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**** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HECTOR'S INHERITANCE ****

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HECTOR'S INHERITANCE
OR
THE BOYS OF SMITH INSTITUTE

By Horatio Alger, Jr.

Author of "Eric Train Boy" "Young Acrobat," "Only an Irish Boy," "Bound to Rise," "The Young Outlaw," "Driven from Home" etc.

Contents

HECTOR'S INHERITANCE.

CHAPTER I. MR. ROSCOE RECEIVES TWO LETTERS.

Mr. Roscoe rang the bell, and, in answer, a servant entered the library, where he sat before a large and commodious desk.

"Has the mail yet arrived?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; John has just come back from the village."

"Go at once and bring me the letters and papers, if there are any."

John bowed and withdrew.

Mr. Roscoe walked to the window, and looked thoughtfully out upon a smooth, luxuriant lawn and an avenue of magnificent trees, through which carriages were driven to what was popularly known as Castle Roscoe. Everything, even to the luxuriously appointed room in which he sat, indicated wealth and the ease which comes from affluence.

Mr. Roscoe looked around him with exultation.

"And all this may be mine," he said to himself, "if I am only bold. What is it old Pindar says? 'Boldness is the beginning of victory.' I have forgotten nearly all I learned in school, but I remember that. There is some risk, perhaps, but not much, and I owe something to my son—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of the servant with a small leather bag, which was used to hold mail matter, going from or coming to the house.

The servant unlocked the bag, and emptied the contents on the desk. There were three or four papers and two letters. It was the last which attracted Mr. Roscoe's attention.

We will take the liberty of looking over Mr. Roscoe's shoulder as he reads the first. It ran as follows:

"DEAR SIR:-I am in receipt of your favor, asking my terms for boarding pupils. For pupils of fifteen or over, I charge five hundred dollars per year, which is not a large sum considering the exceptional advantages presented by Inglewood School. My pupils are from the best families, and enjoy a liberal table. Moreover, I employ competent teachers, and guarantee rapid progress, when the student is of good, natural capacity, and willing to work.

"I think you will agree with me that it is unwise to economize when the proper training of a youth is in question, and that a cheap school is little better than no school at all.

"I have only to add that I shall be most happy to receive your young nephew, if you decide to send him to me, and will take personal pains to promote his advancement. I remain, dear sir, your obedient servant,

"DIONYSIUS KADIX."

Mr. Roscoe threw the letter down upon the desk with an impatient gesture.

"Five hundred dollars a year!" he exclaimed. "What can the man be thinking of? Why, when I went to school, twenty-five years since, less than half this sum was charged. The man is evidently rapacious. Let me see what this other letter says."

The second letter was contained in a yellow envelope, of cheap texture, and was much more plebeian in appearance than the first.

Again we will look over Mr. Roscoe's shoulder, and read what it contains. It was postmarked Smithville, and the envelope was disfigured by a blot. It commenced:

"DEAR SIR:-It gives me pleasure to answer your inquiries respecting my school. I have about fifty pupils, part of whom, say one-third, are boarders. Though I say it myself, it will be hard to find any school where more thorough instruction is given. I look upon my pupils as my children, and treat them as such. My system of government is, therefore, kind and parental, and my pupils are often homesick in vacation, longing for the time to come when they can return to their studies at Smith Institute. It is the dearest wish of Mrs. Smith and myself to make our young charges happy, and to advance them, by pleasant roads over flowery meads, to the inner courts of knowledge.

"Humbug!" muttered Mr. Roscoe. "I understand what all that means." He continued:

"I hope you will not consider three hundred dollars per annum too much for such parental care. Considering the present high price of provisions, it is really as low a price as we can afford to receive.

"I shall be glad if you consider my letter favorable and decide to place your nephew under my charge. Yours respectfully,

"SOCRATES SMITH, A. M."

"That is more reasonable," said Mr. Roscoe, to himself, as he laid down the letter.

"Three hundred dollars I consider a fair price. At any rate, I do not propose to pay any more for Hector. I suppose the table is plain enough, but I don't believe in pampering the appetites of boys. If he were the master of Roscoe Hall, as he thinks he is, there might be some propriety in it; but upon that head I shall soon undeceive him. I will let him understand that I am the proprietor of the estate, and that he is only a dependent on my bounty. I wonder how he will take it. I dare say he will make a fuss, but he shall soon be made to understand that it is of no use. Now to answer these letters."

Mr. Roscoe sat down in a luxurious armchair, and, drawing pen and paper toward him, wrote first to Dr. Radix. I subjoin the letter, as it throws some light upon the character of the writer:

"ROSCOE HALL, Sept. 10th. DR. DIONYSIUS RADIX.

"My DEAR SIR:-I am in receipt of your letter of the 8th instant, answering my inquiries in regard to your school. Let me say at once that I find your terms too high. Five hundred dollars a year for forty weeks' board and schooling seems to me an exorbitant price to ask. Really, at this rate, education will soon become a luxury open only to the wealthy.

"You are probably under a misapprehension in reference to my young ward. Nephew he is not, in a strict sense of the term. He was adopted—not legally, but practically—by my brother, when he was only a year old, and his origin has been concealed from him. My brother, being childless, has allowed him to suppose that he was his own son. Undoubtedly he meant to provide for him in his will, but, as often happens, put off will-making till it was too late. The estate, therefore, goes to me, and the boy is unprovided for. This does not so much matter, since I am willing to educate him, and give him a fair start in life, if he acts in a manner to suit me. I do not, however, feel called upon to pay an exorbitant price for his tuition, and, therefore, shall be obliged to forego placing him at Inglewood School. Yours, etc.,

"ALLAN ROSCOE."

"When this letter is sent, I shall have taken the decisive step," thought Mr. Roscoe. "I must then adhere to my story, at whatever cost. Now for the other."

His reply to the letter of Socrates Smith, A. M., was briefer, but likely to be more satisfactory to the recipient. It ran thus;

"SOCRATES SMITH, A. M.

"DEAR Sir:-Your letter is at hand, and I find it, on the whole, satisfactory. The price you charge-three hundred dollars per annum—is about right. I hope you are a firm disciplinarian. I do not want Hector too much indulged or pampered, though he may expect it, my poor brother having been indulgent to excess.

"Let me add, by the bye, that Hector is not my nephew, though I may inadvertently have mentioned him as such, and had no real claims upon my brother, though he has been brought up in that belief. He was adopted, in an informal way, by my brother, when he was but, an infant. Under the circumstances, I am willing to take care of him, and prepare him to earn his own living when his education is completed.

"You may expect to see me early next week. I will bring the boy with me, and enter him at once as a pupil in your school.

"Yours, etc., ALLAN ROSCOE."

"There, that clinches it!" said Mr. Roscoe, in a tone of satisfaction. "Now for an interview with the boy."

CHAPTER II. RESENTING AN INSULT.

A stone's throw from the mansion was a neat and spacious carriage house. The late master of Castle Roscoe had been fond of driving, and kept three horses and two carriages. One of the latter was an old-fashioned coach; while there was, besides, a light buggy, which Hector was accustomed to consider his own. It was he, generally, who used this, for his father preferred to take a driver, and generally took an airing, either alone or with Hector, in the more stately carriage, drawn by two horses.

Hector walked across the lawn and entered the carriage house, where Edward, the coachman, was washing the carriage. As the former is to be our hero, we may pause to describe him.

He was fifteen, slenderly but strongly made, with a clear skin and dark eyes and a straightforward look. He had a winning smile, that attracted all who saw it, but his face could assume a different expression if need be. There were strong lines about his mouth that indicated calm resolution and strength of purpose. He was not a boy who would permit himself to be imposed upon, but was properly tenacious of his rights.

As he entered the carriage house, he looked about him in some surprise.

"Where is the buggy, Edward?" he asked.

"Master Guy is driving out in it."

"How is that?" said Hector. "Doesn't he know that it is mine? He might, at least, have asked whether I intended to use it."

"That is what I told him."

"And what did he say?"

"That it was just as much his as yours, and perhaps more so."

"What could he mean?"

"He said his father had promised to give it to him."

"Promised to give him my buggy!" exclaimed Hector, his eyes flashing.

"It's a shame, Master Hector, so it is," said Edward, sympathetically. He had known Hector since he was a boy of five, and liked him far better than Guy, who was a newcomer, and a boy disposed to domineer over those whom he considered his inferiors.

"I don't intend to submit to it," said Hector, trying, ineffectually, to curb his anger.

"I don't blame you, Master Hector, but I'm afraid you will have a hard time. As your uncle is your guardian, of course he has power over you, and he thinks everything of that boy of his, though, to my mind, he is an unmannerly cub."

"I don't know how much power he has over me, but he mustn't expect me to play second fiddle to his son. I am willing that Guy should enjoy as many privileges as I do, though the estate is mine; but he mustn't interfere with my rights."

"That's right, Master Hector. Why don't you speak to your uncle about it? I would, if I were you."

"So I will, if it is necessary. I will speak to Guy first, and that may be sufficient. I don't want to enter complaint against him if I can help it."

"You didn't see Master Guy ride out, did you?"

"'No; I was reading. If I had seen him, I would have stopped him."

"I am afraid it wouldn't have done any good."

"Do you mean that he would have taken the buggy in spite of me?" asked Hector, indignantly.

"I think he would have tried. To tell the truth, Master Hector, I refused to get the buggy ready for him, till he brought out a paper from his father commanding me to do it. Then, of course, I had no choice."

Hector was staggered by this.

"Have you got the paper?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Edward, fumbling in his vest pocket.

He drew out a small scrap of notepaper, on which was written, "My son, Guy, has my permission to ride out in the buggy. You will obey me rather than Hector."

This was signed, "Allan Roscoe."

"So it seems my uncle is the trespasser," said Hector. "It is he who takes the responsibility. I will go and speak to him at once."

"Wait a minute! There comes Master Guy, returning from his ride. You can have it out with him first."

In fact, Hector had only to look down the avenue to see the rapid approach of the buggy. Guy held the reins, and was seated in the driver's seat with all the air of a master. The sight aggravated Hector, and not without reason. He waited until Guy, flinging the reins to Edward, leaped from the buggy, then he thought it time to speak.

"Guy," he said, calmly, "it seems to me that you owe me an apology."

"Oh, I do, do I?" sneered Guy. "What for, let me ask?"

"You have driven out in my buggy, without asking my permission."

"Oh, it's your buggy, is it?" said Guy, with another sneer.

"Of course it is. You know that as well as I do."

"I don't know it at all."

"Then I inform you of it. I don't want to be selfish; I am willing that you should ride out in it occasionally; but I insist upon your asking my permission."

Guy listened to these words with a sneer upon his face. He was about the same age and size as Hector, but his features were mean and insignificant, and there was a shifty look in his eye that stamped him as unreliable. He did not look like the Roscoes, though in many respects he was in disposition and character similar to his father.

"It strikes me," he said, with an unpleasant smile, "that you're taking a little too much upon yourself, Hector Roscoe. The buggy is no more yours than mine."

"What do you say, Edward?" said Hector, appealing to the coachman.

"I say that the buggy is yours, and the horse is yours, and so I told Master Guy, but he wouldn't take no notice of it."

"Do you hear that, Guy?"

"Yes, I do; and that's what I think of it," answered Guy, snapping his fingers. "My father gave me permission to ride out in it, and I've got just as much right to it as you, and perhaps more."

"You know better, Guy," said Hector, indignantly; "and I warn you not to interfere with my rights hereafter."

"Suppose I do?" sneered Guy.

"Then I shall be under the necessity of giving you a lesson," said Hector, calmly.

"You will, will you? You'll give me a lesson?" repeated Guy, nodding vigorously. "Who are you, I'd like to know?"

"If you don't know, I can tell you."

"Tell me, then."

"I am Hector Roscoe, the owner of Roscoe Hall. Whether your father is to be my guardian or not, I don't know; but there are limits to the power of a guardian, and I hope he won't go too far."

"Hear the boy talk!" said Guy, contemptuously.

"I wish to treat my uncle with becoming respect; but he is a newcomer here—I never saw him till three months since—and he has no right to come here, and take from me all my privileges. We can all live at peace together, and I hope we shall; but he must treat me well."

"You are quite sure Roscoe Castle belongs to you, are you, Hector?"

"That's the law. Father left no will, and so the estate comes to me."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Guy, with malicious glee.

"If you only knew what I know, you wouldn't crow quite so loud. It's a splendid joke."

There was something in this that attracted Hector's attention, though he was not

disposed to attach much importance to what Guy said.

"If I only knew what you know!" he repeated.

"Yes; that's what I said."

"What is it?"

"You'll know it soon enough, and I can tell you one thing, it'll surprise you. It'll take down your pride a peg or two."

Hector stared at his cousin in unaffected surprise. What could Guy possibly mean? Had his father perhaps made a will, and left the estate to some one else—his uncle, for example? Was this the meaning of Guy's malicious mirth?

"I don't know to what you refer," he said; "but if it's anything that is of importance to me, I ought to know it. What is it?"

"Go and ask father," said Guy, with a tantalizing grin.

"I will," answered Hector, "and without delay."

He turned to enter the house, but Guy had not exhausted his malice. He was in a hurry to triumph over Hector, whom he disliked heartily.

"I don't mind telling you myself," he said.

"You are not what you suppose. You're a lowborn beggar!"

He had no sooner uttered these words, than Hector resented the insult. Seizing the whip from Guy, he grasped him by the collar, flung him to the ground and lashed him with it.

"There," said he, with eyes aflame, "take that, Guy Roscoe, and look out how you insult me in future!"

Guy rose slowly from the ground, pale with fury, and, as he brushed the dust from his clothes, ejaculated:

"You'll pay dearly for this, Hector!"

"I'll take the consequences," said Hector, as coldly as his anger would allow. "Now, I shall go to your father and ask the meaning of this."

CHAPTER III. HECTOR LEARNS A SECRET.

Hector entered the library with some impetuosity. Usually he was quiet and orderly, but he had been excited by the insinuations of Guy, and he was impatient to know what he meant—if he meant anything.

Allan Roscoe looked up, and remarked, with slight sarcasm:

"This is not a bear garden, Hector. You appear to think you are on the playground, judging by your hasty motions."

"I beg your pardon, uncle," said Hector, who never took amiss a rebuke which he thought deserved. "I suppose I forgot myself, being excited. I beg your pardon."

"What is the cause of your excitement?" asked Mr. Roscoe, surveying the boy keenly.

"Guy has said something that I don't understand."

"He must have said something very profound, then," returned Allan Roscoe, with light raillery.

"Indeed, Uncle Allan, it is no laughing matter," said Hector, earnestly.

"Then let me hear what it is."

"He intimates that he knows something that would let down my pride a peg or two. He hints that I am not the heir of Castle Roscoe."

The boy used the term by which the house was usually known.

Allan Roscoe knit his brow in pretended vexation.

"Inconsiderate boy!" he murmured. "Why need he say this?"

"But," said Hector, startled, "is it true?"

"My boy," said his uncle, with simulated feeling, "my son has spoken to you of a secret which I would willingly keep from you if I could. Yet, perhaps, it is as well that you should be told now."

"Told what?" exclaimed Hector, quite at sea.

"Can you bear to hear, Hector, that it is indeed true? You are not the owner of this estate."

"Who is then?" ejaculated the astonished boy.

"I am; and Guy after me."

"What! Did my father leave the estate away from me? I thought he did not leave a will?"

"Nor did he."

"Then how can anyone else except his son inherit?"

"Your question is a natural one. If you were his son you would inherit under the law."

"If I were his son!" repeated Hector, slowly, his head swimming. "What do you mean by that? Of course I am your brother's son."

"It is very painful for me to tell, Hector. It will be distressing for you to hear. No tie of blood connects you with the late owner of Castle Roscoe."

"I don't believe you, Uncle Allan," said Hector, bluntly.

"Of course, therefore, I am not your uncle," added Allan Roscoe, dryly.

"I beg your pardon; I should have said Mr. Allan Roscoe," said Hector, bowing proudly, for his heart was sore, and he was deeply indignant with the man who sat, smooth and sleek, in his father's chair, harrowing up his feelings without himself being ruffled.

"That is immaterial. Call me uncle, if you like, since the truth is understood. But I must explain."

"I would like to know what is your authority for so surprising a statement, Mr. Roscoe. You cannot expect me to believe that I have been deceived all my life."

"I make the statement on your father's authority—I should say, on my brother's authority."

"Can you prove it, Mr. Roscoe?"

"I can. I will presently put into your hands a letter, written me by my brother some months since, which explains the whole matter. To save you suspense, however, I will recapitulate. Where were you born?"

"In California."

"That is probably true. It was there that my brother found you."

"Found me?"

"Perhaps that is not the word. My brother and his wife were boarding in Sacramento in the winter of 1859. In the same boarding house was a widow, with a child of some months old. You were that child. Your mother died suddenly, and it was ascertained that she left nothing. Her child was, therefore, left destitute. It was a fine, promising boy—give me credit for the compliment—and my brother, having no children of his own, proposed to his wife to adopt it. She was fond of children, and readily consented. No formalities were necessary, for there was no one to claim you. You were at once taken in charge by my brother and his wife, therefore, and very soon they came to look upon you with as much affection as if you were their own child. They wished you to consider them your real parents, and to you the secret was never made known, nor was it known to the world. When my brother returned to this State, three years after, not one of his friends doubted that the little Hector was his own boy.

"When you were six years old your mother died—that is, my brother's wife. All the more, perhaps, because he was left alone, my brother became attached to you, and, I think, he came to love you as much as if you were his own son."

"I think he did," said Hector, with emotion. "Never was there a kinder, more indulgent father."

"Yet he was not your father," said Allan Roscoe, with sharp emphasis.

"So you say, Mr. Roscoe."

"So my brother says in his letter to me."

"Do you think it probable that, with all this affection for me, he would have left me penniless?" asked the boy.

"No; it was his intention to make a will. By that will he would no doubt have provided for you in a satisfactory manner. But I think my poor brother had a superstitious fear of will making, lest it might hasten death. At any rate, he omitted it till it was too late."

"It was a cruel omission, if your story is a true one."

"Your—my brother, did what he could to remedy matters. In his last sickness, when too weak to sign his name, he asked me, as the legal heir of his estate, to see that you were well provided for. He wished me to see your education finished, and I promised to do so. I could see that this promise relieved his mind. Of one thing you may be assured, Hector, he never lost his affection for you."

"Thank Heaven for that!" murmured the boy, who had been deeply and devotedly attached to the man whom, all his life long, he had looked upon as his father.

"I can only add, Hector," said Mr. Roscoe, "that I feel for your natural disappointment. It is, indeed, hard to be brought up to regard yourself as the heir of a great estate, and to make the discovery that you have been mistaken."

"I don't mind that so much, Mr. Roscoe," said Hector, slowly. "It is the hardest thing to think of myself as having no claim upon one whom I have loved as a father—to think myself as a boy of unknown parentage. But," he added, suddenly, "I have it only on your word. Why should I believe it?"

"I will give you conclusive proof, Hector. Read this."

Allan Roscoe took from his pocket a letter, without an envelope. One glance served to show Hector that it was in the handwriting of his late father, or, at any rate, in a handwriting surprisingly like it.

He began to read it with feverish haste.

The letter need not find a place here. The substance of it had been accurately given by Mr. Allan Roscoe. Apparently, it corroborated his every statement.

The boy looked up from its perusal, his face pale and stricken.

"You see that I have good authority for my statement," said Mr. Roscoe.

"I can't understand it," said Hector, slowly.

"I need only add," said Mr. Roscoe, apparently relieved by the revelation, "that my brother did not repose confidence in me in vain. I accept, as a sacred charge, the duty he imposed upon me. I shall provide for you and look after your education. I wish to put you in a way to prepare yourself for a useful and honorable career. As a first step, I intend, on Monday next, to place you in an excellent boarding school, where you will have exceptional privileges."

Hector listened, but his mind was occupied by sad thoughts, and he made no comment.

"I have even selected the school with great care," said Mr. Roscoe. "It is situated at Smithville, and is under the charge of Socrates Smith, A. M., a learned and distinguished educator. You may go now. I will speak with you on this subject later."

Hector bowed. After what he had heard, his interest in other matters was but faint.

"I shall be glad to get him out of the house," thought Allan Roscoe. "I never liked him."

CHAPTER IV. A SKIRMISH.

Hector walked out of the house in a state of mental bewilderment not easily described. Was he not Hector Roscoe, after all? Had he been all his life under a mistake? If this story were true, who was he, who were his parents, what was his name? Why had the man whom he had supposed to be his father not imparted to him this secret? He had always been kind and indulgent; he had never appeared to regard the boy as an alien in blood, but as a dearly loved son. Yet, if he had, after all, left him unprovided for, he had certainly treated Hector with great cruelty.

"I won't believe it," said Hector, to himself.

"I won't so wrong my dear father's memory at the bidding of this man, whose interest it is to trump up this story, since he and his son become the owners of a great estate in my place."

Just then Guy advanced toward Hector with a malicious smile upon his face. He knew very well what a blow poor Hector had received, for he was in his father's confidence, and he was mean enough, and malicious enough, to rejoice at it.

"What's the matter with you, Hector?" he asked, with a grin. "You look as if you had lost your last friend."

Hector stopped short and regarded Guy fixedly.

"Do you know what your father has been saying to me?" he asked.

"Well, I can guess," answered Guy. "Ho! ho! It's a great joke that you have all the time fancied yourself the heir of Castle Roscoe, when you have no claim to it at all. I am the heir!" he added, drawing himself up proudly; "and you are a poor dependent, and a nobody. It's funny!"

"Perhaps you won't think it so funny after this!" said Hector, coolly, exasperated beyond endurance. As he spoke he drew off, and in an instant Guy measured his length upon the greensward.

Guy rose, his face livid with passion, in a frame of mind far from funny. He clinched his fists and looked at Hector as if he wished to annihilate him. "You'll pay for this," he screamed. "You'll repent it, bitterly, you poor, nameless dependent, low-born, very likely—"

"Hold, there!" said Hector, advancing resolutely, and sternly facing the angry boy. "Be careful what you say. If this story of your father's is true, which I don't believe, you might have the decency to let me alone, even if you don't sympathize with me. If you dare to say or hint anything against my birth, I'll treat you worse than I have yet."

"You'll suffer for this!" almost shrieked Guy.

"I am ready to suffer now, if you are able to make me," said Hector. "Come on, and we'll settle it now."

But Guy had no desire for the contest to which he was invited. He had a wholesome fear of Hector's strong, muscular arms, aided, as they were, by some knowledge of boxing. Hector had never taken regular lessons, but a private tutor, whom his father had employed, a graduate of Yale, had instructed him in the rudiments of the "manly

art of self-defense," and Hector was very well able to take care of himself against any boy of his own size and strength. In size, Guy was his equal, but in strength he was quite inferior. This Guy knew full well, and, angry as he was, he by no means lost sight of prudence.

"I don't choose to dirty my hands with you," he said. "I shall tell my father, and it would serve you right if he sent you adrift."

In Hector's present mood, he would not, perhaps, have cared much if this threat had been carried into execution, but he was not altogether reckless, and he felt that it was best to remain under Mr. Roscoe's protection until he had had time to investigate the remarkable story which he suspected his reputed uncle had trumped up to serve his own interests.

"Tell your father, if you like," said Hector, quietly. "I don't know whether he will sustain you or not in your insults, but if he does, then I shall have two opponents instead of one."

"Does that mean that you will attack my father?" demanded Guy, hoping for an affirmative answer, as it would help him to prejudice his father against our hero.

"No," answered Hector, smiling, "I don't apprehend there will be any necessity, for he won't insult me as you have done."

Guy lost no time in seeking his father, and laying the matter before him, inveighing against Hector with great bitterness.

"So he knocked you down, did he, Guy?" asked Allan Roscoe, thoughtfully.

"Yes; he took me unawares, or he couldn't have done it," answered Guy, a little ashamed at the avowal.

"What did you do?"

"I—I told him he should suffer for it."

"Why did he attack you?"

"It was on account of something I said."

"What was it?"

Guy reluctantly answered this question, and with correctness.

"It was your fault for speaking to him when he was feeling sore at making a painful discovery."

"Do you justify him in pitching into me like a big brute?" asked Guy, hastily.

"No; but still, I think it, was natural, under the circumstances. You should have kept out of his way, and let him alone."

"Won't you punish him for attacking me?" demanded Guy, indignantly.

"I will speak to him on the subject," said Allan Roscoe; "and will tell him my opinion of his act."

"Then shan't I be revenged upon him?" asked Guy, disappointed.

"Listen, Guy," said his father. "Is it no punishment that the boy is stripped of all his possessions, while you step into his place? Henceforth he will be dependent upon me, and later, upon you. He has been hurled down from his proud place as owner of Castle Roscoe, and I have taken his place, as you will hereafter do."

"Yes," said Guy, gleefully; "it will be a proud day when I become master of the estate."

Allan Roscoe was not a specially sensitive man, but this remark of his son jarred upon him.

"You seem to forget, Guy, that you do not succeed till I am dead!"

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Guy, slowly.

"It almost seems as if you were in a hurry for me to die."

"I didn't mean that, but it's natural to suppose that I shall live longer than you do, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," returned Allan Roscoe, shortly.

"Of course that's what I mean."

"Then, since you are so much better off than Hector, you had better be more considerate, and leave him to get over his disappointment as well as he can."

"Shall I send in Hector to see you?" asked Guy, as he at length turned to leave the room.

"Yes."

"You're to go in to my father," said Guy, reappearing on the lawn; "he's going to give it to you."

Hector anticipated some such summons, and he had remained in the same spot, too proud to have it supposed that he shrank from the interview.

With a firm, resolute step, he entered the presence of Allan Roscoe.

"I hear you wish to see me, Mr. Roscoe," he said, manfully.

"Yes, Hector; Guy has come to me with complaints of you."

"If he says I knocked him down for insulting me, he has told you the truth," said Hector, sturdily.

"That was the substance of what he said, though he did not admit the insult."

"But for that I should not have attacked him."

"I do not care to interfere in boys' quarrels, except in extreme cases," said Mr. Roscoe. "I am afraid Guy was aggravating, and you were unnecessarily violent."

"It doesn't seem to me so," said Hector.

"So I regard it. I have warned him not to add by taunts to the poignancy of your disappointment. I request you to remember that Guy is my son, and that I am disposed to follow my brother's directions, and provide for and educate you."

Hector bowed and retired. He went out with a more favorable opinion of Allan Roscoe, who had treated the difficulty in a reasonable manner.

Allan Roscoe looked after him as he went out.

"I hate that boy," he said, to himself; "I temporize from motives of policy, but I mean to tame his haughty spirit yet."

CHAPTER V. PREPARING TO LEAVE HOME.

Allan Roscoe's remonstrance with the two boys had the effect of keeping the peace between them for the remainder of the week. Guy did not think it prudent to taunt Hector, unless backed up by his father, and he felt that the change in their relative positions was satisfaction enough at present. Besides, his father, in a subsequent conversation, had told Guy that it was his purpose to place Hector in a boarding school, where the discipline would be strict, and where he would be thrashed if he proved rebellious.

"I shall tell Mr. Smith," he added, "that the boy needs a strong hand, and that I am not only perfectly willing that he should be punished whenever occasion may call for it, but really desire it."

"Good, good!" commended Guy, gleefully. "I hope old Smith'll lay it on good."

"I presume he will," said Allan Roscoe, smiling in sympathy with his son's exuberance. "I am told by a man who knows him that he is a tall man, strong enough to keep order, and determined to do it."

"I should like to be there to see Hector's first flogging," remarked the amiable Guy. "I'd rather see it than go to the theater any time."

"I don't see how you can, unless you also enter the school."

"No, thank you," answered Guy. "No boarding school for me. That isn't my idea of enjoyment. I'd rather stay at home with you. Hector won't be here to interfere with my using his horse and buggy."

"They are his no longer. I give them to you."

"Thank you, father," said Guy, very much gratified.

"But I would rather you would not use them till after Hector is gone. It might disturb him."

"That's just why I want to do it."

"But it might make trouble. He might refuse to go to school."

"You'd make him go, wouldn't you, father?"

"Yes; but I wish to avoid forcible measures, if possible. Come, Guy, it's only till Monday; then Hector will be out of the way, and you can do as you please without fear of interference."

"All right, father. I'll postpone my fun till he is out of the way. You'll go with him, won't you?"

"Yes, Guy."

"Just tell old Smith how to treat him. Tell him to show him no mercy, if he doesn't behave himself."

"You seem to dislike Hector very much. You shouldn't feel so. It isn't Christian."

Guy looked at his father queerly out of the corner of his eye. He understood him better than Allan Roscoe supposed.

"I hope you won't insist on my loving him, father," he said. "I leave that to you."

"I only wish you to avoid coming into collision with him. As for love, that is something not within our power."

"Will you be ready to go with me to boarding school on Monday morning, Hector?" asked Allan Roscoe, on Saturday afternoon.

"Yes, sir."

Indeed, Hector felt that it would be a relief to get away from the house which he had been taught to look upon as his—first by right of inheritance, and later as actual owner. As long as he remained he was unpleasantly reminded of the great loss he had experienced. Again, his relations with Guy were unfriendly, and he knew that if they were permanently together it wouldn't be long before there would be another collision. Though in such a case he was sure to come off victorious, he did not care to contend, especially as no advantage could come of it in the end.

