Elena as my own children." Mr. Ramsay went on, "And I adopt the Rushes also. I intend to take you all on to New York city, and give you a home there, with your mother and me, which I think you will find pleasant. Aunt Silence shall go with us, if she will. Albert shall go to Princeton, if he likes, and afterwards I shall give him any profession, or set him up in any business, he may fancy. I shall also educate the younger ones, and settle them in life; if my means are continued to me. I have found a man who would like at once to rent this farm, house, furniture and everything, just as they are. And now, Helen, what's to hinder an immediate carrying out of these plans? Can't you pack up to-day, marry me to-morrow morning, and let us all leave in the noon train for the East?"

"Henry, are you crazy?" she asked, in utter astonishment.

"Not a bit of it. What's the use of delay? Delays are dangerous, as I have found to my cost. I lost you once by waiting to grow a little richer before I asked you; and do you wonder that now I am in great haste to secure my prize? Besides, my

business is hurrying me. I have been too long away from it already. Come, Helen, do be kind, and let my long waited-for happiness begin at once. You and I have lived long enough to care but little for orange blossoms and all that. I will be only too glad to take you in any dress you have, and the trousseau can be bought in New York, when we get there."

"Certainly something very plain and quiet would be far more suitable than white satin and orange blossoms, for the nuptial attire of the mother of this great boy," said Mrs. Rush, smiling up at her son; "but indeed, Henry, a *week* would be a very short time in which to make merely the absolutely necessary preparations for the fitting of a whole family."

After a little more discussion, it was settled that a week it should be; and Fred was raised to the seventh heaven by a proposal from Mr. Ramsay, warmly seconded by his mother, that he should spend the greater part of the intervening time at Hamilton with his betrothed.

He set off the next morning after Aunt Silence, Albert and Elena had been made acquainted with the new aspect of affairs.

"It's just as I expected, and I'm heartily glad for your sake, sister Helen," Miss Silence answered, when with some hesitation, a few blushes, and many fears of raising a storm, Mrs. Rush had told her strange tidings. "Yes, I saw how things were

going; but I had no idea you'd think of keeping the children, or that he'd be willing you should. He's the most generous man I ever heard tell of."

"He is the very soul of generosity," responded the bride elect, with a beautiful look of mingled love, joy and pride, shining out of her violet eyes.

"And to think of his asking *me* too; it's perfectly astonishing, and what I never could have dreamed of!" continued Miss Silence.

"Then you will come, won't you? I shall be very glad to have you."

"I'd like to, Helen, for I've grown wonderfully fond of you and your children; to say nothing of what I feel for Ullman's; but I've made other arrangements,—leastwise I'm going to. He's asked me again—a fellow that I gave the mitten to once, a good many years back. He's a widower, and needs a mother to look after his children, he says, and—and I thought if a little frail thing like you could stand marrying *three* times, a big stout, strong woman, like me could surely bear it once."

She turned away, a little shame-faced and embarrassed.

But her sister's arms were round her neck.

"Dear Silence, I am so glad for you," she whispered; "a good husband will make you very happy, I think, and you richly deserve it for all your kindness to me and mine."

"Tut! Who could be anything but kind to you, if they hadn't a heart o' stone?" cried Miss Silence,

with a hug, that well nigh took Mrs. Rush's breath away.

Fred returned to the wedding, of course. It was a very quiet one, in their own parlor, with no invited guests but the minister and his wife. The trunks were already packed, every preparation had been made for the journey; the bride wore her travelling dress, and an hour after the ceremony saw them all on their way eastward.

Mr. Ramsay's wedding gift to his wife was a roll of paper, which she placed in her satchel, and opened for the first time when they were in the carriage that was taking them to the depot at Brookville.

"What! my dear seaside cottage-home my own again?" she cried, with flushing cheek, and sparkling eyes. Oh, Henry, how kind! How very, *very* kind! How my children will rejoice."

How he enjoyed her delight.

