The Fool of the Family

By Bracebridge Hemyng

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STREET & SMITH CORPORATION
79 Seventh Avenue New York City

The Fool of the Family

By BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG

Author of the famous Harkaway stories.



STREET & SMITH CORPORATION
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THE FOOL OF THE FAMILY.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCES THE READER TO TOMMY.

"Mother!" exclaimed Mr. Smithers, as he came into the parlor about supper time one winter evening, "that boy's a fool."

Mrs. Smithers, who was a quiet-looking, blond little woman, about thirty-five years of age, looked up from a book she was reading, and regarded her husband with a weary air.

"What boy?" she asked, languidly.

"As if you didn't know?" replied Mr. Smithers.

"We have two," she said, calmly.

"Oh, that boy, Tommy."

"What has he done now?"

"Done! why he is always doing something absurd. I told him this morning, before I went out, to cut up all the wood in the yard."

"I'm sure he'd do anything you'd tell him," said Mrs. Smithers, in a tone of conciliation; "he's only too anxious to please. I am positive that he has been hard at work all day, for I heard him chopping and sawing."

"Yes," answered Mr. Smithers, "he's chopped and sawed a little too much. Not only did he cut up the wood, but he's pulled down the fences on both sides of the yard, torn up the supports of the grapevine, and even made firewood of the sawbuck."

"He's too full of zeal; in fact, the poor boy wants to do too much," Mrs. Smithers rejoined. "You oughtn't to blame him for that; as he grows older he'll know better."

"I doubt it, ma'am. I doubt it very much," replied her husband, seating himself before the stove.

Mr. Smithers was a tall, consequential man, in the prime of life, dark in complexion and not bad looking.

His wife was a widow when he married her, and she had one son, the Tommy of whom Smithers was now complaining.

Our friend was commonly called "Soft" Tommy, on account of the simplicity of his nature and the numerous mistakes he was constantly making.

His age was thirteen, and he was a pale, delicate-looking boy, with a mild voice and a dreamy eye, fair hair, thin lips and an undecided sort of mouth.

By her marriage with Mr. Smithers, Tommy's mother had two children, a boy and a girl, who had respectively received the high-sounding names of Harold Stamford Smithers and Alice Regina Smithers.

Mr. Smithers himself was a clerk in a New York dry-goods house, and he resided in a quiet part of Jersey City, about half a mile from the ferry.

He prided himself upon being high-toned, and above all things boasted that he was master in his own house.

Poor little Mrs. Smithers knew this to her cost, for she received many a scolding, especially on Tommy's account, without daring to "talk back."

Smithers was very fond of his own two children, Harold Stamford and Alice Regina, both of whom he spoiled dreadfully.

One was eleven, the other ten, and they were as disagreeable, self-willed and conceited as overindulgence could make them.

Perhaps Smithers had a stepfather's dislike for Tommy.

One thing is certain, he frequently beat him and rarely said a word to the others.

Mrs. Smithers always looked sad and worried, which was no wonder, as she had to put up with a great deal from her husband.

She was a bad manager, was idle, and hated a disturbance of any kind, so that the children might do almost anything without her interfering with them.

"I hope you didn't beat the boy," remarked Mrs. Smithers, after a pause.

"He ran too fast for me," replied Smithers, "and took refuge in neighbor Barker's house."

"He'll be all right there, and when he wants his supper he'll come in," said Mrs. Smithers.

"It's a pity we can't choose our neighbors!" exclaimed her husband. "There's that Barker—he's an undertaker; it's a ghastly trade, and I've remarked that Tommy is more friendly with Charley Barker, the coffin maker's son, than he is with his own brother and sister."

"He must have some one to play with."

"Granted; but he needn't associate with those beneath him."

"The Barkers are hard-working and very respectable," Mrs. Smithers ventured to observe.

"Oh, very!" answered Smithers, sarcastically; "very much so indeed. I'm not saying anything against them. Still, they are not on a par with us, and if your first husband was a mechanic and left you with an only child, an infant at that, to go and work and die in the Nevada mines, I am not supposed to share your tastes."

"Poor man," said Mrs. Smithers, "there was no work for him here. He thought he would do so much better for all of us out West. He promised to send for me and Tommy soon."

"Well, he died, and he couldn't help it," put in Smithers, who was in a bad temper.

"We can't always do what we propose; and Thompson, my dear, dear first husband, was as good as they make them."

"He was a bold and exceedingly vulgar kind of person," rejoined Mr. Smithers, in a withering tone of voice.

"I'm sure Thompson was as genteel as—as Smithers," said his wife.

"Possibly he may have been in your estimation; but we will not discuss the question. Be good enough to get my supper ready," replied Smithers, with a grand wave of the arm.

"I'll do that with pleasure, only do make some allowance for Tommy—you know he is subject to the chills."

"You give me a chill, talking so much. Where are Harold and Alice?"

"Gone visiting."

"Oh, yes. I forgot that I gave them permission this morning to visit the Macphersons. Highly respectable family, the Macphersons. I will go and bring them home in a couple of hours' time. The ground is slippery with the frozen snow, and they might fall and hurt themselves."

Mrs. Smithers sighed.

She wished her husband would be as kind to Tommy as he was to Harold Stamford and Alice Regina.

Smithers had taken the trouble to go to Fulton Market and buy six dozen oysters, which he wanted roasted, and his wife went to get them ready for supper.

Meanwhile Tommy, accompanied by Mr. Barker, the undertaker, entered the room.

Tommy hung behind at the door, for he was afraid of his father, but the undertaker, who was a fiery, shock-headed little man, free and easy in his manner, and fond of his glass and his pipe, walked right in.

"Good-evening, neighbor," he exclaimed. "I've brought your boy back."

"Ah! Barker! Pray take a seat," replied Smithers, who, though he disliked the undertaker, was secretly afraid of him.

"I can stand."

"Sit down, I say; you're just in time for supper. Oysters from Fulton Market. First-class, I tell you."

"No, no," said Barker. "I only came here with Tommy because he was afraid to come alone. You won't lick him, now?"

"I don't see what you have to do with it, really, Barker."

"He did not understand about cutting up the wood."

"That is the trouble of it; he never will understand," replied Smithers, with a complacent smile.

"He's a good boy enough, and he and my Charley get along together first rate."

"Stay to supper, and we'll talk this thing over."

"Well, I don't mind if I do, though it's more for Tommy's sake than for anything else," answered Barker.

"Tommy, our neighbor is right," said his father. "You probably did not mean to do wrong, and I will not whip you this time. Now, you can go down to your mother and see if there is anything you can do in the preparation of supper."

"Yes, sir, certainly, sir," responded Tommy, his face beaming with smiles, as he saw that Barker had got him off the thrashing he expected.

His father kept a rattan in the corner of the room, which he devoted to Tommy's sole use, it never being employed upon the favored persons of Harold Stamford and Alice Regina.

"Now, Smithers," said Barker, "you ought to let up on that boy."

"Why should I, when he's the fool of the family?"

"He can't help it."

"Will you admit he's a fool?"

"I guess he's a little soft, that's all, and your severity makes him no better."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Smithers. "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

"That's played out."

"Since when?"

"Long ago. Try kindness."

Mr. Smithers grew rather red in the face.

"I have every respect for you," he remarked, looking sideways at the stove. "But I don't see why you should interfere with my family affairs."

"Because I like the lad. Why don't you apprentice him to some one?"

"To whom?"

"To me, if you like. I'll take him."

Mr. Smithers laughed in a tremulous manner.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Apprentice him to an undertaker?"

"Why not? You might require his services sooner than you expect. If ours is not such a respectable trade as the dry-goods business, we are as much in request as you are. You clothe the living, we clothe the dead."

"I couldn't hear of such a thing," replied Smithers. "Besides, the boy hasn't finished his schooling. He knows nothing."

Tommy re-entered the room and spread a snow-white cloth over the table.

"There's a little man," said Barker, encouragingly. "What a nice tablecloth."

"'Tain't a tablecloth," replied Tommy. "It's a sheet. Mother says the clothes ain't out of the wash yet."

Mr. Smithers looked disgusted.

"Didn't I tell you he was a fool?" he exclaimed.

"He's only simple," replied Barker.

"What does he know? He's going to school next week, and I'll bet he can't tell you what he wants for books."

"I'll ask him," said Barker. "Come here, Tommy, won't you?"

Tommy approached him without any hesitation, and showed none of that fear which he exhibited when spoken to by his stepfather.

"How much money do you want for school books, Tom?" asked Barker.

"None at all," replied Tommy.

"Why not?"

"I don't like skule," said Tommy, with his hands behind his back.

"But you've got to go, and what will it cost?"

"About four dollars, sir."

"How's that?" demanded Mr. Smithers, sharply. "I bought Harold Stamford's books yesterday, and they didn't come to that. Name the books."

"Lemme see," answered Tommy. "Singin' book, 'rithmetic, jography."

"Well," said his stepfather, "the first is sixty cents, the second seventy-five, the third a dollar and twenty. I insist upon knowing how you make it out."

He took up the cane which stood in the corner and held it up threateningly.

"Don't hit me and I'll tell you," replied Tommy. "There's half a dollar for a new bat, a dollar for a pair of skates and a quarter for candy."

Mr. Barker burst out laughing.

"I tell you he's smart," he exclaimed, "and you can't punish him for telling the truth."

"I won't this time," replied Mr. Smithers. "Yet I don't half like this sort of thing. Go an' give the horse his supper, Tom."

"Yes, sir," replied Tommy.

He hurried off as if he was glad to get away.

CHAPTER II.

HOW SMITHERS FOUND CONSOLATION.

While Tommy was gone Mrs. Smithers came up and laid the table, for although her husband was high-toned, he did not choose to keep a servant.

In ten minutes Tommy came back.

"Did you feed the horse?" asked Mr. Smithers.

"I gave him the supper," replied Tommy; "but he wouldn't touch it."

"That's strange," remarked Smithers.

"I think that plug of yours is ailing," said Barker, "and it's a wonder to me why you keep him."

"Well, you see," replied Smithers, "I got him cheap, and having a good barn at the back, I thought he'd be handy to take to the ferry, and to go out with Sundays and holidays."

"That's so."

"Tommy," said Smithers, "what did you give him?"

The boy was about to answer when Mrs. Smithers rushed into the room.

"Where's the oysters?" she almost screamed.

"How should I know?" replied her husband. "Didn't I give them to you to cook?"

"You did, and I roasted them beautifully, took the top shells off, and left them on the stove in a big dish, while I went upstairs to tidy up."

Mr. Smithers bent a severe glance on Tommy.

"What did you give the horse?" he asked.

"The supper," replied Tommy.

"What?"

"The oysters. Thought that was what you meant."

Mrs. Smithers clasped her hands together, and uttered a cry.

"Do horses eat oysters?" demanded Smithers, furiously.

"How could I tell?" answered Tommy. "I've heard of donkeys eating thistles."

"What would you like to eat, you donkey?"

"A mild tongue," said Tommy.

"How do you mean, you idiot?"

"Do be quiet, dear," cried Mrs. Smithers.

"Am I to be insulted by this idiot of yours, madam?" thundered Smithers.

The wife raised her apron to her eyes and began to cry.

Smithers seized Tommy by the ear and pulled it, exclaiming:

"What do you mean? Are you luny?"

"I meant a beef tongue, not too much salted," replied Tommy.

"What did you do with the oysters?"

"Won't you lick me, if I tell you?"

"N-no."

"When I found the horse wouldn't look at them, I called Charley Barker, and we polished them off between us."

Mr. Smithers let go of Tommy's ear and looked at him ferociously.

"You young villain!" he exclaimed; "I'll skin you some of these days."

At this Mrs. Smithers burst into a fresh torrent of grief.

"Oh, that I should have to hear my boy called such a name!" she sobbed.

"Silence, woman!" roared her husband.

She sank into a chair, exhausted, and redoubled her groans and tears.

"See here," exclaimed Barker, "I'll send for some more. There's no harm done."

"No, you won't," replied Smithers. "You're just as bad as the boy. I could see you snickering all the time, and it's the last chance you'll have of coming into my house."

"I can get out of it," said Barker.

"Git!"

This was said in such a contemptuous manner that Barker had no alternative.

Putting on his hat, he went.

When he was gone, Smithers attempted to do what he had not dared to undertake while the undertaker was in the room.

Seizing his rattan, he rushed upon Tommy.

His mother threw herself between them, and Tommy escaped the intended blows, but his stepfather chased him around the room, uttering frantic cries.

The door being open, the boy thought it would be only prudent to make his escape.

"You rascal! you dunce!" cried Smithers. "The idea of giving oysters to horses! I'll be even with you!"

Tommy banged the door after him, and his stepfather, having put his hand on it, got badly crushed.

He withdrew his hand covered with blood, and as he sucked his fingers he danced an original fandango on the floor.

At this moment the door opened and a boy's form appeared.

Blinded with rage and smarting with pain, Smithers struck out with the cane.

"Oh, pa!" cried the boy; "what have I done? It's me, Harold. Look out, or you'll hit Ally."

Mr. Smithers groaned again.

In the passion of the moment he struck his own child, Harold, who, with his sister, had just returned from the party.

"My darling!" he exclaimed, "I'm truly sorry. It was that stupid, that silly, that insane beast, Tommy, I meant to chastise."

"What's he done, pa?"

"Don't ask me. Maria, I'm going down the street, to the drug store, to have my hand dressed."

"You shouldn't be so violent," she said.

"Just keep that boy out of my sight when I come back, that's all."

"I can't help his making mistakes."

"I'll kill or cure him, anyway."

"When shall you be back?"

"I don't know."

"Don't be long. I'm tired and hungry. We've had no supper," said Mrs. Smithers.

"I shall get mine outside."

"What am I to do? I've had none."

"You may thank your precious brat for that, madam. Give oysters to a horse! Oh, my, I'll never get over it!" cried Mr. Smithers.

Wrapping his injured hand in a handkerchief, he rushed from the house, leaving his wife alone with Harold Stamford and Alice Regina.

"What is the matter with pa, ma, dear?" asked Alice.

"Oh, don't bother me," said Mrs. Smithers, swaying herself to and fro in the rocking-chair.

"Wasn't he mad?" remarked Harold. "I never saw him so before. It was all that Tommy's doing, I'll bet."

"Go up to bed, both of you," said Mrs. Smithers.

"I won't for one," exclaimed Alice. "Will you, Harold?"