Of the boarding school kept by Mr. Socrates Smith he had never heard, but felt that he would, at any rate, prefer to find himself amid new scenes. If the school were a good one, he meant to derive benefit from it, for he was fond of books and study, and thought school duties no task.

"I have carefully selected a school for you," continued Allan Roscoe, "because I wish to follow out my poor brother's wishes to the letter. A good education will fit you to maintain yourself, and attain a creditable station in life, which is very important, since you will have to carve your own future."

There was no objection to make to all this. Still, it did grate upon Hector's feelings, to be so often reminded of his penniless position, when till recently he had regarded himself, and had been regarded by others, as a boy of large property.

Smithville was accessible by railroad, being on the same line as the town of Plympton in which Roscoe Castle was situated. There was a train starting at seven o'clock, which reached Smithville at half-past, eight. This was felt to be the proper train to take, as it would enable Hector to reach school before the morning session began. Allan Roscoe, who was not an early riser, made an effort to rise in time, and succeeded. In truth, he was anxious to get Hector out of the house. It might be that the boy's presence was a tacit reproach, it might be that he had contracted a dislike for him. At any rate, when Hector descended to the breakfast room, he found Mr. Roscoe already there.

"You are in time, Hector," said Mr. Roscoe. "I don't know how early they will get up at school, but I hope it won't be earlier than this."

"I have no objection to early rising," said Hector.

"I have," said Allan Roscoe, gaping.

"I am sorry to have inconvenienced you," said Hector, politely. "I could have gone to school alone."

"No doubt; but I wished an interview with Mr. Socrates Smith myself. I look upon myself in the light of your guardian, though you are not my nephew, as was originally supposed."

"I'd give a good deal to know whether this is true," thought Hector, fixing his eyes attentively upon his uncle's face.

I have written "uncle" inadvertently, that being the character in which Mr. Roscoe appeared to the world.

"By the way, Hector," said Allan Roscoe, "there is one matter which we have not yet settled."

"What is that, sir?"

"About your name."

"My name is Hector Roscoe."

"I beg your pardon. Assuming by brother's communication to be true, and I think you will not question his word, you have no claim to the name."

"To what name have I a claim, then?" asked Hector, pointedly.

"To the name of your father—the last name, I mean. I have no objection to your retaining the name of Hector."

"What was the name of my father?" asked the boy.

"Ahem! My brother did not mention that in his letter. Quite an omission, I must observe."

"Then it is clear that he meant to have me retain his own name," said Hector, decisively.

"That does not follow."

"As I know no other name to which I have a claim, I shall certainly keep the name of the kindest friend I ever had, whether he was my father or not," said Hector, firmly.

Allan Roscoe looked annoyed.

"Really," he said, "I think this ill-judged, very ill-judged. It will lead to misapprehension. It will deceive people into the belief that you are a real Roscoe."

"I don't know but I am," answered Hector, with a calm look of defiance, which aggravated Allan Roscoe.

"Have I not told you you are not?" he said, frowning.

"You have; but you have not proved it," said Hector.

"I am surprised that you should cling to a foolish delusion. You are only preparing

trouble for yourself. If my word is not sufficient—"

"You are an interested party. This story, if true, gives you my property."

"At any rate, you may take your father's—I mean my brother's—word for it."

"If he had told me so, I would believe it," said Hector.

"You have it in black and white, in the paper I showed you. What more do you want?"

"I want to be sure that that document is genuine. However, I won't argue the question now. I have only been giving you my reasons for keeping the name I have always regarded as mine."

Allan Roscoe thought it best to drop the subject; but the boy's persistency disturbed him.

CHAPTER VI. SMITH INSTITUTE.

Socrates Smith, A. M., was not always known by the philosophic name by which he challenged the world's respect as a man of learning and distinguished attainments. When a boy in his teens, and an academy student, he was known simply as Shadrach Smith. His boy companions used to address him familiarly as Shad. It was clear that no pedagogue could retain the respect of his pupils who might readily be metamorphosed into Old Shad. By the advice of a brother preacher, he dropped the plebeian name, and bloomed forth as Socrates Smith, A. M.

I may say, in confidence, that no one knew from what college Mr. Smith obtained the degree of Master of Arts. He always evaded the question himself, saying that it was given him by a Western university causa honoris.

It might be, or it might not. At any rate, he was allowed to wear the title, since no one thought it worth while to make the necessary examination into its genuineness. Nor, again, had anyone been able to discover at what college the distinguished Socrates had studied. In truth, he had never even entered college, but he had offered himself as a candidate for admission to a college in Ohio, and been rejected. This did not, however, prevent his getting up a school, and advertising to instruct others in the branches of learning of which his own knowledge was so incomplete.

He was able to hide his own deficiencies, having generally in his employ some college graduate, whose poverty compelled him to accept the scanty wages which Socrates doled out to him. These young men were generally poor scholars in more than one sense of the word, as Mr. Smith did not care to pay the high salary demanded by a first-class scholar. Mr. Smith was shrewd enough not to attempt to instruct the classes in advanced classics or mathematics, as he did not care to have his deficiencies understood by his pupils.

It pleased him best to sit in state and rule the school, administering reproofs and castigations where he thought fit, and, best of all, to manage the finances. Though his price was less than that of many other schools, his profits were liberal, as he kept down expenses. His table was exceedingly frugal, as his boarding pupils could have

testified, and the salaries he paid to under teachers were pitifully small.

So it was that, year by year, Socrates Smith, A. M., found himself growing richer, while his teachers grew more shabby, and his pupils rarely became fat.

Allan Roscoe took a carriage from the depot to the school.

Arrived at the gate, he descended, and Hector followed him.

The school building was a long, rambling, irregular structure, of no known order of architecture, bearing some resemblance to a factory. The ornament of architecture Mr. Smith did not regard. He was strictly of a utilitarian cast of mind. So long as the institute, as he often called it, afforded room for the school and scholars he did not understand what more was wanted.

"Is Mr. Smith at leisure?" Mr. Roscoe asked of a bare-arm servant girl who answered the bell.

"I guess he's in his office," was the reply.

"Take him this card," said Mr. Roscoe. The girl inspected the card with some curiosity, and carried it to the eminent principal. When Socrates Smith read upon the card the name

ALLAN ROSCOE,

and, penciled in the corner, "with a pupil," he said, briskly:

"Bring the gentleman in at once, Bridget."

As Mr. Roscoe entered, Mr. Smith beamed upon him genially. It was thus he always received those who brought to him new scholars. As he always asked half a term's tuition and board in advance, every such visitor represented to him so much ready cash, and for ready cash Socrates had a weakness.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Roscoe," said the learned principal, advancing to meet his visitor. "And this is the young lad. Dear me! he is very well grown, and looks like he was fond of his books."

This was not exactly the way in which a learned scholar might be expected to talk; but Mr. Smith's speech was not always elegant, or even grammatically correct.

"I believe he is reasonably fond of study," said Mr. Roscoe. "Hector, this is your future instructor, Prof. Socrates Smith."

At the name of professor, which he much affected, Socrates Smith looked positively benignant.

"My young friend," he said, "we will try to make you happy. Smith Institute is a regular beehive, full of busy workers, who are preparing themselves for the duties and responsibilities of life. I aim to be a father to my pupils, and Mrs. Smith is a mother to them. I am truly glad to receive you into my happy family."

Hector scanned attentively the face of his new teacher. He was not altogether prepossessed in his favor. That the reader may judge whether he had reason to be, let me describe Mr. Smith.

He was a trifle over six feet in height, with yellowish, sandy hair, high cheek bones, a rough and mottled skin, a high but narrow forehead, a pair of eyes somewhat like those of a ferret, long, ungainly limbs, and a shambling walk. A coat of rusty black, with very long tails, magnified his apparent height, and nothing that he wore seemed made for him.

Perhaps, as the first Socrates was said to have been the homeliest of all the Athenians, it was fitting that the man who assumed his name should also have the slightest possible claim to beauty.

"He may be a learned man," thought Hector, "but he is certainly plain enough. It is well that he has something to compensate for his looks."

"I hope you are glad to come here, my boy," said Socrates, affably. "I sincerely trust that you will be contented at the institute."

"I hope so, too," said Hector, but he evidently spoke doubtfully.

"I should like a little conversation with you, Professor Smith," said Allan Roscoe. "I don't know that it is necessary to keep Hector here during our interview."

Socrates took the hint.

He rang a hand bell, and a lank boy, of fifteen, appeared.

"Wilkius," said Mr. Smith, "this is a new scholar, Hector Roscoe. Take him to the playground, and introduce him to Mr. Crabb."

"All right, sir. Come along."

This last was addressed to Hector, who went out with the new boy.

"I thought it best to speak with you briefly about Hector, Professor Smith," commenced Allan Roscoe.

"Very appropriate and gratifying, Mr. Roscoe. I can assure you he will be happy here."

"I dare say," returned Mr. Roscoe, carelessly. "I wish to guard you against misinterpreting my wishes. I don't want the boy pampered, or too much indulged."

"We never pamper our boarding pupils," said Socrates, and it is quite certain that he spoke the truth.

"It spoils boys to be too well treated."

"So it does," said Socrates, eagerly. "Plain, wholesome diet, without luxury, and a kind, but strict discipline—such are the features of Smith Institute."

"Quite right and judicious, professor. I may remark that the boy, though reared in luxury by my brother, is really penniless."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, he is solely dependent upon my generosity. I propose, however, to give him a good education at my own expense, and prepare him to earn his living in some useful way."

"Kind philanthropist!" exclaimed Socrates. "He ought, indeed, to be grateful."

"I doubt if he will," said Mr. Roscoe, shrugging his shoulders. "He has a proud spirit, and a high idea of his own position, though he is of unknown parentage, and has nothing of his own."

"Indeed!"

"I merely wish to say that you do not need to treat him as if he were my nephew. It is best to be strict with him, and make him conform to the rules."

"I will, indeed, Mr. Roscoe. Would that all guardians of youth were as judicious! Your wishes shall be regarded."

After a little more conversation, Allan Roscoe took his leave.

So, under auspices not the most pleasant, Hector's school life began.

CHAPTER VII. THE TYRANT OF THE PLAYGROUND.

Under the guidance of the lank boy, named Wilkins, Hector left Mr. Smith's office, and walked to a barren-looking plot of ground behind the house, which served as a playground for the pupils of Smith Institute.

Wilkins scanned the new arrival closely.

"I say, Roscoe," he commenced, "what made you come here?"

"Why do boys generally come to school?" returned Hector.

"Because they have to, I suppose," answered Wilkins.

"I thought they came to study."

"Oh, you're one of that sort, are you?" asked Wilkins, curiously.

"I hope to learn something here."

"You'll get over that soon," answered Wilkins, in the tone of one who could boast of a large experience.

"I hope not. I shall want to leave school if I find I can't learn here."

"Who is it that brought you here—your father?"

"No, indeed!" answered Hector, quickly, for he had no desire to be considered the son of Allan Roscoe.

"Uncle, then?"

"He is my guardian," answered Hector, briefly.

They were by this time in the playground. Some dozen boys were playing baseball. They were of different ages and sizes, ranging from ten to nineteen. The oldest and largest bore such a strong personal resemblance to Socrates Smith, that Hector asked if

he were his son.

"No," answered Wilkins; "he is old Sock's nephew."

"Who is old Sock?"

"Smith, of course. His name is Socrates, you know. Don't let him catch you calling him that, though."

"What sort of a fellow is this nephew?" asked Hector.

"He's a bully. He bosses the boys. It's best to keep on the right side of Jim."

"Oh, is it?" inquired Hector, smiling slightly.

"Well, I should say so."

"Suppose you don't?"

"He'll give you a thrashing."

"Does his uncle allow that?"

"Yes; I think he rather likes it."

"Don't the boys resist?"

"It won't do any good. You see, Jim's bigger than any of us."

Hector took a good look at this redoubtable Jim Smith.

He was rather loosely made, painfully homely, and about five feet nine inches in height. Nothing more need be said, as, in appearance, he closely resembled his uncle.

Jim Smith soon gave Hector an opportunity of verifying the description given of him by Wilkins.

The boy at the bat had struck a ball to the extreme boundary of the field. The fielder at that point didn't go so fast as Jim, who was pitcher, thought satisfactory, and he called out in a rough, brutal tone:

"If you don't go quicker, Archer, I'll kick you all round the field."

Hector looked at Wilkins inquiringly.

"Does he mean that?" he asked.

"Yes, he does."

"Does he ever make such a brute of himself?"

"Often."

"And the boys allow it?"

"They can't help it."

"So, it seems, you have a tyrant of the school?"

"That's just it."

"Isn't there any boy among you to teach the fellow better manners? You must be

cowards to submit."

"Oh, you'll find out soon that you must submit, too," said Wilkins.

Hector smiled.

"You don't know me yet," he said.

"What could you do against Jim? He's three or four inches taller than you. How old are you?"

"I shall be sixteen next month."

"And he is nineteen."

"That may be; but he'd better not try to order me round."

"You'll sing a different tune in a day or two," said Wilkins.

By this time Jim Smith had observed the new arrival.

"What's that you've got with you, Wilkins?" he demanded, pausing in his play.

"The new boy."

"Who's he?"

"His name is Roscoe."

"Ho! Hasn't he got any other name?" asked Jim, meaningly.

Wilkins had forgotten the new arrival's first name, and said so.

"What's your name, Roscoe?" asked Jim, in the tone of a superior.

Hector resented this tone, and, though he had no objection, under ordinary circumstances, to answering the question, he did not choose to gratify his present questioner.

"I don't happen to have a card with me," he answered, coldly.

"Oh, that's your answer, is it?" retorted Jim, scenting insubordination with undisguised pleasure, for he always liked the task of subduing a new boy.

"Yes."

"I guess you don't know who I am," said Jim, blustering.

"Oh, yes, I do."

"Well, who am I, then?"

"The bully of the school, I should suppose, from your style of behavior."

"Do you hear that, boys?" demanded Jim, in a theatrical tone, turning to the other boys.

There was a little murmur in response, but whether of approval or reprobation, it was not easy to judge.

"That boy calls me a bully! He actually has the audacity to insult me! What do you say to that?"

The boys looked uneasy. Possibly, in their secret hearts, they admired the audacity that Jim complained of; but, seeing the difference between the two boys in size and apparent strength, it did not seem to them prudent to espouse the side of Hector.

"Don't you think I ought to teach him a lesson?"

"Yes!" cried several of the smaller boys, who stood in awe of the bully.

Hector smiled slightly, but did not seem in the least intimidated.

"Jim," said Wilkins, "the boy's guardian is inside with your uncle."

This was meant as a warning, and received as such. A boy's guardian is presumed to be his friend, and it would not be exactly prudent, while the guardian was closeted with the principal, to make an assault upon the pupil.

"Very well," said Jim; "we'll postpone Roscoe's case. This afternoon will do as well. Come, boys, let us go on with the game."

"What made you speak to Jim in that way?" expostulated Wilkins. "I'm afraid you've got into hot water."

"Didn't I tell the truth about him?"

"Yes," answered Wilkins, cautiously; "but you've made an enemy of him."

"I was sure to do that, sooner or later," said Hector, unconcernedly. "It might as well be now as any time."

"Do you know what he'll do this afternoon?"

"What will he do?"

"He'll give you a thrashing."

"Without asking my permission?" asked Hector, smiling.

"You're a queer boy! Of course, he won't trouble himself about that. You don't seem to mind it," he continued, eying Hector curiously.

"Oh, no."

"Perhaps you think Jim can't hurt. I know better than that."

"Did he ever thrash you, then?"

"Half a dozen times."

"Why didn't you tell his uncle?"

"It would be no use. Jim would tell his story, and old Sock would believe him. But here's Mr. Crabb, the usher, the man I was to introduce you to."

Hector looked up, and saw advancing a young man, dressed in rusty black, with a meek and long-suffering expression, as one who was used to being browbeaten. He was very shortsighted, and wore eyeglasses.

CHAPTER XIII. IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

"Mr. Crabb," said Wilkins, "this is the new scholar, Roscoe. Mr. Smith asked me to bring him to you."

"Ah, indeed!" said Crabb, adjusting his glasses, which seemed to sit uneasily on his nose. "I hope you are well, Roscoe?"

"Thank you, sir; my health is good."

"The schoolbell will ring directly. Perhaps you had better come into the schoolroom and select a desk."

"Very well, sir."

"Are you a classical scholar, Roscoe?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how far may you have gone now?" queried Crabb.

"I was reading the fifth book of Virgil when I left off study."

"Really, you are quite a scholar. I suppose you don't know any Greek?"

"I was in the second book of the Anabasis."

"You will go into the first class, then. I hope you will become one of the ornaments of the institute."

"Thank you. Is the first class under Mr. Smith?"

"No; I teach the first class," said Crabb, with a modest cough.

"I thought the principal usually took the first class himself?"

"Mr. Smith comes into the room occasionally and supervises, but he has too much business on hand to teach regularly himself."

"Is Mr. Smith a good scholar?" asked Hector.

"Ahem!" answered Mr. Crabb, evidently embarrassed; "I presume so. You should not ask Ahem! irrelevant questions."

In fact, Mr. Crabb had serious doubts as to the fact assumed. He knew that whenever a pupil went to the principal to ask a question in Latin or Greek, he was always referred to Crabb himself, or some other teacher. This, to be sure, proved nothing, but in an unguarded moment, Mr. Smith had ventured to answer a question himself, and his answer was ludicrously incorrect.

The schoolroom was a moderate-sized, dreary-looking room, with another smaller room opening out of it, which was used as a separate recitation room.

"Here is a vacant desk," said Mr. Crabb, pointing out one centrally situated.

"I think that will do. Who sits at the next desk?"

"Mr. Smith's nephew."

"Oh, that big bully I saw on the playground?"

"Hush!" said Crabb, apprehensively. "Mr. Smith would not like to have you speak so of his nephew."

"So, Mr. Crabb is afraid of the cad," soliloquized Hector. "I suppose I may think what I please about him," he added, smiling pleasantly.

"Ye-es, of course; but, Master Roscoe, let me advise you to be prudent."

"Is he in your class?"

"Yes."

"Is he much of a scholar?"

"I don't think he cares much for Latin and Greek," answered Mr. Crabb. "But I must ring the bell. I see that it wants but five minutes of nine."

"About my desk?"

"Here is another vacant desk, but it is not as well located."

"Never mind. I will take it. I shall probably have a better neighbor."

The bell was rung. Another teacher appeared, an elderly man, who looked as if all his vitality had been expended on his thirty years of teaching. He, too, was shabbily dressed—his coat being shiny and napless, and his vest lacking two out of the five original buttons.

"I guess Smith doesn't pay very high salaries," thought Hector. "Poor fellows. His teachers look decidedly seedy."

The boys began to pour in, not only those on the playground, but as many more who lived in the village, and were merely day scholars. Jim Smith stalked in with an independent manner and dropped into his seat carelessly. He looked around him patronizingly. He felt that he was master of the situation. Both ushers and all the pupils stood in fear of him, as he well knew. Only to his uncle did he look up as his superior, and he took care to be on good terms with him, as it was essential to the maintenance of his personal authority.

Last of all, Mr. Smith, the learned principal, walked into the schoolroom with the air of a commanding general, followed by Allan Roscoe, who he had invited to see the school in operation.

Socrates Smith stood upright behind his desk, and waved his hand majestically.

"My young friends," he said; "this is a marked day. We have with us a new boy, who is henceforth to be one of us, to be a member of our happy family, to share in the estimable advantages which you all enjoy. Need I say that I refer to Master Roscoe, the ward of our distinguished friend, Mr. Allan Roscoe, who sits beside me, and with interest, I am sure, surveys our institute?"

As he spoke he turned towards Mr. Roscoe, who nodded an acknowledgment.

"I may say to Mr. Roscoe that I am proud of my pupils, and the progress they have made under my charge. (The principal quietly ignored the two ushers who did all the teaching.) When these boys have reached a high position in the world, it will be my proudest boast that they were prepared for the duties of life at Smith Institute.

Compared with this proud satisfaction, the few paltry dollars I exact as my honorarium are nothing—absolutely nothing."

Socrates looked virtuous and disinterested as he gave utterance to this sentiment.

"And now, boys, you will commence your daily exercises, under the direction of my learned associates, Mr. Crabb and Mr. Jones."

Mr. Crabb looked feebly complacent at this compliment, though he knew it was only because a visitor was present. In private, Socrates was rather apt to speak slightingly of his attainments.

"While I am absent with my distinguished friend, Mr. Roscoe, I expect you to pursue your studies diligently, and preserve the most perfect order."

With these words, the stately figure of Socrates passed through the door, followed by Mr. Roscoe.

"A pleasant sight, Mr. Roscoe," said the principal; "this company of ambitious, aspiring students, all pressing forward eagerly in pursuit of learning?"

"Quite true, sir," answered Allan Roscoe.

"I wish you could stay with us for a whole day, to inspect at your leisure the workings of our educational system."

"Thank you, Mr. Smith," answered Mr. Roscoe, with an inward shudder; "but I have important engagements that call me away immediately."

"Then we must reluctantly take leave of you. I hope you will feel easy about your nephew—"

"My ward," corrected Allan Roscoe.

"I beg your pardon—I should have remembered—your ward."

"I leave him, with confidence, in your hands, my dear sir."

So Allan Roscoe took his leave.

Let us look in upon the aspiring and ambitious scholars, after Mr. Smith left them in charge of the ushers.

Jim Smith signalized his devotion to study by producing an apple core, and throwing it with such skillful aim that it struck Mr. Crabb in the back of the head.

The usher turned quickly, his face flushed with wild indignation.

"Who threw that missile?" he asked, in a vexed tone.

Of course no one answered.

"I hope no personal disrespect was intended," continued the usher.

Again no answer.

"Does anyone know who threw it?" asked Mr. Crabb.

"I think it was the new scholar," said Jim Smith, with a malicious look at Hector.

"Master Roscoe," said Mr. Crabb, with a pained look, "I hope you have not started so

discreditably in your school life."

"No, sir," answered Hector; "I hope I am not so ungentlemanly. I don't like to be an informer, but I saw Smith himself throw it at you. As he has chosen to lay it to me, I have no hesitation in exposing him."

Jim Smith's face flushed with anger.

"I'll get even with you, you young muff!" he said.

"Whenever you please!" said Hector, disdainfully.

"Really, young gentlemen, these proceedings are very irregular!" said Mr. Crabb, feebly.

With Jim Smith he did not remonstrate at all, though he had no doubt that Hector's charge was rightly made.

CHAPTER IX. THE CLASS IN VIRGIL.

Presently the class in Virgil was called up. To this class Hector had been assigned, though it had only advanced about half through the third book of the AEneid, while Hector was in the fifth.

"As there is no other class in Virgil, Roscoe, you had better join the one we have. It will do you no harm to review."

"Very well, sir," said Hector.

The class consisted of five boys, including Hector. Besides Jim Smith, Wilkins, Bates and Johnson belonged to it. As twenty-five lines had been assigned for a lesson, Hector had no difficulty in preparing himself, and that in a brief time. The other boys were understood to have studied the lesson out of school.

Bates read first, and did very fairly. Next came Jim Smith, who did not seem quite so much at home in Latin poetry as on the playground. He pronounced the Latin words in flagrant violation of all the rules of quantity, and when he came to give the English meaning, his translation was a ludicrous farrago of nonsense. Yet, poor Mr. Crabb did not dare, apparently, to characterize it as it deserved.

"I don't think you have quite caught the author's meaning, Mr. Smith," he said. By the way, Jim was the only pupil to whose name he prefixed the title "Mr."

"I couldn't make anything else out of it," muttered Jim.

"Perhaps some other member of the class may have been more successful! Johnson, how do you read it?"

"I don't understand it very well, sir."

"Wilkins, were you more successful?"

"No, sir."

"Roscoe, can you translate the passage?"

"I think so, sir."

"Proceed, then."

Hector at once gave a clear and luminous rendering of the passage, and his version was not only correct, but was expressed in decent English. This is a point in which young classical scholars are apt to fail.

Mr. Crabb was not in the habit of hearing such good translations, and he was surprised and gratified.

"Very well! Very well, indeed, Roscoe," he said, approvingly. "Mr. Smith, you may go on."

"He'd better go ahead and finish it," said Smith, sulkily. "He probably got it out of a pony."

My young readers who are in college or classical schools, will understand that a "pony" is an English translation of a classical author.

"He is mistaken!" said Hector, quietly. "I have never seen a translation of Virgil."

Mr. Smith shrugged his shoulders, and drew down the corners of his mouth, intending thereby to express his incredulity.

"I hope no boy will use a translation," said the usher; "it will make his work easier for the time being, but in the end it will embarrass him. Roscoe, as you have commenced, you may continue. Translate the remainder of the passage."

Hector did so, exhibiting equal readiness.

The other boys took their turns, and then words were given out to parse. Here Jim Smith showed himself quite at sea; though the usher, as it was evident, selected the easiest words for him, he made a mistake in every one. Apparently he was by no means certain which of the words were nouns, and which verbs, and as to the relations which they sustained to other words in the sentence he appeared to have very little conception.

At length the recitation was over. It had demonstrated one thing, that in Latin scholarship Hector was far more accurate and proficient than any of his classmates, while Jim Smith stood far below all the rest.

"What in the world can the teacher be thinking of, to keep such an ignoramus in the class?" thought Hector. "He doesn't know enough to join a class in the Latin Reader."

The fact was, that Jim Smith was unwilling to give up his place as a member of the highest class in Latin, because he knew it would detract from his rank in the school. Mr. Crabb, to whom every recitation was a torture, had one day ventured to suggest that it would be better to drop into the Caesar class; but he never ventured to make the suggestion again, so unfavorably was it received by his backward pupil. He might, in the case of a different pupil, have referred the matter to the principal, but Socrates Smith was sure to decide according to the wishes of his nephew, and did not himself possess knowledge enough of the Latin tongue to detect his gross mistakes.

After a time came recess. Hector wished to arrange the books in his desk, and did not

go out.

Mr. Crabb came up to his desk and said: "Roscoe, I must compliment you on your scholarship. You enter at the head. You are in advance of all the other members of the class."

"Thank you, sir," said Hector, gratified.

"There is one member of the class who is not competent to remain in it."

"Yes, sir; I observed that."

"But he is unwilling to join a lower class. It is a trial to me to hear his daily failures, but, perhaps, he would do no better anywhere else. He would be as incompetent to interpret Caesar as Virgil, I am afraid."

"So I should suppose, sir."

"By the way, Roscoe," said the usher, hurriedly; "let me caution you against irritating Smith. He is the principal's nephew, and so we give him more scope."

"He seems to me a bully," said Hector.

"So he is."

"I can't understand why the boys should give in to him as they do."

"He is taller and stronger than the other boys. Besides, he is backed up by the principal. I hope you won't get into difficulty with him."

"Thank you, Mr. Crabb. Your caution is kindly meant, but I am not afraid of this Jim—Smith. I am quite able to defend myself if attacked."

"I hope so," said the usher; but he scanned Hector's physical proportions doubtfully, and it was very clear that he did not think him a match for the young tyrant of the school.

Meanwhile, Jim Smith and his schoolfellows were amusing themselves in the playground.

"Where's that new fellow?" asked Jim, looking back to see whether he had come out.

"He didn't come out," said Bates.

Jim nodded his head vigorously:

"Just as I expected," he said. "He knows where he is well off."

"Do you think he was afraid to come?" asked Bates.

"To be sure he was. He knew what to expect."

"Are you going to thrash him?" asked Johnson.

"I should say I might."

"He's a very good Latin scholar," remarked Wilkins.

"He thinks he is!" sneered Jim.

"So Mr. Crabb appears to think."

"That for old Crabb!" said Jim, contemptuously, snapping his fingers. "He don't know much himself. I've caught him in plenty of mistakes."

This was certainly very amusing, considering Smith's absolute ignorance of even the Latin rudiments, but the boys around him did not venture to contradict him.

"But it don't make any difference whether he knows Latin or not," proceeded Jim. "He has been impudent to me, and he shall suffer for it. I was hoping to get a chance at him this recess, but it'll keep."

"You might spoil his appetite for dinner," said Bates, who was rather a toady to Jim.

"That's just exactly what I expect to do; at any rate, for supper. I've got to have a reckoning with that young muff."

The recess lasted fifteen minutes. At the end of that time the schoolbell rang, and the boys trooped back into the schoolroom.

Hector sat at his desk looking tranquil and at ease. He alone seemed unaware of the fate that was destined for him.

CHAPTER X. DINNER AT SMITH INSTITUTE.

At twelve o'clock the morning session closed. Then came an intermission of an hour, during which the day scholars either ate lunch brought with them, or went to their homes in the village to partake of a warm repast.

At ten minutes past twelve, a red-armed servant girl made her appearance at the back door looking out on the playground, and rang a huge dinner bell. The boys dropped their games, and made what haste they could to the dining room.

"Now for a feast!" said Wilkins to Hector, significantly.

"Does Mr. Smith furnish good board?" asked Hector, for he felt the hunger of a healthy boy who had taken an early breakfast.