"It has been rented furnished, has been well taken care of, and is, I hope, almost exactly as you left it," he said, pressing her hand in his. "I sent directions to my housekeeper, a week ago, to go down and see that everything was in order for your reception; and if you like, we will spend a part of our honeymoon there; staying as long as the days are bright and warm."

"Like it, my kindest of friends! Nothing could please me better."

At the depot they found Hall, Crawford, and

some few other friends, waiting to bid them adieu, and see them off.

"How very lovely she looks," Crawford said, in an undertone, to Elena, glancing at Mrs. Ramsay, who, with her newly made husband, was seated on the farther side of the room, waiting for the coming of the train. "So utterly different from the bride we saw last. There could not possibly be a greater contrast," he added, smiling at the recollection of the odd appearance of the little, dried-up, sallow, wrinkled creature they had seen led to the altar a week ago, to be changed from Mrs. Biddle to Mrs. Barlow.

"Yes, indeed," Elena answered, with a merry look and tone. "And it just strikes me that both have done that unlucky thing—changed the name and not the letter. But, ah, I can't believe that mamma's will prove to have been 'for the worse and not the better.' See how he is looking at her."

"Yes, he looks as happy as a king; and well he may. Elena"—and he leaned over her, sinking his voice almost to a whisper—"don't you—don't you think we—you and I—might get up a little—or rather a good deal of '*conjugal felickcity*' between us? I should feel that it was a great deal just to have you always by my side."

"Always jesting, Mr. Crawford. A few years hence I may begin to think of such things," she answered, lightly, rising hastily, as every one else

was doing, at the sound of the rush and roar of the rapidly approaching train. But catching his eye, its ardent gaze disconcerted her. Hers fell beneath it, and she blushed crimson.

But Fred was at her side, drawing her hand into his arm, and there was only time for a very hasty good-bye, as he hurried her away. She dropped her veil to hide her burning cheeks, and would not even glance from the car window, though Midget plucked her by the sleeve, crying out, "Look, look, Lena! there's Mr. Crawford kissing his hand to you."

"Pshaw! What a blundering fool I was, to take such a time for it," he muttered to himself, as the train again went thundering on its way.

Elena was strangely quiet and thoughtful for the rest of that day, but seemed to recover her accustomed light-hearted gayety as they drew near their journey's end.

Nothing could better have pleased her or Fred, than to find themselves once more in the dear home of their childhood, as they did a few days later.

As the sun drew near his setting, on the afternoon of their arrival, Fred invited his sister and Albert to a stroll upon the beach.

The little mother and her loving spouse watched them from the pretty vine-covered porch, as they wandered leisurely along, Thad and Midget dancing, gambolling, racing on before.

Fred was in buoyant spirits, Albert serenely happy, now that Crawford was a thousand miles away, and he and Fred had Elena all to themselves; while she was gay and glad as any child.

"Oh, how sweet it is to be at home again, and to listen once more to the music of the waves!" she cried. "I liked the West; I enjoyed myself right well out there; but I was born here, played here in my happy, happy childhood, and there's no place like home."

"No, no place like home," echoed Fred. "And yet it is all our country; North and South, East and West; it is all our own dear native land. The land of freedom; her liberties a precious legacy from our forefathers, bought with their blood and toil, and bequeathed to us, their children, to be watched over and guarded with jealous care," he added, with sudden gravity and deep earnestness. "May God help her sons to be faithful to the trust!"

CHAPTER XXI.

AROUND THE FIRESIDE.

SOME moments of thoughtful silence, broken by a remark from Elena.

"Your words carry me back to revolutionary times, Fred; and that reminds me that I have been wanting to ask the children what the story was which Mr. Ramsay was telling them the other day. I overheard just enough to whet my appetite for more."

"Why not ask himself?" returned her brother.

"Why, yes, so I will. He is so kind, that, I dare say, he would not think it a trouble to repeat it."

The day, beautifully bright and very warm for the season, was succeeded by an evening so cool as to make a glowing grate in the cosy family sitting-room of the cottage look very attractive. They all gathered about it in the gloaming—to use a pretty Scotch word—and Midge, climbing upon Mr. Ramsay's knee, asked coaxingly to hear again the story he had told her and Thad a few days before.