"Not much," replied the boy.

"Your father will punish you when he comes back."

"No he won't—he likes us too much, and we don't care for you, ma, when pa isn't here," said Alice.

Mrs. Smithers sighed again, but made no further effort to get the children to bed.

She knew they were their father's spoiled pets, and that it was useless, with her weak mind and undecided character, to attempt to control them in his absence.

So, while she sat silently crying to herself, Harold Stamford and Alice Regina got out the board and amused themselves with a game of checkers.

It was past midnight when Smithers returned, with rather an unsteady gait, and a glaziness about his eyes, which, taken in connection with the huskiness of his voice, led his wife to suppose that he had been drinking.

"This is a nice time to come home," she said, with more than her usual boldness.

"Very nicesh timesh," he answered, hiccoughing.

"Where have you been?"

"Looking for boysh they call Shoft Tommy—hic—that'sh where I've been."

"Did you find him?"

"No."

"Well, he's not come in," said Mrs. Smithers, "and it's my opinion that your harshness has driven him to some rash act."

"Run away, do you think?" exclaimed Smithers. "Oh, dear, no—hic—Tommy's too good a judge of when he'sh well off. Light my—hic—candlesh, and I'll go to bed."

Smithers was accommodated with a light, and in some mysterious manner retired without breaking his neck or setting the house on fire.

Harold and Alice followed their father's example, but Mrs. Smithers remained up till the small hours, waiting for Tommy to come back.

The fire in the stove went out, and the daylight peeped through the shades. Still the anxious mother watched.

When Tommy managed to escape from his father's anger, he ran to the back of Mr. Barker's house, where he knew he was sure of protection and shelter.

In the kitchen he found Charles Barker, a boy about his own age.

"Hello, Tommy," exclaimed Charley; "weren't those oysters bully?"

"I'm afraid to go home, through them," answered Tommy. "It seems as if I made another mistake. They weren't for the horse's supper at all. I wish I was a little smarter. Father will knock the life out of me when he catches me."

"Let him sleep over it," said Charley, "that's what I do when pop's mad with me. Sleep out all night, and let him go to business before you show up."

"Where can I stay?"

"In our house. You can go up in the carpenter's shop and sleep in one of the coffins. I'd give you half my bed, but father's so funny-tempered he might lick us both, if he found that I'd kept you out."

"That's so; and for want of a better roost, I'll do as you say."

"Come at once, for I hear pop upstairs, going on at mamma as he always does when he's in a bad temper."

Charley went into the yard, followed by his friend Tommy, on whom he thought he was conferring a great favor in allowing him to sleep in a coffin.

The snow was lying about in heaps, and the idea that it would be great fun to snowball somebody at once struck Charley.

"Say!" he exclaimed, "let's go down street and snowball Darky John."

"All right," replied Tommy.

"You fire at him, and I'll make a grab at his candy and divvy with you afterward."

"Just's you say."

Darky John was a good-tempered colored man who kept a candy store.

The boys were always playing him some trick or another, and, indeed, they made his life a misery and a burden to him.

As usual, Soft Tommy did not see the drift of his friend's proposal.

He ran the risk of getting all the blows, and Charley all the candy.

A few minutes' walk brought them to Darky John's. He was standing behind his counter, and was suddenly roused from the contemplation of a batch of red and blue-colored sugar pigs by the forcible contact of a snowball with his nose.

"Ki!" he said, "dat's too rough for dis chile to stand. Who fire dat ball?"

"Give him a couple more, and make him come out after you," whispered Charley.

Tommy threw two more balls, one of which raised a commotion among the bottles on a shelf, the other broke on John's ear, and its flaky particles streamed down his neck.

"Fore de lord, dat's too much. What I gwine to do now? If I cotch dat boy, I'll have to make him feel mighty sick!" exclaimed Darky John.

Catching sight of Tommy he ran out of the shop and chased him up the street.

Charley, meanwhile, entered the store and filled his pockets with candy.

CHAPTER III.

FUN ENDS IN TRAGEDY.

Fat and lazy, Nigger John did not succeed in overtaking Tommy, and at length gave up the chase, vowing vengeance upon him when he got him in his power.

The boys met at the corner of the street and divided the candy.

"Now, what's the next move?" said Charley. "Do you want to creep into your deal box?"

"I don't care," replied Tommy, with a shiver.

"You needn't be afraid. The old man's got no stiff up in the shop just now."

"It's horrid, though, to go among coffins, and your father does keep the dead bodies there sometimes."

"Of course he does. I've seen half a dozen at a time waiting to be boxed up, but they can't hurt you. They're harmless enough; it's nothing when you're used to it."

"Anyway," said Tommy, "it's better than going home to be licked."

"I'll bet yer," replied Charley.

While sucking their candy and talking they were approached by another boy.

"Hello, Charley!" exclaimed the newcomer; "was that you snowballing Nigger John?"

"I never give myself away, Swanny Marsh," replied Charley.

"He's awful mad. I wanted to sell him two pigeons for candy and he wouldn't deal."

"I'll trade with you."

"What'll you give?"

"My jackknife, a handful of candies and a dozen marbles."

"Can't do it," replied Swanny Marsh; "they're worth more."

"You can keep them," said Charley.

"I'll tell you what I'd like to do with them," continued the owner of the pigeons.

"What's that?"

"There's a lecture on to-night in Julian Hall. I went there and got a seat up in the gallery. Just under me there was a man with a bald head, and I dropped a marble down right on top of him. Jimanetti! you should have heard him howl and seen him jump!"

"Did they tumble you?"

"Like my bad luck, they did. A mean cuss saw me do it, and I was bounced. Now, I'll let you have the pigeons, if you'll throw them up through the door of the hall."

"What's the fun of that?"

"They'll fly all around and put the gas out, and we'll holler 'Fire!' like fury. It'll be all a lark to see the folks run for the door," replied Marsh.

"Good boy, Swanny!" said Charley.

"Will you do it?"

"Tommy will, won't you, Tommy?" exclaimed Charley.

"I don't mind," answered Tommy, in his usual good-natured way.

"That settles it," said Swanny Marsh. "Here are the birds."

He produced a paper bag, in which were two full-grown pigeons.

"Come on to Julian Hall. Open the door a little way and let the birds fly," exclaimed Charley Barker. "It'll be such fun."

Tommy thought so, too, but he did not stop to consider the matter thoroughly in all its bearings.

This is the trouble with most boys. They do not stop to think, and, acting as creatures of impulse, they often do mischievous things, which produce disastrous results, without meaning any real harm.

Reaching the hall, which contained about three hundred people, who were listening to an instructive lecture, Tommy opened the door a little way.

He attracted no notice.

Then he opened the paper bag, and the birds flew out among the audience.

Rushing hither and thither, the pigeons, by the motion of their wings, soon extinguished the lights. The hall was wrapped in darkness.

Meanwhile Charley Barker and Swanny Marsh cried "Fire! fire!" with all their might, and Tommy joined in the din.

Not knowing how or why the lights had been put out, the audience became panic-stricken.

They made a rush for the doorway, which speedily became blocked.

Now a terrible scene ensued, which the boys were far from intending, or even anticipating.

The doorway became jammed with a fighting, struggling mass of humanity, yelling, shrieking and pushing to escape.

Delicate women and children were trampled under foot, and the darkness made the scene more dreadful.

There was only one door to the hall, which was all the worse for the people.

The three boys left off crying "Fire! fire!" when they saw the people coming out.

They grew frightened at the terrible uproar, and with blanched faces stood on the outskirts of a quickly increasing crowd.

The police came up and rendered effectual assistance.

In a quarter of an hour the hall was cleared, and beyond bruises and cuts, none of the grown people were seriously injured.

Some women were carried out fainting and bleeding; but one sight caused a thrill of horror to run through the assembling crowd.

The police had picked up a little boy—dead!

He was a tiny little fellow, about seven years old, and as they placed the lifeless body on a shutter, many a strong man felt inclined to shed tears.

This was the only one killed.

"He's a goner," whispered Charley to his companions. "Who'd have thought that?"

"It's rough," replied Swanny Marsh. "Wonder who's young one he is."

"Don't know."

"Oh!" said Tommy, "I'm so sorry we did it."

"So'm I, now," answered Marsh.

The shutter, with the youthful corpse upon it, was taken up by four stout men.

"Where are they going to take it?" asked Charley of a man in the crowd.

"Up to Barker's, the undertaker's," was the reply.

"Whose boy is it?"

"They say it's Marsh's; him as lives up the avenue. Little Tony Marsh, I heard them call him, and they won't take him home, 'cos the mother's sick, and the shock might kill her."

These were cruel words for Swanny to hear, but he did hear them, and they sank into his heart like lead.

"Oh, God!" he murmured, "I have killed my little brother."

Then his lips became whiter than his cheeks, and he would have fallen to the ground had not Charley Barker caught him.

"Say, Tommy," exclaimed Charley, "this is awful!"

"What'll I do?" asked Tommy.

"Say nothing to anybody. Watch your chance to get into the shop, and hide away in a coffin, as I told you."

"But how about poor Swanny Marsh?"

"I'll take him home. Don't bother yourself about him."

"All right."

"Don't forget; you're not to squeal. I must post Swanny when he comes to. If you don't look out we shall all get sent up."

Tommy nodded his head, as if he quite comprehended the warning.

He walked sadly away, and Charley, in time, with some difficulty, got Swanny home.

The state of affairs at home can be easily imagined—a hysterical mother, a father frenzied with grief, one little bed empty, its occupant gone forever, and the house of mourning, desolation and despair.

But crushed with grief as he was, and overwhelmingly shocked, Swanny Marsh did not say anything.

He kept the horrid secret locked up in his breast.

CHAPTER IV.

A NIGHT IN A COFFIN.

Tommy watched the undertaker's house from a distance, saw the body of the dead child taken in, waited till the crowd dispersed, and then crept into the house by the back way.

The room in which the coffins were stored was up one flight of stairs.

No one saw him go up.

He pushed the door open, and the pale moonlight streamed in on piles of coffins, some made of common pine and others of handsomely polished wood.

These latter were the elegant caskets of the rich.

Pieces of wood and carpenters' tools lay all about, but what arrested Tommy's attention was a white cloth.

This was stretched over a plainly-made coffin.

Actuated by an irresistible impulse, he approached and lifted the cloth.

A convulsive shudder ran through his limbs.

He had disclosed the pallid features of the dead boy, the poor unfortunate who had come to his untimely end through the thoughtless joke of his friends and himself.

It was dreadful to have to sleep in the same room with the dead.

"I'll put it out of sight," said he to himself.

Lifting up the coffin containing the dead child, he hid it under the carpenter's bench.

It was a cold night, and he kept the sheet.

There was a boy's coffin on the floor, and he crept in.

It just fitted him.

Drawing the white cloth or sheet over himself, he soon fell asleep, in spite of the dismal and ghastly surroundings.

An hour later Barker, the undertaker, entered.

"I guess I'll just nail a lid over that 'stiff,'" he muttered. "I've known cats to come in here and gnaw the hands and faces. There'll be an inquest to-morrow, and it'll be best to have it look decent."

Taking up a board, he placed it over the coffin in which Soft Tommy was sleeping.

Then he drove in half a dozen long nails.

The sound of the nailing roused Tommy, who tried to cry out, but the lid was so close to his face that he could not.

He felt a sense of suffocation.

In vain he endeavored to raise an alarm.

A nameless horror took possession of him. It was worse than a nightmare, or anything that can be produced by physical suffering.

It was the fear that he was going to be buried alive—that, in fact, he was already nailed up in his casket and on his way to the silent tomb.

"That fixes it," he heard Mr. Barker say. "Now I'll go to bed."

"Mr. Bar-Barker," Tommy strove to say, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

The words died on his lips.

A dizziness came over him, his head seemed to swim, and he lost consciousness.

The undertaker had nailed him in the coffin, and he was alone with the dead.

Charley Barker went to sleep, after leaving Tommy, but he woke up with a bad dream, in which he had fancied that his friend had fallen into a furnace and was rapidly being reduced to a cinder.

He had witnessed the horrid scene distinctly in his dream, the boy's arms were outstretched as if begging help and protection, while his plaintive voice rang in his ears.

A cold sweat broke out all over Charley, as he started up in bed, and such was the impression that the dream made on him, that he determined to go to the carpenters' room and satisfy himself with his own eyes that all was right.

It was fortunate indeed for Tommy that Charley had his dream, for had he been left till morning in his confused and cramped position, he would undoubtedly have been a corpse.

Hastily slipping on his clothes, Charley crept out of the room and stood a moment at the head of the stairs to assure himself that all was quiet.

Mr. and Mrs. Barker had retired to rest, and the house was consequently as still as the grave; so he boldly made his way to the place where he had left Tommy.

Striking a match, he lighted a lantern, which cast a lurid light over the pile of coffins, and, to his astonishment, perceived that the wooden casket into which his friend had crawled was nailed down.

"Dad's been up here," he muttered, "and I shouldn't wonder if he hain't taken the living for the dead."

Seizing a screw-driver, he began to force off the lid, finding his judgment correct, for there was Tommy Smithers, breathing heavily, with the blood oozing from his eyes, nose, mouth and ears.

"By thunder," he cried, "that was a lucky dream of mine. I'm only just in time; but better late than never; a good motto, and he yet lives."

With some difficulty he lifted Tommy out of the coffin, and placed him on the floor, when the cold air soon revived him.

Opening his eyes, he looked curiously around him at the strange surroundings, like one emerging from a trance, but when his eyes fell upon Charley, his memory seemed to come back to him, and he smiled faintly.

Presently he sat up and said:

"I guess your father nailed me down, thinking I was Tony Marsh. But how did you come to know it?"

"It was through a dream I had," replied Charley.

"A dream," repeated Tommy, in surprise.

"Yes. I thought you were in a fiery furnace, and called to me for help. The dream was so clear that I couldn't sleep until I had come to see if you were all right."

"Thank you," said Tommy, grasping his hand. "You have saved my life."

He was trembling with excitement and shivering with the cold, so that Charley concluded to offer him half his bed.

"Come and turn in with me," he exclaimed. "I'll stand a thrashing from father. You can't rest here."

"No, indeed," answered Tommy, with a shudder. "I came too near dying here to like the idea. Wouldn't it have been horrible if I had gone to the grave that way?"