"Good grub?" said Wilkins, making a face. "Wait till you see. Old Sock isn't going to ruin himself providing his pupils with the delicacies of the season."

"I'm sorry for that. I am confoundedly hungry."

"Hungry!" exclaimed Wilkins. "I've been I hungry ever since I came here."

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Hector, rather alarmed.

"I should say so. I haven't had a square meal—what I call a square meal—for four weeks, and that's just the time since I left home."

They had reached the door of the dining-room by this time.

In the center stood a long table, but there didn't seem to be much on it except empty plates. At a side table stood Mrs. Smith, ladling out soup from a large tureen.

"That's the first course," whispered Wilkins. "I hope you'll like it."

The boys filed in and took seats. The servant girl already referred to began to bring plates of soup and set before the boys. It was a thin, unwholesome-looking mixture, with one or two small pieces of meat, about the size of a chestnut, in each plate, and fragments of potatoes and carrots. A small, triangular wedge of dry bread was furnished with each portion of soup.

"We all begin to eat together. Don't be in a hurry," said Wilkins, in a low tone.

When all the boys were served, Socrates Smith, who sat in an armchair at the head of the table, said:

"Boys, we are now about to partake of the bounties of Providence, let me hope, with grateful hearts."

He touched a hand bell, and the boys took up their soup spoons.

Hector put a spoonful gingerly into his mouth, and then, stopping short, looked at Wilkins. His face was evidently struggling not to express disgust.

"Is it always as bad?" he asked, in a whisper.

"Yes," answered Wilkins, shrugging his shoulders.

"But you eat it!"

Wilkins had already swallowed his third spoonful.

"I don't want to starve," answered Wilkins, significantly. "You'll get used to it in time."

Hector tried to dispose of a second spoonful, but he had to give it up. At home he was accustomed to a luxurious table, and this meal seemed to be a mere mockery. Yet he felt hungry. So he took up the piece of bread at the side of his plate, and, though it was dry, he succeeded in eating it.

By this time his left-hand neighbor, a boy named Colburn, had finished his soup. He looked longingly at Hector's almost untasted plate.

"Ain't you going to eat your soup?" he asked, in a hoarse whisper

"No."

"Give it to me?"

"Yes."

In a trice, Colburn had appropriated Hector's plate and put his own empty one in its place. Just after this transfer had been made, Mr. Smith looked over to where Hector was sitting. He observed the empty plate, and said to himself: "That new boy has been gorging himself. He must have a terrible appetite. Well, that's one good thing, he ain't dainty. Some boys turn up their noses at plain, wholesome diet. I didn't know but he might."

Presently the hand bell rang again, and the soup plates were removed. In their places were set dinner plates, containing a small section each of corned beef, with a consumptive-looking potato, very probably "soggy." At any rate, this was the case with Hector's. He succeeded in eating the meat, but not the potato.

"Give me your potato?" asked his left-hand neighbor.

"Yes."

It was quickly appropriated. Hector looked with some curiosity at the boy who did so much justice to boarding-school fare. He was a thin, pale boy, who looked as if he had been growing rapidly, as, indeed, he had. This, perhaps, it was that stimulated his appetite. Afterward Hector asked him if he really liked his meals.

"No," he said; "they're nasty."

He was an English boy, which accounted for his use of the last word.

"You eat them as if you liked them," remarked Hector.

"I'm so hungry," apologized Colburn, mournfully. "I'm always hungry. I eat to fill up, not 'cause I like it. I could eat anything."

"I believe he could," said Wilkins, who overheard this conversation. "Could you eat fried cat, now?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Colburn, honestly. "There would be something hearty and filling about fried cat. I ain't half full now."

It was just after dinner.

Hector might have said the same thing at the end of his first dinner. There was, indeed, another course. It consisted of some pale, flabby apple pie, about half baked. The slices given were about half the size of those that are ordinarily supplied at private tables and restaurants. Hector managed to eat the apple, but the crust he was obliged to leave. He noticed, however, that his fellow pupils were not so fastidious.

When the last fragment of pie had disappeared, Mr. Smith again rang the hand bell.

"Boys," he said, "we have now satisfied our appetites."

"I haven't," thought Hector.

"We have once more experienced the bountiful goodness of Providence in supplying our material wants. As we sit down to our plain but wholesome diet, I wonder how many of us are sensible of our good fortune. I wonder how many of us think of the thousands of poor children, scattered about the world, who know not where to get their daily bread. You have been refreshed, and have reinforced your strength; you will soon be ready to resume your studies, and thus, also, take in a supply of mental food, for, as you are all aware, or ought to be aware, the mind needs to be fed as well as the body. There will first be a short season for games and out-of-door amusements. Mr. Crabb, will you accompany the boys to the playground and superintend their sports?"

Mr. Crabb also had participated in the rich feast, and rose with the same unsatisfied but resigned look which characterized the rest. He led the way to the playground, and the boys trooped after him.

"Really, Wilkins," said Hector, in a low tone, "this is getting serious. Isn't there any place outside where one can get something to eat?"

"There's a baker's half a mile away, but you can't go till after afternoon session."

"Show me the way there, then, and I'll buy something for both of us."

"All right," said Wilkins, brightening up.

"By the way, I didn't see Jim Smith at the table."

"No; he eats with his uncle and aunt afterward. You noticed that old Sock didn't eat just now."

"Yes, I wondered at it."

"He has something a good deal better afterward. He wouldn't like our dinner any better than we did; but he is better off, for he needn't eat it."

"So Jim fares better than the rest of us, does he?"

"Yes, he's one of the family, you know."

Just then pleasant fumes were wafted to the boys' nostrils, and they saw through the open window, with feelings that cannot well be described, a pair of roast chickens carried from the kitchen to the dining-room.

"See what old Sock and Ma'am Sock are going to have for dinner?" said Wilkins, enviously.

"I don't like to look at it. It is too tantalizing," said Hector.

CHAPTER XI. HECTOR RECEIVES A SUMMONS.

It so happened that Hector was well provided with money. During the life of Mr. Roscoe, whom he regarded as his father, he had a liberal allowance—liberal beyond his needs—and out of it had put by somewhat over a hundred dollars. The greater part of this was deposited for safe-keeping in a savings bank, but he had twenty-five dollars in his possession.

At the time he was saving his money, he regarded himself as the heir and future possessor of the estate, and had no expectation of ever needing it. It had been in his mind that it would give him an opportunity of helping, out of his private funds, any deserving poor person who might apply to him. When the unexpected revelation had been made to him that he had no claim to the estate, he was glad that he was not quite penniless. He did not care to apply for money to Allan Roscoe. It would have been a confession of dependence, and very humiliating to him.

No sooner was school out, than he asked Wilkins to accompany him to the baker's, that he might make up for the deficiencies of Mr. Smith's meager table.

"I suppose, if I guide you, you'll stand treat, Roscoe?" said Wilkins.

"Of course."

"Then let us go," said his schoolfellow, with alacrity. "I'd like to get the taste of that beastly dinner out of my mouth."

They found the baker's, but close beside it was a restaurant, where more substantial fare could be obtained.

"Wilkins," said Hector, "I think I would rather have a plate of meat."

"All right! I'm with you."

So the two boys went into the restaurant, and ordered plates of roast beef, which they ate with evident enjoyment.

"I guess," said the waiter, grinning, "you two chaps come from the institute."

"Yes," answered Hector. "What makes you think so?"

"The way you eat. They do say old Smith half starves the boys."

"You're not far from right," said Wilkins; "but it isn't alone the quantity, but the quality that's amiss."

They ate their dinner, leaving not a crumb, and then rose refreshed.

"I feel splendid," said Wilkins. "I just wish I boarded at the restaurant instead of the doctor's. Thank you, Roscoe, for inviting me."

"All right, Wilkins! We'll come again some day."

Somehow the extra dinner seemed to warm the heart of Wilkins, and inspire in him a feeling of friendly interest for Hector.

"I say, Hector, I'll tell you something."

"Go ahead."

"You've got to keep your eyes open."

"I generally do," answered Hector, smiling, "except at night."

"I mean when Jim Smith's round."

"Why particularly when he is around?"

"Because he means to thrash you."

"What for?"

"You are too independent. You don't bow down to him, and look up to him."

"I don't mean to," said Hector, promptly.

"If you don't you'll see trouble, and that very soon."

"Let it come!" said Hector, rather contemptuously.

"You don't seem afraid!" said Wilkins, regarding him curiously.

"Because I am not afraid. Isn't that a good reason?"

"You don't think you can stand up against Jim, do you?"

"I will see when the time comes."

"I shouldn't be a bit surprised if he were looking out for you at this very moment, and wondering where you are."

It seemed that Wilkins was right. As they approached the school grounds, John Bates

came running to meet them.

"Where have you been, you two?" he said.

"To the village," answered Wilkins.

"What for?"

"For a walk," answered Wilkins, with a warning glance at Hector. It would have been awkward if the principal had heard that they had been compelled to eke out their meager dinner at a restaurant.

"Well, Jim wants you. Leastways, he wants Roscoe."

Bates looked as if he expected Roscoe would immediately hasten to comply with the wishes of the redoubtable Jim.

"If he wants me, he can come to me," said Hector, independently.

"But I say, that won't do. Jim won't be satisfied."

"Won't he? I don't know that that particularly concerns me."

"Shall I tell him that?"

"If you choose."

Bates looked as if Hector had been guilty of some enormity. What, defy the wishes, the mandates, of Jim Smith, the king of the school and the tyrant of all the small boys! He felt that Hector Roscoe was rushing on his fate.

"I advise you to come," he said, "Jim's mad with you already, and he'll lick you worse if you send him a message like that."

"He will probably have to take blows, as well as give them," said Hector.

"Then I am to tell him what you said?"

"Of course."

With a look that seemed to say, "Your fate be on your own head!" Bates walked away.

"John Bates is always toadying to Jim," said Wilkins. "So he's prime favorite when Jim is good-natured—when he's cross, I've seen him kick Bates."

"And Bates didn't resent it?"

"He didn't dare to. He'd come round him the next day the same as ever."

"Has the boy no self-respect?" asked Hector, in a tone of disgust.

"He doesn't seem to have."

As soon as school was out, Jim Smith had looked round for the new boy, who seemed disposed to defy his authority. On account of eating at different tables, they had not met during the noon intermission. At any rate, there had not been time to settle the question of subserviency. Through the afternoon session Jim had been anticipating the signal punishment which he intended to inflict upon the newcomer.

"I'll show him!" he said to himself. "Tomorrow he'll be singing a different tune, or I am

mistaken."

This was the way Jim had been accustomed to break in refractory new arrivals. The logic of his fist usually proved a convincing argument, and thus far his supremacy had never been successfully resisted. He was confident that he would not be interfered with. Secretly, his Uncle Socrates sympathized with him, and relished the thought that his nephew, who so strongly resembled him in mind and person, should be the undisputed boss—to use a word common in political circles—of the school. He discreetly ignored the conflicts which he knew took place, and if any luckless boy, the victim of Jim's brutality, ventured to appeal to him, the boy soon found that he himself was arraigned, and not the one who had abused him.

"Where's that new boy?" asked Jim, as he left the schoolroom.

He had not seen our hero's departure—but his ready tool, Bates, had.

"I saw him sneaking off with Wilkins," said Bates.

"Where did they go?"

"To the Village, I guess."

"They seemed to be in a hurry," said Jim, with a sneer.

"They wanted to get out of your way—that is, the new boy did," suggested Bates.

Jim nodded.

"Likely he did," he answered. "So he went to the village, did he?"

"Yes; I saw him."

"Well, he's put it off a little. That boy's cranky. I'm goin' to give him a lesson he won't forget very soon."

"So you will, so you will, Jim," chuckled Bates.

"That's the way I generally take down these boys that put on airs," said Jim, complacently. "This Roscoe's the worst case I've had yet. So Wilkins went off with him, did he?"

"Yes; I saw them go off together."

"I'll have to give Wilkins a little reminder, then. It won't be safe to take up with them that defy me. I'll just give him a kick to help his memory."

"He won't like that much, oh, my!" chuckled Bates.

"When you see them coming, Bates, go and tell Roscoe I want to see him," said Jim, with the air of an autocrat.

"All right, Jim," said Bates, obediently.

So he went on his errand, and we know what success he met with.

CHAPTER XII. THE IMPENDING CONFLICT.

Jim Smith stood leaning indolently against a post, when his emissary, Bates, returned from his errand. He was experiencing "that stern joy" which bullies feel just before an encounter with a foeman inferior in strength, whom they expect easily to master. Several of the boys were near by—sycophantic followers of Jim, who were enjoying in advance the rumpus they expected. I am afraid schoolboys do not always sympathize with the weaker side. In the present instance, there was hardly a boy who had not at some time or other felt the weight of Jim's fist, and, as there is an old saying that "misery loves company," it was not, perhaps, a matter of wonder that they looked forward with interest to seeing another suffer the same ill-treatment which they had on former occasions received!

Presently Bates came back.

Jim looked over his head for the boy whom he expected to see in his company.

"Where's the new boy?" he demanded, with a frown.

"He won't come."

"Won't come?" repeated Jim, with an ominous frown. "Did you tell him I wanted him?"

"Yes, I did."

"And what did he say?"

"That if you wanted to see him, you could come to him."

All the boys regarded each other with looks of surprise. Was it possible that any boy in Smith Institute could have the boldness to send such a message to Jim! Most of all, Jim was moved by such a bold defiance of his authority. For the moment, he could not think of any adequate terms in which to express his feelings.

"Did the new boy say that?" he asked, hoarsely.

"Yes, he did."

Jim nodded his head vigorously two or three times.

"You fellows," he said, appealing to the boys around him, "did you ever hear such impudence?"

"No!" "Never!" exclaimed the boys in concert, Bates being the loudest and most emphatic.

"I have never been so insulted since I was at the institute," said Jim, again looking about him for a confirmation of his statement.

"It's because he's a new boy. He don't understand," suggested one.

"That's no excuse," said Jim, sternly. "He needn't think I'll let him off on that account."

"Of course not," answered Bates.

"What would you advise me to do, boys?" asked Jim, with the air of a monarch asking

the opinion of his counselors.

"Thrash him till he can't stand!" said the subservient Bates. He was always ready to go farther than anyone else in supporting and defending the authority of the tyrant of the playground.

"Bates, you are right. I shall follow your advice," said Jim. "Where is the young reprobate?"

"He is over in Carver's field."

"Is anyone with him?"

"Yes, Wilkins."

"Ha! Wilkins and I will have an account to settle. If he is going to side with this young rascal he must take the consequences. So, he's over in the field, is he? What's he doing?"

"I think he was going to walk down to the brook."

Carver's field was a tract, several acres in extent, of pasture land, sloping down to one corner, where a brook trickled along quietly. Here three large trees were located, under whose spreading branches the boys, in the intervals of study, used often to stretch themselves for a chat or engage in some schoolboy games, such as nimble peg or quoits. The owner of the field was an easy-going man, who did not appear to be troubled by the visits of the boys, as long as they did not maltreat the peaceful cows who gathered their subsistence from the scanty grass that grew there.

"He wants to keep out of your way, I guess," volunteered Bates.

As this suggestion was flattering to the pride of the "boss," it was graciously received.

"Very likely," he said; "but he'll find that isn't so easy. Boys, follow me, if you want to see some fun."

Jim started with his loose stride for the field, where he expected to meet his adversary, or, rather, victim, for so he considered him, and the smaller boys followed him with alacrity. There was going to be a scrimmage, and they all wanted to see it.

Jim and his followers issued from the gate, and, crossing the street, scaled the bars that separated Carver's field from the highway. Already they could see the two boys—Roscoe and Wilkins-slowly walking, and nearly arrived at the brook in the lower part of the field.

"He doesn't seem much afraid," remarked Talbot, one of the recent comers, incautiously.

Upon him immediately Jim frowned ominously.

"So you are taking sides with him, Talbot, are you?" he said, imperiously.

"No, Jim," answered Talbot, hurriedly, for he now saw that he had been guilty of an imprudence.

"What made you say he wasn't scared, then?"

"I only said he didn't seem afraid," answered Talbot, apologetically.

"Be careful what you say in future, young fellow!" said Jim, sternly; "that is, if you are a friend of mine. If you are going over to Roscoe, you can go, and I shall know how to treat you."

"But I am not going over to him. I don't like him," said the cowardly boy.

"Very well; I accept your apology this time. In future be careful what you say."

By this time Wilkins and Roscoe had reached the clump of big trees, and had seated themselves under their ample branches. Then, for the first time, glancing backward toward the school, they became aware of the advancing troop of boys. Wilkins saw them first.

"There's Jim coming!" he exclaimed. "Now you are in a pickle. He means business."

"I suppose," said Hector, coolly, "he has decided to accept my invitation, and come to see me."

"You'll find he has," said Wilkins, significantly.

"He seems to have considerable company," remarked Hector, scanning the approaching party with tranquillity.

"They're coming to see the fun!" said Wilkins.

"I suppose you mean the fight between Jim Smith and myself."

"Well, not exactly. They've come to see you thrashed."

Hector smiled.

"Suppose they should see Jim thrashed instead—what then?"

"They might be surprised: but I don't think they will be," answered Wilkins, dryly. He was, on the whole, well disposed toward Hector, and he certainly disliked Jim heartily, but he did not allow his judgment to be swayed by his preferences, and he could foresee but one issue to the impending conflict. There was one thing that puzzled him exceedingly, and that was Hector's coolness on the brink of a severe thrashing, such as Jim was sure to give him for his daring defiance and disregard of his authority.

"You're a queer boy, Hector," he said. "You don't seem in the least alarmed."

"I am not in the least alarmed," answered Hector. "Why should I be?"

"You don't mind being thrashed, then?"

"I might mind; but I don't mean to be thrashed if I can help it."

"But you can't help it, you know."

"Well, that will soon be decided."

There was no time for any further conversation, for Jim and his followers were close at hand.

Jim opened the campaign by calling Hector to account.

"Look here, you new boy," he said, "didn't Bates tell you that I wanted to see you?"

"Yes," answered Hector, looking up, indifferently.

"Well, why didn't you come to me at once, hey?"

"Because I didn't choose to. I sent word if you wished to see me, to come where I was."

"What do you mean by such impudence, hey?"

"I mean this, Jim Smith, that you have no authority over me and never will have. I have not been here long, but I have been here long enough to find out that you are a cowardly bully and ruffian. How all these boys can give in to you, I can't understand."

Jim Smith almost foamed at the mouth with rage.

"You'll pay for this," he howled, pulling off his coat, in furious haste.

CHAPTER XIII. WHO SHALL BE VICTOR?

Hector was not slow to accept the challenge conveyed by his antagonist's action. He, too, sprang to his feet, flung off his coat, and stood facing the bully.

Hector was three inches shorter, and more than as many years younger, than Jim. But his figure was well proportioned and strongly put together, as the boys could see. On the other hand; Jim Smith was loosely put together, and, though tall, he was not well proportioned. His arms were long and his movements were clumsy. His frame, however, was large, and he had considerable strength, but it had never been disciplined. He had never learned to box, and was ignorant of the first rudiments of the art of self-defense. But he was larger and stronger than any of his school-fellows, and he had thus far had no difficulty in overcoming opposition to his despotic rule.

The boys regarded the two combatants with intense interest. They could see that Hector was not alarmed, and meant to defend himself. So there was likely to be a contest, although they could not but anticipate an easy victory for the hitherto champion of the school.

Hector did not propose to make the attack. He walked forward to a favorable place and took his stand. The position he assumed would have assured the casual observer that he knew something of the art in which his larger antagonist was deficient.

"So you are ready to fight, are you?" said Jim.

"You can see for yourself."

Jim rushed forward, intending to bear down all opposition. He was whirling his long arms awkwardly, and it was clear to see that he intended to seize Hector about the body and fling him to the earth. Had he managed to secure the grip he desired, opposition would have been vain, and he would have compassed his design. But Hector was far too wary to allow anything of this kind. He evaded Jim's grasp by jumping backward, then dashing forward while his opponent was somewhat unsteady from the failure of his attempt, he dealt him a powerful blow in the face.

Jim Smith was unprepared for such prompt action. He reeled, and came near falling. It may safely be said, also, that his astonishment was as great as his indignation, and that was unbounded.

"So that's your game, is it?" he exclaimed, furiously. "I'll pay you for this, see if I don't."

Hector did not reply. He did not propose to carry on the battle by words. Already the matter had come to a sterner arbitrament, and he stood on the alert, all his senses under absolute control, watching his big antagonist, and, from the expression of his face, seeking to divine his next mode of attack. He had this advantage over Jim, that he was cool and collected, while Jim was angry and rendered imprudent by his anger. Notwithstanding his first repulse, he did not fully understand that the new boy was a much more formidable opponent than he anticipated. Nor did he appreciate the advantage which science gives over brute force. He, therefore, rushed forward again, with the same impetuosity as before, and was received in precisely the same way. This time the blood started from his nose and coursed over his inflamed countenance, while Hector was still absolutely unhurt.

Meanwhile the boys looked on in decided amazement. It had been as far as possible from their thoughts that Hector could stand up successfully against the bully even for an instant. Yet here two attacks had been made, and the champion was decidedly worsted. They could not believe the testimony of their eyes.

Carried away by the excitement of the moment, Wilkins, who, as we have said, was disposed to espouse the side of Hector, broke into a shout of encouragement.

"Good boy, Roscoe!" he exclaimed. "You're doing well!"

Two or three of the other boys, those who were least under the domination of Jim, and were only waiting for an opportunity of breaking away from their allegiance, echoed the words of Wilkins. If there was anything that could increase the anger and mortification of the tyrant it was these signs of failing allegiance. What! was he to lose his hold over these boys, and that because he was unable to cope with a boy much smaller and younger than himself? Perish the thought! It nerved him to desperation, and he prepared for a still more impetuous assault.

Somewhere in his Greek reader, Hector had met with a saying attributed to Pindar, that "boldness is the beginning of victory." He felt that the time had now come for a decisive stroke. He did not content himself, therefore, with parrying, or simply repelling the blow of his antagonist, but he on his part assumed the offensive. He dealt his blows with bewildering rapidity, pressed upon Jim, skillfully evading the grasp of his long arms, and in a trice the champion measured his length upon the greensward.

Of course, he did not remain there. He sprang to his feet, and renewed the attack. But he had lost his confidence. He was bewildered, and, to confess the truth, panic-stricken, and the second skirmish was briefer than the first.

When, for the third time, he fell back, with his young opponent standing erect and vigorous, the enthusiasm of the boys overcame the limits of prudence. There was a shout of approval, and the fallen champion, to add to his discomfiture, was forced to listen to his own hitherto subservient followers shouting, "Hurrah for the new boy! Hurrah for Hector Roscoe!"

This was too much for Jim.

He rose from the ground sullenly, looked about him with indignation which he could not control, and, shaking his fist, not at one boy in particular, but at the whole company, exclaimed: "You'll be sorry for this, you fellows! You can leave me, and stand by the new boy if you want to, but you'll be sorry for it. I'll thrash you one by one, as I have often done before."

"Try Roscoe first!" said one boy, jeeringly.

"I'll try you first!" said Jim; and too angry to postpone his intention, he made a rush for the offender.

The latter, who knew he was no match for the angry bully, turned and fled. Jim prepared to follow him, when he was brought to by Hector placing himself in his path.

"Let that boy alone!" he said, sternly.

"What business is it of yours?" demanded Jim, doggedly; but he did not offer to renew the attack, however.

"It will be my business to put an end to your tyranny and bullying," said Hector, undauntedly. "If you dare to touch one of these boys, you will have to meet me as well."

Jim had had enough of encountering Hector. He did not care to make a humiliating spectacle of himself any more before his old flatterers. But his resources were not at an end.

"You think yourself mighty smart!" he said, with what was intended to be withering sarcasm. "You haven't got through with me yet."

He did not, however, offer to pursue the boy who had been the first to break away from his allegiance. He put on his coat, and turned to walk toward the school, saying, "You'll hear from me again, and that pretty soon!"

None of his late followers offered to accompany him. He had come to the contest with a band of friends and supporters. He left it alone. Even Bates, his most devoted adherent, remained behind, and did not offer to accompany the discrowned and dethroned monarch.

"What's Jim going to do?" asked Talbot.

"He's going to tell old Sock, and get us all into trouble."

"It'll be a cowardly thing to do!" said Wilkins. "He's been fairly beaten in battle, and he ought to submit to it."

"He won't if he can help it."

"I say, boys, three cheers for the new boy!" exclaimed Wilkins.

They were given with a will, and the boys pressed forward to shake the hand of the boy whose prowess they admired.

"Thank you, boys!" said Hector, "but I'd rather be congratulated on something else. I would rather be a good scholar than a good fighter."

But the boys were evidently of a different opinion, and elevated Hector straightway to the rank of a hero.

CHAPTER XIV. SOCRATES CALLS HECTOR TO ACCOUNT.

Jim Smith, as he walked back to the institute, nursing his wrath, felt very much like a dethroned king. He was very anxious to be revenged upon Hector, but the lesson he had received made him cautious. He must get him into trouble by some means. Should he complain to his uncle? It would involve the necessity of admitting his defeat, unless he could gloss over the story in some way.

This he decided to do.

On reaching the school he sought his dormitory, and carefully wiped away the blood from his face. Then he combed his hair and arranged his dress, and sought his uncle.

Mr. Smith was at his desk, looking over his accounts, and estimating the profits of the half year, when his nephew made his appearance.

"Uncle Socrates, I'd like to speak to you."

"Very well, James. Proceed."

"I want to complain of the new boy who came this morning."

Socrates Smith looked up in genuine surprise. As a general thing, his nephew brought few complaints, for he took the responsibility of punishing boys he did not like himself.

"What! Roscoe?" inquired the principal.

"Yes."

"Is he in any mischief?"

"Mischief? I should say so! Why, he's a regular young Turk."

"A young Turk? I don't think I understand you, James."

"I mean, he's a young ruffian."

"What has he been doing?" asked Socrates, in surprise.

"He pitched into me a short time ago," said Jim, in some embarrassment.

"Pitched into you! You don't mean to say that he attacked you?"

"Yes, I do."

"But he's a considerably smaller boy than you, James. I am surprised that he should have dared to attack you."

"Yes, he is small, but he's a regular fighter."

"I suppose you gave him a lesson?"

"Ye-es, of course."

"So that he won't be very likely to renew the attack."

"Well, I don't know about that. He's tough and wiry, and understands boxing. I found it hard work to thrash him."

"But you did thrash him?" said Socrates, puzzled.

"Yes."

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"I thought you might punish him for being quarrelsome."

"It may be a good idea. I remember now that his uncle warned me that he would need restraining."

"Just so, uncle," said Jim, eagerly. "His uncle was right."

"Well, I will give him a lecture. He will find that he cannot behave as he pleases at Smith Institute," said Socrates, pompously. "He will find that I do not tolerate any defiance of authority. I will speak of it after vespers."

"Thank you, uncle."

"He'll get a raking down!" thought Jim, with gratification. "I'll make it hot for him here, he may be sure of that."

Half an hour after supper was read a brief evening service called vespers, and then the boys' study hours commenced. During this time they were expected to be preparing their lessons for the next day.

The service was generally read by Socrates Smith, A. M., in person. It was one of the few official duties he performed, and he was generally very imposing in his manner on this occasion.

When the service had been read on that particular evening, the principal did not immediately give the signal for study to be commenced. Instead, he cleared his throat, saying:

"Boys, I have a few words to say to you. This morning a new boy made his appearance among us. His uncle, or perhaps I should say his guardian, attracted by the well-deserved fame of Smith Institute, came hither to enter him among my pupils. I received him cordially, and promised that he should share with you the rich, the inestimable educational advantages which our humble seminary affords. I hoped he would be an acquisition, that by his obedience and his fidelity to duty he would shed luster on our school."

Here Socrates blew his nose sonorously, and resumed:

"But what has happened? On the very first day of his residence here he brutally assaults one of our numbers, my nephew, and displays the savage instincts of a barbarian. His uncle did well to warn me that he would need salutary restraint."

Hector, who had been amused by the solemn and impressive remarks of Socrates,

looked up in surprise. Had Allan Roscoe really traduced him in this manner, after robbing him of his inheritance, as Hector felt convinced that he had done?

"Hector Roscoe!" said Socrates, severely; "stand up, and let me hear what you have to say for yourself."

Hector rose calmly, and faced the principal, by no means awe-stricken at the grave arraignment to which he had listened.

"I say this, Mr. Smith," he answered, "that I did not attack your nephew till he had first attacked me. This he did without the slightest provocation, and I defended myself, as I had a right to do."

"It's a lie!" muttered Jim, in a tone audible to his uncle.

"My nephew's report is of a different character. I am disposed to believe him."

"I regret to say, sir, that he has made a false statement. I will give you an account of what actually occurred. On my return from a walk he sent a boy summoning me to his presence. As he was not a teacher, and had no more authority over me than I over him, I declined to obey, but sent word that if he wished to see me he could come where I was. I then walked down to the brook in Carver's field. He followed me, as soon as he had received my message, and, charging me with impertinence, challenged me to a fight. Well, we had a fight; but he attacked me first."