"What, the same old thing again?" he asked, stroking her hair, and playfully pinching her round, rosy cheek.

"Yes, sir; it's good enough to hear two times, I'm sure. And the other folks haven't heard it at all."

"And perhaps don't want to hear it at all."

"I do, sir, for one," said Elena. "I was thinking of asking you to repeat it, if it would not be too much trouble."

"No trouble, my dears, if it will give you pleasure to hear it. It is merely a little incident that occurred during our Revolutionary war, and at the time the British occupied Trenton. I had it not long since, from a friend whose grandmother, or great grandmother, was one of the principal actors in the little drama.

"The Hessians used to go into the houses of the American patriots, demand food, and after having satisfied their appetites, amuse themselves by plundering their unwilling entertainers; carrying off whatever they fancied of their furniture and effects, and wantonly breaking, or otherwise destroying what they did not see fit to appropriate to their own use.

"The lady I have spoken of was then a young girl in her father's house. There was an eight-day clock belonging to the family, and highly valued by them. I presume particularly so by this young girl; for a party of Hessians coming in one

day, and showing some intention of laying violent hands on it, she stepped before it, and flashing a look of defiance at them out of her bright black eyes, cried, 'You shall cut my head off before you injure this clock.' "

"I guess she wouldn't 'a liked it much if they had," interrupted Maggie.

"No, I reckon not, Midge," laughed Mr. Ramsay; "but they didn't. Such cowardly ruffians are apt to quail before such a brave determined spirit, even when shown by only a woman. The officer bade his men, 'Let the little devil keep her clock, and don't touch anything in the house.' And they went away leaving the family and their goods unharmed."

"That was a nice story, but such a little one," said Midge. "Wont you please tell another?"

"Another? What about?"

"Indians," suggested Thad, drawing his chair closer to that of the old gentleman.

"Indians," repeated Mr. Ramsay, reflectively, "yes, I can tell you a true story of that sort which has never appeared in print, and therefore, I presume, will be entirely new to all present. I do not know the exact date of the scenes I am about to describe, but think they must have taken place about the time of, or very shortly after the close of the Revolutionary war.

"Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky were then a howling wilderness, without towns or villages, proba-

bly without a single white inhabitant—all forests and prairies, tenanted only by wild beasts and savages.

“What a wonderful change something less than a hundred years have wrought,” he remarked, turning, with his proud and happy smile, to the sweet and lovely little lady by his side. “Think of the great cities and the myriads of towns and villages, teeming with busy, bustling life—of the splendid steamboats, and hundreds of smaller craft, that ply incessantly up and down the rivers, especially the Ohio—of the railroads, carrying to and fro their hundreds of thousands of passengers—and how difficult it is to go back, even in imagination, to the time I speak of, and realize the difference—the navigation of that grand river impeded by snags, its banks clothed with thick forests, whose silence was seldom broken by other sounds than the songs of the birds, the whoop of the Indian, or the scream of the wild-cat.”

“Yes,” she said, returning his smile, “it is a wonderful change, and very hard to realize; but, like the children, I am eager for your story.”

“Ah, yes; I will proceed with it without any further preface. Its hero was then a mere lad—perhaps eighteen or nineteen years of age—but tall and broad-shouldered—for he came of no pigmy race—and remarkably handsome too, it is said. He belonged to the numerous family of Browns, and we will call him Andy. His father was a well-

to-do farmer of Western Pennsylvania. There were a good many sons. Andy, I think, must have been one of the younger ones. There was a sister too, named Mary, a very lovely young creature, with a fair and rosy complexion, a wealth of golden-brown curls, and great liquid blue eyes. One day Andy came in and told her he was going down the Ohio river in a keel-boat bound for Louisiana with a cargo of dry-goods.

"Mary's cheek grew pale with fear as she thought of the long and perilous journey.

"'O Andy,' she cried, clasping her little white hands together, while the tears rushed to her eyes, 'will you ever live to get back? Think of the snags in the river; the boat might strike on one and sink so suddenly that you would not have time to escape drowning. And think of the woods so full of savage Indians, thirsting for the blood of the white man.'