"I'll bet you. Wait while I put poor little Tony in the box and fix the lid, or father will think something."

He took hold of Tony, and was about to place him in the coffin when he dropped the body.

"What's the mat-matter?" asked Tommy, whose teeth were chattering.

"He's warm yet," answered Charley.

"What you say?" cried Tommy. "It can't be, because the doctor said he was a gone coon."

"I don't give a straw for what the doctor said," answered Charley, going on his knees and putting his ear to the boy's chest. "He's breathing," he continued, after a slight pause, "and of course he can't be dead. This is a night of miracles. Oh! ain't I just glad, that's all. Swanny was awfully cut up, and so were we, to think that our joke should have killed Tony."

"What'll we do?" inquired Tommy.

"Tell you what'll we do. You help me to carry him, and we'll put him between us in my bed, and warm him."

Tommy was now strong enough to render the required assistance, and the boys succeeded in getting the supposed corpse into bed.

There were no bones broken in Tony's body, though he was considerably crushed and bruised.

It was an undoubted fact that he lived, for in a couple of hours he was so much recovered that he was able to speak.

"Is that you, Swanny?" he asked.

The little fellow was accustomed to room with his elder brother, and supposed they were in bed together.

Tommy had dropped off into a deep slumber, but Charley Barker was awake.

"No, Tony; it's me, Charley Barker. You know me, don't you?" he replied.

"Why, certainly. But why ain't I in my own house? What has happened? I'm so sore all over."

"You got hurt when the people at the lecture had a scare, and Swanny and I thought you'd be best here."

"Does mother know?"

"Oh, yes! Try and get to sleep, there's a good little fellow. Swanny will be here good and early in the morning."

"I shall be glad to sleep, my head aches so, and I feel quite dizzy, while my body is just as if I'd been beaten all over. Good-night, Charley; it was very kind of you to take so much care of me."

Then the little fellow dozed off, and Charley Barker sank to sleep with the sweet consciousness of having saved two lives that night by his lucky dream.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN WITH ONE EYE.

Charley Barker was up at daylight next day, and after washing the blood from Tony's face, which was much cut and disfigured, he hurried off to Swanny to acquaint him with the good news.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Marsh had gone to bed at all, for they were mourning the loss of their darling, and, on being admitted to the house, Charley at once acquainted them with what had occurred.

They could scarcely believe in the reality of such joyful tidings, but started immediately for the undertaker's.

Mr. Barker, as we have said, was a rough-and-ready, fiery sort of man, who at times did not attempt to restrain his temper.

The father and mother had gone alone to his house, as Charley had stayed behind to talk with Swanny.

It was about seven o'clock, and Barker was not up.

When he heard a furious ringing at his bell he jumped out of bed in a passion, saying to his wife, who was also aroused by the noise:

"I'll teach those fools, whoever they are, not to ring my bell as if the house was on fire, dern me if I don't!"

Advancing to the window, he threw it open, and his temper was not improved by the rush of cold air, which struck a chill to his bones after leaving his nice, warm bed a moment before.

"Be-low!" he shouted. "What in thunder do you want?"

The tassel of his nightcap fluttered in the cold blast, and particles of the crisp, frozen snow flew up in his face.

"Give me my child," replied Mr. Marsh.

"Oh, it's you, Marsh," said the undertaker, in a milder tone. "What's the use of asking for the body so early? You'll have it in a neat casket about the middle of the day. I can't work at night, besides, I didn't know you were in such an all-fired hurry."

"It isn't the body we want, it's the child."

"Comes to the same thing, and you've got to wait."

"Open the door and let us in."

"No, I'm derned if I do. Come at a proper time," growled the undertaker.

"For Heaven's sake, take pity on us!" cried Mrs. Marsh. "Will not a mother's tears move you?"

"Not by a bucketful, marm."

"If you don't give up Tony, I'll get a warrant and have you arrested," roared Mr. Marsh. "Aren't you an inhuman scoundrel? Want to kill him, I guess, for fear you'll lose the job."

"Kill him! What do you mean? Oh, pshaw, you're both crazy!" replied Barker, in a tone of deep disgust. "Go home, and don't come fooling around here no more."

"Look here, Barker," exclaimed Mr. Marsh, "I'll——"

His further utterance was cut short by the sudden and violent slamming of the window by the irate undertaker, who, after consigning the interrupters of his repose to perdition, crept once more into bed, and pulling the clothes round his cold shoulders, prepared to sleep again.

At this moment Charley and Swanny came running up.

"Won't dad let you in?" asked Charley.

"No," replied Mr. Marsh. "This is an outrage. I shall go for an officer."

"Don't do nothing of the sort. Come in with me at the back door. Pop ain't to blame; he don't know anything about the stiff coming to life," answered Charley.

The rage of Mr. and Mrs. Marsh moderated at once, and they followed their conductor into the house through the rear. Presently they were overjoyed at seeing their darling.

Barker was roused, everything was explained, and Tony was carried home by his anxious parents.

Tommy also sought his domicile, finding his father and mother in the kitchen.

"If that boy takes to stopping out nights," he heard Mr. Smithers say, "he can stay away altogether, for what I care."

"You forget," replied his mother, "that it was your injustice and ungovernable temper that drove him out."

"He's such a fool, madam."

"Can he help being a little soft? Besides, he's quite young yet."

At this juncture Tommy came forward.

"Here I am, mother," he said.

"Where have you been, sir?" demanded Mr. Smithers.

Tommy related the incidents of the night, which were pronounced to be very wonderful.

"Well, I'll overlook it this time," said his stepfather; "but don't let it happen again, or I'll take you into the woodshed and welt you considerable."

Mrs. Smithers caught him in her arms, crying:

"Oh, my darling! I should never have got over it if you had been buried in that coffin."

"Here, stop that blubbering!" exclaimed Smithers. "Give me another cup of coffee; I must be off, or I'll be late at the store!" And soon after he hastened off to the ferry.

There was a ring at the bell. Mrs. Smithers dried her tears, and added:

"See who that is."

Tommy opened the door, and a man, poorly dressed, with a worn expression on his face, which was weather-beaten and battered, stood on the stoop.

What made him more remarkable was the fact that he had only one eye. No attempt was made to conceal the defect, which might have been remedied by one of glass, and the vacant space made him look even more homely and ghastly.

"Does Mrs. Smithers reside here?" he inquired, in a voice harsh and hoarse through drink and exposure to the weather.

"Yes," replied Tommy.

At this moment Mrs. Smithers raised her head, took one long look at the stranger, and uttering a piercing shriek, would have fallen to the ground had not Tommy rushed forward and supported her with his arm.

The man with one eye smiled grimly, and showing no outward concern, stepped into the house, closing the door after him.

"Let go," he said. "Where's the parlor?"

"That door to the left," answered Tommy.

"Open it."

Mrs. Smithers had fainted, but the stranger took her in his arms as if she had been a child.

"What's your game?" asked Tommy. "That's my mother."

"I know it," was the calm reply.

"Don't touch her, you dirty-looking tramp!" continued Tommy. "How dare you?"

"Because I am your father, and she is my wife."

At this remarkable and unexpected reply, Tommy opened his eyes wide in amazement.

"Thought my father was dead?" he said.

"No matter what any of you thought, I am alive and I am here. Open the door."

There was an air of authority about this man who claimed to be the Mr. Thompson whom Mrs. Smithers had first married, and Tommy no longer refused to obey him.

He opened the door of the room in which a good fire was burning, and the stranger carried the woman in, laying her on a sofa, and chafing her hands so as to circulate the

blood and restore her to consciousness.

Tommy could scarcely realize the fact that this rough, ragged and ugly man was the father of whom he had heard his mother speak so often.

Young as he was when his father went West—only to die, as was reported and supposed—he remembered a very different sort of person.

In the course of a few minutes, during which Tommy remained standing near the closed door, in an awestruck sort of manner, Mrs. Smithers became herself again.

Her mind was clear, and the passing faintness having gone away, she looked the stranger in the face.

"Thomas," she said, softly, "what is the meaning of this? I heard from one of your friends that you were dead."

"All thought me so," he answered. "I was in a wild part of the country, where I had gone to make money for you and our child——"

A sickly smile overspread her delicate countenance.

"You left me to starve, and the child, too," she interrupted.

"Let that be as it may," he rejoined, "I went away. You can put what construction you like on my actions."

"Well, go on," she said, in a tone of resignation.

"I'll admit," he continued, "that I was a drunkard and a gambler; but I wasn't that when I left you. I intended to do you good. A barroom quarrel nearly resulted in my death. I was badly shot, badly kicked and lost one of my eyes."

Mrs. Smithers covered her face with her hands, as if she could conjure up the horrible scene and wished to shut it out.

"How have you been living since?" she asked.

"Heaven only knows. A friendly Indian took care of me till I got well, and then I waited till I could get square with my enemy."

"And he?"

"I slew him as I would a dog," said the man, Thompson. "He begged for his life like a whining girl, but I had him in a tight place, and he died by my hand."

"Horrible!" she muttered.

"Not at all. Didn't he disfigure me? I tell you that out West we consider ourselves entitled to satisfaction in cases of this kind."

"Why did you come here, Thomas?"

"To see you. I found out that you had married again, and knowing that you were my property, I thought I could make something out of you."

"Your property?" she repeated.

"Why, certainly. Does not a wife belong to her husband?"

Mrs. Smithers groaned.

"Do you wish to destroy me?" She asked.

"Oh, dear, no! I'll own up that you made a mistake in marrying me—that I was always a bad husband, and that you were better without than with me. Further than that, I will confess that I don't blame you for taking the first chance that offered after you heard of my death, because you had to keep yourself and the child."

"Then why persecute me, Thomas?" inquired Mrs. Smithers, raising her moist eyes to his.

"Simply because I think that I can get something out of you. I am poor; 'dead broke' won't express my condition."

"And if you can levy blackmail upon me, you will be satisfied?"

"For a time, yes."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONFIDENCE GAME.

"You never were a good man," said Mrs. Smithers, looking down at the floor and moving her foot restlessly, "but I didn't think you would have become so bad as you have. However, I shall have to make a compromise with you. Name your terms."

"Now you're talking," answered Thompson, with a smile of satisfaction. "In the first place, I want all the money and jewelry you can lay your hands on. You can say the house was robbed."

"Yes, you shall have all," Mrs. Smithers replied.

"Secondly, I must have Tommy."

"For what?"

"No business of yours. If you don't let Tommy come with me, I will see Mr. Smithers, and upset the whole caboodle. Don't you forget it."

"You want to make him as bad as yourself, I know you do," she said, impetuously, "and I will not let him go."

"All right. I'll stay here till Smithers comes back from the dry-goods store where he is employed, and the chances are that he will kick the pair of you out when he hears what I have to say."

"Is this manly or just, Thomas?" she asked.

"Neither one nor the other; but I have to do something in New York this time, or I shall be sent up to the island for the winter," replied Thompson, looking piercingly at her with his one eye. "Take your choice."

"Come here, Tommy," said his mother.

"What is it, mamma?" he asked, taking her hand tenderly.

"Will you go with your father?"

"Yes, to save you, mamma," answered Tommy.

"Then go, and God be with you," she said, and rising, went to a handsome bureau, which she opened with a key.

Taking a roll of bills and some jewelry from a secret drawer, she handed them to the stranger, adding:

"They are all I have."

The man's eyes gloated over the plunder which he counted, exclaiming:

"Twenty dollars, three rings, a bracelet and a pair of diamond rings. Little enough, but I will make it do."

Covering her face with her hands, the weak-minded and unfortunate woman shed an abundance of tears.

"Come on," said Thompson to Tommy; "you're mine now. D'ye hear—or do you want a gentle reminder from the toe of my boot?"

"You needn't kick me," replied Tommy. "What I say I never go back on."

Bestowing an affectionate look on his mother, he followed the stranger from the house, and in silence they made their way to the ferry, by means of which they crossed over to New York.

Thompson took him to a house in Dey Street, where he boarded, and when they were alone in a room, he lighted his pipe, and began to talk.

"How do you suppose I get my living, sonny?" he inquired.

"Best way you know how, I guess," answered Tommy.

"Precisely. Sometimes I am a gambler, at others a thief, now and then a monte man; but here, where I am not known by the police, I mean to work the confidence game."

"How's that done?" asked Tommy.

"It's as simple as playing policy. We'll go out presently and look for a victim. I can always tell a countryman. When I point him out to you, it will be your job to go up to him and say:

"How are you, Mr. Jennings?"

"But suppose his name isn't Jennings?"

"Of course it isn't," replied Thompson, "and he'll say: 'My name is not that, you've made a mistake.' Then you say: 'Didn't my father work for yours in Buffalo,' and he'll most likely answer by telling his real name and address, after which you beg his pardon, and fall back to tell me who he is."

"What then?"

"I shall go up to him, you keeping in the background, accost him by his real name, and worm myself into his confidence, the end of which will be that I shall get all his money and valuables out of him in some saloon."

"That's cheating," said Tommy, bluntly.

"I know it's a State's prison offense; but a man must live, and I'm too far gone to work now," replied Thompson. Putting down his pipe, and replacing his hat on his head, he told Tommy to accompany him to Broadway to make his first attempt at the game of confidence.

Thompson was not yet acquainted with Tommy's aptitude for making blunders, or he would not have been so pleased at getting him as a decoy for unwary strangers.

They walked on till they came near Grand Street, where Thompson saw an individual upon whom he thought he could practice.

He was tall and gaunt, with a restless, inquisitive air, looking into shop windows, and staring about him as if everything was new and he wanted to take in all he could during a limited stay in the city.

"Here's the bloke!" exclaimed Thompson. "Go and do what I told you, and leave me to play him for a sucker."

"All right," answered Tommy.

The boy approached the stranger, and pulling his sleeve, accosted him, saying:

"How are you, Mr. Jennings?"

The man stopped abruptly, and with a sharp, clear eye scanned his face.

Instead of answering as Tommy expected, he exclaimed:

"How long have you been at this game, bub?"

"Not long, sir," replied Tommy, in his simple way. "I only started on it just now."

"As I thought. Who put you up to it?"

"That man behind, sir, who is leaning against the lamp-post."

"If I told you my name you were to fall back and tell him, and then he'd come up to me?"

"Yes, sir," he said, "you were a greenhorn, and he'd play you for a sucker."

The tall man smiled.

"He never made a greater mistake in his life," was the reply. "I'm pretty well posted on all these tricks, and I've paid for my experience."