"I don't know whether this account is correct or not," said Socrates, a little nonplused by this new version of the affair.

"I am ready to accept the decision of any one of the boys," said Hector.

"Bates," said Socrates, who knew that this boy was an adherent of his nephew, "is this account of Roscoe's true?"

Bates hesitated a moment. He was still afraid of Jim, but when he thought of Hector's prowess, he concluded that he had better tell the truth.

"Yes, sir," he answered.

Jim Smith darted an angry and menacing glance at his failing adherent.

"Ahem!" said Socrates, looking puzzled: "it is not quite so bad as I supposed. I regret, however, that you have exhibited such a quarrelsome disposition."

"I don't think I am quarrelsome, sir," said Hector.

"Silence, sir! I have Mr. Allan Roscoe's word for it."

"It appears to me," said Hector, undauntedly, "that your nephew is at least as quarrelsome as I am. He forced the fight upon me."

"Probably you will not be in a hurry to attack him again," said Socrates, under the impression that Hector had got the worst of it.

Some of the boys smiled, but Socrates did not see it.

"As you have probably received a lesson, I will not punish you as I had anticipated. I will sentence you, however, to commit to memory the first fifty lines of Virgil's 'AEneid.' Mr. Crabb, will you see that Roscoe performs his penance?"

"Yes, sir," said Crabb, faintly.

"Is your nephew also to perform a penance?" asked Hector, undaunted.

"Silence, sir! What right have you to question me on this subject?"

"Because, sir, he is more to blame than I."

"I don't know that. I am not at all sure that your story is correct."

Mr. Crabb, meek as he was, was indignant at this flagrant partiality.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "I happen to know that Roscoe's story is strictly correct, and that your nephew made an unprovoked attack upon him."

Hector looked grateful, and Jim Smith furious.

"Mr. Crabb," said Socrates, angrily, "I did not ask your opinion. So far as my nephew is concerned, I will deal with him privately. Boys, you may begin your studies."

All the boys understood that Jim was to be let off, and they thought it a shame. But Mr. Crabb took care to make Hector's penance as light as possible.

And thus passed the first day at Smith Institute.

CHAPTER XV. THE USHER CONFIDES IN HECTOR.

Mr. Crabb acted rashly in siding with Hector, and speaking against Mr. Smith's nephew. Socrates showed his displeasure by a frigid demeanor, and by seeking occasions for snubbing his assistant. On the other hand, Hector felt grateful for his intercession, and an intimacy sprang up between them.

A few days afterward, on a half holiday, Mr. Crabb said: "Roscoe, I am going out for a walk. Do you care to accompany me?"

"I will do so with pleasure," said Hector, sincerely.

"Mr. Crabb," he said, after they were fairly on their way, "I am sorry to see that Mr. Smith has not forgiven you for taking my part against Jim."

"I would do it again, Roscoe," said the usher. "I could not sit silent while so great an injustice was being done."

"Do you think Jim was punished?"

"I am sure he was not. He is a boy after Mr. Smith's own heart, that is, he possesses the same mean and disagreeable qualities, perhaps in a greater degree. Has he interfered with you since?"

"No," answered Hector, smiling; "he probably found that I object to being bullied."

"You are fortunate in being strong enough to withstand his attacks."

"Yes," said Hector, quietly; "I am not afraid of him."

"Bullies are generally cowards," said the usher.

"I wonder, Mr. Crabb, you are willing to stay at Smith Institute, as usher to such a man as Mr. Smith."

"Ah, Roscoe!" said Mr. Crabb, sighing; "it is not of my own free will that I stay. Poverty is a hard task-master. I must teach for a living."

"But surely you could get a better position?"

"Perhaps so; but how could I live while I was seeking for it. My lad," he said, after a pause, "I have a great mind to confide in you; I want one friend to whom I can talk unreservedly."

"Mr. Crabb," said Hector, earnestly, "I shall feel flattered by your confidence."

"Thank you, Roscoe; or, rather, since we are going to be friends, let me distinguish you from the other boys and call you Hector."

"I wish you would, sir."

"I need not tell you that I am poor," continued Mr. Crabb; "you can read it in my shabby clothes. I sometimes see the boys looking at my poor suit, as if they wondered why I dressed so badly. Smith has more than once cast insulting looks at my rusty coat. It is not penuriousness, as some of the boys may think—it is poverty that prevents me from attiring myself more becomingly."

"Mr. Crabb, I sympathize with you," said Hector.

"Thank you, Hector. Of that I am sure."

"Mr. Smith ought to pay you enough to clothe yourself neatly. He makes you work hard enough."

"He pays me twenty dollars a month," said the usher; "twenty dollars and my board."

"Is that all?" asked Hector, in amazement. "Why, the girl in the kitchen earns nearly that."

"To be sure," answered the usher, bitterly; "but in Mr. Smith's estimation, I stand very little higher. He does not value education, not possessing it himself. However, you may wonder why, even with this sum, I cannot dress better. It is because I have another than myself to support."

"You are not married?" asked Hector, in surprise.

"No; but I have an invalid sister, who is wholly dependent upon me. To her I devote three-quarters of my salary, and this leaves me very little for myself. My poor sister is quite unable to earn anything for herself, so it is a matter of necessity."

"Yes, I understand," said Hector, in a tone of sympathy.

"You now see why I do not dare to leave this position, poor as it is. For myself, I might take the risk, but I should not feel justified in exposing my sister to the hazard of possible want."

"You are right, Mr. Crabb. I am very sorry now that you spoke up for me. It has

prejudiced Mr. Smith against you."

"No, no; I won't regret that. Indeed, he would hesitate to turn me adrift, for he would not be sure of getting another teacher to take my place for the same beggarly salary."

"Something may turn up for you yet, Mr. Crabb," said Hector, hopefully.

"Perhaps so," answered the usher, but his tone was far from sanguine.

When they returned to the school, Hector carried out a plan which had suggested itself to him in the interest of Mr. Crabb. He wrote to a boy of his acquaintance, living in New York, who, he had heard, was in want of a private tutor, and recommended Mr. Crabb, in strong terms, for that position. He did this sincerely, for he had found the usher to be a good teacher, and well versed in the studies preparatory to college. He did not think it best to mention this to Mr. Crabb, for the answer might be unfavorable, and then his hopes would have been raised only to be dashed to the earth.

Later in the day, Hector fell in with Bates, already referred to as a special friend of Jim Smith. The intimacy, however, had been diminished since the contest in which Hector gained the victory. Bates was not quite so subservient to the fallen champion, and Jim resented it.

"I saw you walking out with old Crabb," said Bates.

"He isn't particularly old," said Hector.

"Oh, you know what I mean. Did you ever see such a scarecrow?"

"Do you refer to his dress?" asked Hector.

"Yes; he'll soon be in rags. I shouldn't wonder at all if that old suit of his was worn by one of Noah's sons in the ark."

"You don't suppose he wears it from choice, do you?"

"I don't know. He's stingy, I suppose—afraid to spend a cent."

"You are mistaken. He has a sister to support, and his salary is very small."

"I can believe that. Old Sock is mean with his teachers. How much does he pay Crabb?"

"It is very little, but I don't know that I ought to tell."

"I say, though, Roscoe, I wouldn't go to walk with him again."

"Why not?"

"The boys will say that, you are trying to get into his good graces, so he'll let you off easy in your lessons."

"I don't want him to let me off easy; I generally intend to be prepared."

"I know, but that's what they will say."

"Let them say what they please, and I will do what I please," said Hector, independently.

"Old Sock ain't any too fond of Crabb since he took your part the other day. Jim says the old man means to bounce him before long."

"I suppose that means discharge him."

"It means giving him his walking papers. Jim will see that he does it, too."

Hector did not reply, but he felt more than ever glad that he had written a letter which might possibly bring the poor usher more profitable and, at the same time, agreeable employment.

"Jim doesn't like you, either," added Bates.

"I never supposed he did. I can do without his favor."

"He will get you into a scrape if he can."

"I have no doubt whatever of his benevolent intentions toward me. I shall not let it interfere with my happiness."

Just then a sharp cry was heard, as of a boy in pain. It came from the school yard, which the two boys were approaching on their return from a walk.

"What's that?" asked Hector, quickly.

"I expect it's the new boy."

One had arrived the day before.

"Is he hurt, I wonder?" asked Hector, quickening his steps.

"Jim's got hold of him, probably," said Bates; "he said this morning he was going to give the little chap a lesson to break him into school ways."

"He did, did he?" said Hector, compressing his lips. "I shall have something to say to that," and he quickened his steps.

CHAPTER XVI. TOSSED IN A BLANKET.

The last new boy was a little fellow only eleven years old. His name was Tommy Cooper, as he was called at home. It was his first absence from the sheltering care of his mother, and he felt lonesome in the great, dreary school building, where he was called "Cooper," and "you little chap." He missed the atmosphere of home, and the tenderness of his mother and sister. In fact, the poor boy was suffering from that most distressing malady, homesickness.

Had Mrs. Socrates Smith been a kind, motherly woman, she might have done much to reconcile the boy to his new home; but she was a tall, gaunt, bony woman, more masculine than feminine, not unlike Miss Sally Brass, whom all readers of Dickens will remember.

I am sorry to say that a homesick boy in a boarding school does not meet with much sympathy. Even those boys who have once experienced the same malady are half ashamed of it, and, if they remember it at all, remember it as a mark of weakness. There was but one boy who made friendly approaches to Tommy, and this was Hector Roscoe.

Hector had seen the little fellow sitting by himself with a sad face, and he had gone up to him, and asked him in a pleasant tone some questions about himself and his home.

"So you have never been away from home before, Tommy," he said.

"No, sir," answered the boy, timidly.

"Don't call me sir. I am only a boy like you. Call me Hector."

"That is a strange name. I never heard it before."

"No, it is not a common name. I suppose you don't like school very much?"

"I never shall be happy here," sighed Tommy.

"You think so now, but you will get used to it."

"I don't think I shall."

"Oh, yes, you will. It will never seem like home, of course, but you will get acquainted with some of the boys, and will join in their games, and then time will pass more pleasantly."

"I think the boys are very rough," said the little boy.

"Yes, they are rough, but they don't mean unkindly. Some of them were homesick when they came here, just like you."

"Were you homesick?" asked Tommy, looking up, with interest.

"I didn't like the school very well; but I was much older than you when I came here, and, besides, I didn't leave behind me so pleasant a home. I am not so rich as you, Tommy. I have no father nor mother," and for the moment Hector, too, looked sad.

The little fellow became more cheerful under the influence of Hector's kind and sympathetic words. Our hero, however, was catechised about his sudden intimacy with the new scholar.

"I see you've got a new situation, Roscoe," said Bates, when Hector was walking away.

"What do you mean?"

"You've secured the position of nurse to that little cry baby."

"You mean Tommy Cooper?"

"Yes, if that's his name."

"I was cheering up the little fellow a bit. He's made rather a bad exchange in leaving a happy home for Smith Institute."

"That's so. This is a dreary hole, but there's no need of crying about it."

"You might if you were as young as Tommy, and had just come."

"Shall you take him under your wing?"

"Yes, if he needs it."

We now come to the few minutes preceding the return of Hector from his walk, as

indicated in the last chapter.

Tommy Cooper was sitting in the school yard, with a disconsolate look, when Jim Smith, who was never happier than when he was bullying other boys, espied him.

"What's the matter with you, young one?" he said, roughly, "Is your grandmother dead?"

"No," answered Tommy, briefly.

"Come here and play."

"I would rather not."

"I am not going to have you sulking round here. Do you hear me?"

"Are you one of the teachers?" asked Tommy, innocently.

"You'll find out who I am," answered Jim, roughly. "Here, Palmer, do you want a little fun with this young one?"

Palmer and Bates were Jim Smith's most devoted adherents.

"What are you going to do, Jim?" questioned Palmer.

"I'm going to stir him up a little," said Jim, with a malicious smile. "Go and get a blanket."

"All right!" said Palmer.

"We'll toss him in a blanket. He won't look so sulky after we get through with him."

There were two or three other boys standing by, who heard these words.

"It's a shame!" said one, in a low voice. "See the poor little chap, how sad he looks! I felt just as he does when I first came to school."

"Jim ought not to do it," said the second. "It's a mean thing to do."

"Tell him so."

"No, thank you. He'd treat me the same way."

The two speakers were among the smaller boys, neither being over fourteen, and though they sympathized with Tommy, their sympathy was not likely to do him any good.

Out came Palmer with the blanket.

"Are there any teachers about?" asked Jim.

"No."

"That's good. We shan't be interfered with. Here, young one, come here."

"What for?" asked Tommy, looking frightened.

"Come here, and you'll find out."

But Tommy had already guessed. He had read a story of English school life, in which a boy had been tossed in a blanket, and he was not slow in comprehending the situation.

"Oh, don't toss me in a blanket!" said the poor boy, clasping his hands.

"Sorry to disturb you, but it's got to be done, young one," said Jim. "Here, jump in. It'll do you good."

"Oh, don't!" sobbed the poor boy. "It'll hurt me."

"No, it won't! Don't be a cry baby. We'll make a man of you."

But Tommy was not persuaded. He jumped up, and tried to make his escape. But, of course, there was no chance for him. Jim Smith overtook him in a couple of strides, and seizing him roughly by the collar, dragged him to the blanket, which by this time Palmer and one of the other boys, who had been impressed into the service reluctantly, were holding.

Jim Smith, taking up Tommy bodily, threw him into the blanket, and then seizing one end, gave it a violent toss. Up went the boy into the air, and tumbling back again into the blanket was raised again.

"Raise him, boys!" shouted Jim. "Give him a hoist!"

Then it was that Tommy screamed, and Hector heard his cry for help.

He came rushing round the corner of the building, and comprehended, at a glance, what was going on.

Naturally his hot indignation was much stirred.

"For shame, you brutes!" he cried. "Stop that!"

If there was anyone whom Jim Smith did not want to see at this moment, it was Hector Roscoe. He would much rather have seen one of the ushers. He saw that he was in a scrape, but his pride would not allow him to back out.

"Keep on, boys!" he cried. "It's none of Roscoe's business. He'd better clear out, or we'll toss him."

As he spoke he gave another toss.

"Save me, Hector!" cried Tommy, espying his friend's arrival with joy.

Hector was not the boy to let such an appeal go unheeded. He sprang forward, dealt Jim Smith a powerful blow, that made him stagger, and let go the blanket, and then helped Tommy to his feet.

"Run into the house. Tommy!" he said. "There may be some rough work here."

He faced round just in time to fend off partially a blow from the angry bully.

"Take that for your impudence!" shouted Jim Smith. "I'll teach you to meddle with, me."

But Jim reckoned without his host. The blow was returned with interest, and, in the heat of his indignation, Hector followed it up with such a volley that the bully retreated in discomfiture, and was glad to withdraw from the contest.

"I'll pay you for this, you scoundrel!" he said, venomously.

"Whenever you please, you big brute!" returned Hector, contemptuously. "It is just

like you to tease small boys. If you annoy Tommy Cooper again, you'll hear from me."

"I'd like to choke that fellow!" muttered Jim. "Either he or I will have to leave this school."

CHAPTER XVII. JIM SMITH'S REVENGE.

It would be natural to suppose that Jim Smith, relying upon his influence with his uncle, would have reported this last "outrage," as he chose to consider it, to the principal, thus securing the punishment of Hector. But he was crafty, and considered that no punishment Hector was likely to receive would satisfy him. Corporal punishment for taking the part of an ill-used boy, Hector was probably too spirited to submit to, and, under these circumstances, it would hardly have been inflicted. Besides, Jim was aware that the offense for which Hector had attacked him was not likely, if made known, to secure sympathy. Even his uncle would be against him, for he was fond of money, and had no wish to lose the new pupil, whose friends were well able to pay for him.

No! He decided that what he wanted was to bring Hector into disgrace. The method did not immediately occur to him, but after a while he saw his way clear.

His uncle's bedchamber was on the second floor, and Jim's directly over it on the third story. Some of the other boys, including Hector, had rooms also on the third floor.

Jim was going upstairs one day when, through the door of his uncle's chamber, which chanced to be open, he saw a wallet lying on the bureau. On the impulse of the moment, he walked in on tiptoes, secured the wallet, and slipped it hurriedly into his pocket. Then he made all haste upstairs, and bolted himself into his own room. Two other boys slept there, but both were downstairs in the playground.

Jim took the wallet from his pocket and eagerly scanned the contents. There were eight five-dollar bills and ten dollars in small bills, besides a few papers, which may be accurately described as of no value to anyone but the owner.

The boy's face assumed a covetous look. He, as well as his uncle, was fond of money—a taste which, unfortunately, as he regarded it, he was unable to gratify. His family was poor, and he was received at half price by Socrates Smith on the score of relationship, but his allowance of pocket money was less than that of many of the small boys. He made up the deficiency, in part, by compelling them to contribute to his pleasures. If any boy purchased candy, or any other delicacy, Jim, if he learned the fact, required him to give him a portion, just as the feudal lords exacted tribute from their serfs and dependents. Still, this was not wholly satisfactory, and Jim longed, instead, for a supply of money to spend as he chose.

So the thought came to him, as he scanned the contents of the wallet: "Why shouldn't I take out one or two of these bills before disposing of it? No one will lay it to me."

The temptation proved too strong for Jim's power of resistance. He selected a five-dollar bill and five dollars in small bills, and reluctantly replaced the rest of the

money in the wallet.

"So far, so good!" he thought. "That's a good idea."

Then, unlocking the door, he passed along the entry till he came to the room occupied by Hector. As he or one of the two boys who roomed with him might be in the room, he looked first through the keyhole.

"The coast is clear!" he said to himself, in a tone of satisfaction.

Still, he opened the door cautiously, and stepped with catlike tread into the room. Then he looked about the room. Hanging on nails were several garments belonging to the inmates of the room. Jim selected a pair of pants which he knew belonged to Hector, and hurrying forward, thrust the wallet into one of the side pockets. Then, with a look of satisfaction, he left the room, shutting the door carefully behind him.

"There," he said to himself, with exultation. "That'll fix him! Perhaps he'll wish he hadn't put on quite so many airs."

He was rather annoyed, as he walked along the corridor, back to his own room, to encounter Wilkins. He had artfully chosen a time when he thought all the boys would be out, and he heartily wished that some untoward chance had not brought Wilkins in.

"Where are you going, Jim?" asked Wilkins.

"I went to Bates' room, thinking he might be in, but he wasn't."

"Do you want him? I left him out on the playground."

"Oh, it's no matter! It'll keep!" said Jim, indifferently.

"I got out of that pretty well!" he reflected complacently.

Perhaps Jim Smith would not have felt quite so complacent, if he had known that at the time he entered Hector's room it was occupied, though he could not see the occupant. It so chanced that Ben Platt, one of Hector's roommates, was in the closet, concealed from the view of anyone entering the room, yet so placed that he could see through the partially open door what wras passing in the room.

When he saw Jim Smith enter he was surprised, for he knew that that young man was not on visiting terms with the boy who had discomfited and humiliated him.

"What on earth can Jim want?" he asked himself.

He did not have long to wait for an answer though not a real one; but actions, as men have often heard, speak louder than words.

When he saw Jim steal up to Hector's pants, and producing a wallet, hastily thrust it into one of the pockets, he could hardly believe the testimony of his eyes.

"Well!" he ejaculated, inwardly, "I would not have believed it if I hadn't seen it. I knew Jim was a bully and a tyrant, but I didn't think he was as contemptible as all that."

The wallet he recognized at once, for he had more than once seen Socrates take it out of his pocket.

"It's old Sock's wallet!" he said to himself. "It's clear that Jim has taken it, and means to have it found in Roscoe's possession. That's as mean a trick as I ever heard of."

Just then Wilkins entered the room. Wilkins and Ben Platt were Hector's two roommates.

"Hello, Wilkins! I'm glad you've come just as you have."

"What for, Platt? Do you want to borrow some money?"

"No; there is more money in this room now than there has been for a long time."

"What do you mean? The governor hasn't sent you a remittance, has he?"

"No."

"Expound your meaning, then, most learned and mysterious chum."

"I will. Within five minutes Jim Smith has been here and left a wallet of money."

"Jim been here? I met him in the corridor."

"I warrant he didn't say he had been here."

"No; he said he had been to Bates' room, but didn't find him there."

"That's all gammon! Wilkins, what will you say when I tell you that old Sock's wallet is in this very room!"

"I won't believe it!"

"Look here, then!"

As he spoke, Ben went to Hector's pants and drew out the wallet.

Wilkins started in surprise and dismay.

"How did Roscoe come by that?" he asked; "surely he didn't take it?"

"Of course he didn't. You might know Roscoe better. Didn't you hear me say just now that Jim brought it here?"

"And put it in Roscoe's pocket?"

"Yes."

"In your presence?"

"Yes; only he didn't know that I was present," said Platt.

"Where were you?"

"In the closet. The door was partly open, and I saw everything."

"What does it all mean?"

"Can't you see? It's Jim's way of coming up with Roscoe. You know he threatened that he'd fix him."

"All I can say is, that it's a very mean way," said Wilkins in disgust.

He was not a model boy—far from it, indeed!—but he had a sentiment of honor that made him dislike and denounce a conspiracy like this.

"It's a dirty trick," he said, warmly.

"I agree with you on that point." "What shall we do about it?"

"Lay low, and wait till the whole thing comes out. When Sock discovers his loss, Jim will be on hand to tell him where his wallet is. Then we can up and tell all we know."

"Good! There's a jolly row coming!" said Wilkins, smacking his lips.

CHAPTER XVIII. THE MISSING WALLET IS FOUND.

Socrates Smith was, ordinarily, so careful of his money, that it was a very remarkable inadvertence to leave it on the bureau. Nor was it long before he ascertained his loss. He was sitting at his desk when his wife looked in at the door, and called for a small sum for some domestic expenditure.

With an ill grace—for Socrates hated to part with his money—he put his hand into the pocket where he usually kept his wallet.

"Really, Mrs. Smith," he was saying, "it seems to me you are always wanting money—why, bless my soul!" and such an expression of consternation and dismay swept over his face, that his wife hurriedly inquired:

"What is the matter, Mr. Smith?"

"Matter enough!" he gasped. "My wallet is gone!"

"Gone!" echoed his wife, in alarm. "Where can you have left it?"

Mr. Smith pressed his hand to his head in painful reflection.

"How much money was there in it, Socrates?" asked his wife.

"Between forty and fifty dollars!" groaned Mr. Smith. "If I don't find it, Sophronia, I am a ruined man!"

This was, of course, an exaggeration, but it showed the poignancy of the loser's regret.

"Can't you think where you left it?"

Suddenly Mr. Smith's face lighted up.

"I remember where I left it, now," he said; "I was up in the chamber an hour since, and, while changing my coat, took out my wallet, and laid it on the bureau. I'll go right up and look for it."

"Do, Socrates."

Mr. Smith bounded up the staircase with the agility of a man of half his years, and hopefully opened the door of his chamber, which Jim had carefully closed after him. His first glance was directed at the bureau, but despair again settled down sadly upon his heart when he saw that it was bare. There was no trace of the missing wallet.

"It may have fallen on the carpet," said Socrates, hope reviving faintly.

There was not a square inch of the cheap Kidderminster carpet that he did not scan earnestly, greedily, but, alas! the wallet, if it had ever been there, had mysteriously taken to itself locomotive powers, and wandered away into the realm of the unknown and the inaccessible.

Yet, searching in the chambers of his memory, Mr. Smith felt sure that he had left the wallet on the bureau. He could recall the exact moment when he laid it down, and he recollected that he had not taken it again.

"Some one has taken it!" he decided; and wrath arose in his heart, He snapped his teeth together in stern anger, as he determined that he would ferret out the miserable thief, and subject him to condign punishment.

Mrs. Smith, tired of waiting for the appearance of her husband, ascended the stairs and entered his presence.

"Well?" she said.

"I haven't found it," answered Socrates, tragically. "Mrs. Smith, the wallet has been stolen!"

"Are you sure that you left it here?" asked his wife.

"Sure!" he repeated, in a hollow tone. "I am as sure as that the sun rose to-morrow—I mean yesterday."

"Was the door open?"

"No; but that signifies nothing. It wasn't locked, and anyone could enter."

"Is it possible that we have a thief in the institute?" said Mrs. Smith, nervously. "Socrates, I shan't sleep nights. Think of the spoons!"

"They're only plated."

"And my earrings."

"You could live without earrings. Think, rather, of the wallet, with nearly fifty dollars in bills."

"Who do you think took it, Socrates?"

"I have no idea; but I will find out. Yes, I will find out. Come downstairs, Mrs. Smith; we will institute inquiries."

When Mr. Smith had descended to the lower floor, and was about entering the office, it chanced that his nephew was just entering the house.

"What's the matter, Uncle Socrates?" he asked; "you look troubled."

"And a good reason why, James; I have met with a loss."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Jim, in innocent wonder; "what is it?"

"A wallet, with a large amount of money in it!"

"Perhaps there is a hole in your pocket," suggested Jim.

"A hole—large enough for my big wallet to fall through! Don't be such a fool!"

"Excuse me, uncle," said Jim, meekly; "of course that is impossible. When do you remember having it last?"

Of course Socrates told the story, now familiar to us, and already familiar to his nephew, though he did not suspect that.

Jim struck his forehead, as if a sudden thought had occurred to him.

"Could it be?" he said, slowly, as if to himself; "no, I can't believe it."

"Can't believe what?" demanded Socrates, impatiently; "if you have any clew, out with it!"

"I hardly like to tell, Uncle Socrates, for it implicates one of the boys."

"Which?" asked Mr. Smith, eagerly.

"I will tell you, though I don't like to. Half an hour since, I was coming upstairs, when I heard a door close, as I thought, and, directly afterward, saw Hector Roscoe hurrying up the stairs to the third floor. I was going up there myself, and followed him. Five minutes later he came out of his room, looking nervous and excited. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but I now think that he entered your room, took the wallet, and then carried it up to his own chamber and secreted it."

"Hector Roscoe!" repeated Mr. Smith, in amazement. "I wouldn't have supposed that he was a thief."

"Nor I; and perhaps he isn't. It might be well, however, to search his room."

"I will!" answered Socrates, with eagerness, "Come up, James, and you, Mrs. Smith, come up, too!"

The trio went upstairs, and entered poor Hector's room. It was not unoccupied, for Ben Platt and Wilkins were there. They anticipated a visit, and awaited it with curious interest. They rose to their feet when the distinguished visitors arrived.

"Business of importance brings us here," said Socrates. "Platt and Wilkins, you may leave the room."

The boys exchanged glances, and obeyed.

"Wilkins," said Ben, when they were in the corridor, "it is just as I thought. Jim has set a trap for Roscoe."

"He may get caught himself," said Wilkins. "I ain't oversqueamish, but that is too confounded mean! Of course you'll tell all you know?"

"Yes; and I fancy it will rather surprise Mr. Jim. I wish they had let us stay in there."

Meanwhile, Jim skillfully directed the search.

"He may have put it under the mattress," suggested Jim.

Socrates darted to the bed, and lifted up the mattress, but no wallet revealed itself to his searching eyes.

"No; it is not here!" he said, in a tone of disappointment; "the boy may have it about him. I will send for him."

"Wait a moment, Uncle Socrates," said Jim; "there is a pair of pants which I recognize as his."

Mr. Smith immediately thrust his hand into one of the pockets and drew out the wallet!

"Here it is!" he exclaimed, joyfully. "Here it is!"

"Then Roscoe is a thief! I wouldn't have thought it!" said Jim.

"Nor I. I thought the boy was of too good family to stoop to such a thing. But now I remember, Mr. Allan Roscoe told me he was only adopted by his brother. He is, perhaps, the son of a criminal."

"Very likely!" answered Jim, who was glad to believe anything derogatory to Hector.

"What are you going to do about it, uncle?"

"I shall bring the matter before the school. I will disgrace the boy publicly," answered Socrates Smith, sternly. "He deserves the exposure."

"Aha, Master Roscoe!" said Jim, gleefully, to himself; "I rather think I shall get even with you, and that very soon."

CHAPTER XIX. A DRAMATIC SCENE.

It was generally after vespers that Mr. Smith communicated to the school anything which he desired to call to their attention. This was to be the occasion of bringing our hero into disgrace.

The boys assembled, most of them quite ignorant that anything exceptional was to occur. Hector himself, the person chiefly interested, was entirely unconscious that he was to be made "a shining mark" for the arrows of suspicion and obloquy. If he had noticed the peculiar and triumphantly malicious looks with which Jim Smith, the bully and tyrant, whom he had humiliated and deposed, regarded him, he might have been led to infer that some misfortune was in store for him. But these looks he did not chance to notice.

There were two other boys, however, who did notice them. These were Ben Platt and Wil-kins, who had very good reasons, as we know, for doing so.

"I believe old Sock is going to pitch into Roscoe at vespers," said Ben, in a whisper, to his roommate.

"So do I. There's a look about him like that of a tiger about to pounce on his prey."

"Or a cat with murderous designs on a mouse."

"We must expose the whole thing."

"Of course."

"Won't Jim be mad?"

"Let him! He won't dare to thrash us while Roscoe is round."