"'We will go well armed, little sister,' he answered, 'and travelling only by day, will be able to see and avoid the snags.'

"'But at night, when you stop and moor your boat?'

"'Then we must watch for the Indians, and be ready to give them a warm welcome when they come.'

"'But they will hide behind trees and rocks, and perhaps shoot you down with a bullet or a poisoned arrow, before you even suspect their approach.'

“Ah, but we must be careful to select a spot that will furnish no ambush for our bloody foes.’

“‘You are quite determined to go, Andy?’

“‘Yes, Mary, dear, the thing is settled; and besides, I would not draw back now if I could.’

“‘You don’t believe the dangers are real?’

“‘I know they are. But you would not have your brother a coward?’

“Her answer came in a very low, tremulous, sorrowful ‘No, Andy, never,’ as she clung about his neck, with the tears slowly trickling down her cheeks.

“Mary’s sleep was broken that night, and more than once she awoke with a start and cry of terror, as she seemed to hear the savage war-whoop, or to see an Indian swinging his tomahawk over her brother’s head, or with a yell of fiendish triumph waving his bloody scalp high in the air.

“Mary had no mother; her father was, I think, rather a reserved and quiet man, and Andy, perhaps, her favorite brother.

“Of course it was a very sad parting when the time came that he must go, and when she had seen the last of him, the only comfort that poor Mary had left was in the thought that she could pray for his safety, and that God was able to take care of him wherever he went.”

“I think I should like to have been in Andy’s place,” remarked Fred; “there must be a very pleasurable sort of excitement about such a jour-

ney as that. Ours are but tame affairs in comparison."

"My boy, however you may feel about it, your mother is very glad they are," said Mrs. Ramsay.

"Oh, please, wont you go on?" begged Maggie.

"Yes, my dear. The next thing we hear of Andy, he was on his boat, in company with a number of other men, I do not know how many; but there must have been several. They floated with the current, and probably also made more or less use of poles and oars; yet their progress was but slow, on account of the presence of the numerous snags compelling them to move with caution during the day, and to lie by entirely at night.

"They had also to be constantly on their guard against the Indians, both day and night, lest the wily savages should seize upon some opportunity to board their boat, or fire upon them from the land.

"One evening, when they had, as usual, moored their boat near the shore, the men got at the whiskey, which in those days always formed a part of the cargo of every such craft.

"Andy had no love for the 'fire-water,' as the Indians call it, and he begged the others to let it alone; reminding them that if they became drunk, they would be unable to defend their property or themselves against the savages, should they attack them that night, of which, of course, there was great danger.

“But they only laughed at his fears, and went on drinking, till at length they were all completely overcome, and lay about the deck, sleeping the heavy sleep of utter intoxication.

“Poor Andy did not venture to close an eye, but kept up a vigilant watch for the coming of the dreaded foe. Slowly he paced the deck, to and fro, straining his eyes to pierce the darkness of the dense forest, stretching away for miles upon miles on the nearer shore. It did not reach the water's edge; a strip of sand, some yards in width, lay between; so that there must be some little warning, if an attack were about to be made; yet he sighed to think how little that would avail in the present condition of his fool-hardy companions.

“The stillness seemed awful; yet much to be preferred to the hideous screech of an owl, or the cry of a panther, by which, at intervals, it was broken. Young Brown shuddered in spite of himself, as one more prolonged, and seemingly nearer than any that had preceded it, suddenly struck upon his ear. Then a dark object seemed to be moving among the trees, drawing cautiously nearer to the boat. Was it man or beast? He could not tell; but his gun was brought to his shoulder in readiness to fire, and at the same time he endeavored to rouse his nearest companion by a not too gentle movement of his foot.

“In vain; the potatoes had been much too deep,

and for all the assistance that could be hoped from him or any of the others, Andy might as well have been utterly alone. He saw and felt it, desisted from his effort, and at the same instant the air was rent by a wild, unearthly yell that seemed to come from a hundred throats, as a large party of Indians, with the war-paint on their faces, dashed out of the forest, and made a sudden descent upon the boat.