"What will I say to him?" asked Tommy.

The tall man advanced to where Thompson was waiting, but when the latter saw him coming he concluded that something was wrong, and ran.

A chase ensued. Thompson ran into the arms of an officer, who held him till the tall man came up.

"What's the charge?" asked the officer.

"He tried to play confidence on me. I'm a detective connected with Central office. Take him to headquarters, while I find the boy. You know me, officer. I'm Maccabe."

"I guess I ought to," answered the policeman.

"Curse the boy! Did he give me away?" asked Thompson.

"In the worst way, but without meaning it," was the answer.

"If I'd known he was such a fool, I'd never have traveled with him," growled Thompson, bestowing some choice oaths on Tommy, "and when I come out, after doing the time I suppose you'll give me, I'll have satisfaction out of his hide."

"Stop your chinning. You're my prisoner," said the officer, hauling him off to Mulberry Street.

Maccabe, the detective, who had assumed an innocent air and a rough sort of dress on purpose to throw thieves off their guard, looked around for Tommy. He was nowhere to be seen.

Tommy had done the most sensible thing he ever did in his life, which was to run away to the ferry and go home again, consequently the detective couldn't catch him. But the absence of Tommy did not save Thompson, who was sent to the island as a rogue and a vagabond for three months.

In the solitude of his cell he had ample opportunity to plan his revenge upon the boy, and we must leave him to brood over his future plans while we return to Jersey City. It was afternoon when Tommy reached the house.

His father had left the store early, and was with Mrs. Smithers in the parlor, the latter being hysterical.

"What's the matter with you?" he heard his father say. "I ask for the money in the bureau and all you do is to cry."

Tommy entered the room, and his mother no sooner saw him than she caught him in her arms, and kissed and hugged him as if she had never expected to see him again.

"Oh! my dear, dear boy," she exclaimed, "Heaven be thanked you are restored to me."

"I ran away from the man, mother, when the police took him," said Tommy.

"Hush!" she cried, placing her fingers on her lip, warningly.

Mr. Smithers was interested. He saw that something of an unusual nature had occurred during his absence, and he was determined to find out what it was.

"What man?" he inquired.

"My father," replied Tommy, innocently. "He wasn't dead, and turned up to-day."

"O-oh!" said Smithers, with a prolonged whistle; "that's how the cat jumps, hey? Now I can see where the money went. Soh! the late lamented Thompson has come back, and you're not my wife by law."

Mrs. Smithers bestowed a wrathful look on Tommy.

She would not for the world that Smithers should have got even the least glimmering of what had taken place that day.

But it was too late for regrets. He knew all now.

She lay perfectly passive on the lounge, while Mr. Smithers closely questioned Tommy, drawing from him all the facts connected with Thompson's unexpected return from the West, and the circumstances of his visit.

CHAPTER VII.

TOMMY MAKES A STRANGE VOYAGE.

After pacing the room in a state of agitation for some minutes, Mr. Smithers enjoined Tommy not to say a word of what had happened to anybody, and ordered him to go out and play, which the boy was very willing to do.

At length he took his wife's hand in his.

"My dear," he said, "on consideration, I do not blame you in this affair. When you married me you believed your first husband dead?"

"I did, indeed," she said, sobbing.

"You were weak and foolish to give him money, and still more silly to let him have control of Tommy, whose simpleness came in well for once, however."

"It broke my heart to part with him; but what could I do?"

"In future leave this fellow to me, or we shall have trouble. Will you do so?"

"I shall be only too glad."

"That settles all. You are forgiven, and if Thompson dares to enter my door again I shall give him to the police."

"But if he claims me and Tommy?"

"You can refuse to accompany him. The law will protect you," replied Smithers.

"Oh! my dear, dear husband," exclaimed Mrs. Smithers, smiling gratefully through her tears, "you are the best of men."

"And with all your faults you are good enough for me," replied Smithers.

Then peace was restored between them.

Meanwhile Tommy sought his friend, Charley Barker, who was standing near an express wagon in the yard.

"Here's fun," exclaimed Charley. "Father's got a body which is to go to England, and I'm to go with the expressman and see it on board the steamer. Have you ever been on board a liner?"

"Never."

"Wouldn't you like to go?"

"I'll bet yer!" replied Tommy.

"That settles it. We've got to hurry up, as the steamer sails this afternoon. It's the *Umbria*, of the Cunard line, and their docks are in Jersey City," said Charley.

Tommy, boylike, was delighted at the chance of a little amusement of a novel nature, and waited with impatience for the appearance of the undertaker and the expressman, who at length came down the stairs with a handsome, polished, elm coffin.

It contained the body of an Englishman, whose friends were desirous of having it sent to the old country, so that he might rest with his forefathers.

"Hurry with this to the *Umbria*, Charley," said the undertaker. "Are you going along, Tommy Smithers?"

"Yes, sir, if I may."

"All right—up she goes."

The coffin was put in the wagon, and the boys got up behind, while the driver said "Git up" to his team, and "rattled his bones over the stones" to the Cunard docks.

When the steamer was reached, the steam was up, and, as usual on such occasions, the greatest confusion prevailed.

The body was hoisted on deck, and the boys were permitted on board to see it safely stowed away; but once on the ship, they took advantage of the confusion to wander through the ship, being hugely pleased with all they saw.

Suddenly a bell rang.

"Ship off!" cried Charley. "Make haste—this way; we shan't get ashore if we don't look sharp."

Friends were taking leave of friends, and passengers were rushing about in all directions.

In the crowd Tommy was separated from Charley Barker, and, as might have been expected, from him, he took the wrong turning and got lost in the saloon.

While he was trying to find his way out the gang-plank was drawn up, the cable slipped, and the huge ship began steaming down the bay.

He had started on a voyage to England without intending it, and could not help himself.

When he did reach the deck Jersey City was only visible in the distance, and the *Umbria* was gradually leaving the Battery behind.

The tears came to his eyes, and he exclaimed, "Charley! Charley!" But his call met with no response.

The great ship steamed past Staten Island and into the upper bay without anyone taking any notice of Tommy.

He had spoken to several people, but they, full of their own affairs, had pushed him rudely on one side, as if a small boy was too insignificant to pay attention to. There was no hope of his getting on shore now, for the only place where they might have landed him was Quarantine, and that was out of sight.

The tears trickled down his face still, and a strange fear that the captain might beat or imprison him took possession of his mind.

He had heard of people being put in irons and confined in some dark place for a trifling offense.

Suppose they asked him for his passage ticket, what could he say?

It was not likely that the captain would take him a journey of three thousand miles for nothing.

He had no money, his knowledge of the sea and of seamanship was so meager that he did not think he could work at anything.

Then, again, if they did not throw him overboard, which he regarded as a possible contingency, what would he do at Liverpool without a friend or a cent in the world?

The more he thought over the situation the more grave did it appear.

He was standing nearly amidships on the side of the rope which divides the steerage and the saloon passengers.

It was no use to look imploringly at people who passed him; he was nobody's child, as it were.

The huge ship seemed like a town to him, it was so vast, and held such a number of people.

After a while the crowd on deck decreased, as the land receded from view, for everyone wished to put his state-room in order, and get ready for dinner.

They neared the Hook, Coney Island was on the left, and the Highlands of Navesink, vested in a blue mist, were lying gracefully on the right.

A slight swell began to be perceptible in the motion of the vessel, which showed that there was a stiff breeze and a rising swell in the Atlantic.

A bell rang. The deck was soon deserted by the few who had remained up to the last minute to enjoy the breeze and get an appetite for dinner.

A lad about sixteen came up to Tommy and exclaimed:

"Now, then, captain, you'd best be going below to get your grub."

"Thank you," replied Tommy, rubbing his eyes. "I'm not hungry, only miserable."

"How's that?"

The lad was fair-haired, blue-eyed and good-natured, if his face could be trusted, and he stared curiously at Tommy.

"Are you saloon or steerage?" he asked; "because, if you're steerage, you'll get bounced if you come this side of that rope."

"I don't know what I am, and that's a fact."

"Come, don't guy me! Where do you belong? You must know who you came aboard with."

"So I do."

"Who was it?"

"I came with the corpse," replied Tommy, with the utmost seriousness.

The fair-haired lad laughed.

"They call me Wild Charley!" he exclaimed, "and what my other name is don't matter to anybody, since I left home without asking permission to go; but in all my experience, I never traveled with a corpse."

"I'll tell you how it was," said Tommy, eagerly. "I live in Jersey City, next door to Barker, the undertaker, and his boy and me was sent to this steamer with a coffined body to go to England. We landed the stiff and went to look around the ship, and ——"

Wild Charley laughed.

"I see now," he interrupted, "you weren't quick enough in getting on shore, and so you've started on a voyage without having previously declared your intentions."

"Exactly."

Wild Charley whistled.

"Indeed, what I say is true," Tommy continued, hoping to make a favorable impression upon the first friend he had met.

"I believe you," was the answer, "and I am trying to think how I can help you. My position on board of this ship is that of steward's assistant. If I said you were a friend of mine whom I had engaged to assist, you could share my bunk, do what work you could, and no one would trouble about the bit of food you eat, so long as you kept quiet and made yourself generally useful."

Tommy's eyes filled with tears again. This time they were tears of gratitude.

Seizing Wild Charley's hand, he pressed it cordially, saying:

"Oh, please do this for me. I will be so thankful."

"What's your name?"

"Tommy Smithers. They call me Soft Tommy sometimes, because I get things kinder mixed up now and then."

"I should guess you were soft when you let the ship slip from her moorings and take you across to the other side. Why, what on earth are you to do when you reach Liverpool?"

"Work my passage back, I suppose."

"Not so easily done as said," answered Charley. "You don't meet with a good-natured fellow like me every day."

"Will you do what you can for me?"

"Yes. Come below. Dinner is just being served, and it is my busy time. I'll say a few words to the purser and chief steward, which will fix things, and all you'll have to do will be to take the word from me and do as you are told," answered Wild Charley.

They descended the hatchway, and Tommy found a job in washing up plates and cleaning knives and forks.

After tea he went on deck.

The sea was calm, and he did not experience any sensation of seasickness.

For a while he looked over the ship's side into the starlit night. All at once a steamer was discovered going west.

The captain was on the bridge with the second officer.

"We'll signal that steamer," he exclaimed. "Send below for the usual lights."

"Ay, ay, sir," replied the mate.

He left the bridge, and, seeing Tommy, said:

"Are you one of the ship's boys?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tommy, touching his cap.

"Go to the quartermaster, and ask him for the ordinary signals."

"The what, sir?"

"Quartermaster, you fool! and hurry up!" shouted the officer.

Tommy did not understand who the quartermaster was, but he was afraid to ask any more questions, and dived below.

The first person he met was the doctor.

"Please, sir," began Tommy.

"Well, what is it, my lad?"

"Where is there a quarter, master?"

"I've no quarter to give you, and am surprised at your impertinence in asking for it," the doctor answered, passing on.

Tommy was somewhat surprised at this abrupt answer, and stood still, wondering where he could go and what he could do next, when, fortunately, he met Wild Charley.

"Say," he exclaimed, "where will I find the quartermaster?"

"That's his room," replied Wild Charley, pointing to the right. "What do you want with him?"

"I'm sent for signals."

"Do you know what they are?"

"Of course I do. Don't take me for a fool," answered Tommy, looking up with considerable pride.

"All right, my son. When you want to turn in, come down to the bunk I showed you. Yours is the same as mine."

"I'll be there," replied Tommy.

He knocked at the quartermaster's door, and was told to enter.

"What is it, boy," asked the officer, without looking up from some accounts which he was attentively studying.

"Captain's sent for usual signals, sir."

"Take them out of that locker."

There were two lockers, and, unfortunately, Tommy mistook the direction in which the quartermaster waved his hand.

The consequence was that he took up two signals which he should have left alone.

"Got 'em?" queried the quartermaster.

"Yes, sir," answered Tommy, hauling off the two lights.

"Get along, then."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WRONG SIGNALS.

Tommy lost no time in getting on deck, and reaching the bridge, found that the third officer was in charge, the captain and the second officer having retired to the cabin of the former to consult the chart as to some questions in dispute between them.

"Give me those lights," exclaimed the third officer, who had been instructed to burn them.

They were handed over, and at once sent up.

Bright and brilliant they shot up, and flashed in the clear, dark blue sky.

Scarcely had they died away when the captain returned and took his place on the bridge.

"Signaled her, Mr. Simmons?" he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the third officer.

Scarcely had he spoken when an answering signal appeared shooting up from the deck of the passing steamer.

"By jingo! that's queer," said the captain.

"Very strange, indeed, sir," replied the third officer.

"What do you understand by that?"

"It's heave to, or I'm mistaken; but, really, I don't understand the whole code as well as I ought. I must take the book in hand."

"See, she's altering her course. We'll show our ensign, and alter the ship's course a few points to the northwest."

"Ay, ay, sir."

The necessary change was made, and the two steamers approached each other.

When they got within hailing distance a voice shouted:

"Ship ahoy!"

"*Umbria*," was the reply.

"Where from, and how long out?"

"New York, six hours."

"What in thunder," was the next question, "do you want to fool us by signaling that you were in distress and out of provisions?"

"We sent up the ordinary signals, to make out who you were."

"Some mistake. Do you want anything?"

"No."

"Then good-by. We're the *Asia*, and we'll have a good joke on you."

The captain of the *Umbria* muttered some improper words, and gave the order to go ahead.

Soon the mighty machinery began to creak and groan, and the good ship was speedily flying across the ocean at the rate of sixteen knots.

The vessels parted, their lights grew dim in the distance, and the captain had full leisure to vent his displeasure upon those who deserved it.

He sought the quartermaster, who was still busy in his cabin.

"Why did you send me the wrong signals?" he demanded.

"I pointed to the locker, sir, and told the boy to help himself. He must have mistaken the lights."

"Yes, and a nice laughingstock he has made of us."

"What did you send up, sir?"

"In distress and short of provisions, when we were only six hours from port."

The quartermaster with difficulty repressed a smile.

"Who burned the lights?" he inquired.

"The third officer, and it's my opinion that none of the men on board this boat know their business," quoth the captain.

With this severe shot he went on deck again, and sent the boatswain to find out Tommy.

"When you've got him," he added, "give him the taste of a rope's-end, to make him smarter in future."