There was, indeed, about Socrates Smith an air of mystery, portentous and suggestive. He looked like one meditating a coup d'etat, or, perhaps, it might better be said, a coup de main, as the hand is with schoolmasters, generally, the instrument of attack.

When the proper time arrived, Mr. Smith cleared his throat, as he always did before beginning to speak.

"Boys," he said, "I have an important, and I may say, a painful, communication to make to you."

All the boys looked at each other in curiosity, except the three who were already in the secret.

"You know, boys," continued Socrates, "how proud I am of this institute, how zealous I am for its good reputation, how unwearied I am in my efforts for your progress and welfare."

Mr. Smith's unwearied efforts were largely in the line of making out and receipting bills for tuition, and it may be said that this was to him by far the most agreeable of the duties he undertook to perform.

"I have been proud of my pupils," continued the principal, "and it has given me pleasure to reflect that you all reflected credit, more or less, upon my teaching. I have, also, sought to form your manners, to train you to fill the positions which Providence may have in store for you. In a word, while from time to time you may have indulged in little escapades, slightly-culpable, I have felt that you were all gentlemen."

"What in the world does he mean?" thought more than one puzzled boy. "What is all this leading to?"

Among those to whom this thought occurred, was Hector Roscoe, who was very far from conjecturing that all this long preamble was to introduce an attack upon him.

"But," proceeded Socrates, after a pause, "I have this afternoon been painfully undeceived. I have learned, with inexpressible pain, that Smith Institute has received an ineffaceable stigma."

"Old Sock is getting eloquent!" whispered Ben Platt.

"I have learned," continued Socrates, with tragic intensity, "that I have nourished a viper in my bosom! I have learned that we have a thief among us!"

This declaration was greeted with a buzz of astonishment. Each boy looked at his next door neighbor as if to inquire, "Is it you?"

Each one, except the three who were behind the scenes. Of these, Jim Smith, with an air of supreme satisfaction, looked in a sidelong way at Hector, unconscious the while that two pairs of eyes—those of Wilkins and Ben Platt—were fixed upon him.

"I thought you would be surprised," said the principal, "except, of course, the miserable criminal. But I will not keep you in suspense. To-day, by inadvertence, I left my wallet, containing a considerable sum of money, on the bureau in my chamber. An hour later, discovering my loss, I went upstairs, but the wallet was gone. It had mysteriously disappeared. I was at a loss to understand this at first, but I soon found a clew. I ascertained that a boy—a boy who is presently one of the pupils of Smith

Institute—had entered my chamber, had appropriated the wallet, had carried it to his dormitory, and there had slyly concealed it in the pocket of a pair of pants. Doubtless, he thought his theft would not be discovered, but it was, and I myself discovered the missing wallet in its place of concealment."

Here Mr. Smith paused, and it is needless to say that the schoolroom was a scene of great excitement. His tone was so impressive, and his statement so detailed, that no one could doubt that he had most convincing evidence of the absolute accuracy of what he said.

"Who was it?" every boy had it on his lips to inquire.

"Three hours have elapsed since my discovery," continued Mr. Smith. "During that time I have felt unnerved. I have, however, written and posted an account of this terrible discovery to the friends of the pupil who has so disgraced himself and the school."

Ben Platt and Wilkins exchanged glances of indignation. They felt that Mr. Smith had been guilty of a piece of outrageous injustice in acting thus before he had apprised the supposed offender of the charge against him, and heard his defense. Both boys decided that they would not spare Jim Smith, but at all hazards expose the contemptible plot which he had contrived against his schoolfellow.

"I waited, however, till I was somewhat more calm before laying the matter before you. I know you will all be anxious to know the name of the boy who has brought disgrace upon the school to which you belong, and I am prepared to reveal it to you. Hector Roscoe, stand up!"

If a flash of lightning had struck him where he sat, Hector could not have been more astonished. For a moment he was struck dumb, and did not move.

"Stand up, Hector Roscoe!" repeated the principal. "No wonder you sit there as if paralyzed. You did not expect that so soon your sin would find you out."

Then Hector recovered completely his self-possession. He sprang to his feet, and not only that, but he strode forward, blazing with passion, till he stood before Mr. Smith's desk and confronted him.

"Mr. Smith!" he said, in a ringing tone, "do I understand you to charge me with stealing a wallet of yours containing money?"

"I do so charge you, and I have complete evidence of the truth of my charge. What have you to say?"

"What have I to say?" repeated Hector, looking around him proudly and scornfully. "I have to say that it is an infamous lie!"

"Hold, sir!" exclaimed Socrates, angrily. "Shameless boy, do you intend to brazen it out? Did I not tell you that I had complete proof of the truth of the charge?"

"I don't care what fancied proof you have. I denounce the charge as a lie."

"That won't do, sir! I myself took the wallet from the pocket of your pantaloons, hanging in the chamber. Mrs. Smith was with me and witnessed my discovery, and there was another present, one of the pupils of this institute, who also can testify to the fact. It is useless for you to deny it!"

"You found the wallet in the pocket of my pantaloons?" asked Hector, slowly.

"Yes. There can be no doubt about that."

"Who put it there?" demanded Hector, quickly.

Socrates Smith was staggered, for he had not expected this query from the accused.

"Who put it there?" he repeated.

"Yes, sir," continued Hector, firmly. "If the matter is as you state it, some one has been mean enough to put the wallet into my pocket in order to implicate me in a theft."

"Of course you put it there yourself, Roscoe. Your defense is very lame."

Hector turned round to his fellow-scholars.

"Boys," he said, "you have heard the charge that has been made against me. You know me pretty well by this time. Is there any one of you that believes it to be true?"

"No! No!" shouted the boys, with one exception. Jim Smith was heard to say distinctly, "I believe it!"

"Silence in the school!" shouted Socrates. "This is altogether irregular, and I won't have it."

Hector turned to the principal, and said, calmly:

"You see, Mr. Smith, that, in spite of your proof, these boys will not believe that your charge is well founded."

"That is neither here nor there, Roscoe. Will anyone step up and prove your innocence?"

There was another sensation. In the second row back a boy was seen to rise.

"Mr. Smith," said Ben Platt, "I can prove Roscoe's innocence!"

CHAPTER XX. HECTOR GAINS A VICTORY.

There were two persons on whom Ben Platt's declaration made a profound impression. These were Jim Smith and his uncle, the learned Socrates. The latter was surprised, for he was fully persuaded that the charge he had made was a true one, and Hector was a thief. As for Jim, his surprise was of a very disagreeable nature. Knowing as he did that, he himself had taken the money, he was alarmed lest his offense was to be made known, and that the pit which he had digged for another should prove to be provided for himself.

Socrates was the first to speak after taking time to recover himself from his surprise.

"This is a very extraordinary statement, Platt," he said. "You say you can prove Roscoe's innocence?"

"Yes, sir," answered Platt, firmly.

"I wish no trifling here, sir," said the principal, sharply. "I myself found the wallet in Roscoe's pocket."

"Yes, sir," answered Ben Platt, "I know it was there."

"You knew it was there!" repeated Socrates. "How did you know it was there?"

"Because I saw it put in."

Here Jim Smith's face turned from red to pale, and he moved about uneasily in his seat. "Could Ben Platt have been hidden somewhere in the room?" he asked himself, "If so, what was he to do?" There was but one answer to this question. He must brazen it out, and boldly contradict the witness. But he would bide his time. He would wait to hear what Ben had to say.

"Did you put it in yourself?" asked Socrates, savagely.

"No, Mr. Smith, I didn't put it in," answered Ben, indignantly.

"None of your impudence, sir!" said the schoolmaster, irritated.

"I merely answered your question and defended myself," answered Ben.

There was a little murmur among the pupils, showing that their sympathy was with the boy who had been so causelessly accused by the principal.

"Silence!" exclaimed Socrates, annoyed. "Now," he continued, turning to Ben, "since you know who put the wallet into Roscoe's pocket—a very remarkable statement, by the way—will you deign to inform me who did it?"

"James Smith did it!" said Ben, looking over to the principal's nephew, who was half expecting such an attack.

"It's a base lie!" cried Jim, but his face was blanched, his manner was nervous and confused, and he looked guilty, if he were not so.

"My nephew?" asked Socrates, flurried.

"Yes, sir."

"It isn't so, Uncle Socrates," said Jim, excited. "I'll lick you, Ben Platt, when we get out of school."

"You forget yourself, James," said Socrates, with a mildness he would not have employed with any other pupil.

"I beg your pardon, Uncle Socrates," said Jim, with contrition, "but I can't be silent when I am accused of things I don't do."

"To be sure, you have some excuse, but you should remember the respect you owe to me. Then you did not do it?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"So it appears, Platt, that you have brought a false charge against your fellow-pupil," said Mr. Smith, severely. "I can conceive of nothing meaner."

"Mr. Smith," said Hector, "what right have you to say that the charge is false? Is it the

denial of your nephew? If he took the wallet he would, of course, deny it."

"So would you!" retorted Socrates.

"No one saw me conceal it," said Hector, significantly.

Then Wilkins rose.

"Mr. Smith," he said, "I have some evidence to offer."

"Out with it, sir," said the principal, angrily, for he was fighting against an inward conviction that his nephew was really the guilty party.

"I was walking along the corridor about the time Platt speaks of Smith's visit to Roscoe's room, and I met your nephew walking in the opposite direction. When I entered the room, Platt told me that, half-concealed by the closet door, he had seen Jim Smith enter and thrust the wallet into Roscoe's pocket. Soon after, you and Mrs. Smith came into the room, guided by your nephew, who let you know just where the wallet was hidden. He had very good reasons for knowing," added Wilkins.

If a look would have annihilated Wilkins, the look directed towards him by Jim Smith would have had that effect.

"It's a conspiracy against me, Uncle Socrates," said Jim, intent upon brazening it out. "They're all in league together."

"The testimony of Wilkins doesn't amount to much!" said Mr. Smith. "He may have seen James in the corridor, but that is by no means a part of his complicity in this affair."

"Just so!" said Jim, eagerly.

"Ben Platt's evidence ought to count for something," said Hector. "He saw your nephew putting the wallet into the pocket of my pants."

Socrates was clearly perplexed. In spite of his partiality for his nephew, the case against him certainly looked very strong.

Hector, however, determined to make his defense even stronger.

"I would like to ask Platt," he said, "at what time this took place?"

"At three o'clock."

"How do you know it was three?" asked the principal, sharply.

"Because I heard the clock on the village church strike three."

"I would like to ask another boy—Frank Lewis—if he heard the clock strike three?"

Lewis answered in the affirmative.

"Where were you at the time?"

"In the playground."

"What were you doing?"

"Playing ball."

"Was I in the game?"

"Yes."

"How long had the game been going on?"

"Half an hour."

"How long had the game been going on, do you know?"

"From half to three-quarters of an hour."

"Can you remember whether I was with you all the time?"

"You were."

"Now, Platt, will you tell me how long after the wallet was put into my pocket before Mr. Smith appeared in search of it?"

"Not over half an hour."

"I submit, then," said Hector, in a matter-of-fact manner, "that I was absent in the playground during the entire time when it was found in my room. I believe this is what lawyers call an alibi that I have, fortunately, been able to prove."

"You are a very smart lawyer!" sneered the principal.

The boys were by this time so incensed at Mr. Smith's evident effort to clear his nephew at the expense of Roscoe, that there was a very audible hiss, in which at least half a dozen joined.

"Is this rebellion?" asked Socrates, furiously.

"No, sir," said Ben Platt, firmly. "We want justice done; that is all."

"You shall have justice—all of you!" exclaimed Socrates, carried beyond the limits of prudence.

"I am glad to hear that, sir," said Hector. "If you do not at once exonerate me from this charge, which you know to be false, and write to my guardian retracting it, I will bring the matter before the nearest magistrate."

This was more than Socrates had bargained for. He saw that he had gone too far, and was likely to wreck his prospects and those of the school.

"I will look into the matter," he said, hurriedly, "and report to the school hereafter. You may now apply yourselves to your studies."

CHAPTER XXI. THE USHER IS DISCHARGED.

Among the boys of Smith Institute there was but one opinion on the subject of the principal's wallet. All acquitted Roscoe of having any part in the theft, and they were equally unanimous in the belief that Jim Smith had contrived a mean plot against the boy whom he could not conquer by fair means. There was a little informal consultation as to how Jim should be treated. It was finally decided to "send him to Coventry."

As this phrase, which is well understood in English schools, may not be so clear to my readers, I will explain that Jim was to be refused notice by his schoolfellows, unless he should become aggressive, when he was to be noticed in a manner far from agreeable.

Jim could not help observing the cold looks of the boys, who but lately were glad enough to receive notice from him, and he became very angry. As to being ashamed of the exposure, he was not sensitive, nor did he often have any feeling of that kind. Naturally vindictive, he felt especially angry with the two boys, Ben Platt and Wilkins, whose testimony had proved so uncomfortable for him.

"I'll thrash those boys if I never thrash another," he said to himself. "So they have turned against me, have they? They're only fit to black my boots anyway. I'll give 'em a lesson."

Platt and Wilkins were expecting an attack. They knew that Jim would seize the opportunity of attacking them singly, and in the absence of Hector, of whom he was afraid, and with good reason. They concerted measures, accordingly, for defeating the common enemy.

Jim was stalking about the next day, looking sullen and feeling ugly. He could not help observing that whenever he approached a group of boys they immediately scattered and walked away in various directions. This naturally chafed him, for, having no intellectual resources, he found solitude oppressive. Besides, he had been accustomed to the role of boss, and where is a boss without followers?

Tired of the schoolroom precincts, Jim went to walk. In a rustic lane, much to his delight, he saw approaching him one of the boys who had so seriously offended him.

It was Ben Platt.

Ben was sauntering along in idle mood when he came face to face with the dethroned boss.

"So it's you, Platt, is it?" said Jim, grimly.

"I believe it is," answered Ben, coolly.

"I've got a word or two to say to you," said Jim, significantly.

"Say them quick," said Ben, "for I'm in a hurry."

"I'm not," said Jim, in his old tone, "and it makes no difference whether you are or not."

"Indeed! you are as polite as usual," returned Ben.

"Look here, you young whelp!" Jim broke forth, unable any longer to restrain his wrath, "what, did you mean by lying about me last evening?"

"I didn't lie about you," said Ben, boldly.

"Yes, you did. What made you say you saw me put that wallet into Roscoe's pocket?"

"I can't think of any reason, unless because it was true," said Ben.

"Even if it were, how dared you turn against me? First you play the spy, and then informer. Paugh!"

"I see you admit it," said Ben. "Well, if you want an answer I will give you one. You laid a plot for Hector Roscoe—one of the meanest, dirtiest plots I ever heard of, and I wasn't going to see you lie him into a scrape while I could prevent it."

"That's enough, Platt!" exclaimed Jim, furiously. "Now, do you know what I am going to do?"

"I don't feel particularly interested in the matter."

"You will be, then. I am going to thrash you."

"You wouldn't if Hector Roscoe were here," said Ben, not appearing to be much frightened.

"Well, he isn't here, though if he were it wouldn't make any difference. I'll whip you so you can't stand."

Ben's reply was to call "Wilkins!"

From a clump of bushes, where he had lurked, unobserved hitherto, sprang Wilkins, and joined his friend.

"There are two of us, Smith!" said Ben Platt.

"I can thrash you both," answered Jim, whose blood was up.

Before the advent of Hector no two boys would have ventured to engage Jim in combat, but his defeat by a boy considerably smaller had lost him his prestige, and the boys had become more independent. He still fancied himself a match for both, however, and the conflict began. But both of his antagonists were in earnest, and Jim had a hard time.

Now, it so happened that Mr. Crabb, the usher, was taking a solitary walk, and had approached the scene of conflict unobserved by any of the participants. He arrived at an opportune time. Jim had managed to draw Wilkins away, and by a quick movement threw him. He was about to deal his prostrate foe a savage kick, which might have hurt him seriously, when the usher, quiet and peaceful as he was by nature, could restrain himself no longer. He rushed up, seized him by the collar, dragged him back and shook him with a strength he did not suppose he possessed, saying:

"Leave that boy alone, you brute!"

Jim turned quickly, and was very much surprised when he saw the meek usher, whom he had always despised, because he looked upon him as a Miss Nancy.

"So it's you, is it?" he said, with a wicked glance.

"Yes, it is I," answered the usher, manfully; "come up just in time to stop your brutality."

"Is it any of your business?" demanded Jim, looking as if he would like to thrash the usher.

"I have made it my business. Platt and Wilkins, I advise you to join me, and leave this fellow, who has so disgraced himself as to be beneath your notice."

"We will accompany you with pleasure, sir," said the boys.

They regarded the usher with new respect for this display of courage, for which they had not given him credit.

"I'll fix you, Crabb," said Jim Smith, insolently, "and don't you forget it!"

Mr. Crabb did not deign to answer him.

Jim Smith was as good as his word.

An hour later Mr. Crabb was summoned to the presence of the principal.

Socrates received him with marked coldness.

"Mr. Crabb," he said, "I cannot conceal the amazement I feel at a complaint which has just been made by my nephew."

"Well, sir?"

Mr. Crabb had nerved himself for the worst, and did not cower or show signs of fear, as Socrates expected he would.

"James tells me that you attacked him savagely this afternoon when he was having a little sport with two of his schoolfellows."

"Is that what he says, Mr. Smith?"

"Yes, sir, and I require an explanation."

"You shall have it. The sport in which your nephew was engaged was attempting to thrash Wilkins. He had him down, and was about to deal him a savage kick when I fortunately came up."

"And joined in the fight," sneered Socrates.

"Yes, if you choose to put it so. Would you have had me stand by, and see Wilkins brutally used?"

"Of course, you color the affair to suit yourself," said Socrates, coldly. "The fact is that you, an usher, have lowered yourself by taking part in a playful schoolboy contest."

"Playful!" repeated Mr. Crabb.

"Yes, and I shall show how I regard it by giving you notice that I no longer require your services in my school. I shall pay you up at the end of the week and then discharge you."

"Mr. Smith," said the usher, "permit me to say that anything more disgraceful than your own conduct within the last twenty-four hours I have never witnessed. You have joined your nephew in a plot to disgrace an innocent boy, declining to do justice, and now you have capped the climax by censuring me for stopping an act of brutality, merely because your nephew was implicated in it!"

"This to me?" exclaimed Socrates Smith, hardly crediting the testimony of his ears.

"Yes, sir, and more! I predict that the stupid folly which has characterized your course will, within six months, drive from you every scholar you have in your school!"

"Mr. Crabb," gasped Socrates, never more surprised in his life than he was at the

sudden spirit exhibited by the usher, "I will not be so insulted. Leave me, and to-morrow morning leave my service."

"I will, sir. I have no desire to remain here longer."

But when Mr. Crabb had walked away his spirit sank within him. How was he to obtain another situation? He must consult immediately with Hector Roscoe, in whose judgment, boy as he was, he reposed great confidence.

CHAPTER XXII. THE WELCOME LETTER.

"Hector," said Mr. Crabb, nervously, "I am going to leave the institute at the end of the week."

"Have you secured another situation, Mr. Crabb?" asked Hector, hopefully.

"No," answered the usher, shaking his head. "I have been discharged."

"For what reason?"

"For interfering with Mr. Smith's nephew when he was brutally abusing Wilkins."

"Did Mr. Smith fully understand the circumstances?"

"Yes; but he stands by his nephew right or wrong. He blamed me for checking his nephew's brutality."

"This is shameful!" said Hector, warmly. "May I ask, Mr. Crabb, if you have formed any plans?"

"No, except to seek a new position!" answered Crabb. "I fear," he added, despondently, "that it may be some time before I am so fortunate. Roscoe, I don't know what to do when I leave the school. I shall barely have five dollars, and you know I have not only myself, but another to support."

"Keep up your courage, Mr. Crabb! It is nearly time for me to hear from the friend in New York to whom I wrote is your behalf. If you can secure the position of his private tutor—"

"If I can, I will hail it as providential. It will relieve me at once from all anxiety."

"I don't think I shall long remain here myself, Mr. Crabb," said Hector. "I came here with the full intention of making the most of the facilities the institute affords for education, but I find the principal incompetent, and disposed to connive at injustice and brutality. The only good I have got here has been derived from your instructions."

"Thank you, Roscoe. Such a tribute is, indeed, welcome," said the usher, warmly.

"It is quite sincere, Mr. Crabb, and I hope my good wishes may bring you the advantage which I have in view."

"Thank you, Roscoe. I don't blame you for being disgusted with the management of the school. You have yourself suffered injustice."

"Yes; in writing home, and charging me with theft, before he had investigated the circumstances, Mr. Smith did me a great injustice. I doubt whether he has since written to correct the false charge, as I required him to do. If not, I shall owe it to myself to leave the school."

"You will be justified in doing so." The next day brought Hector two letters. One was from Allan Roscoe, and read as follows:

"HECTOR: I have received from your worthy teacher a letter which has filled me with grief and displeasure. I knew you had great faults, but I did not dream that you would stoop so low as to purloin money, as it seems you have done. Mr. Smith writes me that there is no room to doubt your guilt. He himself discovered in the pocket of your pantaloons a wallet containing a large sum of money, which he had missed only a short time before. He learned that you had entered his chamber, and taken the money, being tempted by your own dishonest and depraved heart.

"I cannot express the shame I feel at this revelation of baseness. I am truly glad that you are not connected with me by blood. Yet I cannot forget that my poor brother treated you as a son; and took pains to train you up in right ideas. It would give him deep pain could he know how the boy whom he so heaped with benefits has turned out! I may say that Guy is as much shocked as I am, but he, it seems, had a better knowledge of you than I; for he tells me he is not surprised to hear it. I confess I am, for I thought better of you.

"Under the circumstances I shall not feel justified in doing for you as much as I intended. I proposed to keep you at school for two years more, but I have now to announce that this is your last term, and I advise you to make the most of it. I will try, when the term closes, to find some situation for you, where your employer's money will not pass through your hands. ALLAN ROSCOE."

Hector read the letter with conflicting feelings, the most prominent being indignation and contempt for the man who so easily allowed himself to think evil of him.

The other letter he found more satisfactory.

It was from his young friend in New York, Walter Boss. As it is short, I subjoin it:

"DEAR HECTOR: I am ever so glad to hear from you, but I should like much better to see you. I read to papa what you said of Mr. Crabb, and he says it is very apropos, as he had made up his mind to get me a tutor. I am rather backward, you see, not having your taste for study, and papa thinks I need special attention. He says that your recommendation is sufficient, and he will engage Mr. Crabb without any further inquiry; and he says he can come at once. He will give him sixty dollars a month and board, and he will have considerable time for himself, if he wants to study law or any other profession. I don't know but a cousin may join me in my studies, in which case he will pay a hundred dollars per month, if that will be sastisfactory.

"Why can't you come and make me a visit? We'll have jolly fun. Come and stay a month, old chap. There is no one I should like better. Your friend, WALTER Boss."

Hector read this letter with genuine delight. It offered a way of escape, both for the unfortunate usher and himself. Nothing could be more "apropos" to quote Walter's expression.

Our hero lost no time in seeking out Mr. Crabb.

"You seem in good spirits, Roscoe," said the usher, his careworn face contrasting with the beaming countenance of his pupil.

"Yes, Mr. Crabb, I have reason to be, and so have you."

"Have you heard from your friend?" asked the usher, hopefully.

"Yes, and it's all right."

Mr. Crabb looked ten years younger.

"Is it really true?" he asked.

"It is true that you are engaged as private tutor to my friend, Walter. You'll find him a splendid fellow, but I don't know if the pay is sufficient," continued Hector, gravely.

"I am willing to take less pay than I get here," said the usher, "for the sake of getting away."

"How much do you receive here?"

"Twenty dollar a month and board. I might, perhaps, get along on a little less," he added doubtfully.

"You won't have to, Mr. Crabb. You are offered sixty dollars a month and a home."

"You are not in earnest, Roscoe?" asked the usher, who could not believe in his good fortune.

"I will read you the letter, Mr. Crabb."

When it was read the usher looked radiant. "Roscoe," he said, "you come to me like an angel from heaven. Just now I was sad and depressed; now it seems to me that the whole future is radiant. Sixty dollars a month! Why, it will make me a rich man."

"Mr. Crabb," said Hector, with a lurking spirit of fun, "can you really make up your mind to leave Smith Institute, and its kind and benevolent principal?"

"I don't think any prisoner ever welcomed his release with deeper thankfulness," said the usher. "To be in the employ of a man whom you despise, yet to feel yourself a helpless and hopeless dependent on him is, I assure you, Roscoe, a position by no means to be envied. For two years that has been my lot."

"But it will soon be over."

"Yes, thanks to you. Why can't you accompany me, Hector? I ought not, perhaps, to draw you away, but—"

"But listen to the letter I have received from my kind and considerate guardian, as he styles himself," said Hector.

He read Allan Roscoe's letter to the usher.

"He seems in a great hurry to condemn you," said Mr. Crabb.

"Yes, and to get me off his hands," said Hector, proudly. "Well, he shall be gratified in the last. I shall accept Walter's invitation, and we will go up to New York together."

"That will, indeed, please me. Of course, you will undeceive your guardian."

"Yes. I will get Wilkins and Platt to prepare a statement of the facts in the case, and accompany it by a note releasing Mr. Roscoe from any further care or expense for me."

"But, Hector, can you afford to do this?"

"I cannot afford to do otherwise, Mr. Crabb. I shall find friends, and I am willing to work for my living, if need be."

At this point one of the boys came to Mr. Crabb with a message from Socrates, desiring the usher to wait upon him at once.

CHAPTER XXIII. ANOTHER CHANCE FOR THE USHER.

Mr. Smith had been thinking it over. He had discharged Mr. Crabb in the anger of the moment, but after his anger had abated, he considered that it was not for his interest to part with him. Mr. Crabb was a competent teacher, and it would be well-nigh impossible to obtain another so cheap. Twenty dollars a month for a teacher qualified to instruct in Latin and Greek was certainly a beggarly sum, but Mr. Crabb's dire necessity had compelled him to accept it. Where could he look for another teacher as cheap? Socrates Smith appreciated the difficulty, and decided to take Mr. Crabb back, on condition that he would make an apology to Jim.

To do Mr. Crabb justice, it may be said that he would not have done this even if he saw no chance of another situation. But this Mr. Smith did not know. He did observe, however, that the usher entered his presence calm, erect and appearing by no means depressed, as he had expected.

"You sent for me, sir?" said the usher interrogatively.

"Yes, Mr. Crabb. You will remember that I had occasion to rebuke you, when we last conferred together, for overstepping the limits of your authority?"

"I remember, Mr. Smith, that you showed anger, and found fault with me."

"Exactly so."

"Why doesn't he ask to be taken back?" thought Socrates.

"I have thought the matter over since," continued the principal, "and have concluded we might be able to arrange matters."

The usher was surprised. He had not expected that Mr. Smith would make overtures of reconciliation. He decided not to mention at present his brighter prospects in New York, but to wait and see what further his employer had to say.

Mr. Crabb bowed, but did not make any reply.

"I take it for granted, Mr. Crabb, that your means are limited," proceeded Socrates.

"You are right there, sir. If I had not been poor I should not have accepted the position

of teacher in Smith Institute for the pitiful salary of twenty dollars a month."

"Twenty dollars a month and your board, Mr. Crabb," said Socrates, with dignity, "I consider a very fair remuneration."

"I do not, Mr. Smith," said the usher, in a decided tone.

"I apprehend you will find it considerably better than to be out of employment," said Socrates, rather angry.

"You are right there, sir."

"I am glad you show signs of returning reason. Well, Mr. Crabb, I have thought the matter over, and I have a proposal to make to you."

"Very well, sir!"

"I do not wish to distress you by taking away your means of livelihood."

"You are very considerate, sir."

There was something in Mr. Crabb's tone that Socrates did not understand. It really seemed that he did not care whether he was taken back or not. But, of course, this could not be. It was absolutely necessary for him, poor as he was, that he should be reinstated. So Mr. Smith proceeded.

"To cut the matter short, I am willing to take you back on two conditions."

"May I ask you to name them?"

"The first is, that you shall apologize to my nephew for your unjustifiable attack upon him day before yesterday."

"What is the other, Mr. Smith?"

"The other is, that hereafter you will not exceed the limits of your authority."

"And you wish my answer?" asked the usher, raising his eyes, and looking fixedly at his employer.

"If you please, Mr. Crabb."

"Then, sir, you shall have it. Your proposal that I should apologize to that overgrown bully for restraining him in his savage treatment of a fellow-pupil is both ridiculous and insulting."

"You forget yourself, Mr. Crabb," said Socrates, gazing at the hitherto humble usher in stupefaction.

"As to promising not to do it again, you will understand that I shall make no such engagement."

"Then, Mr. Crabb," said Socrates, angrily, "I shall adhere to what I said the other day. At the end of this week you must leave me."

"Of course, sir, that is understood!"

"You haven't another engagement, I take it," said Mr. Smith, very much puzzled by the usher's extraordinary independence.

"Yes, sir, I have."

"Indeed!" said Socrates, amazed. "Where do you go?" Then was Mr. Crabb's time for triumph.

"I have received this morning an offer from the city of New York," he said.

"From New York! Is it in a school?"

"No, sir; I am to be private tutor in a family."