"Brown dropped his gun, and quietly resigned himself to his fate. Resistance against such odds was plainly useless, and to kill or wound one or more of them, would be but to increase their rage and hate, and so insure a more terrible fate for himself and his comrades. He saw them quickly despatched, their reeking scalps dangling high in the air on the points of the spears of the Indian braves, while at the same instant he himself was seized, dragged to the shore, and bound hand and foot. Tomahawks were brandished over his head, and he closed his eyes to shut out the dreadful sights, longing to be able to close his ears also to the hideous sounds, and expecting every moment to share the fate of his companions.

"Great was the exultation of the savages. They rifled the boat of all its contents, including the 'fire-water,' which they seized upon with as great delight, and drank with as keen a relish as if their skins had been white.

"It did not, however, exert any civilizing or

humanizing effect upon them. Nay, with every draught they quaffed they grew more and more like demons in countenance, gestures and actions. Louder, shriller, and wilder grew the war-whoops, and fiercer and faster the war-dance about their helpless victim, till he almost thought himself surrounded by the very inhabitants of the bottomless pit. One rushed upon him, and burying his fists in his hair, tore it out by the double handful, and not satisfied with that, took his teeth to it also. Then another seized a burning brand, from a fire they had kindled on the ground near by, and with it pounded the sore and quivering flesh.

“Andy bore it all without a groan, but thought that now indeed his last hour had come. Yet, not so; they continued to torture, but did not kill him.

“What a night it was. Did the loving sister at home dream again those dreadful dreams? I cannot tell; but surely she had not forgotten to pray for her absent brother before she laid her head on its pillow.

“Morning came at last, but brought no relief. The Indians took up their march again, and forced their wretched captive to accompany them. It was well for him then that he was strong and healthy, and able to endure a great amount of exertion and fatigue, for had he become so utterly exhausted that even blows, pricks and goads could not force him onward, doubtless a tomahawk buried in his brain would have speedily put an end to his life.

"As it was, his sufferings, both mental and physical, were terrible. The cords with which his limbs were tied cut deep into the flesh, and they were never removed or loosened. All day long he was forced to drag himself wearily onward, through pathless forests, where his bare and bleeding feet were torn by thorns and briars, his face stung by insects, which he could make no effort to drive away, his hands being bound, or wounded by coming in contact with branches which he could not put aside.

"Sometimes the way lay across an open prairie; but it was only a change from one species of torture to another; for then the fierce rays of the summer sun beat pitilessly upon his unprotected head, denuded of its natural covering, and still sore from the blows of the burning brand.

"But the worst of all that terrible journey was when they drew near an Indian village, and he was compelled to run the gauntlet."

"What was that, sir?" asked Thad.

"I will explain," said Mr. Ramsay.

"When they were nearing a village, word would be sent forward that the braves were returning from the war-path, bringing one or more prisoners with them. Then all the old men, women and children, who had been left behind, would sally forth rejoicing, each armed with whatever missile he could lay his hands upon—club, tomahawk, or spear—and range themselves in two long rows, leaving an

open path between. Down this path the prisoner was forced to run, every one giving him a blow as he passed. Sometimes they finished him before he reached the end. Through this ordeal our hero was compelled to pass, once or oftener, yet escaped with life.

"At last they arrived at their destination, and here new trials awaited him. A council was called to decide how they should finally dispose of him. The braves seated themselves in a circle upon the ground, a pipe was filled and lighted, each smoked it in turn, and now and then one or another rose and made a speech.

"The prisoner was within hearing, and understood the language sufficiently to gather the meaning of much that was said. Imagine his horror, when he became aware that they were discussing the question of burning him alive.

"For three days the council lasted, and he had almost given himself up for lost, when, by a wonderful interposition of Providence, his life was saved.

"Indian women are not, I think, very apt to be merciful; but there was one whose heart was touched by the sight of Andy's sufferings, while the patience and fortitude with which they were borne, joined to the beauty and nobility of his handsome features, won her ardent admiration.