Luckily for Tommy, the boatswain was unable to find him, as he had, on seeing that something was wrong, gone below and got into his berth.

But again he had made a mistake, for in the darkness he had entered the purser's cabin, and got into his bed.

The purser had been playing a game of whist in the smoking room and drinking some hot whisky, which, with the fatigue of the day, consequent on leaving port, made him feel unusually sleepy.

Kicking off his boots, he turned into his bunk without looking inside, and was greatly surprised to find it occupied.

"Oh! Charley," exclaimed Tommy, "ain't you heavy. Get off me, or you'll have me smothered, sure."

The purser sprang out again and took one look at the bold intruder.

"You young cub!" he cried, "come out of that double-quick, or I'll skin you alive!"

"Ain't it Charley?"

"No, it's me. How dare you have the cheek to turn into my bunk? Clear out!"

Tommy made a snatch for his clothes, and got out.

"Beg pardon, sir, but where do I sleep?" he asked.

"Hang me if I know, and I'm blessed if I care," replied the purser. "Take your hook out of this, youngster."

Tommy attempted to run, but a well-directed kick from the purser sent him on his hands and knees, when the door was banged behind him.

"Bounced!" he heard a voice say close to him.

"That's sure as I'm alive, and badly bounced, too. Why, Charley, is that you?"

"It is. What's up?"

"I'm down," replied Tommy. "The fact is, I got into the wrong cabin, and was yanked out."

"You're always making mistakes. It's rough on you, I'll admit, but it serves you right."

They turned in after this, and the next day very little was seen of Tommy, as the weather was very rough, and he was so seasick he kept in his berth.

The gale was over in a couple of days, and he appeared again, serene and smiling, having found his sea legs, as his friend, Wild Charley, expressed it.

The boatswain's pipes whistled cheerily at this moment.

Some sailors were climbing up the shrouds.

"Anything I can do, sir?" inquired Tommy.

"Go aloft and help set that sail," was the reply.

Though he had never been in the rigging before, Tommy was too proud to refuse to comply with this command.

Accordingly he shinned up the shrouds, but hadn't gone far before he lost his hold and fell in a lump to the deck.

He would have seriously injured himself had not the officer been standing directly under him.

Tommy fell upon the officer's broad back, bringing him with a thud to the deck.

He jumped up unhurt, but the officer was much bruised and shaken.

"Deuce take you for a fool!" he cried.

"Anything else I can do, sir?" asked Tommy.

The officer rose and picked up a belaying pin.

"If you don't make yourself scarce," he replied, "I'll pound you into a jelly."

Tommy disappeared below, but the men had seen the fall and heard Tommy's remark of "anything else I can do, sir?" which became quite a word in the forecastle during the remainder of the voyage.

During the rest of the morning he was sent by the steward to wait upon the cabin passengers, and answer the smoking-room bell.

The ladies kept him busy carrying up wraps and chairs, as it was fine on deck, and the gentlemen occupied his time in orders for Bass' ale and cigars.

Mrs. Nathan S. Stocker, of Chicago, had a mortal aversion to a dog, and a maiden lady named Jones had a Scotch terrier which she insisted upon giving all the privileges of the saloon.

The two ladies entered the saloon together as Tommy was dusting the piano.

Miss Jones' dog ran up and pawed her.

"Boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Stocker, "remove this animal."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Touch him if you dare! Dogs have as much right here as children," replied Miss Jones.

"That remark does not apply to me, as I have left all my precious ones at home; but I will maintain that the butcher's shop is the place for dogs. Boy, go to the purser, and say that I wish this brute taken away."

"Certainly, ma'am," answered Tommy.

The ladies glared at one another, and Tommy sought the purser, who was in his cabin.

"Well, what do you want?" he asked.

"Say, sir, what am I to do with Miss Jones' dog? Mrs. Stocker says——"

"Oh! hang the dog!" replied the purser, impatiently. "I've heard all that before. I can't be bothered."

Tommy entered the saloon again with a piece of rope.

"What does he say?" asked Mrs. Stocker, eagerly.

"The dog's to be hanged, ma'am."

"What!" cried Miss Jones, "hang my Fido!"

"I always said the purser was a gentleman," remarked Mrs. Stocker, smiling triumphantly.

"I will appeal to the captain!" exclaimed Miss Jones. "Touch Fido, if you dare, till I return."

She rushed away, and Tommy stood, irresolute how to act.

"Boy," said Mrs. Stocker, "carry out the purser's orders. Execute that detestable brute of a dog, and I will never forget you."

"All right, ma'am," answered Tommy.

He put the dog under his arm, and going on deck, slung the rope over a yard, made a noose, and having put it round the dog's neck, hauled him up about two feet from the deck.

Fido struggled and kicked, and his eyes were nearly starting from his head in all the agony of strangulation.

Suddenly Miss Jones, followed by the captain, rushed upon the scene, wringing her hands and uttering piercing cries.

"My dear, dear Fido! Save him! oh, save him!" she exclaimed, in piteous accents.

The captain took out a claspknife and cut the rope; then he gave Tommy a box on the ear.

Consequently Fido fell on the deck, very much resembling a dead dog, and his executioner tumbled in a heap on top of him.

Miss Jones pulled him off, and taking up her dear dog, hugged it in her arms, being rewarded by a feeble wag of the tail.

"He lives! yes, he breathes! I was in time!" she cried, tragically, "and my darling is saved!"

The captain looked sternly at Tommy.

"Who gave you authority to hang people's dogs?" he demanded.

"Purser's orders, sir," answered Tommy.

The purser chanced to come on deck, and was just about offering his arm to a lady who was taking a promenade, when the captain called him.

"Why did you order this lady's dog to be killed, Mr. Kinsey?" he asked.

"I, sir? I did nothing of the sort," replied the purser.

"This boy says you did."

"Yes, indeed, sir. Don't go back on me!" pleaded Tommy. "You said, 'Hang the dog!'"

"But I didn't mean it that way, you fool! It was an exclamation of impatience. I had heard of this dog trouble, and didn't want to be mixed up in it."

"Take the dog to the butcher, and let him mind him until the end of the voyage."

"Yes, sir."

"Madam, I am glad to have been of service to you," continued the captain, making a polite bow to Miss Jones and going on the bridge.

Tommy took the dog to the butcher and received a severe talking to from the purser, who said:

"Are you a fool, or are you putting on?"

"Really, sir, I thought that you were in earnest."

"Thought my eye! thought my grandmother!" replied the purser. "If I thought you were trying on any more larks with me, I'd tan your hide, my lad, and don't you forget it!"

Tommy shrank away, somewhat abashed, wondering why people would say what they didn't mean.

But he had made a friend of Mrs. Stocker, who in the end proved of great service to him.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SMUGGLER.

The voyage was a quick one, and on the morning of the ninth day out they were in the River Mersey.

Wild Charley spoke to him in the morning, and asked him what he intended to do.

"I don't know, exactly," answered Tommy. "At first I was anxious to get home, but if I write a letter to mother, telling her I am safe and well, she will not be anxious about me, and now I am here I should like to see something of England."

"Spoken like a little man," said Wild Charley. "I have spoken to the steward, and he says he will always give you a passage back to America."

"That's good, and I'm much obliged to you."

"Mrs. Stocker has also mentioned your name," continued Charley. "She is grateful to you for that affair of Miss Jones' dog."

"Yes, she said she'd be a friend to me."

"If you like to be her attendant and look after her baggage, she says she will take you along."

"That will suit me first rate."

"Very well. You can see her at the Adelphi Hotel, where she stays three days; but at present I want you to do something for me."

"You have only to name it. I'm sure, after your kindness, there is nothing I could refuse you," replied Tommy, warmly.

"It is a mere trifle. I've got a lot of tobacco in cakes, which I would like to have you conceal about your body."

"What for?"

"To avoid paying duty to the custom house," replied Wild Charley.

"That would be smuggling."

"Of course it would, but there is no harm in it."

"It's against the laws, and if I'm found out I shall be put in prison for it."

"Oh, no," replied Charley, "there is no harm in it. They're not very strict, and if you were tumbled to, I should be the principal sufferer."

"Why?"

"Because I should lose all my tobacco, which would be forfeited to the customs."

Tommy hesitated.

Looking critically at him with his keen, selfish, blue eyes, Charley added:

"I didn't think you would make any difficulty about such a little thing after the friend I've been to you."

"But——"

"Oh, if you're so awful mean, say no more about it. I'm tired of roughing it, and intend to go home. My only idea in smuggling the tobacco was that I should have a little spending money when I reached home, and not look poor."

"Are your friends well off?"

"Tolerably. Father is a professor, and keeps quite a fashionable boarding school for young gentlemen in London."

"And you mean to go back?"

"Yes. I'll return to Greek and algebra, and learn all I can. Seeing the world is all very well, but it doesn't pay when you can do better at home," answered Wild Charley.

"That's so," answered Tommy, still hesitating.

"Come, don't keep me waiting for your reply all day. Say yes or no," answered Wild Charley, impatiently.

"Yes."

Tommy had consented in his soft way to do what his better judgment told him might get him into trouble.

Lest he should have time for his decision to cool, he was called by Charley into their cabin and literally stuffed with bags containing thin, flat cakes of tightly pressed tobacco.

The duty on this tobacco is four shillings and six pence per pound, with five per cent. added, and when we say that Tommy was loaded or padded with over half a hundredweight, it can be imagined that he was smuggling on a large scale.

Wild Charley sewed the bags with a needle and thread to the lining of his pants, vest and coat, giving him a large pilot jacket to wear over all.

"Now," he said, "you'll do. We shall soon be off Birkenhead, when the officers of the customs will come on board. All you have to do is to loaf around here, and when we've landed our passengers, you and I will go ashore together, and I'll take you to a friend of mine, where you can unload your cargo."

"All right," replied Tommy.

"If anything should go wrong you won't squeal?"

"No."

"Promise me that, because if they do twig you, they'll ask you all sorts of questions, and it will do you no good to give me away. There are more in the thing than myself, and you'll have a present given you."

"I promise," replied Tommy.

He remained below, showing himself as little as possible, until the steamer was boarded by the custom house officers.

It did not then occur to him that his friend, Wild Charley, was as heartless as he was full of scheming.

Yet it was a fact that he had only made up his mind to befriend him because he thought he would be of great assistance in his smuggling venture, in which some of the steward's assistants were mixed up.

The revenue men had been all over the ship, and Wild Charley had looked in upon Tommy, whispering that he guessed it was all right now.

Tommy accordingly went into the saloon to see if he could not pick up a dollar by making himself of use to some of the passengers, who were getting their smaller articles of baggage together preparatory to quitting the vessel.

The first party he encountered was Mr. and Mrs. Nathan D. Stocker, of Chicago.

"Anything I can do, ma'am?" he asked.

"Well, yes, take a hold of this valise and these wraps. But, gracious sakes! how you've grown," she replied.

"Got a little fatter," said Tommy, coloring up.

He was not aware that he presented the appearance of a prize side show boy, and had increased apparently at least one-third in size.

"Why, bless me!" remarked Mr. Stocker, "the boy is positively bloated—swelled up like the frog in the fable. I never saw such a thing. Chicawgo growed fast after the fire, but, by thunder, he licks Chicawgo hollow!"

"It's being confined and shut up on board ship," said Tommy.

"You've been living high, bub."

"Yes, sir. I guess that's got something to do with it."

A man who was writing at a table in the saloon heard this conversation, and got up.

Tommy had the valise in one hand, and the wraps were thrown over his arm.

"Put those down," said the man.

Mrs. Stocker looked at him.

"Why should he? They are mine!" she exclaimed.

"I am perfectly well aware of that fact, madam," replied the man, "and feel sorry to interfere with your arrangements in any way, but I am a custom house officer."

"Indeed?"

"I feel it my duty to examine this boy, because such an extraordinary growth as you hinted at does not seem natural."

Tommy felt as if he would like to sink into his boots.

If the floor had opened and allowed him to drop down into the hold or into the sea, it would have been a welcome relief.

"Take off that pilot coat," continued the revenue man.

"Why should I do that?" asked Tommy.

"If you don't do it, I'll have to help you."

Reluctantly Tommy obeyed.

"Now remove the other."

He did so.

The officer laid it on the table, and the bags of tobacco were revealed to view.

Passing his hands up and down the boy's vest and pants, the officer smiled serenely.

"Decided case of smuggling!" he exclaimed, triumphantly. "I'll have to arrest you. Put on your coats, and, when we land, come with me before a magistrate."

"Oh, please, sir, don't do that. Take the stuff and let me go," pleaded Tommy.

"Can't do it."

"I—I'm very sorry."

"I'm not. This is a good haul. We have suspected that there has been a great deal of smuggled tobacco taken off these ocean steamers, and I'm pleased to think we've spotted some one at last."

Tommy began to cry.

"Who is in this with you?" asked the officer.

"N—no one, sir," replied Tommy.

"Are you sure?"

"Qui-quite sure, sir."

"All right. Tell a lie and stick to it. We've got you, and that's enough for me," answered the officer.

Tommy continued crying, and rubbed the knuckles of his hands in his eyes, but nobody took any notice of him.

All were busily engaged in preparing to leave the vessel, and when she presently reached her dock, a grand rush was made for the gangway.

"Won't you let me go?" asked Tommy, thinking the officer might relent.

"Not likely," was the reply.

"What will they do with me?"

"Send you up for life, or perhaps hang you."

At this appalling prospect, which was a jest of the officer, Tommy's tears redoubled. Mr. and Mrs. Stocker bestowed no attention upon the unhappy boy, and even Wild Charley, who caught sight of him in charge of the officer, hurried on as quick as he could.

"Charley! Charley!" exclaimed Tommy.

But Charley ran as if his former acquaintance were stricken with the plague.

"Who's that?" asked the custom house officer.

"Only a friend of mine, sir," rejoined Tommy.

Soon afterward Tommy was taken on shore, and brought up before the nearest magistrate.

The case was stated, and the smuggled tobacco produced.

"Clear case," said the judge. "Had he any accomplices?"

"He says not, your worship," replied the officer.

"Well, as he is so young, we will fine him twenty pounds, or three months in jail."

"I haven't a cent, sir," exclaimed Tommy, "nor a friend on this side."

"Sorry for you. Next case!" replied the judge.

Tommy was taken below to the cells of the jailer, to await the coming of the van which was to take him to prison.

Pushed rudely in, and locked up, he felt very miserable; but he could do nothing.