"Indeed! Do you receive as good pay as here?"

"As good!" echoed the usher. "I am offered sixty dollars a month and board, with the possibility of a larger sum, in the event of extra service being demanded."

Socrates Smith had never been more surprised.

This Mr. Crabb, whom he had considered to be under his thumb, as being wholly dependent upon him, was to receive a salary which he considered princely.

"How did you get this office?" he asked.

"Through my friend, Hector Roscoe," answered the usher.

"Probably he is deceiving you. It is ridiculous to offer you such a sum."

"I am quite aware that you would never think of offering it, but, Mr. Smith, there are other employers more generous."

Mr. Crabb left the office with the satisfied feeling that he had the best of the encounter.. He would have felt gratified could he have known the increased respect with which he was regarded by the principal as a teacher who could command so lucrative an engagement in the great city of New York.

Before closing this chapter I must take notice of one circumstance which troubled Mr. Smith, and in the end worked him additional loss.

I have already said that Jim Smith, in appropriating his uncle's wallet, abstracted therefrom a five-dollar bill before concealing it in Hector's pocket.

This loss Mr. Smith speedily discovered, and he questioned Jim about it.

"I suppose Roscoe took it," said Jim, glibly.

"But he says he did not take the wallet," said Socrates, who was assured in his own mind that his nephew was the one who found it on the bureau. Without stigmatizing him as a thief, he concluded that Jim meant to get Hector into trouble.

"Wasn't it found in his pants' pocket?" queried Jim.

"Yes, but why should he take five dollars out of the wallet?"

"I don't know."

"It doesn't look likely that he would!" said Socrates, eying Jim keenly.

"Then it may have been Ben Platt or Wilkins," said Jim, with a bright idea.

"So it might," said the principal, with a feeling of relief.

"They said they were in the room—at any rate, Platt said so—at the time it was concealed, only he made a mistake and took Roscoe for me."

"There is something in that, James. It may be as you suggest."

"They are both sneaks," said Jim, who designated all his enemies by that name. "They'd just as lieve do it as not. I never liked them."

"I must look into this matter. It's clear that some one has got this money, and whoever has it has got possession of it dishonestly."

"To be sure," answered Jim, with unblushing assurance. "If I were you I would find out who did it, that is, if you don't think Roscoe did it."

"No, I don't think Roscoe did it, now. You may tell Platt and Wilkins that I wish to see them."

Jim could not have been assigned a more pleasing duty. He hated the two boys quite as much as he did Hector, and he was glad to feel that they were likely to get into hot water.

He looked about for some time before he found the two boys. At length he espied them returning from a walk.

"Here, you two!" he called out, in a voice ef authority. "You're wanted!"

"Who wants us?" asked Ben Platt.

"My uncle wants you," answered Jim, with malicious satisfaction. "You'd better go and see him right off, too. You won't find it a trifling matter, either."

"Probably Jim has been hatchng some mischief," said Wilkins. "He owes us a grudge. We'll go and see what it is."

CHAPTER XXIV. THE YOUNG DETECTIVES.

When Mr. Smith had made the two boys' understand that he suspected them of purloining the missing five-dollar bill, they were naturally very indignant.

"Mr. Smith," said Ben Platt, in a spirited tone, "no one ever suspected me of dishonesty before."

"Nor me," said Wilkins.

"That's neither here nor there," said the principal, dogmatically. "It stands to reason that some one took the money. Money doesn't generally walk off itself," he added, with a sneer.

"I don't dispute that," said Ben; "but that does not prove that Wilkins or I had anything to do with it."

"You were in the room with the money for half an hour, according to your own confession," said Socrates.

"Yes, I was."

"And part of that time Wilkins was also present."

"Yes, sir," assented Wilkins.

"I am no lawyer," said the principal, triumphantly, "but that seems to me a pretty good case of circumstantial evidence."

"You seem to forget, sir, that there is another person who had an excellent chance to take the money," said Ben Platt.

"You mean Hector Roscoe? That is true. It lies between you three."

"No, Mr. Smith, I do not mean Hector Roscoe. I have as much confidence in Roscoe as myself."

"So have I," sneered Socrates.

"And I know he would not take any money that did not belong to him. I mean a very different person—your nephew, James Smith."

Socrates Smith frowned with anger. "There seems to be a conspiracy against my unfortunate nephew," he said. "I don't believe a word of your mean insinuations, and I am not deceived by your attempt to throw your own criminality upon him. It will not injure him in my eyes. Moreover, I shall be able to trace back the theft to the wrongdoer. The missing bill was marked with a cross upon the back, and should either of you attempt to pass it, your guilt will be made manifest. I advise you to restore it to me while there is yet time."

"The bill was marked?" asked Wilkins, eagerly.

"Yes."

"Then, sir, you may have a chance to find out who took it."

"The discovery might not please you," said Socrates, with a sneer.

"It would give me the greatest pleasure, Mr. Smith. If I can in any way help you discover the missing note, I will do so."

"You can go," said Socrates, abruptly.

When the two boys had left the presence of the principal, Ben Platt, said, "What are you going to do about it, Wilkins?"

"First of all," answered Wilkins, promptly, "I am going to find out if Jim took that money."

"How can you find out?"

"Did you notice that he had come out with a new ring?"

"No, I didn't observe it."

"He has bought it since that money was lost!" said Wilkins, significantly.

"Do you think he purchased it with the missing bill?"

"I wouldn't wonder at all. At any rate, I am going to find out. He must have bought it

from Washburn, the jeweler. Will you go with me, and ask?"

"Yes," answered Ben, eagerly. "Let us go alone. If we can only prove the theft upon Jim, so that old Sock can't help believing that he stole the money, we shall be cleared; though, as to that, there isn't a scholar in school who would believe the charge against us."

"Still, we may as well do what we can to bring the guilt home to Jim Smith."

Ten minutes later the two boys entered the shop of Mr. Washburn.

"Will you show me some rings, Mr. Washburn?" asked Wilkins.

"Certainly," answered the jeweler, politely.

"What is the price of that?" asked Wilkins, pointing to one exactly like the one he had seen on Jim's finger.

"Three dollars and a half. It is a very pretty pattern."

"Yes, sir. There's one of our boys who has one just like it."

"You mean James Smith, the principal's nephew."

"Yes, sir."

"He bought it of me yesterday."

The two boys exchanged a quick glance.

They felt that they were on the brink of a discovery.

"Did he give you a five-dollar bill in payment?" asked Ben Platt.

"Yes," answered the jeweler, in surprise.

"Could you identify that bill?"

"What are you driving at, boys?" asked Mr. Washburn, keenly.

"I will explain to you if you will answer my questions first."

"Yes, I could identify the bill."

"Have you it in your possession still?"

"I have."

"How will you know it?"

"It seems to me, my boy, you are in training for a lawyer."

"I have a very urgent reason for asking you this question, Mr. Washburn."

"Then I will answer you. When the note was given me, I noticed that it was on the Park Bank of New York."

"Will you be kind enough to see if you can find it?"'

"Certainly."

The jeweler opened his money drawer, and after a brief search, produced the bill in

question.

It was a five-dollar bill on the Park Bank of New York, as he had already told the boys.

"Now, Mr. Washburn," asked Wilkins, trying to repress his excitement, "will you examine the back of the bill, and see if there is any mark on it."

The jeweler did as requested, and announced, after slight examination, that there was a cross on the back of the bill in the upper right hand corner.

"Hurrah!" shouted Ben, impulsively.

To the wondering jeweler he explained his precise object in the inquiry he had made, and the boys were complimented by Mr. Washburn for their shrewdness.

"If I ever meet with a loss, I shall certainly call on you for assistance, boys," he said.

"Thank you, Mr. Washburn," answered Wilkins, "but I do not expect to be here to be called upon."

"You are not going to leave the institute, are you?"

"I shall write to my father in what manner I have been treated, and let him understand how the principal manages the school, and I feel sure he will withdraw me."

"Ditto for me!" said Ben Platt. "Old Sock's partiality for his nephew has been carried too far, and now that the only decent teacher is going—Mr. Crabb—I don't mean, to stay here if I can help it."

The boys, upon their return to the school, sought out the principal.

"Well, boys," he said, "have you come to confess?"

"No, sir," answered Ben, "but we have come to give you some information about your money."

"I was sure you knew something about it," said Socrates, with a sneer. "I am glad you have decided to make a clean breast of it."

"You are mistaken, sir."

"Well, out with your information!" said the principal, roughly.

"A five-dollar bill, marked as you have described, was paid to Mr. Washburn, the jeweler, only yesterday."

"Ha! Well?"

"The one who offered it purchased a gold ring."

"I don't care what he bought. Who was it that offered the money?"

"Your nephew, James Smith!"

"I don't believe it," said the teacher, very much disconcerted.

"Then, sir, I advise you to question Mr. Washburn."

"How can he identify the bill? Is it the only five-dollar bill he has?"

"The only five-dollar bill on the Park Bank of New York, and he says he noticed that this was the bank that issued the bill handed him by your nephew."

"What of that?"

"The note, which he still has in his possession, is marked just exactly as you have described."

"It may have been marked since it came into Mr. Washburn's hands," said Socrates, but he was evidently very much disturbed by the intelligence. He might not confess it, but he could not help believing that Jim was the thief, after all.

"You can go," he said, harshly. "I will look into this improbable story."

CHAPTER XXV. SMITH INSTITUTE GROWS UNPOPULAR.

Hector lost no time in drawing up a statement of the facts connected with the loss of the wallet, which he got Wilkins and Ben Platt to sign. This he put into an envelope directed to Allan Roscoe, accompanied by a brief note, which I subjoin:

"MR. ROSCOE: I send you a statement, signed by two of my schoolmates, showing that the charge which Mr. Smith was in such a hurry to bring against me, in order to screen his nephew, who is the real thief, is wholly unfounded. I am not particularly surprised that you were ready to believe it, nor do I care enough for your good opinion to worry. I consider that it is due to myself, however, to prove to you that I have done nothing of which I need be ashamed. Finding the scholars here in terror of a bully, who imposed upon his schoolfellows with impunity because, being the principal's nephew, he was protected in so doing, I taught him a lesson which may not do him good, but has certainly been of benefit to his fellow-pupils. In so doing, I have incurred his enmity, and that of his uncle, who, for more than one reason, is utterly unfit to conduct a school of this kind.

"You threaten to remove me from school at the end of this term. I do not wish to remain, and shall remove myself at the end of this week. I shall not look to you for support, nor do I expect again to depend upon the estate to which I once thought myself the heir, unless I should be able to prove that I am the son of your brother, as I fully believe, notwithstanding the letter you exhibit."

"HECTOR ROSCOE."

When Mr. Allan Roscoe received this letter he was very much disturbed. As he had no affection for Hector, and did not care what became of him, this may, perhaps, excite surprise. Could it be the last sentence which excited his alarm?

"Is that letter from Hector?" asked Guy, who had noticed the postmark as it lay upon his father's table.

"Yes," answered Allan Roscoe.

"Does he try to explain his theft?" asked Guy.

"He says he had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, of course!" sneered Guy. "You don't believe it, do you?"

"He sends a statement of two of the pupils to the effect that the wallet was taken by another pupil, a nephew of the principal."

"That's too thin!"

"I don't know. It may be true. I don't like the boy, but I hardly think it probable he would steal."

"You think better of him than I do. I suppose he wants to get into your good graces again?"

"No; he says he shall leave school at the end of this week, and will not again look to me for support."

"That's jolly!" exclaimed Guy, much pleased. "You're well rid of him, papa. Let him go away and make a living as he can. He'll have to turn newsboy, or something of that sort—perhaps he'll have to be a bootblack. Wouldn't that be a good come down for a boy like Hector?"

Guy spoke with great glee, but his father did not seem to enjoy his release as well as Guy. He showed that he understood the boy better when he said:

"Hector will not have to resort to any such employment. He has a good education, and he can get some decent position, probably. On the whole, I am sorry he is going to leave my protection, for friends of the family may, perhaps, blame me."

"But it isn't your fault, papa. He is taking his own course."

"To be sure. You are right there!"

Mr. Roscoe thought so much on the subject, however, that the next day he went to Smith Institute to see Hector, without telling Guy where he was going.

Arrived there, he asked to see Mr. Smith.

The latter did not appear to be in a happy frame of mind.

"How do you do, Mr. Roscoe?" he said.

"Very well," answered Mr. Roscoe, briefly. "Mr. Smith, I wish to see my ward."

"I am sorry you cannot see him, Mr. Roscoe."

"Cannot see him! Why not?"

"Because he has left the institute."

Allan Roscoe frowned.

"Why has he left?" he asked.

"He has left against my will. I think he has been influenced by an usher in my employ who has behaved very ungratefully. I took him, sir, when he was in danger of starving, and now he leaves me at a day's notice, after doing all he can to break up my school."

"I feel no particular interest in your usher," said Allan Roscoe, coldly. "I wish to obtain information about the boy I placed under your charge. Do you know where he has gone?"

"No; he did not tell me," answered the principal.

"You wrote me that he had been detected in stealing a wallet!"

"Yes," answered Socrates, embarrassed. "Appearances were very much against him."

"Do you still think he took it?"

"I may have been mistaken," answered Mr. Smith, nervously, for he began to see that the course he had been pursuing was a very unwise one.

"Hector has written me, inclosing a statement signed by two of his schoolfellows, implicating your own nephew, and he charges that you made the charge against him out of partiality for the same."

"There is considerable prejudice against my nephew," said Socrates.

"And for very good reasons, I should judge," said Allan Roscoe, severely. "Hector describes him as an outrageous bully and tyrant. I am surprised, Mr. Smith, that you should have taken his part."

Now, Socrates had already had a stormy interview with his nephew. Though partial to Jim, and not caring whether or not he bullied the other boys, as soon as he came to see that Jim's presence was endangering the school, he reprimanded him severely. He cared more for himself—for number one—than for anyone else in the universe. He had been exceedingly disturbed by receiving letters from the fathers of Wilkins and Ben Platt, and two other fathers, giving notice that they should remove their sons at the end of the term, and demanding, in the meantime, that his nephew should be sent away forthwith.

And now Allan Roscoe, whom he had hoped would side with him, had also turned against him. Then he had lost the services of a competent usher, whom he got cheaper than he could secure any suitable successor, and, altogether, things seemed all going against him.

Moreover, Jim, who had been the occasion of all the trouble, had answered him impudently, and Socrates felt that he had been badly used. As to his own agency in the matter, he did not give much thought to that.

"My nephew is going to leave the school, Mr. Roscoe," said Socrates, half-apologetically.

"I should think it was full time, Mr. Smith."

"Perhaps so," said Smith; "but if I have stood by him, it has been in ignorance. I cannot think him as wrong as your ward has probably represented. Hector was jealous of him."

"Of his scholarship, I presume?"

"Well, no," answered the principal, reluctantly, "but of his physical superiority, and—and influence in the school. I may say, in fact, Mr. Roscoe, that till your ward entered the school it was a happy and harmonious family. His coming stirred up strife

and discontent, and I consider him primarily responsible for all the trouble that has occurred."

"I don't defend Hector Roscoe," said Allan, "but he writes me that your nephew was a bully, who imposed upon his schoolfellows, and that he, by taking their part and stopping this tyranny, incurred his ill-will and yours."

"I supposed I should be misrepresented," said Socrates, meekly. "I am devoted to my school and my pupils, Mr. Roscoe. I am wearing out my life in their service. I may make mistakes sometimes, but my heart—my heart, Mr. Roscoe," continued Socrates, tapping his waistcoat, "is right, and acquits me of any intentional injustice."

"I am glad to hear it, Mr. Smith," said Allan Roscoe, stiffly. "As Hector has left you, I have only to settle your bill, and bid you good-day."

"Will you not exert your influence to persuade the boy to return?" pleaded Socrates.

"As I don't know where he is, I don't see how I can," said Allan Roscoe, dryly.

"That man is an arch hypocrite!" he said to himself, as he was returning home.

I may state here that at the end of the term half the pupils left Smith Institute, and Socrates Smith lamented too late the folly that had made him and his school unpopular.

CHAPTER XXVI. HECTOR'S ARRIVAL IN NEW YORK.

Mr. Crabb and Hector were sitting side by side in a railroad car, speeding away from Smith Institute. In the heart of each was a feeling of relief, which increased as each minute carried them farther away from the school.

"Hector," said the usher, looking younger and happier than his pupil had ever known him, "I feel like a free man now. It is a feeling that I have not had since I first set foot in Smith Institute."

"I think you will lead a happier life in New York, Mr. Crabb."

"I am sure of it. Thanks to your considerate kindness, I shall for the first time earn an ample salary, and even be able to lay up money. Is my future pupil about your age?"

"He is a year younger."

"Where did you make his acquaintance?"

"At Saratoga, My father and I spent two months at Congress Hall two summers ago, and as Walter's family were also there, we naturally got to be friends. He is a capital fellow, and you will be sure to like him."

"I am ready to like him after reading that letter he wrote you. Is he fond of study?"

"That is his weak point," said Hector, laughing. "Walter was never cut out for a scholar. I don't mean, of course, that he hasn't fair capacity, but his taste doesn't lie

that way. However, he won't give you any trouble, only you won't succeed as well as you may wish in pushing him on."

"All boys are not cut out for scholars," said the usher. "Now you, Hector, would do excellently, and might hope to make a very successful professional man."

Hector shook his head.

"I must look to a different career," he said. "I am to be the architect of my own fortune, you know."

"What are your plans, Hector?" asked the usher.

"I will consult with Mr. Boss, Walter's father. By the way, he knows nothing of the change in my circumstances. He supposes me to be the heir to the Roscoe estate."

"Trouble has come upon you early, Hector. Should you need help hereafter, you must remember that I am earning a good salary and—"

"Thank you, Mr. Crabb," gratefully, "but you will need all you earn. I don't look upon my loss of fortune as a trouble. I think it will make me more manly and self-reliant, and stimulate me to exertion. I have a fair education, and I am sure I can earn my living in some honest way."

"If that is your spirit, Hector, I am sure you will succeed. You are young and hopeful. I am too much inclined to despond. I have always been timid about the future. It is a matter of temperament."

It was early in the afternoon when they reached New York. As they emerged from the depot a bright-faced boy came up eagerly and greeted them.

"How are you, Hector?" he said. "You see, I came to meet you. I have been longing to have you come."

"I am just as glad to see you, Walter," said Hector, heartily. "Mr. Crabb, here is your future pupil, Walter Boss."

"I hope we may soon be friends, Walter," said the usher, attracted by the bright, sunny face of the boy.

Walter gave the usher his hand.

"I hope so, too," he said, smiling. "I'll try not to worry you any more than I can help."

"I have no misgivings," said Mr. Crabb, as he mentally contrasted his new pupil with Jim Smith, and two or three others at the institute, who had been a frequent source of trouble and annoyance.

"Here is the carriage," said Walter, pointing out a plain but handsome carriage waiting outside. "Bundle in, both of you! I beg your pardon, Mr. Crabb, for my familiarity. That was intended for Hector."

"I am ready to be classed with Hector," said Mr. Crabb.

"I am glad to hear you say so. I was afraid you would be stiff and dignified."

"I think I shall take my cue from you."

"Oh, my rule is, go as you please. Edward, drive home!"

The house occupied by Mr. Boss was a fine brown-stone dwelling on Forty-second Street. Arrived there, Mr. Crabb was shown into a spacious chamber, on the third floor, furnished with a luxury to which the poor usher was quite unaccustomed.

"Now, Hector, you can have a room to yourself, or you may share my den," said Walter.

"I would rather share the den," said Hector.

"That's what I hoped. You see, we shall have ever so much to say to each other. We haven't seen each other for over a year."

A slight shade of gravity overspread Hector's face. Since he had met his friend, his father had died, and he had been reduced from the heir of wealth to a penniless orphan. Of this last change Walter knew nothing, but Hector did not mean long to leave him in ignorance.

At dinner the two newcomers saw Mr. Ross, from whom they received a friendly welcome. The usher was put at his ease at once.

"I hope you'll get along with my boy," said the bluff city merchant. "Of one thing you may be assured, your scholarship won't be severely taxed in educating him. Walter is a pretty good boy, but he isn't a prodigy of learning."

"I may be some day, father," said Walter, "with Mr. Crabb's help."

"I take it Mr. Crabb isn't able to perform miracles," said Mr. Ross, good-humoredly. "No, Mr. Crabb, I shan't expect too much of you. Get your pupil on moderately fast, and I shall be satisfied. I am glad, Hector, that you were able to pay Walter a visit at this time."

"So am I, sir."

"I thought you might not be able to leave your studies."

"I have given up study, sir."

"I am surprised at that, Hector. I thought you contemplated going to college."

"So I did, sir, but circumstances have changed my plans."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, sir; I will explain after dinner, and will ask your advice."

Mr. Ross dropped the subject, and after dinner led the way to the library, where he sank into an armchair, and, breathing a sigh of satisfaction, said: "This, Mr. Crabb, is the most enjoyable part of the twenty-four hours for me. I dismiss business cares and perplexities, and read my evening paper, or some new book, in comfort."

As the usher looked about him and saw costly books, engravings, furniture and pictures, he could well understand that in such surroundings the merchant could take solid comfort. It was a most agreeable contrast to the plain and poverty-stricken room at Smith Institute, where the boys pursued their evening studies under his superintendence.

"Well, Hector, so you don't propose to go back to school," said the merchant. "Isn't that rather a sudden resolution?"

"Yes, sir; but, as I said, circumstances have changed."

"What circumstances? Because you are rich, you don't think you ought to be idle, I hope?"

"Oh, no, sir. It is because I have discovered that I am not rich."

"Not rich! I always understood that your father left a large estate," said Mr. Ross, in surprise.

"So he did, sir."

"Didn't it descend to you?"

"I thought so till recently."

"Why don't you think so now?"

In answer, Hector told the story of the revelation made to him by Allan Roscoe, after his father's death.

"You see, therefore," he concluded, "that I am penniless, and a dependent upon Mr. Allan Roscoe's generosity."

"This is a most extraordinary story!" said the merchant, after a pause.

"Yes, sir; it changes my whole future."

"I suppose Mr. Allan Roscoe is the beneficiary, and the estate goes to him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did your father—the late Mr. Roscoe—ever hint to you anything which could lead you to suspect that you were not his own, but an adopted son?"

"Never, Mr. Ross," answered Hector, with emphasis.

"Did he continue to treat you with affection."

"Always. Nothing in his manner ever would have led me to imagine that I was not his own son."

"He left no will?"

"No, sir."

"What are your plans?"

"I do not wish to remain dependent upon Allan Roscoe. I should like to obtain a situation of some kind in the city, if I can."

"I can probably serve you, then, after a while. For the present, stay here as Walter's companion."

"Thank you, sir; I should like nothing better."

CHAPTER XXVII. LARRY DEANE.

Not altogether in accordance with his inclinations, Walter was set to work at his studies immediately under the direction of Mr. Crabb. He asked his father for a week's vacation to go about the city with Hector, but his father answered in the negative.

"You are too far behind in your studies, Walter," he said. "You are two years, at least, behind Hector, and cannot spare the time as well as he."

"Hector will have to go round alone," objected Walter.

"It will do him no harm to get acquainted with the different parts of the city, as that will be a kind of knowledge he may require if he should obtain a situation."

"I shan't see much of him."

"Oh, yes, you will; Mr. Crabb will not make you study all day. Mr. Crabb, you may work with Walter from nine to one. This, with perhaps an hour or more devoted to study in the afternoon or evening, will enable him to make fair progress."

This arrangement struck Walter favorably, as he could, whenever he desired it, spend the whole afternoon with Hector.

Hector found it very pleasant to act upon the suggestion made by Mr. Ross. He had visited the city of New York at different times, but had never enjoyed the opportunity of exploring it by himself. His first visit was made to Central Park, where he mingled with the crowds wandering about in search of pleasure.

He made his way to the lake, and took passage in one of the skiffs which, in charge of a skilled oarsman, makes a tour of the pretty and picturesque sheet of water.

The second morning he turned his steps southward, and walked down Broadway. It was a leisurely walk, for he had no scruple in stopping wherever he saw anything in the streets or in the shop windows that seemed to him worthy of attention. About the corner of Canal Street he was very much surprised at a boy who was on his knees, blacking the boots of an elderly gentleman—a boy whom he recognized at once as the son of a man who had for years been in his father's employ as gardener at Castle Roscoe.

"What brings him here?" thought Hector, much surprised.

"Larry Deane!" he said, as the boy finished his job, and rose from his feet to receive his pay.

"Hector Roscoe!" exclaimed Larry, not much less surprised.

"What brings you here, and what has reduced you to such work?" inquired Hector.

Larry Deane was a boy of about Hector's age. He was a healthy-looking country lad, looking like many another farmer's son, fresh from the country. He had not yet acquired that sharp, keen look which characterizes, in most cases, the New York boy who has spent all his life in the streets.

"I can answer both your questions with the same word, Master Hector," said Larry, as a sober look swept over his broad, honest face.

"Don't call me master, Larry. We are equals here. But what is that word?"

"That word is trouble,'" answered the bootblack.

"Come with me into this side street," said Hector, leading the way into Howard Street. "You have a story to tell, and I want to hear it."

"Yes, I have a story to tell."

"I hope your father and mother are well," said Hector, interrupting him.

"Yes, they are well in health, but they are in trouble, as I told you."

"What is the trouble?"

"It all comes of Mr. Allan Roscoe," answered Larry, "and his son, Guy."

"Tell me all about it."

"I was walking in the fields one day," said Larry, "when Guy came out and began to order me round, and call me a clodhopper and other unlikely names, which I didn't enjoy. Finally he pulled off my hat, and when I put it back on my head, he pulled it off again. Finally I found the only way to do was to give him as good as he sent. So I pulled off his hat and threw it up in a tree. He became very angry, and ordered me to go up after it. I wouldn't do it, but walked away. The next day my father was summoned to the house, where Mr. Allan Roscoe complained of me for insulting his son. He asked my father to thrash me, and when father refused, he discharged him from his employment. A day or two afterward a new gardener came to Roscoe Castle, and father understood that there was no chance of his being taken back."

"That was very mean in Mr. Roscoe," said Hector, indignantly.

"Yes, so it was; but father couldn't do anything. He couldn't get a new place, for it wasn't the right time of year, and Mr. Roscoe said he wouldn't give him a recommendation. Well, we had very little money in the house, for mother has been sick of late years, and all father's extra earnings went to pay for medicines and the doctor's bill. So one day I told father I would come to New York and see if I couldn't find something to do."

"I think you did the right thing, Larry," said Hector, approvingly. "It was your duty to help your father if you could."

"I can't help him much," answered Larry.

"What made you take up this business, Larry?"

"I couldn't get anything else to do, besides, this pays better than working in a store or office."

"How—much can you earn at it?"

"Six or seven dollars a week."

"I should think it would require all that to support you."

"It would if I went to a boarding house, but I can't afford that."

"Where do you live?"

"At the Newsboys' Lodging House."

"How much does that cost you?"

"For eighteen cents a day I get supper, lodging and breakfast. In the middle of the day I go to a cheap restaurant."

"Then you are able to save something?"

"Yes; last week I sent home three dollars, the week before two dollars and a half."

"Why, that is doing famously. You are a good boy, Larry."

"Thank you, Hector; but, though it is doing very well for me, it isn't as much as they need at home. Besides, I can't keep it up, as, after a while, I shall need to buy some new clothes. If your father had been alive, my father would never have lost his place. Master Hector, won't you use your influence with your uncle to have him taken back?"

Hector felt keenly how powerless he was in the matter. He looked grave, as he answered:

"Larry, you may be sure that I would do all in my power to have your father restored to the position from which he never should have been removed; but I fear I can do nothing."

"Won't you write to Mr. Roscoe?" pleaded Larry, who, of course, did not understand why Hector was powerless.

"Yes, I will write to him, but I am sorry to say that I have very little influence with Mr. Roscoe."

"That is strange," said Larry; "and you the owner of the estate."

Hector did not care to explain to Larry just how matters stood, so he only said:

"I can't explain to you what seems strange to you, Larry, but I may be able to do so some time. I will certainly write to Mr. Roscoe, as you desire; but you must not build any hopes upon it. Meanwhile, will you accept this from me, and send it to your father?"

As he spoke, he drew from his pocketbook a five-dollar bill and handed it to his humble friend.

Larry would not have accepted it had he known that Hector was nearly as poor as himself, but, supposing him to be the heir of a large and rich estate, he felt no hesitation.

"Thank you very much, Hector," he said; "you had always a kind heart. This money will do my father very much good. I will send it to him to-day."

"Do you generally stand here, Larry?" asked Hector.

"Yes."

"Then I will take pains to see you again."

"Shall you stay long in the city, Master Hector?"

"Not Master Hector."

"Then Hector, if you don't mind."

"I shall be here for the present—I don't know how long."

"Then let me black your boots for nothing every time you come by—I want to do something for you."

"Thank you, Larry; but I don't like to have a friend perform such a service. Remember me to your father when you write."

"I wish I could do something for Larry," said Hector, to himself, as he walked away. "As it is, I stand in need of help myself."

He was to make a friend that day under rather unusual circumstances.

CHAPTER XXVIII. TWO MORE ACQUAINTANCES.