"Oh, you needn't exchange glances and smiles, young folks, thinking you are about to be treated

to a genuine love story. This was not the tender passion, its subject a beautiful Indian maid. She was a woman of mature years, and great influence; in fact the queen of the tribe; and it was a maternal instinct that drew her toward the forlorn young 'pale-face.'

"She made her speech, and his heart warmed toward her as he heard the eloquent words, telling of her grief and desolation, because of the death of the brave young chief, her son, slain by the cruel whites, extolling his virtues, bewailing her loss, and winding up by declaring her determination to adopt this young captive in his stead."

"Oh, good!" cried Midge, clapping her hands. "But did they let her, those big, cruel men Indians?"

"Yes, child, they did, and she took him to her wigwam, released him from his bonds, bound up his wounds, and fed him with the best she had. He was with her three years, and she always treated him with great kindness. She soon found out that he did not like rum, and when the Indians were enjoying their potations, she would treat him to a great lump of maple sugar."

"Oh, that was nice," said Midge. "I'm sure maple sugar is enough better than rum."

"Why, Midge, I'm sure you never tasted rum," said Fred. "Did you?"

"No; course I didn't, Fred, but I know it's bad, and maple sugar's real good. But won't you please

tell the rest, Mr. Ramsay? What else did she do to him?"

"When drunken Indians came about, she used to hide him till they went away again. She was so kind, that he became strongly attached to her, yet of course he could not feel willing to resign himself to such a life, giving up civilization, home, friends, and kindred. He was ever longing for these, and constantly on the watch for an opportunity to escape. Yet so vigilant were his foes, that it was long before any presented itself. I dare say, that in the earlier part of his captivity he made some futile attempts, which only increased the severity and watchfulness of the Indians; but as time passed on, and he seemed to grow contented with his lot, they became less wary and suspicious, and allowed him a trifle more of liberty.

"Indians lead a roving life, and as they moved from place to place, pitching their wigwams now here, now there, at length the long-wished for chance came and was eagerly seized upon by our hero. They had reached a new camping-ground, and, as was not unusual, Brown was sent out in company with some of the women and children to collect fuel from the surrounding forest. At first he kept tolerably near to his companions and the camp; but gradually he withdrew farther and farther, now breaking off a dead branch here, now gathering one up there, with every movement widening the distance between him and them; yet

in such a way that even if observed he could not be convicted of an intention to escape.

"At last, a hurried, eager glance from side to side, satisfying him that he was out of sight of all, he suddenly dropped his load, and set off on a run for life and liberty.

"It was not very long before he was missed. At once a great hue and cry arose, and several fleet-footed Indians started in hot pursuit.

"But our hero too was fleet of foot, young, brave and strong, and had already the start of them by perhaps an hour or more. Besides, how much there was to spur him on to almost superhuman effort—behind him captivity and probable torture and death; before him freedom, home and loved ones. He strained every nerve to distance and elude his pursuers, and at length succeeded."

"Oh, then did he get home?" asked Midge, drawing a sigh of relief.

"Not yet, little one," answered Mr. Ramsay; "hundreds of miles of howling wilderness still lay between him and it, and alone, on foot, without provisions, fire-arms, or any kind of weapons with which to defend himself against savage Indians or wild beasts, you will perceive that he had many perils to encounter by the way. His sufferings too, from hunger, fatigue, and exposure must have been very great; enough, I should think, to tempt a weaker spirit to give up and lie down and die in despair."

"Could he get anything to eat?" asked Midge.

"He must have lived principally upon roots and berries, yet he may have been able to trap some of the smaller kinds of game," said Mr. Ramsay; "somehow he managed to find enough to keep soul and body together, and to give him strength to travel onward, till at last his weary limbs brought him in sight of the settlement where his father lived."

"Then did he start and run right to the house?" asked Thad. "Oh, my, how glad they must have been to see him!"