He was alone and friendless, as well as penniless, while even Wild Charley, who might have been expected to help him, kept away.

Abandoned on all sides, Tommy gave himself up to despair, and sat on the hard bench in his cell in a state of sullen despondency.

CHAPTER X.

LOST IN LONDON.

Very miserably passed the sluggish hours for Tommy. It was now afternoon, and he had been locked up more than two hours, during which he had indulged in a good cry.

He was looking forward to the arrival of the van which was to take him and others similarly situated to jail, when the wicket in his cell door was pushed back. The face of the jailer appeared at the aperture.

"Johnny," he exclaimed, "brace up. Here's two people wants to see you."

"Who are they?" eagerly demanded Tommy.

"How should I know? They look like swells, though, and are dressed bang up. The lady gave me a shilling."

"Is that so?" said Tommy. "Show them in at once. This isn't New Year's, but I'm receiving calls."

The door was flung open, and Mr. and Mrs. Stocker appeared in the damp, narrow passageway.

"What an awful place," exclaimed Mrs. Stocker. "Is this where they put smugglers? I declare that I'll never risk taking any more silks or laces in my trunks when I go back to the States."

"It's for all sorts, ma'am," answered the jailer.

Tommy looked at Mr. Stocker and wished him good-day.

"You've got yourself in a nice fix," said the Chicago man, "and if I'd thought you'd done it all yourself I wouldn't have helped you, but my wife thinks it's a put-up job, and she wants me to pay the fine for you, though a hundred dollars is a lot of money, and if you travel with us, you mustn't expect much wages for some time to come."

"I won't ask a cent, sir," replied Tommy, "if you'll only get me out of this place."

"Who was it?" asked Mrs. Stocker.

"It was Wild Charley, ma'am, that got me to do it."

"That steward's assistant. Sakes! Why didn't you tell the judge so? Good land! I'd have turned the tables on him mighty quick."

"He made me promise not to."

"Well," said Mr. Stocker, taking a chew of short-cut, "I'll allow that you were soft not to squeal on him, but I guess I'll have to buy you out of this hole. It goes against the grain of my wood to see an American citizen shut up for smuggling a bit of tobacco."

Overwhelmed with delight, Tommy was marched upstairs by the jailer. The fine was paid, and instead of going to prison, he accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Stocker to their hotel.

He was engaged by them to look after the baggage and attend upon the lady, who hated foreigners, and said she would rather have one of her own countrymen around her than an Englishman or a Frenchman.

The next day was spent in viewing the sights of Liverpool, and at five o'clock they took the express train to go to London.

On arriving at the railway station, Tommy was quite bewildered at the noise and bustle which prevailed on all sides of him.

Mr. and Mrs. Stocker hired two cabs, as one would not contain all their baggage, which they had packed on the roof of the cab, putting the smaller parcels inside.

They were to ride in one and Tommy in the other.

"Give me those wraps—hurry up! Oh, my, how cold it is!" cried Mrs. Stocker. "I shall be so glad when I get to the hotel."

The weather had changed considerably within the last twelve hours, a light snow was falling.

Tommy handed in the wraps through the window.

"Did you tell them drivers where to go, sir?" asked Tommy.

"Yes. Jump in and keep behind us," was the reply.

Now it happened that there were many cabs in the station, and most of them were laden with luggage, so that it was difficult to tell one from the other.

People were rushing about hither and thither, porters were wheeling trunks on barrows, and pushing all out of their way.

A hand truck went over Tommy's foot, which made him set up a howl of pain.

Scarcely had this happened than he was caught in a rush of people and carried halfway down the platform.

Having got out of this crush, he retraced his steps and tried to find out his cab, but as all the four-wheeled London cabs resemble each other, it was not an easy task.

At length he fancied he had found the right one, and opening the door, got in.

"Go on," said he.

The driver, however, got down from his box, and eying the boy sternly through the window, replied:

"Who are you tellin' to go on?"

"Why, you, of course."

"Did you engage me?"

"I didn't hire you, but my boss did," replied Tommy, "and he told you where to go to."

"Where's that?"

Tommy scratched his head in perplexity.

He had heard the name of the hotel, but the rush, the whirl, and the bustle of the moment had driven it clean out of his head.

"I've forgotten!" he exclaimed. "But it don't matter so long as the boss told you, and you know."

"Look here, young fellow," replied the cabman, "this game won't wash. I never see you before, and I don't know nothing about bosses. You get out."

"What d'you mean?" cried Tommy, "ain't the trunks got the name of Stocker on them?"

"No, they haven't. It's name of Jones. See for yourself."

"I'll stay here," answered Tommy.

"Will you?"

"You bet I will. It's my opinion you want to steal the property."

This insinuation was more than the man could bear.

He stretched out his arm, seized Tommy by the collar, and dragging him out, flung him on the platform, where he fell on his back.

At that moment the gentleman who had in reality engaged the cab appeared with his wife, got in, and was driven off.

Tommy, still of opinion that the cab held Mr. Stocker's property, ran after it out of the station, but it went quicker than he, so that he soon lost sight of it in the blinding snow.

Thus died away his last hope.

He had lost all trace of his kind protectors, and it seemed as if it was impossible to find them again.

How could he gain any news of them in such a vast wilderness as London?

The snow was descending in thick, heavy flakes.

Where could he go for shelter?

In his pocket he had not a cent, and he did not know anyone in the whole metropolis.

With a terrible dread of starvation, or being frozen to death, he leaned against a lamp-post.

Suddenly a policeman came upon him.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, roughly.

"Nothing," replied Tommy.

"Move on."

"I've nowhere to go to. I'm a stranger here, and——"

"Go to the workhouse," interrupted the policeman.

"I don't know where it is."

"Then I ain't going to tell you. All I know is, if you don't get off my beat, I'll have to make you."

With a weary sigh Tommy trudged on in the rapidly deepening snow.

He was so tired that he scarcely could drag one leg after the other, and seeing a door standing half open, he determined to enter and throw himself on the mercy of the inmates.

Over the door was a lamp, and on the door a brass plate, upon which was engraved, "Rev. C. Floyd, Academy for Young Gentlemen."

In the hallway he met an elderly lady, who had no sooner seen him that she began to cry out at the top of her voice:

"Thieves! murder! burglars! help!"

A gentleman of clerical appearance came out of a room, and behind him were a dozen or more boys.

These he waved back with his hand, saying:

"No excitement, if you please, young gentlemen. Stay where you are."

The boys hesitated on the threshold, looking over one another's shoulders, those in the rear standing on tiptoe.

"Now, my dear," commenced the clerical-looking gentleman, who was the Rev. C. Floyd himself, "what is the matter?"

"A stranger in the house," replied Mrs. Floyd.

"Indeed!"

The Rev. C. Floyd adjusted his spectacles, and looked curiously at Tommy.

"My boy!" he exclaimed, "what do you want here at this hour of the evening?"

"If you please, sir," replied Tommy, "I'm a stranger here. I'm lost, and I thought you might allow me to sleep somewhere till morning."

"Have you no home?"

"Not here. I'm from America, and only came up from Liverpool to-day."

"Dear me," said the Rev. C. Floyd. "That is a curious coincidence. My son only arrived yesterday. You say you are from America. Now we will test the accuracy of your story. Perhaps you are an impostor. If so, you will be turned out; if not, you shall receive shelter."

"Thank you, sir," answered Tommy, peeping curiously at the young gentlemen on the threshold.

"Mary, my dear," exclaimed the Rev. C. Floyd, "will you kindly call down our prodigal son, who, I have reason to believe, is smoking a pipe in his bedroom, contrary to my express orders."

Mrs. Floyd, having recovered from her fright at seeing a stranger in the house, went upstairs, and presently returned with a young man.

Tommy's eyes dilated with surprise.

"Charley!" he exclaimed—"Wild Charley! He knows me, sir. We came over in the same ship together."

The young man advanced with a smile, and held out his hand.

"Glad to see you," he said; "I thought you had found a job in Liverpool."—This was said with an expressive wink.—"But how did you find me?"

"Chance," replied Tommy.

Rev. C. Floyd looked from one to the other.

"Do I understand that you two were shipmates?" he asked; "and that you have met here quite accidentally?"

"That's so, father," answered Charley. "Let Tommy come in by the stove and he'll tell you all about it."

CHAPTER XI.

TOMMY IN BUTTONS.

Tommy was invited in, and given a seat. He related his adventures, but owing to a whisper from Wild Charley, did not say anything about the smuggling. They all listened to him with great attention, and admitted that his coming to Mr. Floyd's was very remarkable.

"My young friend," exclaimed Rev. C. Floyd, "your wanderings serve to show that there is a higher power which watches over the most insignificant of us. I will turn no houseless wanderer from my door; nay, I will even offer you employment."

"How can I thank you, sir?" said Tommy, his eyes overflowing with tears.

"By diligence and civility. We have a lad named Bobsey, who cleans the boots and shoes, sees to the fires, brushes the young gentlemen's clothes, and answers the bell, as well as waits at table."

"I'll do that."

"Bobsey is about to leave us. You shall take his place, receive your board and lodging, and half a crown a month. I think, my dear, that Bobsey's livery will fit our young friend."

"Yes; they're about the same size," answered Mrs. Floyd, to whom this remark was addressed.

"Then we will relegate him to the regions below; for though he has traveled with our Charley, their intimacy must cease, and Tommy be taught at the start that we can allow no communication between him and our young gentlemen."

At this, the young gentlemen in question, who were inclined to be priggish and high-toned, turned up their noses and appeared to regard Tommy as one very much beneath them.

"Boy," exclaimed Mrs. Floyd, "go downstairs, and the cook will give you your supper. For to-night you will sleep with Bobsey."

"Thank you, ma'am," replied Tommy.

She conducted him to the top of the kitchen stair, and called down to the cook, saying:

"Susan, this is the new page boy."

"All right, ma'am," answered the cook from the depths below.

Tommy went down and entered a large kitchen in which burned a bright fire. The cook, a good-natured looking woman, sat on one side, and on the other, perched upon a stool, was a lad of sixteen, though his face was old enough to make one think he was twice that age.

"Bobsey," said the cook, "missis says this is the new page boy."

"I knows it," replied Bobsey, with a cheerful air. "Cos vy, I vos a-listenin' at the door all the time they vos a-talkin', and it don't break my 'art. Look at me! Ven I come 'ere I vos fat, now I is that thin my mother thinks of chalkin' my 'ed and lettin' me hout as a billiard cue."

"I'm sure, Bobsey, you 'as plenty to heat and to drink," answered the cook, with a reproachful glance.

"It isn't you I's complaining of, cooky," rejoined Bobsey; "it's the vork. If a cove vants to go for to commit suicide vell, hall he 'as to do is to take a place in a academy for young gentlemen. Sit down, my noble swell from furrin' parts; we hain't a-goin' to heat you, and I don't bear no malice agin' anyone."

Tommy took a seat between the two.

There was a ring at the bell.

"Vot is that bell a-ringing for?" said Bobsey. "They've got a scuttle of coal in the schoolroom; ditto in the parlor; the young gentlemen 'as 'ad their supper, and the ole woman has got some 'ot water for her nightcap."

"What does she want hot water for her nightcap for?" asked Tommy.

"She takes a little gin 'ot before she goes to bed."

"Shall I answer the bell?"

"If you don't, I shan't," replied Bobsey; "as you're engaged, I may consider myself on leave of habsence—eh, cooky?"

"Of course," replied Susan. "Servants have their rights, and who'd blame you, Bobsey?"

"You hadmire my spirit, cooky?"

"Indeed I do."

Bobsey got up and removed a coat he wore, made of blue cloth and ornamented in the front with bright silver-colored buttons.

"Take the badge of servitude!" he exclaimed. "I discard it. Cos vy? Not cos I'm sacked, but I've got a hindependent spirit which vill never be satisfied till the earth of this country runs red with the blood of the haristocrats."

Susan regarded Bobsey with admiration not unmixed with awe.

"Don't he talk beautiful?" she said.

"Yes," answered Tommy.

"'Ow is it in the Hunited States?" inquired Bobsey.

"Very much the same as it is here," replied Tommy; "we've all got to work."

"Hain't you hall masters and no servants?"

"Not exactly. One man considers himself as good as another, but's a mighty hard place for working and finding your level."

The bell rang again.

"Put on the badge," said Bobsey. "I'll take it heasy."

With some difficulty Tommy got into the coat, which was several sizes too small for him, and only by dint of holding his breath could he get the buttons to go into the holes prepared for them.

He felt that if he was compelled to undergo any unusual exertion, the buttons would fly off like bullets from a rifle when the trigger falls.

"Shall I do?" he asked.

"First-rate," replied Bobsey. "You looks a A No. 1 Buttons, and no mistake."

Tommy hastened upstairs to answer the ringing of the bell, which summoned him to the parlor where Mr. and Mrs. Floyd were seated, the young gentlemen being in the schoolroom indulging in half an hour's conversational recreation before prayers, which preceded their retirement to their dormitories.

Entering the parlor, he inquired:

"Did you ring, sir?"

"Ah—h'm," replied the Rev. C. Floyd. "This is very good. He'll do, my dear; I think, though, the coat is a little tight for him. Yes, I did ring. You are putting too much coal on the fire downstairs. It makes our chimney smoke."

"I wish he could stop our chimney; the nasty thing chokes me," remarked Mrs. Floyd.

"I'll see what can be done," answered Tommy.

He went into the kitchen again, but missed a step on the stairs and fell in a heap at the bottom, but without hurting himself.

"Vot's that?" cried Bobsey, coming out.

"I missed my pitch," replied Tommy. "Blame these stairs!"

"No bones broke, eh? and no damage done?"

"Oh, no."

"That's good. Yes, there is, though—you've busted some buttons. I knowed as 'ow you'd bust yer buttons."

Tommy looked at what Bobsey called the "badge," and saw that several buttons were missing.

"They'll have to buy you a new one," said Bobsey, consolingly. "Vell, vot did the old duffer want?"

"His chimney smokes, and they want me to stop it."

Bobsey's eyes twinkled with a delight he could not conceal.

"Oh," he said, "that's an old dodge. Did he tell you what to do?"

"No."

"He left it to me, I suppose. I always had to do it."

"What?"

"You've got to take the hall doormat and get up to the top of the house; there's a trapdoor at the top—get out of that, and put the doormat on the top of the chimney. I'll show you."