Hector continued his walk downtown. Despite the crowds of persons who thronged the sidewalks, he did not anticipate meeting anyone else that he knew. But he was destined to another surprise. On the corner of Murray Street he saw two persons advancing toward him, the last, perhaps, that he expected to see. Not to keep the reader in suspense, it was Allan Roscoe and his son, Guy.

Guy was the first to recognize Hector. Of course, he, too, was surprised.

"Why, there's Hector!" he exclaimed, directing his father's attention to our hero.

Allan Roscoe looked up quickly. It is hard to tell whether he felt glad or the reverse at this meeting with the boy whom he called his ward.

An instant later Hector recognized Guy and his father.

"How do you do, Mr. Roscoe?" he said, politely.

"Very well. When did you reach New York?"

"On Saturday."

It should have been explained that Hector had spent Sunday quietly with Mr. Ross and Walter, and that this was Monday.

"Ahem! I was very much surprised at your leaving the institute," said Mr. Roscoe.

"I explained to you in my letter why I proposed to leave it," Hector answered, coldly.

"I did not think your reason sufficient."

"As Mr. Smith saw fit to bring a base charge against me, and persisted in it, even after he must have been convinced that his nephew was guilty, I was unwilling to remain under his charge any longer."

"The circumstances were against you," said Mr. Roscoe.

"You might have known me better than that, Mr. Roscoe," said Hector, proudly. "Yet you condemned me unheard."

"Of course, I am very glad that the charge is unfounded," said Mr. Roscoe, awkwardly.

"Where there is smoke there is generally fire," said Guy, spitefully.

"I understand you, Guy," said Hector, half turning to look at the boy who had usurped his place. "I hope you won't think it impolite if I say that I care nothing whatever for your opinion."

"You put on as many airs as ever," sneered Guy. "I should think you would be a little more humble in your changed position."

"I have not changed, even if my position has," answered Hector. "Money is nothing to be proud of."

"I apprehend that the world judges differently," said Allan Roscoe. "Since you have taken your destiny into your own hands, you will excuse me for asking how you intend to earn your living?"

"I hope to get a mercantile position," answered Hector.

"Take my advice," said Guy, with a derisive smile, "and buy yourself a blacking box and brush. I am told bootblacks make a good deal of money."

"Hush, Guy!" said his father. "Do not insult Hector."

But Hector concerned himself but little with any slight received from Guy Roscoe. His words, however, recalled his thoughts to the boy he had so recently met, Larry Deane, and he resolved to see if he could not help him by an appeal to Allan Roscoe.

"Mr. Roscoe," said he, quickly, "I nearly forgot something I want very much to say to you."

"What is it?" asked his guardian, suspiciously. It occurred to him that Hector wished to borrow some money, and he was considering how little he could decently give him.

"I hear you have discharged Reuben Deane from his position?"

"How did you hear it?"

"From his son, Larry."

"Where did you see Larry?" asked Allan, in some curiosity.

"He has been driven to take up that employment which Guy so kindly recommended to me."

"Larry Deane a bootblack! That's a good one!" exclaimed Guy, with evident relish.

"I don't think so," said Hector. "The poor boy is picking a poor living, and sending home what he can to his father, who cannot get new employment. Mr. Roscoe, why did you discharge him?"

"I can answer that question, though it's none of your business all the same," volunteered Guy. "The boy Larry was impudent to me, and his father took his part."

"Mr. Roscoe," said Hector, "Reuben Deane was in my father's employ before I was born. Larry and I used to play together when we were little boys, and since when we were older."

"A bootblack is a nice playmate," said Guy, with his usual sneer.

"He was not a bootblack then," retorted Hector, "nor would he be now but for your mean spite. Mr. Roscoe, as I happen to know, my father always valued the services of Reuben Deane, and I ask, in his name, that you give him back his place."

"My brother may have been deceived in him," said Allan Roscoe, coldly, emphasizing the first two words, in order to remind Hector that he was no longer to consider him as his father; "but I cannot promise to adopt all his views and protege's. I have displaced Deane and substituted for him a gardener with whom I am better pleased."

"Have you no sympathy for the poverty and distress of a man who has served our family faithfully for so many years?" asked Hector, half indignantly.

"My father is competent to manage his own affairs," said Guy, offensively.

"You don't appear to think so, or you would not answer for him," retorted Hector.

"Boys, I must request you to desist from this bickering," said Allan Roscoe. "I am sorry, Hector, that I cannot comply with your request. By the way, you did not tell me where you were staying."

"With a gentleman on Forty-second Street."

"What is his name?"

"Andrew Ross."

"Not the eminent merchant of that name?" asked Allan Roscoe, in surprise.

"Yes, I believe so."

"He is worth a million."

"I supposed he was rich. He lives in an elegant house."

"Where did you get acquainted with him, Hector?"

"At Saratoga, a year and a half ago."

"Did you beg him to take you in?" asked Guy, unpleasantly.

Hector quietly ignored the question.

"Walter Boss and I have been very intimate, and I was invited to pay him a visit."

"Does he know that you are a poor boy?" asked Guy.

"I have communicated to Mr. Ross what your father told me," answered Hector, coldly. "He is a real friend, and it made no difference in his treatment of me. I hope to get a situation through his influence."

"You are lucky to have such a man for a friend," said Allan Roscoe, who would himself have liked to become acquainted with a man whose social position was so high. "I hope you will not misrepresent me to him. Should any opportunity occur, I will try to procure you employment."

"Thank you, sir," said Hector, but his tone lacked heartiness. He saw that his being a visitor to Mr. Ross and his son had made a difference in his favor. Guy, too, began to think he might be a little more gracious. He, like his father, liked to associate with boys of high social position, and he would have liked to be introduced to Walter Ross.

"What is your number?" he asked of Hector, "I don't know but I'll call and see you some time. Is Walter Ross generally at home?"

"Don't put yourself to any inconvenience to call," said Hector, significantly. "Walter and I are generally away in the afternoon."

"Oh, I don't care to call upon you," said Guy, annoyed. "I can have all the company I want."

"I won't detain you any longer, Mr. Roscoe," said Hector, realizing that the conversation had occupied considerable time. "Good-morning."

"That boy is as proud as ever," said Guy, after Hector had left them. "He doesn't seem to realize that he has lost his money."

"He has not had time to realize it yet. It won't be long before he will understand the difference it makes."

"I am glad he isn't my cousin," continued Guy. "I dislike him more than any boy I know."

Allan Roscoe looked thoughtful.

"I fear that boy will give me trouble yet," he said to himself. "He evidently suspects that something is wrong."

CHAPTER XXIX. JIM SMITH EFFECTS A LOAN.

After parting with Allan Roscoe and Guy, Hector kept on his way downtown. He did not expect to meet any more acquaintances, but he was again to be surprised. Standing on the sidewalk having his boots blacked, he recognized the schoolfellow he had least reason to like—Jim Smith.

"What brings Jim here?" he asked himself, in some surprise.

He did not feel inclined to go up and claim acquaintance, but it chanced that he became witness of a piece of meanness characteristic of Jim.

When the young bootblack had finished polishing his shoes, he waited for his customary fee.

Jim fumbled in his pockets, and finally produced two cents.

"There, boy," he said, placing them in the hand of the disgusted knight of the brush.

"What's that for?" he asked.

"It's your pay."

"Look here, mister, you've made a mistake; here's only two cents."

"I know it."

"Do you think I work for any such price as that?"

"Perhaps you expect a dollar!" sneered Jim.

"No, I don't; but a nickel's my lowest price. Plenty of gentlemen give me a dime."

"That's too much; I've paid you all I'm going to."

"Wait a minute. That boot don't look as well as the other."

Jim unsuspiciously allowed the boy to complete his work, but he had occasion to regret it. The bootblack hastily rubbed his brush in the mud on the sidewalk and daubed it on one of Jim's boots, quite effacing the shine.

"There, that'll do," he said, and, scrambling to his feet, ran round the corner.

Then, for the first time, Jim looked down, and saw what the boy had done. He uttered an exclamation of disgust and looked round hastily to see where the offender had betaken himself. His glance fell upon Hector, who was quietly looking on, and not without a sense of enjoyment.

It often happens that we greet cordially those for whom we have even a feeling of aversion when we meet them unexpectedly away from our usual haunts. Jim, who was beginning to regret that circumstances had forced him to leave the serene sanctuary of Smith Institute, since now he would be under the necessity of making his own living, was glad to see our hero.

"Is it you, Roscoe?" he said, eagerly.

"Yes," answered Hector, coolly.

"What are you doing?"

"Walking about the city, just at present."

"Suppose we go together."

Hector hardly knew how to refuse, and the two boys kept down Broadway in company.

"You're surprised to see me, ain't you?" asked Jim.

"Rather so."

"You see, I got tired of the school. I've been there three years, so I told my uncle I would come to New York and see if I couldn't get work."

"I hope you may succeed," said Hector, for he would not allow his dislikes to carry him too far. He felt that there was room in the world for Jim and himself, too.

"Are you going to work?" asked Jim.

"I hope so."

"Got anything in view?"

"Not exactly.'"

"It would be a good thing if we could get into the same place."

"Do you say that because we have always agreed so well?" asked Hector, amused.

"We may be better friends in future," said Jim, with a grin.

Hector was judiciously silent.

"Where are you staying?"

"Up on Forty-second Street."

"That's a good way uptown, isn't it?"

"Yes, pretty far up."

"Are you boarding?"

"No; I am visiting some friends."

"Couldn't you get me in there as one of your school friends?"

This question indicated such an amount of assurance on the part of his old enemy that at first Hector did not know how to reply in fitting terms.

"I couldn't take such a liberty with my friends," he said. "Besides, it doesn't strike me that we were on very intimate terms."

But Jim was not sensitive to a rebuff.

"The fact is," he continued, "I haven't got much money, and it would be very convenient to visit somebody. Perhaps you could lend me five dollars?"

"I don't think I could. I think I shall have to say good-morning."

"I can't make anything out of him," said Jim to himself, philosophically. "I wonder if he's got any money. Uncle Socrates told me his uncle had cast him off."

Going up Broadway instead of down, it was not long before Jim met Allan Roscoe and Guy, whom he immediately recognized. Not being troubled with immodesty, he at once walked up to Mr. Roscoe and held out his hand.

"Good-morning, Mr. Roscoe!" he said, in an ingratiating voice.

"Good-morning, young man. Where have I met you?" asked Allan Roscoe, puzzled.

"At Smith Institute. I am the nephew of Mr. Smith."

"What! Not the nephew who—"

Mr. Roscoe found it hard to finish the sentence. He didn't like to charge Jim with stealing to his face.

"I know what you mean," said Jim, boldly. "I am the one whom your nephew charged with taking money which he took himself. I don't want to say anything against him, as he is your nephew, but he is an artful young—but no matter. You are his uncle."

"He is not my nephew, but was only cared for by my brother," said Allan Roscoe. "You may tell me freely, my good fellow, all the truth. You say that Hector stole the money which your uncle lost."

"Yes; but he has made my uncle believe that I took it. It is hard upon me," said Jim, pathetically, "as I was dependent upon my uncle. I have been driven forth into the cold world by my benefactor because your nephew prejudiced his mind against me."

"I believe him, papa," said Guy, who was only too glad to believe anything against Hector. "I have thought all along that Hector was guilty."

"Is that your son?" asked the crafty Jim. "I wish he had come to the institute, instead of Hector. He is a boy that I couldn't help liking."

There are few who are altogether inaccessible to flattery. At any rate, Guy was not one of this small number.

"I feel sure you are not guilty," said Guy, regarding Jim graciously. "It was a very mean thing in Hector to get you into trouble."

"It was, indeed," said Jim. "I am cast out of my uncle's house, and now I have no home, and hardly any money."

"Hector is in the city. Have you seen him?" asked Allan Roscoe.

"Yes; I met him a few minutes since."

"Did you speak to him?"

"Yes; I reproached him for getting me into trouble, but he only laughed in my face. He told me he hated you both," added Jim, ingenuously.

"Just like Hector!" said Guy. "What have I always told you, papa?"

"I am sorry you have suffered such injustice at the hands of anyone in any way connected with my family," said Mr. Roscoe, who, like Guy, was not indisposed to believe anything to the discredit of Hector. "I do not feel responsible for his unworthy acts, but I am willing to show my sympathy by a small gift."

He produced a five-dollar note and put it into Jim's ready hand.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "You are a gentleman."

So the interview closed, and Jim left the spot, chuckling at the manner in which he had wheedled so respectable a sum out of Allan Roscoe.

Meanwhile Hector, after looking about him, turned, and, getting into a Broadway stage, rode uptown as far as Twenty-third Street, where the stage turned down toward Sixth Avenue. He concluded to walk the remainder of the way.

As he was walking up Madison Avenue, his attention was drawn to a little girl in charge of a nursemaid. The latter met an acquaintance and forgot her charge. The little girl, left to herself, attempted to cross the street just as a private carriage was driven rapidly up the avenue. The driver was looking away, and it seemed as if, through the double neglect of the driver and the nurse, the poor child would be crushed beneath the hoofs of the horses and the wheels of the carriage.

CHAPTER XXX. A BRAVE DEED.

Hector's heart stood still as he realized the peril of the child. He dashed forward on the impulse of the moment, and barely succeeded in catching up the little girl and drawing her back out of harm's way. The driver, who had done his best to rein up his horses, but without success, ejaculated with fervent gratitude, for he, too, had a child of his own about the age of the little girl, "God bless you, boy."

The little girl seemed less concerned than anyone of the spectators. She put her hand confidently in Hector's, and said: "Take me to Mary."

"And who is Mary?" asked Hector, kindly.

He did not require an answer, for the nurse, who, rather late in the day, had awakened to the fact that her charge was in danger, came running forward, crying: "Oh! Miss Gracie, what made you run away?"

"The little girl would have been killed but for this boy's timely help," said a middle-aged spectator, gravely.

"I'm sure I don't know what possessed her to run away," said Mary, confusedly.

"She wouldn't if she had been properly looked after," said the gentleman, sharply, for he had children of his own.

Hector was about to release the child, now that he had saved her, but she was not disposed to let him go.

"You go with me, too!" she said.

She was a pretty child, with a sweet face, rimmed round by golden curls, her round, red cheeks glowing with exercise.

"What is her name?" asked Hector, of the nurse.

"Grace Newman," answered the nurse, who felt the necessity of saying something in her own defense. "She's a perfect little runaway. She worries my life out running round after her."

"Grace Newman!" said the middle-aged gentleman already referred to. "Why, she must be the child of my friend, Titus Newman, of Pearl Street."

"Yes, sir," said the nurse.

"My old friend little knows what a narrow escape his daughter has had."

"I hope you won't tell him, sir," said Mary, nervously.

"Why not?"

"Because he would blame me."

"And so he ought!" said the gentleman, nodding vigorously. "It's no merit of yours that she wasn't crushed beneath the wheels of that carriage. If you had been attending to your duty, she wouldn't have been in danger."

"I don't see as it's any business of yours," said Mary, pertly. "You ain't her father, or her uncle."

"I am a father, and have common humanity," said the gentleman, "and I consider you unfit for your place."

"Come along, Grace!" said Mary, angry at being blamed. "You've behaved very badly, and I'm going to take you home."

"Won't you come, too?" asked the little girl, turning to Hector.

"No, there's no call for him to come," said the nurse, pulling the child away.

"Good-by, Gracie," said Hector, kindly.

"Good-by!" responded the child.

"These nursemaids neglect their charges criminally," said the gentleman, directing his remarks to Hector. "Mr. Newman owes his child's safety, perhaps her life, to your prompt courage."

"She was in great danger," said Hector. "I was afraid at first I could not save her."

"A second later and it would have been too late. What is your name, my brave young friend?"

"Hector Roscoe, sir."

"It is a good name. Do you live in the city?"

"At present I do, sir. I was brought up in the country."

"Going to school, I take it."

"I am looking for a place, sir."

"I wish I had one to give you. I retired from business two years since, and have no employment for anyone."

"Thank you, sir; I should have liked to serve you."

"But I'll tell you what, my young friend, I have a considerable acquaintance among business men. If you will give me your address, I may have something to communicate to you ere long."

"Thank you, sir."

Hector drew a card from his pocket, and added to it the number of Mr. Ross' house.

"I am much obliged to you for your kind offer," he said.

"You don't look as if you stood in need of employment," said the gentleman, noticing the fine material of which Hector's suit was made.

"Appearances are sometimes deceitful," said Hector, half smiling.

"You must have been brought up in affluence," said Mr. Davidson, for this was his name.

"Yes, sir, I was. Till recently I supposed myself rich."

"You shall tell me the story some time; now I must leave you."

"Well," thought Hector, as he made his way homeward, "I have had adventures enough

for one morning."

When Hector reached the house in Forty-second Street, he found Walter just rising from his lessons.

"Well, Hector, what have you been doing?" asked Walter.

"Wandering about the city."

"Did you see anybody you knew while doing so?"

"Oh, yes! I was particularly favored. I saw Allan Roscoe and Guy—"

"You don't say so! Were they glad to see you?"

"Not particularly. When Guy learned that I was staying here, he proposed to call and make your acquaintance."

"I hope you didn't encourage him," said Walter, with a grimace.

"No; I told him that we were generally out in the afternoon."

"That is right."

"I suppose you have been hard at work, Walter?"

"Ask Mr. Crabb."

"Walter has done very well," said the usher. "If he will continue to study as well, I shall have no fault to find."

"If I do, will you qualify me to be a professor in twelve months' time?"

"I hope not, for in that case I should lose my scholar, and have to bow to his superior knowledge."

"Then you don't know everything, Mr. Crabb?"

"Far from it! I hope your father didn't engage me in any such illusion."

"Because," said Walter, "I had one teacher who pretended to know all there was worth knowing. I remember how annoyed he was once when I caught him in a mistake in geography."

"I shall not be annoyed at all when you find me out in a mistake, for I don't pretend to be very learned."

"Then I think we'll get along," said Walter, favorably impressed by the usher's modesty.

"I suppose if I didn't know anything we should get along even better," said Mr. Crabb, amused.

"Well, perhaps that might be carrying things too far!" Walter admitted.

In the afternoon Hector and Walter spent two hours at the gymnasium in Twenty-eighth Street, and walked leisurely home after a healthful amount of exercise.

For some reason, which he could not himself explain, Hector said nothing to Walter about his rescue of the little girl on Madison Avenue, though he heard of it at the gymnasium.

One of the boys, Henry Carroll, said to Walter: "There was a little girl came near being run over on Madison Avenue this noon!"

"Did you see it?"

"No, but I heard of it."

"Who was the little girl?"

"Grace Newman."

"I know who she is. How did it happen?"

The boy gave a pretty correct account.

"Some boy saved her," he concluded, "by running forward and hauling her out of the road just in time. He ran the risk of being run over himself. Mr. Newman thinks everything of little Grace. I'd like to be in that boy's shoes."

Neither of the boys noticed that Hector's face was flushed, as he listened to the account of his own exploit.

The next morning, among the letters laid upon the breakfast table was one for Hector Roscoe.

"A letter for you, Hector," said Mr. Ross, examining the envelope in some surprise. "Are you acquainted with Titus Newman, the Pearl Street merchant?"

"No, sir," answered Hector, in secret excitement.

"He seems to have written to you," said Mr. Ross.

Hector took the letter and tore open the envelope.

CHAPTER XXXI. AN IMPORTANT LETTER.

The letter alluded to in the last chapter ran thus. It was written from Mr. Newman's house in Madison Avenue, though inclosed in a business envelope:

"MASTER HECTOR ROSCOE: I learn that I am indebted to you for the rescue of my little daughter from imminent peril during my absence from home yesterday. A friend who witnessed her providential escape has given me such an account of your bravery in risking your own life to save that of an unknown child, that I cannot rest till I have had an opportunity of thanking you in person. You will do me a favor, if not otherwise engaged, if you will call at my house this evening, about eight o'clock. Yours gratefully,

"Titus NEWMAN."

It is needless to say that Hector read this letter with feelings of gratification. It is true, as we are often told, that "virtue is its own reward," but it is, nevertheless, pleasant to feel that our efforts to do well and serve others are appreciated.

"No bad news, I hope, Hector?" said Walter.

"No," answered Hector. "You may read the letter, if you like, Mr. Ross."

Mr. Ross did so, and aloud, much to the surprise of everyone at table.

"You did not tell me of this," said Walter, in astonishment.

"No," answered Hector, smiling.

"But why not?"

"Because Hector is modest," Mr. Ross answered for him. "Now, if you had done such a thing, Walter, we should have been sure to hear of it."

"I don't know," returned Walter, comically. "You don't know how many lives I have saved within the last few years."

"Nor anyone else, I fancy," replied his father. "By the way, Hector, there is a paragraph about it in the Herald of this morning. I read it, little suspecting that you were the boy whose name the reporter was unable to learn."

Hector read the paragraph in question with excusable pride. It was, in the main, correct.

"How old was the little girl?" asked Walter.

"Four years old, I should think."

"That isn't quite so romantic as if she had been three times as old."

"I couldn't have rescued her quite as easily, in that case."

Of course, Hector was called upon for an account of the affair, which he gave plainly, without adding any of those embellishments which some boys, possibly some of my young readers, might have been tempted to put in.

"You are fortunate to have obliged a man like Titus Newman, Hector," said Mr. Ross. "He is a man of great wealth and influence."

"Do you know him, papa?" asked Walter.

"No—that is, not at all well. I have been introduced to him."

Punctually at eight o'clock Hector ascended the steps of a handsome residence on Madison Avenue. The door was opened by a colored servant, of imposing manners.

"Is Mr. Newman at home?" asked Hector, politely.

"Yes, sar."

"Be kind enough to hand him this card?"

"Yes, sar."

Presently the servant reappeared, saying:

"Mr. Newman will see you, sar, in the library. I will induct you thither."

"Thank you," answered Hector, secretly amused at the airs put on by his sable conductor.

Seated at a table, in a handsomely furnished library, sat a stout gentleman of kindly

aspect. He rose quickly from his armchair and advanced to meet our hero.

"I am glad to see you, my young friend," he said. "Sit there," pointing to a smaller armchair opposite. "So you are the boy who rescued my dear little girl?"

His voice softened as he uttered these last few words, and it was easy to see how strong was the paternal love that swelled his heart.

"I was fortunate in having the opportunity, Mr. Newman."

"You have rendered me a service I can never repay. When I think that but for you the dear child—" his voice faltered.

"Don't think of it, Mr. Newman," said Hector, earnestly. "I don't like to think of it myself."

"And you exposed yourself to great danger, my boy!"

"I suppose I did, sir; but that did not occur to me at the time. It was all over in an instant."

"I see you are modest, and do not care to take too great credit to yourself, but I shall not rest till I have done something to express my sense of your noble courage. Now, I am a man of business, and it is my custom to come to the point directly. Is there any way in which I can serve you."

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad to hear it. Name it."

"I am looking for a situation in some mercantile establishment, Mr. Newman."

"Pardon me, but, judging from your appearance, I should not suppose that it was a matter of importance to you."

"Yes, sir; I am poor."

"You don't look so."

"You judge from my dress, no doubt"—Hector was attired in a suit of fine texture—"I suppose I may say," he added, with a smile, "that I have seen better days."

"Surely, you are young to have met with reverses, if that is what you mean to imply," the merchant remarked, observing our hero with some curiosity.

"Yes, sir; if you have time, I will explain to you how it happened."

As the story has already been told, I will not repeat Hector's words.

Mr. Newman listened with unaffected interest.

"It is certainly a curious story," he said. "Did you, then, quietly surrender your claims to the estate simply upon your uncle's unsupported assertion?"

"I beg pardon, sir. He showed me my father's—that is, Mr. Roscoe's—letter."

"Call him your father, for I believe he was."

"Do you, sir?" asked Hector, eagerly.

"I do. Your uncle's story looks like an invention. Let me think, was your father's name

Edward Roscoe?"

"Yes, sir."

"And in what year were you born?"

"In the year 1856."

"At Sacramento?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then I feel quite sure that I made your father's acquaintance in the succeeding year, and your own as well, though you were an infant—that is, you were less than a year old."

"Did my father say anything of having adopted me?"

"No; on the contrary, he repeatedly referred to you as his child, and your mother also displayed toward you an affection which would have been at least unusual if you had not been her own child."

"Then you think, sir—" Hector began.

"I think that your uncle's story is a mere fabrication. He has contrived a snare in which you have allowed yourself to be enmeshed."

"I am only a boy, sir. I supposed there was nothing for me to do but to yield possession of the estate when my uncle showed me the letter."

"It was natural enough; and your uncle doubtless reckoned upon your inexperience and ignorance of the law."

"What would you advise me to do, sir?"

"Let me think."

The merchant leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and gave himself up to reflection. In the midst of his reverie the pompous servant entered, bringing a letter upon a silver salver.

"A letter, sar," he said.

"That will do. You can go, Augustus."

"Yes, sar."

Mr. Newman glanced at the postmark, tore open the letter, read it with a frown, and then, as if he had suddenly formed a resolution, he said:

"This letter has helped me to a decision."

Hector regarded him with surprise. What could the letter have to do with him?

"Have you any objection to going out to California by the next steamer?" asked Mr. New-man.

"No, sir," answered Hector, with animation "Am I to go alone?"

"Yes, alone."

CHAPTER XXXII. A WAYWARD YOUTH.

It is needless to say that Hector was very much surprised, not to say startled, at this sudden proposal. What could Mr. Newman possibly want him to go to California for? If on business, how did it happen that he trusted a mere boy with so responsible a mission?

The explanation came soon.

"No doubt, you are surprised," said the merchant, "at the proposal I have made you. I am not prepared myself to say that I am acting with good judgment. In making it, I have obeyed a sudden impulse, which is not always prudent. Yet, in more than one instance, I have found advantage in obeying such an impulse. But to my explanation. By the way, let me first ask you two or three questions. Have you any taste for any kind of liquor?"

"No, sir," answered Hector, promptly.

"Even if you had, do you think you would have self-control enough to avoid entering saloons and gratifying your tastes?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is well. Do you play pool?"

"No, sir," answered Hector, wondering whither all these questions tended.

"I ask because playing pool in public rooms paves the way for intemperance, as bars are generally connected with such establishments."

"I don't even know how to play pool, sir," said Hector.

"Do you ever bet or gamble?" continued the merchant.

"No, sir."

"You will understand why I ask all these questions when I tell you that I have a nephew now nineteen years of age, who does all these things. He is not only my nephew, but my ward. I have a moderate sum of money in my charge which belongs to him—enough, if he were a young man of correct habits, to buy him an interest in a respectable business. That use I had proposed to make of it when he reached twenty-one, or rather, to recommend to him, but for his yielding to temptation in more than one form, and, finally, running away from my protection."

"Where is he now, sir?"

"In California. Three months since he disappeared, and it was some weeks before I learned where he had gone. As I do not intend to conceal anything from you, I must tell you that he carried with him five hundred dollars purloined from my desk. This grieved me most of all. I wrote out to a mercantile friend in San Francisco, who knows the boy by sight, to hunt him up, and see if he could do anything for him. He writes me—this is the letter I hold in my hand—that he has seen Gregory, and expostulated

with him, but apparently without effect. The boy has pretty much run through his money, and will soon be in need. I do not intend, however, to send him money, for he would misuse it. I don't think it will do him any harm to suffer a little privation, as a fitting punishment for his wayward courses. I would not wish him to suffer too much, and I am anxious lest he should go further astray. I now come to the explanation of my proposal to you. I wish you to go to California, to seek out Gregory, obtain his confidence, and then persuade him to give up his bad course, and come home with you, prepared to lead a worthier life. Are you willing to undertake it?"

"Yes, sir," answered Hector. "I will undertake it, since you are willing to place such a responsibility upon me. I will do my best to accomplish what you desire, but I may fail."

"In that case I will not blame you," answered the merchant.

"What sort of a boy is Gregory? Shall I find it difficult to gain his confidence?"

"No; he is a youth of very amiable disposition—indeed, he was generally popular among his companions and associates, but he is morally weak, and finds it difficult to cope with temptation. I believe that a boy like you will stand a better chance of influencing him than a man of mature age."

"I will do my best, sir."

"One thing more. You may assure Gregory that I forgive him the theft of my money, though it gave me great pain to find him capable of such an act, and that I am prepared to receive him back into my favor if he will show himself worthy of it. I will give you a letter to that effect. Now, when will you be ready to start?"

"By the next steamer."

"That is well."

CHAPTER XXXIII. MR. ROSCOE MAKES A DISCOVERY.

The California steamer was to start in two days. This gave Hector but little time for preparation, but then he had but scanty preparation to make. Mr. Ross and Walter were naturally surprised at the confidence placed in Hector by a stranger, but were inclined to think that our hero would prove himself worthy of it.

"Don't be gone long, Hector," said Walter. "I shall miss you. I depended upon having your company for a good while yet."

"Come back to my house, Hector," said Mr. Ross, cordially, "when you return, whether you are successful or not. Consider it a home where you are always welcome."

"Thank you, sir," said Hector, gratefully. "I wish you were my uncle instead of Mr. Allan Roscoe."