"No, my boy," said the old gentleman; "he did not rush home in that sudden fashion. As he drew near, his thoughts were full of the dear ones from whom he had not heard one word for three long years; and trembling between hope and fear, he asked himself, 'Shall I find them all there as when I left? Is my dear grey-haired old father yet alive? Will my sweet sister meet me at the door? Are my brave, strong brothers yet an unbroken band?' Ah, not one of these questions could he answer, and his heart failed him. He dared not go at once to his father's door, but turning aside, knocked at that of a near neighbor and intimate friend.

"He was hospitably invited to enter, then to sit down and rest, and afterward partake of the bountiful meal the good wife was preparing.

"'You look footsore and weary, stranger,' she said, in gentle, kindly tones, 'have had a long

tramp, no doubt. Have you been on a hunt? But, no; for where's your gun?'

"His features worked with emotion, and she scanned him from head to foot with suddenly excited and eager curiosity.

"'Indians!' was the only word he was able to utter.

"'Injuns!' she cried, dropping the knife with which she was turning her corn-cakes; 'are they on the war-path? nigh the settlement?' He shook his head, then started up.

"'Mrs. West, don't you know me?'

"'What? 'Taint Andy Brown? Oh, then God be praised! We all thought the Injuns had murdered you more than three years ago.'

"She caught him in her arms, hugged him and cried over him as if he had been her own son.

"The noise of her weeping and exclamations speedily brought husband, sons, and daughters upon the scene. Their joy over the returned wanderer seemed scarcely less than hers, and in their excitement they plied him with many eager questions.

"But first he must know of his dear ones. They had all been spared to him, were all well, but had long mourned for him as dead. Ah, what untold relief to his anxiety! He could now rest for an hour where he was, appease the gnawings of hunger with the tempting viands hospitably pressed upon his acceptance, and satisfy the curiosity of

these sympathizing friends by a brief history of his captivity and escape.

"They gathered about him to listen, one sweet, pretty little girl taking her station behind his chair. As he went on with his narrative, the child's tender feelings were so touched by the recital of his sufferings that the tears streamed over her cheeks, and at length she sobbed aloud.

"He heard her, turned round, and drew her to his knee, tenderly soothing her distress."

"I'd like to have been her," said Midge; "for I'm sure he was nice and kind. But, oh, I'm in a hurry for him to get home to Mary."

"He was soon there," said Mr. Ramsay; "they could not keep him long at Mr. West's, you may be sure. As soon as his tale was told, he bade his kind entertainers good-bye, and hastened on his way. He had not very far to go; I believe Mr. Brown's farm was adjoining that of Mr. West. Yet doubtless it seemed to him a weary while ere he reached the gate, and passing up the path that led to the house, stood once more in the old, familiar porch, knocking with eager, trembling hand at his own father's door.

"Oh, how often in the days and years of that dreadful captivity fancy had drawn bright pictures of this home-coming! Could it be but fancy's picture now? Would it vanish like the bright fantasy of a dream, and he awake again to the terrible realities of that hideous past?"

"No, the door has opened, and his sister's sweet, wondering blue eyes are looking full into his. One instant of their eager questioning, then a wild cry, and her arms are clinging about his neck, and she is sobbing on his breast. The lost is found, the dead restored to life again. But how shall I describe her joy, or that of the grey-haired sire, as he strains to his beating heart this son, so long mourned for as one numbered with the dead; or that of the brothers, who, brave, strong, bronzed and bearded men though they be, yet grasp his hand with an emotion, that heaves their broad breasts, sends a tell-tale moisture to their eyes, and will scarce suffer them to speak one word of the loving welcome that trembles on their tongues?"

"Well, I'm glad he did get home safe at last," cried Midge.

"And so am I," said Thad. "But did the Indians ever get him again?"

"No; yet my story is not quite done. Now comes its bit of romance. The pretty little girl who wept so bitterly over poor Andy's sufferings, and whom he took on his knee and comforted, grew up into a charming young lady, and one day he asked her to be his wife. I don't know whether she said yes just at first or not, but she did finally, and they were married."

"What a very nice conclusion for your story, Mr. Ramsay," said Elena. "It was exceedingly

interesting, and I think we all owe you a vote of thanks."

"Yes, it was real nice; but I wish you'd tell another," said Maggie, in her most coaxing tones.