"Is that what he calls stopping the chimney?"

"If that won't do it, I want to know what will," replied Bobsey.

"That settles it," said Tommy. "I want to do all I can to please them, as they were kind enough to take me in out of the snow."

"Of course; you're tender hearted. Come along."

Tommy followed Bobsey, who pointed to a heavy mat in the hall, which Tommy slung over his shoulder, and they proceeded to the top of the house, where a step-ladder gave egress to the roof through a trapdoor, which was easily opened.

The chimney was close to the trap, and without any great exertion Tommy managed to place the mat over it, precluding the possibility of any smoke escaping.

When this was done, Bobsey hurried him downstairs again into the kitchen.

"I don't want any gratitude," he remarked, "for putting you up to things and making you know the ways of the 'ouse."

"I'm a thousand times obliged to you," replied Tommy, "for keeping me posted."

"I may help you a hundred different ways, but never you tell anyone who it was done it."

"Not I. What do you take me for?" said Tommy. "I'm no slouch."

The bell of the parlor began to ring again furiously, and Tommy prepared to answer it.

"The old duffer wants to thank you," remarked Bobsey. "If he hoffers to make you a present of 'alf a crown, don't you say no."

CHAPTER XII.

AN ARTISTIC CHIMNEY SWEEPING.

Tommy hastened upstairs, and Bobsey, entering the kitchen, made various pantomimic expressions of delight, such as inflating his cheeks, putting out his tongue, winking one eye and setting his fingers to his nose.

"Oh, my," he cried to the cook, "ain't he soft? I'm glad I ain't going far away from this place, 'cos I can 'ave no end of fun with 'im."

"What you done now?" asked Susan.

"You'll hear the racket, if you listen at the foot of the stairs," replied Bobsey.

They both adjourned to the spot mentioned, and eagerly listened to what was taking place above.

When Tommy entered the Rev. C. Floyd's room he found it full of thick coal smoke, which was pouring in dense volumes from the blocked-up chimney.

The windows were open, and so were the doors, but this only gave a partial relief.

"What on earth is the matter with the chimney?" asked Mr. Floyd.

"I stopped it, sir," replied Tommy.

"How?"

"Put the doormat on the top of it."

"You did, did you? Wait till I catch you!" cried Mr. Floyd. "I'll teach you to play your jokes upon me."

Tommy endeavored to escape, but Mr. Floyd caught him by the ear.

"I've got him," he exclaimed, "now pound him. Thrash him. Punch him. Punch him severely. This will never do. He's worse than Bobsey, and that is saying a great deal."

The Rev. C. Floyd grasped Tommy by the coat collar and shook him so violently that four more buttons dropped off his jacket, which consequently bulged out in front in a very dilapidated and drunken manner, suggestive of having been on a spree, and not having had time to put in the necessary repairs.

"Leave off!" cried Tommy.

"Are you a fool?" said Mr. Floyd.

"I don't know, but it's my opinion you're trying to make me one. Let up—now stop! I want you to stop, or I'll kick your shins. Quit, won't you?"

Mr. Floyd let him go and glared at him.

"Go and take the mat away, and if you play me any more tricks I'll cane you in the presence of the young gentlemen," he exclaimed.

Tommy saw that he had made a mistake and hastened to rectify it by removing the mat, which being done, the smoke ascended smoothly, though the wind forced an occasional puff the wrong way.

The wrath of Mr. Floyd became mollified, and when Tommy returned he talked to him calmly, and as became a minister and a schoolmaster.

Bobsey, however, was not satisfied with the result of the evening's entertainment.

He caught up the kitchen cat, a fine tabby, which was snoring peacefully on the hearth.

"My gracious!" asked the cook, "what are you going to do?"

"The guvnor's too mean to have his chimney swept, and I'm going to do it for him."

"With what?"

"With my new patent," answered Bobsey, grinning. "I shall drop this cat down the flue and pelt her with tiles to make her hurry down. She'll come out in the parlor looking splendid, and the fire won't do more than singe her fur."

"Oh, you cruel wretch! I'll tell on you."

"You will, eh?" said Bobsey, gravely. "If you do anything so rash I'll come to your bedside in the night and cut all your hair off so short you'll have to wear a wig."

"A wig!" repeated Susan, horrified at the mere thought of such a terror.

"You stop here, Susan, and don't never 'oller about me," said Bobsey, imperiously.

Calling the cat such pet names as "poor tabby" and "good old Tom," he conveyed it to the roof.

He was as good as his word.

The cat was thrown down the chimney, and in spite of its claws, forced to descend.

Tremendous quantities of soot were dislodged in the foul chimney by its struggles, and shot down with great velocity.

Never was a chimney more artistically or more cleanly swept.

The Rev. C. Floyd was indulging in a little lecture, which he thought would do Tommy good.

"This, my friend," he was saying, "is the land of freedom and intelligence. You must not allow yourself to get behind the age. Keep pace with the times. There are people who would stifle education—who would throw a dense pall of black ignorance over the country, and——"

At this moment a terrific avalanche of soot fell down, covering those in front of the fire.

It flew all over the room, settling on the table, books and carpet nearly an inch thick.

Mr. and Mrs. Floyd and Tommy, as soon as they could get their eyes open, looked at one another in blank dismay.

They were as black as negroes, and began to sneeze and cough as if they had suddenly caught cold.

"Dear me," said Mr. Floyd, retreating to the door.

"What in the world is it?" exclaimed Mrs. Floyd, following him.

Down came another cloud of soot, which struck Tommy full in the face.

Mr. Floyd opened the door and called for help.

Suddenly a dark object darted down the chimney, surrounded with soot, and uttering a fiendish scream as its feet touched the coals, dashed across the room, made one spring for the window, leaped into the street and was seen no more.

"The devil!" muttered Mr. Floyd.

"Heaven defend us!" said his wife.

The young gentlemen came out of the schoolroom, and seeing these black, unearthly looking objects before them, hastily retreated.

Mr. Floyd looked toward the staircase.

He saw Bobsey coming down, and a suspicion at once crowded his mind.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Nowhere," replied Bobsey.

"What was it you put down the chimney?"

"Vell, then, 'ere's a go?" said Bobsey, assuming an air of injured innocence. "'Cos I'm going to leave your hemploy, I'm not to be accused of everything. Oh! no—not much. I ain't a nigger slave."

"I'll send for a policeman," cried Mr. Floyd.

"Send for a dozen," said Bobsey, who retreated to the kitchen.

Mr. Floyd's anger was now at its height.

He seized Tommy and dragged him into the schoolroom.

"You're in the plot," he exclaimed, "and I'll cane you. Bend your back, sir, and touch your toes with your fingers." At the same time he took a cane from his desk.

"I won't," answered Tommy, resolutely.

The Rev. C. Floyd looked perfectly diabolical with his black face and hands, while Tommy resembled one of the attendant imps.

All the young gentlemen were highly amused, but the discipline of the academy was so strict that they did not dare to laugh.

Finding that Tommy would not submit to the cane, the reverend gentleman endeavored to strike him where he stood.

The boy, however, dived between his legs, throwing him on his face, and ran away to the kitchen, where the cook considerately washed his face and hands, and sewed the buttons on his coat.

"Now," exclaimed Bobsey, "you look less like a Heast Hindian, and more of a Christian. Warn't it a lark? Oh! crickey, didn't I split with laughing ven I saw old Floyd near smothered with soot!"

"I'm afraid he'll be down on me for it," said Tommy.

"Never mind, you and me's friends, and if you get the dirty kick out, I'll see hafter you."

"Will you, indeed?"

"Vill I? I promise that you shan't want as long as I've got a shilling to whack up, if it's only to spite the old man," replied Bobsey.

All at once Mrs. Floyd's voice was heard calling:

"Fire! Fire!"

"Bless us and save us!" cried the cook.

"Vot's up now?" said Bobsey.

He ran upstairs to examine, and came back with the intelligence that the parlor was on fire.

"I think," he remarked, "that the cat coming from the fire must have caught a live coal and dropped it in the window curtain, for the front of the room's a-blazin' away like mad."

"Won't you help put it out?" said Tommy.

"Not I. Vy should I? The engine'll be here as soon as the peeler on the beat sees the flames, and I'm goin' out into the street to see the fun. Come on, Yankee."

"All right, Johnny Bull," replied Tommy.

The house was now all excitement. The young gentlemen ran about with water jugs, making feeble efforts to put out the fire.

Mrs. Floyd fainted and was carried out in the snow, while her husband, with a small garden syringe, squirted at the flames, which were increasing in fury and intensity every moment.

Wild Charley was the only one who had any sense.

He put on his hat and ran to the engine house, which was fortunately in the next street, and gave the alarm.

Bobsey, with Tommy by his side, formed one of a rapidly increasing crowd that lined the pavement opposite.

He enjoyed the fire as only boys can, and when the flames darted out of the parlor windows, took off his cap, waved it, and cried:

"Hooray!"

Tommy was much concerned at the state of affairs, for he saw a prospect of losing the new home that he had so recently acquired.

By and by the engine came snorting and panting up to the scene of the fire. People all up and down the street were aroused.

The firemen got at the hydrant and fastened the hose, and soon two streams of water were playing on the flames.

"Go it, boys! pump on her!" exclaimed Bobsey, wild with excitement. "Let her have it. 'Ere's a jolly spree!"

The water descended in streams on the flames, but for some time did not appear to take any effect.

All this time the feathery snow descended pitilessly.

CHAPTER XIII.

TOMMY FINDS A FRIEND IN BOBSEY.

In spite of the efforts of the firemen, the flames, aided by a strong northerly wind which had suddenly sprung up, increased in volume and intensity.

The Rev. Mr. Floyd began to recognize the fact that his house would eventually succumb to the flames, and he remembered that he had a box containing money and valuable papers in the room in which he slept.

Calling his son, he exclaimed:

"Charles, I am ruined if I cannot save my private box. What am I to do?"

Wild Charley surveyed the situation, and concluded that, though hazardous in the extreme, an attempt might be made to enter the burning house.

"Where is the box?" was Charley's only question.

"Under the bed in my room. But, for Heaven's sake, do not be rash."

Wild Charley said nothing more. He ran past the firemen and gained the front door, regardless of cries to stop which arose from many throats.

The staircase was on fire, but he dashed through the flames, which licked his body as if they had him in deathly embrace, and was soon lost to sight.

Suddenly a tremendous shout arose. Standing on the roof of the house was perceived the figure of Charley, who held a box under his arm. So far his desperate enterprise had been successful, but he knew not how to regain the street, as the burning of the staircase had cut off all retreat.

The firemen now raised their ladder-like apparatus against the side of the flaming house, and Charley commenced his descent, but when about halfway down, the crowd saw him disappear.

The roof had given way.

Wild Charley was precipitated into the midst of the flames, and everyone was convinced that he was beyond help now.

Mr. and Mrs. Floyd and the young gentlemen were taken into the house of a sympathizing neighbor, where the grief of the schoolmaster and his wife had full vent in private. Their sorrow for the loss of their son was overwhelming.

Nobody bestowed any attention upon Tommy and Bobsey, who watched the efforts of the firemen until they had conquered the flames.

When the gray dawn of morning broke upon the snow-clad scene, the engines were playing upon a smoking, smoldering mass of charred and blackened fragments, under which lay the burned body of Wild Charley.

"What'll we do now?" asked Tommy.

"I told you," replied Bobsey, "as 'ow I'd got another place at Dr. Slasher's, and he'll 'ave to take you, too."

"I guess he won't want two boys; but I'll come for nothing, only my board."

"He's standing at his door now," said Bobsey. "I'll go and speak to 'im about you."

Tommy waited impatiently while his friend went to make an application on his behalf to Dr. Slasher.

The doctor was quite a character in his way. Being moderately well off, he was not dependent on his practice for a living. He had served in the war and lost a leg, which he had replaced by a cork one, with a stick at the end of it instead of a boot.

He was hot-tempered and impulsive, and fond of using the expression, "Never in the wide, wide world," if he had made up his mind not to do a particular thing.

When Bobsey approached him he was smoking a cigar.

"This 'as been somethin' of a fire, sir," exclaimed Bobsey, "and I'm burnt hout. Will you take me in as you promised?"

"Certainly," replied Dr. Slasher. "When I make a promise I keep it. You shall be my errand boy—take out the medicines and make yourself generally useful."

"Thank you doctor," said Bobsey, "I'm much hobliged, and shall be still more so if you'll help a frien' of mine."

"Who is he?"

"Stranger in this country. Was engaged by Mr. Floyd, but now he's hout of work 'cos of the fire. He'll 'ave to starve, and you wouldn't like to see him do that."

"Never in the wide," answered the good-natured doctor. "He shall attend to my surgery. I'll teach him to mix potions and roll pills."

"That's hall he wants," said Bobsey. "Can we go and pitch hour tents in the kitchen till morning, sir?"

"Go right in," said Dr. Slasher. "I'm about to go to bed myself. It's no use waiting up any longer. This is the most disappointing fire I ever witnessed. My professional skill has not once been called into requisition."

"Wild Charley's burnt hup, sir."

"Well, the young scamp deserved it, and I guess they won't put him to sweeping snow where he's gone to. Now you and your friend can sleep by the stove in the kitchen, but I shall want you up in the morning. You'll have to work, or I'll know the reason why."

Bobsey promised acquiescence, and ran away, to make Tommy acquainted with the welcome news.

"Hi've got you hon," he exclaimed.

"How can I thank you?" replied Tommy. "This will save me from an awful lot of misery. It's dreadful to be in a foreign country without money or friends."

The doctor had retired, leaving the door open for them, and the two boys entered the house, making themselves comfortable in the kitchen.

Next day they were given a room to themselves, and their duties were mapped out for them.

Dr. Slasher was not a married man, and his home was kept by an elderly lady who might in years gone by have been called good-looking, but who had long, long ago lost all pretensions to beauty. Her name was Miss Minks, and she was cook and housekeeper all in one.

For some days all went on smoothly at the doctor's.

It was quite a week before Tommy was allowed an opportunity for exercising his remarkable powers for doing things as they ought not to be done.

Dr. Slasher had been invited to dine at a neighbor's house, but having a patient to attend he could not go.

Walking into the surgery where Tommy was rolling pills, he said:

"Go to Mrs. Jones at 99 in this street, and say with my compliments that I can't dine with her to-day, though there is nothing I should like better, as I don't expect I shall get much to eat at home."