"By the way, Hector, take time, while you are in California, to go to Sacramento to see if you can learn anything of your early history. It is most important to you, and I'm sure Mr. Newman will not object."

"He has already suggested it to me," said Hector. "Moreover, he has given me the name of the minister who baptized me, and, should he be dead or removed, he has given me the name of another person—a lady—with whom my father boarded during his residence in Sacramento."

"It is to be hoped that one or the other of these persons may still be living. It will afford me sincere pleasure if, by reliable testimony, you can defeat the wicked conspiracy into which Mr. Roscoe has entered, with the object of defrauding you of your inheritance."

Hector's ticket was purchased by Mr. Newman, and he was provided with a considerable sum of money as well as an order upon a bank in San Francisco for as much more as he might need.

"You are trusting me to an unusual extent, Mr. Newman," said Hector.

"That is true, but I have no hesitation in doing so. I am a close observer, and, though I have seen but little of you, I have seen enough to inspire me with confidence."

"I hope I shall deserve it, sir."

"That depends upon yourself, so far as integrity and fidelity go. Whether you succeed or not in your undertaking depends partly upon circumstances."

My young readers may wonder how Hector would be expected to recognize a young man whom he had never seen. He was provided with a photograph of Gregory, which had been taken but six months before, and which, as Mr. Newman assured him, bore a strong resemblance to his nephew.

"He may have changed his name," he said, "but he cannot change his face. With this picture you will be able to identify him."

The great steamer started on her long voyage. Walter and Mr. Crabb stood on the pier and watched it till Hector's face was no longer distinguishable for the distance, and then went home, each feeling that he had sustained a loss.

Among those who watched the departure of the steamer was a person who escaped Hector's notice, for he arrived just too late to bid good-by to an acquaintance who was a passenger on board.

This person was no other than Allan Roscoe.

When he recognized Hector's face among the passengers he started in surprise and alarm.

"Hector Roscoe going to California!" he inwardly ejaculated. "What can be his object, and where did he raise money to go?"

Conscience whispered: "He has gone to ferret out the fraud which you have practiced upon him, and his mission is fraught with peril to you."

Allan Roscoe returned to his elegant home in a state of nervous agitation, which effectually prevented him from enjoying the luxuries he was now able to command. A

sword seemed suspended over him, but he resolved not to give up the large stake for which he played so recklessly without a further effort.

By the next mail he wrote a confidential letter to an old acquaintance in San Francisco.

CHAPTER XXXIV. FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF SAN FRANCISCO.

Hector was seasick for the first twenty-four hours, but at the end of that time he had become accustomed to the rise and fall of the billows, and was prepared to enjoy himself as well as he could in the confined quarters of an ocean steamer.

Of course, he made acquaintances. Among them was a clergyman, of middle age, who was attracted by our hero's frank countenance. They met on deck, and took together the "constitutional" which travelers on shipboard find essential for their health.

"You seem to be alone?" said the clergyman.

"Yes, sir."

"Pardon me, but it is uncommon to meet one so young as yourself who is making so long a journey. I suppose, however, you have friends or relatives in California."

"No, sir; I know no one, to my knowledge, in the Golden State."

"Then, perhaps, you go out in search of employment?"

"No, sir; I go out on business."

"You are a young business man," said the clergyman, smiling.

"Perhaps I should rather say, on a mission. I am sent out, by a New York merchant, in search of his nephew, who is somewhere in San Francisco."

Hector explained himself further. The minister, Mr. Richards, listened with attention.

"Certainly," he said, "a great responsibility rests upon you. Mr. Newman must have great confidence in you."

"I hope he will not find it misplaced," answered Hector, modestly.

"It is certainly a compliment to you that a shrewd business man should consider you worthy of such confidence. The presumption is that he has good reason for his confidence. I think, my young friend, that you will enjoy your visit to our State."

"Then you reside there, sir?"

"Oh, yes. I went out twenty years since; in fact, just after I graduated from the theological school. I spent a year at the mines; but, at the end of that time, finding an opening in my profession, I accepted the charge of a church in Sacramento."

"In Sacramento?" exclaimed Hector, eagerly.

"Yes. Have you any associations with that city?"

"It is my birthplace, sir."

"Then you are not a stranger to California?"

"Yes, sir; I came away so early that I have no recollection of the place."

"What is your name?" asked the clergyman.

"Hector Roscoe."

"Roscoe? The name sounds familiar to me," said the minister, thoughtfully.

"How long since you went to Sacramento, Mr. Richards?"

"I went there in 1855."

"And I was born there in 1856. My father and mother lived there for some time afterwards."

"It is probable that I met them, for Sacramento was a small place then. Shall you go there?"

"Yes, sir. I have a special reason for going—a reason most important to me."

As Mr. Richards naturally looked inquisitive, Hector confided in him further.

"You see, sir," he concluded, "that it is most important to me to ascertain whether I am really the son of the man whom I have always regarded as my father. If so, I am heir to a large fortune. If not, my uncle is the heir, and I certainly should not wish to disturb him in the enjoyment of what the law awards him."

"That is quite proper," said Mr. Richards. "In your investigation, it is quite possible that I may be able to help you materially, through my long residence and extensive acquaintance in Sacramento. When you come there, lose no time in calling upon me. Whatever help I can render you shall cheerfully be given."

"Thank you, sir."

"Shall you be much disappointed if you find that you are only the adopted, instead of the real, son of Mr. Roscoe?"

"Yes, sir; but it won't be chiefly on account of the property. I shall feel alone in the world, without relations or family connections, with no one to sympathize with me in my successes, or feel for me in my disappointments."

"I understand you, and I can enter into your feelings."

Arrived in San Francisco, Hector took lodgings at a comfortable hotel on Kearney Street. He didn't go to the Palace Hotel, or Baldwin's, though Mr. Newman had supplied him with ample funds, and instructed him to spend whatever he thought might be necessary.

"I mean to show myself worthy of his confidence," said Hector to himself.

He arrived in the evening, and was glad to remain quietly at the hotel the first evening, and sleep off the effects of his voyage. After the contracted stateroom, in which he had passed over twenty days, he enjoyed the comfort and luxury of a bed on shore and a good-sized bedroom. But, in the morning, he took a long walk, which was full of interest. Less than five minutes' walk from his hotel was the noted Chinese quarter.

Curiously enough, it is located in the central part of the business portion of San Francisco. Set a stranger down in this portion of the city, and the traveler finds it easy to imagine himself in some Chinese city. All around him, thronging the sidewalks, he will see almond-eyed men, wearing long queues, and clad in the comfortable, but certainly not elegant, flowing garments which we meet only occasionally in our Eastern cities, on the person of some laundryman. Then the houses, too, with the curious names on the signs, speak of a far-off land. On every side, also, is heard the uncouth jargon of the Chinese tongue.

There is a part of San Francisco that is known as the Barbary Coast. It is that part which strangers will do well to avoid, for it is the haunt of the worst portion of the population. Here floats many a hopeless wreck, in the shape of a young man, who has yielded to the seductions of drink and the gaming table—who has lost all hope and ambition, and is fast nearing destruction.

If Hector allowed himself to explore this quarter, it was not because he found anything to attract him, for his tastes were healthy, but he thought, from the description of Gregory Newman, that he would stand a better chance of meeting him here than in a more respectable quarter.

Hector halted in front of a building, which he judged to be a gambling house. He did not care to enter, but he watched, with curiosity, those who entered and those who came out.

As he was standing there, a man of forty touched him on the shoulder.

Hector turned, and was by no means attracted by the man's countenance. He was evidently a confirmed inebriate, though not at that time under the influence of liquor. There was an expression of cunning, which repelled Hector, and he drew back.

"I say, boy," said the stranger, "do you want to go in?"

"No, sir."

"If you do, I know the ropes, and I'll introduce you and take care of you."

"Thank you," said Hector, "but I don't care to go in."

"Are you afraid?" asked the man, with a slight sneer.

"Yes. Haven't I a reason?"

"Come, sonny, don't be foolish. Have you any money?"

"A little."

"Give it to me and I'll play for you. I'll double it in ten minutes, and I'll only ask you five dollars for my services."

"Suppose you lose?"

"I won't lose," said the man, confidently. "Come," he said, in a wheedling tone, "let me make some money for you."

"Thank you, but I would rather not. I don't want to make money in any such way."

"You're a fool!" said the man, roughly, and with an air of disgust he left the spot, much to Hector's relief.

Still Hector lingered, expecting he hardly knew what, but it chanced that fortune favored him. He was just about to turn away, when a youth, two or three years older than himself in appearance, came out of the gambling house. He was pale, and looked as if he had kept late hours. He had the appearance, also, of one who indulges in drink.

When Hector's glance fell upon the face of the youth, he started in great excitement.

"Surely," he thought, "that must be Gregory Newman!"

CHAPTER XXXV. THE PRODIGAL.

As the best way of getting into communication with the youth whom he suspected to be the object of his search, Hector asked him the name of the street.

On receiving an answer, he said, in an explanatory way:

"I am a stranger here. I only arrived on the last steamer."

The other looked interested.

"Where do you come from?"

"From New York."

"I used to live there," said Gregory—for it was he—with a sigh.

"Have you bettered yourself by coming out here?" asked Hector.

Gregory shook his head.

"No," he said; "I begin to think I was a fool to come at all."

"Perhaps you had poor prospects in New York?" said Hector.

"No; my uncle is a rich merchant there. I have some property, also, and he is my guardian."

"Did he favor your coming?"

"No; he was very much opposed to it."

"Perhaps I ought not to take such a liberty, but I begin to agree with you about your being a fool to leave such prospects behind you."

"Oh, I am not offended. It is true enough."

"I suppose you haven't prospered, then," said Hector.

"Prospered? Look at me! Do you see how shabby I am?"

Gregory certainly did look shabby. His clothes were soiled and frayed, and he had the appearance of a young tramp.

"That isn't the worst of it," he added, bitterly. "I have spent my last cent, and am penniless."

"That is bad, certainly. Did you lose any of it in there?" said Hector, indicating the gaming house.

"I have lost full half of it there," answered Gregory. "This morning I found myself reduced to four bits—"

"To what?" inquired Hector, puzzled.

"Oh, I forgot you had just arrived. Four bits is fifty cents. Well, I was reduced to that, and, instead of saving it for my dinner, I went in there and risked it. If I had been lucky, I might have raised it to ten dollars, as a man next to me did; but I'm out of luck, and I don't know what to do."

"Why don't you go back to your uncle in New York?"

"What! and walk all the way without food?" said Gregory, bitterly.

"Of course you couldn't go without money. Suppose you had the money, would you go?"

"I should be afraid to try it," said Gregory, smiling.

"Why? Don't you think he would receive you back?"

"He might but for one thing," answered Gregory.

"What is that?"

"I may as well tell you, though I am ashamed to," said Gregory, reluctantly. "I left New York without his knowledge, and, as I knew he wouldn't advance me money out of my own property, I took five hundred dollars from his desk."

"That was bad," said Hector, quietly, but he didn't look shocked or terror-stricken, for this would probably have prevented any further confidence.

"It wasn't exactly stealing," said Gregory, apologetically, "for I knew he could keep back the money from my property. Still, he could represent it as such and have me arrested."

"I don't think he would do that."

"I don't want to run the risk. You see now why I don't dare to go back to New York. But what on earth I am to do here I don't know."

"Couldn't you get employment?" asked Hector, for he wished Gregory to understand his position fully.

"What! in this shabby suit? Respectable business men would take me for a hoodlum."

Hector knew already that a "hoodlum" in San Francisco parlance is a term applied to street loafers from fifteen to twenty-five years of age, who are disinclined to work and have a premature experience of vice.

"Suppose you were assured that your uncle would receive you back and give you another chance?"

Gregory shook his head.

"I don't believe he would, and I am afraid I don't deserve it. No, I must try to get to the

mines in some way. How are you fixed?" said Gregory, turning suddenly to Hector. "Could you spare a five-dollar gold piece for a chap that's been unfortunate?"

"Perhaps I might; but I am afraid you would go back into the gambling house and lose it, as you did your other money."

"No, I won't; I promise you that. Four bits was nothing. Five dollars would give me a chance of going somewhere where I could earn a living."

Gregory seemed to speak sincerely, and Hector thought it would do him no harm to reveal himself and his errand.

"Your name is Gregory Newman, isn't it?" he inquired.

Gregory stared at him in uncontrollable amazement.

"How do you know that?" he inquired.

"And your uncle's name is Titus Newman?"

"Yes, but—"

"He lives on Madison Avenue, does he not?"

"Yes, yes; but who are you that seem to know so much about me?"

"My name is Hector Roscoe."

"Did I know you in New York?"

"No; I never met you, to my knowledge."

"Then how do you recognize me and know my name?"

In answer, Hector took from his pocket a photograph of Gregory and displayed it.

"How did you come by that?" asked Gregory, hurriedly. "Are you a detective?"

Gregory looked so startled that Hector had hard work not to laugh. It seemed ludicrous to him that he should be supposed to be a detective on Gregory's track, as the boy evidently suspected.

"No," he answered, "I am not a detective, but a friend. I have come out to San Francisco especially to find you."

"You won't inform against me?" asked Gregory, nervously.

"Not at all. I come as a friend, with a message from your uncle—"

"What is it?" asked Gregory, eagerly.

"He wants you to come back to New York, and he will give you another chance."

"Is this true?"

"Yes; will you come?"

"I shall be glad to leave San Francisco," said Gregory, fervently. "I have had no luck since I arrived here."

"Do you think you deserved any?" said Hector, significantly.

"No, perhaps not," Gregory admitted.

"When will you be ready to return?"

"You forget that I have no money."

"I have, and will pay your passage."

Gregory grasped the hands of our hero gratefully.

"You are a trump!" said he.

Then he looked at his wretched and dilapidated suit.

"I don't like to go home like this," he said. "I should be mortified if I met my uncle or any of my old acquaintances."

"Oh, that can be remedied," said Hector. "If you can lead the way to a good clothing house, where the prices are moderate, I will soon improve your appearance."

"That I will!" answered Gregory, gladly.

Within five minutes' walk was a good clothing house, on Kearney Street. The two entered, and a suit was soon found to fit Gregory. Then they obtained a supply of underclothing, and Gregory breathed a sigh of satisfaction. His self-respect returned, and he felt once more like his old self.

"Now," said Hector, "I shall take you to my hotel, and enter your name as a guest. You and I can room together."

"Do you know," said Gregory, "I almost fear this is a dream, and that I shall wake up again a tramp, as you found me half an hour ago? I was almost in despair when you met me."

Though Gregory seemed quite in earnest in his desire to turn over a new leaf, Hector thought it prudent to keep the funds necessary for their journey in his own possession. He gave a few dollars to Gregory as spending money, but disregarded any hints looking to a further advance.

CHAPTER XXXVI. HOW HECTOR SUCCEEDED IN SACRAMENTO.

Now that Hector had succeeded in the main object of his journey, he had time to think of his own affairs. It was most important for him to visit Sacramento and make inquiries into the matter that so nearly concerned him.

"I must find out," he said to himself, "whether I am entitled to the name I bear, or whether I only received it by adoption."

The second day after his discovery of Gregory Newman, he said to him:

"Gregory, business of importance calls me to Sacramento. Do you wish to go with me?"

"Does the business in any way relate to me?" asked Gregory.

"Not at all."

"Then I prefer to remain in San Francisco."

"Can I trust you not to fall back into your old ways?" asked Hector.

"Yes; I have had enough of them," answered Gregory, and there was a sincerity in his tone which convinced Hector that he might safely leave him.

"I shall probably stay overnight," he said. "If I stay any longer, I will telegraph to you."

Arrived in Sacramento, Hector sought out the residence of the Rev. Mr. Richards, whose acquaintance he had made on board the steamer.

His clerical friend received him with evident pleasure.

"How have you fared, my young friend?" he asked.

"Very well, sir. I have succeeded in my mission."

"Then you have found the youth you were in search of?"

"Yes, sir; moreover, I have induced him to return home with me, and turn over a new leaf."

"That is indeed good news. And now, I think I have also good news for you."

"Please let me know it, sir," said Hector, eagerly.

"I have found the lady with whom your father and mother boarded while they were in Sacramento."

"What does she say?"

"She says," answered Mr. Richards, promptly, "that you are Mr. Roscoe's own son, and were born in her house."

"Thank Heaven!" ejaculated Hector.

"Nor is this all. I have found the minister who baptized you. He is still living, at a very advanced age—the Rev. Mr. Barnard. I called upon him, and recalled his attention to the period when your father lived in the city. I found that he remembered both your parents very well. Not only that, but he has a very full diary covering that time, in which he showed me this record:

"'Baptized, June 17th, Hector, the son of Thomas and Martha Roscoe; a bright, healthy child, in whom the parents much delight."

"Then it seems to me," said Hector, "that my case is a very strong one."

"Unusually so. In fact, it could not be stronger. I marvel how Allan Roscoe, your uncle, could have ventured upon a fraud which could be so easily proved to be such."

"He depended upon Sacramento being so far away," said Hector. "He thought I would accept my father's letter without question."

"That letter was undoubtedly forged," said the minister.

"It must have been, but it was very cleverly forged. The handwriting was a very close copy of my father's." It was a great pleasure to Hector that he could say "my father" without a moment's doubt that he was entitled to say so.

"He thought, also, that you would not have the means to come here to investigate for yourself," said Mr. Richards.

"Yes, and he would have been right but for the commission Mr. Newman gave me. What course would you advise me to take," asked Hector, a little later, "to substantiate my claim?"

"Get Mrs. Blodgett's and Rev. Mr. Barnard's sworn affidavits, and place them in the hands of a reliable lawyer, requesting him to communicate with your uncle."

This advice seemed to Hector to be wise, and he followed it. Fortunately, he had no difficulty in inducing both parties to accede to his request. The next day he returned to San Francisco.

CHAPTER XXXVII. A NARROW ESCAPE.

Armed with the affidavits which were to restore to him the position in life of which his uncle had wickedly deprived him, Hector returned to San Francisco. He found Gregory unaffectedly glad to see him.

"Glad to see you back, Hector," he said; "I missed you."

Hector was glad to find that Gregory had not taken advantage of his absence to indulge in any of his old excesses. He began to hope that he had already turned over the new leaf which was so desirable.

"I know what you are thinking of," said Gregory, after Hector had returned his salutation. "You are wondering whether I 'cut up' any while you were gone."

"You don't look as if you had," said Hector, smiling.

"No; I have had enough of sowing wild oats. It doesn't pay. Shall I tell you what I did last evening?"

"If you like."

"I attended a lecture illustrated with the stereopticon. I was in bed at ten."

"Gregory," said Hector, taking his hand, "you don't know how glad I am to hear this. I am sure your uncle will be delighted when you return to him so changed."

"I've made a great fool of myself," said Gregory, candidly. "Hereafter I am going to make you my model."

Hector blushed deeply, for he was a modest boy.

"You compliment me too much, Gregory," he said. "Still, if you are in earnest, I will try to set you a good example."

"You won't have any trouble in doing that. You are one of the fellows that find it easy to be good."

"I am not sure of that, Gregory. Still, I mean to do my best."

In the evening the two boys attended a theatrical performance. It was not till after eleven o'clock that they emerged from the theatre, and slowly, not by the most direct way, sauntered home.

There was no thought of danger in the mind of either, yet, as a fact, Hector had never in his life been exposed to peril so serious as that evening. Lurking behind in the shadow a shabby-looking man followed the two boys, keeping his eyes steadily on Hector. At a place specially favorable, our hero was startled by hearing a bullet whiz by his ear. He turned instantly, and so did Gregory. They saw a man running, and they pursued him. They might not have caught up with him, but that he stumbled and fell. Instantly they were upon him.

"Well," he said, sullenly, "you've caught me after all."

"Were you the man who fired at me?" asked Hector, "or was it my friend here you sought to kill?"

"I was firing at you," answered their captive, coolly. "Now, what are you going to do with me?"

"Was this forced upon you by want? Did you wish to rob me?"

"No; I had another motive."

"What was it?"

"If I tell you, will you let me go free?"

Hector hesitated.

The man proceeded, speaking with emphasis.

"If I tell you who put me up to this, and furnish you proofs so that you can bring it to him, will you let me go?"

"You will not renew the attempt?" asked Hector.

"No," answered the man; "it isn't likely; I shall have no further motive."

"Yes, I agree."

"Read that letter, then."

"There isn't light enough. Will you accompany me to the hotel, where I can read it?"

"I will."

The three walked together to the hotel, where Hector and Gregory were staying. There Hector read the letter. He was astonished and horrified when he discovered that it was from his uncle to this man, with whom he seemed to have an acquaintance, describing Hector, and promising him a thousand dollars if he would put him out of the way.

"This is very important," said Hector, gravely. "Are you ready to accompany me to New York and swear to this?"

"Yes, if you will pay my expenses."

By the next steamer Hector, Gregory and the stranger, who called himself Reuben Pearce, sailed for New York.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. CONCLUSION.

Allan Roscoe sat at the breakfast table with Guy opposite him. Though Mr. Roscoe was not altogether free from anxiety since he had learned of Hector's expedition to California, he had taught himself to believe that there was little chance of the boy's ferreting out the imposition he had practiced upon him. He had been a poor and struggling man most of his life, having, when quite a young man, squandered his inheritance, and his present taste of affluence was most agreeable. He felt that he could not part with Castle Roscoe.

"But I am safe enough," he said to himself; "even if Hector discovered anything, something might happen to him, so that he might be unable to return."

"Father," said Guy, who had just dispatched an egg, "I want ten dollars this morning."

"Ten dollars!" said his father, frowning. "How is this? Did I not give you your week's allowance two days since?"

"Well, I've spent it," answered Guy, "and I need some more."

"You must think I am made of money," said his father, displeased.

"It's pretty much so," said Guy, nonchalantly. "Your income must be ten thousand a year."

"I have a great many expenses. How have you spent your allowance?"

"Oh, I can't tell exactly. It's gone, at any rate. You mustn't become mean, father."

"Mean! Don't I give you a handsome allowance? Look here, Guy, I can't allow such extravagance on your part. This once I'll give you five dollars, but hereafter, you must keep within your allowance."

"Can't you make it ten?"

"No, I can't," said his father, shortly.

Guy rose from the table, and left the room, whistling.

"The old man's getting mean," he said. "If he doesn't allow me more, I shall have to get in debt."

As Guy left the room, the mail was brought in. On one of the envelopes, Mr. Roscoe saw the name of his lawyer. He did not think much of it, supposing it related to some minor matter of business. The letter ran thus:

"ALLAN ROSCOE, ESQ.:

"DEAR SIR: Be kind enough to come up to the city at once. Business of great importance demands your attention.

"Yours respectfully, TIMOTHY TAPE."

"Mr. Tape is unusually mysterious," said Allan Roscoe to himself, shrugging his shoulders. "I will go up to-day. I have nothing to keep me at home."

Mr. Roscoe ordered the carriage, and drove to the depot. Guy, noticing his departure, asked permission to accompany him.

"Not to-day, Guy," he answered. "I am merely going up to see my lawyer."

Two hours later Mr. Roscoe entered the office of his lawyer.

"Well, Tape, what's up?" he asked, in an easy tone. "Your letter was mysterious."

"I didn't like to write explicitly," said Mr. Tape, gravely.

"The matter, you say, is of great importance?"

"It is, indeed! It is no less than a claim for the whole of your late brother's estate."

"Who is the claimant?" asked Allan Roscoe, perturbed.

"Your nephew, Hector."

"I have no nephew Hector. The boy called Hector Roscoe is an adopted son of my brother."

"I know you so stated. He says he is prepared to prove that he is the lawful son of the late Mr. Roscoe."

"He can't prove it!" said Allan Roscoe, turning pale.

"He has brought positive proof from California, so he says."

"Has he, then, returned?" asked Allan, his heart sinking.

"He is in the city, and expects us to meet him at two o'clock this afternoon, at the office of his lawyer, Mr. Parchment."

Now, Mr. Parchment was one of the most celebrated lawyers at the New York bar, and the fact that Hector had secured his services showed Allan Roscoe that the matter was indeed serious.

"How could he afford to retain so eminent a lawyer?" asked Allan Roscoe, nervously.

"Titus Newman, the millionaire merchant, backs him."

"Do you think there is anything in his case?" asked Allan, slowly.

"I can tell better after our interview at two o'clock."

At five minutes to two Allan Roscoe and Mr. Tape were ushered into the private office of Mr. Parchment.

"Glad to see you, gentlemen," said the great lawyer, with his usual courtesy.

Two minutes later Hector entered, accompanied by Mr. Newman. Hector nodded coldly to his uncle. He was not of a vindictive nature, but he could not forget that this

man, his own near relative, had not only deprived him of his property, but conspired against his life.

"Hector," said Allan Roscoe, assuming a confidence he did not feel, "I am amazed at your preposterous claim upon the property my brother left to me. This is a poor return for his kindness to one who had no claim upon him."

"Mr. Parchment will speak for me," said Hector, briefly.

"My young client," said the great lawyer, "claims to be the son of the deceased Mr. Roscoe, and, of course, in that capacity, succeeds to his father's estate."

"It is one thing to make the claim, and another to substantiate it," sneered Allan Roscoe.

"Precisely so, Mr. Roscoe," said Mr. Parchment. "We quite agree with you. Shall I tell you and your learned counsel what we are prepared to prove?"

Mr. Roscoe nodded uneasily.

"We have the affidavits of the lady with whom your brother boarded in Sacramento, and in whose house my young client was born. We have, furthermore, the sworn testimony of the clergyman, still living, who baptized him, and we can show, though it is needless, in the face of such strong proof, that he was always spoken of in his infancy by Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe as their child."

"And I have my brother's letter stating that he was only adopted," asserted Allan Roscoe.

"Even that, admitting it to be genuine," said Mr. Parchment, "cannot disprove the evidence I have already alluded to. If you insist upon it, however, we will submit the letter to an expert, and—"

"This is a conspiracy. I won't give up the estate," said Allan, passionately.

"We also claim that there is a conspiracy," said Mr. Parchment, smoothly, "and there is one circumstance that will go far to confirm it."

"What is that?" demanded Allan Roscoe.

"It is the attempt made upon my young client's life in San Francisco by an agent of yours, Mr. Roscoe."

"It is a lie!" said Allan, hoarsely, shaking, nevertheless, with fear.

At a sign from Mr. Parchment, Hector opened the door of the office to give admission to Reuben Pearce.

At a sight of this man Allan Roscoe utterly collapsed. He felt that all was lost!

"Gentlemen," he said, "I will give up the estate, but for Heaven's sake, don't prosecute me for this!"

There was an informal conference, in which it was agreed that Allan Roscoe should make no resistance to Hector's claim, but restore the estate to him. Hector promised, though this was against his lawyer's advice, to give his uncle, who would be left penniless, the sum of two thousand dollars in cash, and an allowance of a hundred dollars per month for his life. He appointed Mr. Newman his guardian, being a minor,

and was once more a boy of fortune. He resolved to continue his studies, and in due time go to college, thus preparing himself for the high position he would hereafter hold.

As for Allan Roscoe, he and his son, Guy, lost no time in leaving the neighborhood. Guy was intensely mortified at this turn of the wheel, which had again brought his cousin uppermost, and was quite ready to accompany his father to Chicago, where they are living at present. But he had formed extravagant tastes, and has been a source of trouble and solicitude to his father, who, indeed, hardly deserves the comfort of a good son.

Hector lost no time, after being restored to his old position, in re-engaging Larry Deane's father, who had been discharged by his uncle.

He paid him his usual wages for all the time he had been out of place, and considerably raised his pay for the future.

"Larry shall never want a friend as long as I live," he assured Mr. Deane. "He was a friend to me when I needed one, and I will take care to give him a good start in life." He redeemed this promise by securing Larry a place in Mr. Newman's employ, and voluntarily allowed him as large a weekly sum as the merchant paid him in addition, so that Larry could live comfortably in the city. I am glad to say that Larry has shown himself deserving of this kindness, and has already been promoted to an important and better paid position.

A word about Smith Institute. It never recovered from the blow that it had received at the time when Hector found himself forced to leave it. One after another the pupils left, and Mr. Smith felt that his race as a schoolmaster was run. He advertised the institute for sale, and who do you think bought it? Who but Hector Roscoe, who probably paid more for it than anyone else would.

My readers will hardly suppose that he wanted it for himself. In a cordial letter he presented it to Mr. Crabb, the late usher, when he had finished his engagement with Walter Boss, and the name was changed to "Crabb Institute." It was not long before it regained its old patronage, for Mr. Crabb was not only a good scholar, but was fair and just to the pupils, ruling them rather by love than fear. He has married the daughter of a neighboring clergyman, who is a judicious helper and contributes to the success of the school.

As for Jim Smith, the last heard of him was to this effect: He had strayed out to St. Louis, and, after a few months of vicissitude, had secured the position of bartender in a low liquor saloon. He has very little chance of rising higher. The young tyrant of Smith Institute has not done very well for himself, but he has himself to blame for it.

To return to Hector. I think we are justified in predicting for him a prosperous future. He behaved well in adversity. He is not likely to be spoiled by prosperity, but promises to grow up a good and manly man, who will seek to do good as he goes along, and so vindicate his claim to the exceptional good fortune which he enjoys.

THE END.

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