"My child, you will tire our kind friend out," observed the little mother.

"Oh no," said he; "it gives me pleasure to gratify the little ones, and as another story has just recurred to my recollection, and the clock on the mantel there says it still wants half an hour to tea-time, I will proceed to relate it at once.

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"Only one door, and one window to the whole house!" exclaimed Elena. "What a disagreeable, gloomy abode it must have been."

"Rather dark and gloomy in the winter time, I dare say," replied Mr. Ramsay, "though cheerful enough in warm, bright weather, when both door and window could be allowed to stand open. But in those times of constant danger from wild beasts, and savages, it would not do for a man to make too many openings in his sheltering walls. They might serve to admit far less welcome visitors than light and air.

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"That was not the unimportant affair it is with us; for it involved a journey of several miles, following a mere bridle path through dense forests, where a panther might suddenly drop from a tree upon a man's shoulders, fasten its cruel fangs in his neck, and suck his life blood ere he could free himself from the fearful load; or a prowling Indian start up in his path, or send a bullet through his brain from the covert of some bush or tree. Was it any wonder if a shade of anxiety rested on the wife's face; or if she detained her husband a moment for a parting caress, and looked after him

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Elena turned to her brother.

"Just tell him the truth as kindly as you can,—that you like him as a friend, but don't care for

him in any other way," he answered to her perplexed and troubled look. "And don't be too much concerned about him; he'll get over it—probably console himself with another pretty face before the month is out. He's not of the sort to take such things very deeply to heart—not yet, at least—and he is, as you say, quite too young for you. A man ought to be three or four years older than his wife."

A smile trembled about Elena's pretty mouth, for an instant, as she remarked, demurely, "That is the difference between you and Isabel, is it not?"

"Yes," he said, laughing and coloring. "What better proof could you ask? Nobody could be happier than we are."

"When you and she have lived together some five or ten years, such words will come with more weight from your lips, Fred," said his mother, looking much amused.

"But that would be too late to assist my sister in the present emergency," he answered, coloring still more deeply. "Unfortunately, we've a good while to wait before we even begin the five or ten years."

"Unfortunately," repeated his mother, coming to his side, and leaning with her clasped hands upon his shoulder, whilst she looked up lovingly into his face; "don't fret, my dear boy, over what your mother cannot help feeling to be a cause of rejoicing. I am not yet ready to resign my children to

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others. It will be hard enough when the time comes. So let me be glad now that I may keep you both a little longer."

His smile was very tender and sweet as he returned her loving look, and passing his hand caressingly over her shining hair, said in a low, moved tone: "No, darling little mother, I will not fret at anything that adds to your happiness. And after all, what treasure so priceless as a mother's unselfish, undying love."

THE END

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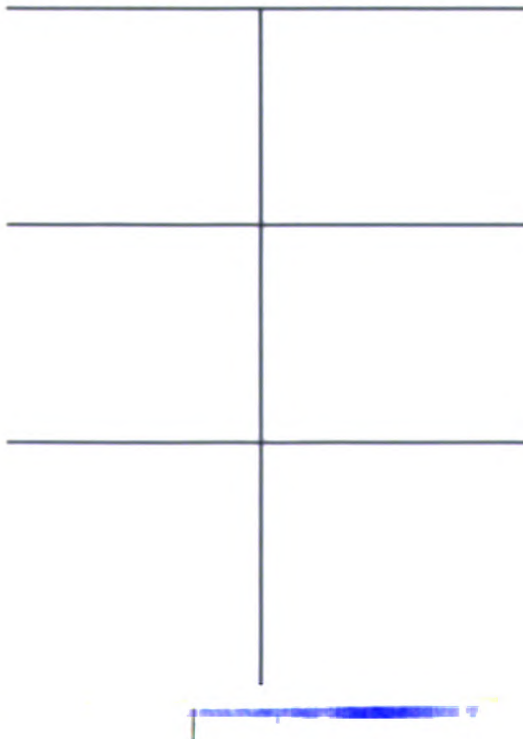
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