As Tommy walked up the street he conceived a great idea. His master could not go out to dinner, but evidently wanted something to eat. It should be his business to see that this was attended to.

When he arrived at Mrs. Jones', he asked to see that lady, and was ushered into the hall, where she came in full-dress.

"Doc's compliments, ma'am!" he exclaimed, "and he can't come to dine, but he'd like something to eat, so if you'll put the grub in a basket, I'll take it home for him."

"Oh, eh! yes," replied Mrs. Jones, in some confusion. "Wait here and I'll attend to it."

She knew that Dr. Slasher was an eccentric character, and thought that he might have sent for something to eat, though it was an extraordinary thing for a gentleman to do; so she had the cook put up a basketful of good things with which Tommy returned to the house in triumph.

The doctor was just going out, and had his hat and coat on.

"Did you give my message to Mrs. Jones?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, and as you couldn't go yourself, I got her to give me your dinner in a basket."

"You did what!" thundered the doctor.

"Got your dinner, sir; here it is," replied Tommy, opening the lid of the basket and displaying the contents.

"Are you a fool, or what are you?" vociferated the doctor.

"I don't know," responded Tommy, sulkily. "It seems as if I never can do anything right."

"Now, my boy," said the doctor, "you'll take this half-crown, and you'll go to a florist's to buy a bouquet of flowers. Having purchased the article, you will take it to Mrs. Jones, with my compliments, and explain that the dinner was your mistake."

"Yes, sir."

"If you make any blunder about it this time. I'll put leeches on you to suck your blood."

Tommy had to walk some distance to reach a florist's, and when he did, he found the man had only one bouquet left.

"How much for this?" he asked.

"Two and-six," replied the man; and Tommy, throwing down the half-crown, took up the bouquet, which was very pretty and tastefully arranged.

Going at once to Mrs. Jones', he was fortunate enough to find that the lady had just quitted the dinner table, and she saw him in the hall.

"How did Dr. Slasher like what I sent him?" she asked, with a smile.

"First-class, ma'am," replied Tommy, "only it was a mistake of mine, and I've brought you a bokay from the doctor."

"I'm sure I feel very much obliged to the doctor, and you are a very good boy," she exclaimed, much gratified at the present. "Here's a shilling for you."

This was intended as a gratuity for Tommy, but he thought she wanted to pay for the flowers, and that it was his duty to take the money back to his employer.

"Please, ma'am, that ain't enough," he remarked.

"Why not?"

"It cost two-and-six. I want a shilling and sixpence more."

CHAPTER XIV.

A DOSE FOR THE DOCTOR.

A look of displeasure crossed Mrs. Jones' face, but she handed Tommy the money.

"Get out of the house," she said, "and tell Dr. Slasher that I don't understand this conduct at all. He's no gentleman."

"I'll tell him, ma'am," answered Tommy, who was getting bewildered again, and away he posted home.

"Did you make that all right?" he asked.

"You can bet I did," answered Tommy, with a triumphant smile. "I'm the hunky-dory boy who can fix things."

"Well, what did she say?"

"She handed me a shilling for the flowers, which cost two-and-six, but I wasn't going to be beat that way."

"What?"

"She couldn't play that on me, sir, and I made her dub up the other eighteen pence, and she told me to get out of the house, and let you know that you were no gentleman. You see, she was mad because I tumbled to her little game."

The doctor's eyes flashed fire, and his cork leg seemed to quiver with indignation.

"You rascal!" he exclaimed. "Do you want to ruin me? Have you no knowledge of the usages of good society? Does a gentleman ever expect a lady to pay for the presents he makes her?"

"I did my best, sir."

"Did your worst, you mean. Sit in that chair while I get the leeches."

Tommy sank into the chair, and Dr. Slasher tied a piece of rope round him, which rendered it impossible for him to move.

In a glass vase were kept the leeches, a couple of which the doctor took out, putting one on each of the boy's cheeks.

Their clammy feel caused a thrill of horror to run through his frame, which increased when he felt a puncture of the skin.

The leeches were at their work, and drinking his blood.

"Oh, sir, take them off!" he screamed. "They'll kill me! They'll drain me dry, and I shall go about like a walking skeleton."

"They like boys' blood," the doctor remarked. "It seems to agree with them."

"Oh, sir, please, sir, take the beastly things away," pleaded Tommy.

The doctor was determined, and Tommy's pleadings did not move him in the least, so the leeches continued to suck until they were thoroughly gorged, when they dropped off and were carefully replaced in their vases.

"Now," said the doctor, "I shall expect you to be a smarter boy after this, for I have been at considerable pains to extract the bad blood from you."

Tommy was untied, and rubbing his cheeks, ran downstairs to find Bobsey, and get him to condole with him.

He found Bobsey sitting by the stove, all by himself. There was no other servant, as Miss Minks did all the work.

"What's up?" inquired Bobsey.

Tommy related what had happened.

"Oh, my heyes!" said Bobsey, "ain't that a shame! I never 'eard of such a rig as that."

"I'll be revenged."

"What'll yer do?"

"There's a big auger in the cellar, and I'll bore holes in the surgery floor, so that old Slasher will stick his leg in one. I'll have a big stone in the room underneath, and I'll fasten the stone to his leg so he can't move. That'll be bully."

"First-rate," replied Bobsey.

"Then," continued Tommy, warming with his subject, "I'll get a lancet and stab him all over. I'll physic him with a dose of salts and——"

"'Old on," interrupted Bobsey. "S'pose he takes and sacks you?"

"I won't let him loose till he promises to forgive me."

"You'll do, young one," Bobsey said. "I don't want to offend you."

Tommy was as good as his word, for he worked hard that night with the auger, and made at least a dozen holes in various parts of the surgery floor.

The next day Dr. Slasher had occasion to find fault with Tommy, who was not making the pills the proper shape.

"You've got the mold," said the doctor, "why don't you turn them out properly?"

"If you don't like my way, do it yourself," replied Tommy.

"What!" cried the doctor; "getting impudent, are you? I'll have to give you a dose of salts and senna, young man."

"If you catch me."

"That won't give me much trouble," replied Dr. Slasher, who proceeded to fill a glass with a nauseous-looking fluid.

When the dose was ready he called to Tommy to come and drink it.

"Not much," said Tommy.

"I order you to take it, and if you don't, I'll make you."

"You've got to spell able," was Tommy's reply, as he moved toward the door.

The doctor tried to intercept him, but as the boy had reckoned, he stuck his wooden leg into one of the holes, and was held fast.

Putting his finger to his nose, in token of derision, Tommy ran below and securely fastened the large stone to the end of the wooden leg.

"Now I've got him hard and fast," said Tommy to himself.

In vain the doctor tried to extricate himself; he was, as it were, rooted to the spot.

Returning to the room, Tommy seized the glass containing the salts and senna.

"Drink this," he ordered.

"I won't. Am I to be dictated to by a boy?" replied the doctor. "What on earth is the matter with my leg?"

"I've made it fast below. It's anchored."

"You scoundrel! I'll have you arrested. I'll give you six months. Go and undo my leg."

"Not yet. You've got to take your medicine. Your blood wants cooling off. I'll give you some leeches presently."

Tommy held the medicine to the doctor's lips, and forced him to drink the contents, which very soon had a griping effect.

"Oh!" he cried, putting his hands to his vest, "this is awful!"

"Will you ever put leeches on me again?" said Tommy.

"Never in the wide world. Let me go, there's a good boy. I'll make you a handsome present. I will indeed."

"Do you forgive me, and promise never to say a word about this?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then I'll undo the stone, but jest mind how you attack a poor boy another time. I'm my own best friend, if I am alone in a strange country."

"I'll be a father to you, Tommy."

"Yes, you will, over the left; but I'll let up on you this time, boss," said Tommy, who went downstairs and untied the stone.

Aided by Bobsey, he pulled the doctor out of the unpleasant predicament in which he was placed, and set him down on a chair.

After a while the doctor said:

"Here's sixpence for you both. Run up to Mr. Garretson's with this medicine, and let me know how he is."

On arriving at Mr. Garretson's house, they were informed that the gentleman in question was dead.

"Could we see him, miss?" inquired Bobsey.

"The corpse is in that room on the left," replied the girl, pointing to a door. "You can go in, but I can't stay, as I've got my work to do downstairs."

The two boys entered the room where the dead body of Mr. Garretson was lying. He was a little man, about seventy, and had died of some internal complaint, which had defied the skill of his physician.

"The guv'ner would like to have that specimen," said Tommy.

"Yes," replied Bobsey. "I heard him say he'd give something for the body, to make a hexamination of it, but he didn't think as how the family would stand it."

"Let's wrap it up in a blanket, and take it down the road."

"What for?"

"So that the old man may have a show at it."

"Hi'm hagreeable," answered Bobsey, "only there'll be a jolly row about it, I hexpect."

The idea was no sooner conceived than executed.

Rolling a blanket round the body, the boys carried it out of the house without being perceived, and proceeded to the doctor's with their remarkable burden.

They had not been gone long when the only son of Mr. Garretson, who had been telegraphed for, arrived in a cab.

Sally opened the door, and recognizing him, at once said:

"He's gone at last, sir."

"So mother says in the dispatch. Where is mother now?"

"She's feeling bad, upstairs, sir."

"Then I won't disturb her at present. I'll take a look at it."

By "it" the son meant the corpse.

"It's in here, sir," said Sally, opening the door of the room, which the boys had so lately robbed of its contents.

"I don't see anything," remarked the son.

"Well, I never did! It was there just now!" cried Sally, in alarm.

Young Garretson looked sternly at her.

"There is something wrong about this!" he exclaimed; "explain it."

Sally began to cry, and put the corner of her apron to her eyes.

"Wretched girl!" he continued, shaking her arm, "what have you done with my father's body?"

"I ain't done nothing; but"—her face brightened—"it might have been those two young varmints."

"What two young varmints?"

"Them as come from the doctor."

"Dr. Slasher's boys?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have they been here?"

"A few minutes ago. I let them in to see the deceased, and I'll swear the corpse was all right then."

"Ha!" exclaimed the young man, "I see it all. This is an infamous plot on the part of the doctor to obtain the body of my esteemed and venerable parent for the purpose of dissection, but I'll frustrate it. Rouse the neighbors!"

Young Garretson himself ran into the street, and was fortunate enough to meet with a policeman, to whom he related his suspicions.

A crowd soon collected, and the news that the doctor had been stealing a body spread with great rapidity.

Tommy and Bobsey managed to reach the house without molestation, entered by the surgery door, and saw Dr. Slasher looking over the pages of a medical book.

"Well," said the doctor, "how is Mr. Garretson?"

"He's come to answer for himself," replied Tommy.

"Indeed! I wasn't aware that he would ever again be able to leave his bed," said the doctor, in astonishment.

"'Ere he is!" cried Bobsey, undoing the blanket.

"Why, what in the wide world is this?" asked the doctor, viewing the ghastly corpse.

"We thought you wanted it, sir, and brought it along without anyone seeing it," said Tommy.

"Dear me! This is a very complicated case, and I should like to anatomize it extremely, but the people are so prejudiced—I may say ignorant—that I am almost afraid you have done wrong."

"We can take it back when you're through with it, sir."

"I have a good mind to risk it."

Dr. Slasher eyed the corpse with an affectionate air.

Suddenly there was a noise in the street.

"What is all that?" he said, going to the window and looking out.

The uproar increased, and loud cries were raised, the doctor's name being easily distinguishable amid groans and hisses.

"They have found it out. The neighborhood is roused. The street is alive with people. I'm ruined!" exclaimed the doctor.

Bobsey and Tommy looked blankly at one another. No one spoke.

If the doctor was caught with the evidence of his guilt on the table before him, the people would believe him to be a body snatcher, and perhaps handle him roughly.

Tommy had made one of his charming blunders again. But an idea struck him.

"I'd know what I'd do, sir," he said.

"What?" eagerly demanded the doctor.

"I'd put the body in Miss Minks' bed."

"Happy thought; she's downstairs, and will suspect nothing. We'll do it," said the doctor.

"Good hagain! Brayvo for hour side! Who says we can't do it?" cried Bobsey.

"Hurry!" said the doctor. "They'll never think of looking in her bed for it, and at nighttime, when all is still, we'll get the body back to its own house."

Miss Minks slept on the floor where the surgery was, and all the boys had to do was to carry the body across the hall, from one room to the other.

They deposited it in the bed of the maiden lady, and covered it up carefully.

"All right?" asked the doctor, as they returned.

"Fixed it all up A 1," replied Tommy.

A heavy ringing was now heard at the surgery bell, and Miss Minks, proceeding from the lower regions, answered it.

Mr. Garretson, accompanied by the policeman and followed by an indignant crowd, appeared on the steps.

"What is your pleasure, gentlemen?" she asked.

"Where's Dr. Slasher?" asked the young man.

"In his surgery, where he will be pleased to see you, if you will step in," she replied.

"I will do so," returned Mr. Garretson.

The policeman kept back the surging crowd, and the young man in search of a father entered the doctor's surgery, where he was apparently calmly reading, the boys being engaged in compounding various medicines, and working away as if their lives depended upon their exertions.

CHAPTER XV.

A HASTY TRIP.

We must now bestow some attention upon Mr. Smithers and his family, whom we have left in the background since Tommy took his trip to Liverpool.

When Charley Barker stepped down the gangway, in obedience to the summons of the bell which ordered all on shore, he did not doubt that Tommy was following him.

But when the communication between the steamer and the dock was shut off he began to look curiously around him, for nothing whatever was to be seen of his friend.

The ship slowly left her dock, and Charley Barker became aware of the fact that, for some reason altogether unknown to him, Tommy had not left with the other friends of the passengers.

Satisfied with this conviction, he returned quickly to his father's, and having reported the safe bestowal of the coffin, hurried to Mr. Smithers' house and communicated the facts of the case.

"Silly boy!" cried Mrs. Smithers. "He is always doing something stupid."

"Well, ma'am, all the boys say he's a little soft."

"I am in hopes he will grow out of that," said his mother. "But tell me, Charley, do you think he'll come to any harm?"

"I guess not, ma'am. They'll make him work, that's all, and the American consul at Liverpool is bound to send him back."

Charley Barker now retired, and the unhappy mother tried to comfort herself with the reflection that the boy was on board an English ship, bound to a well-known port, and among officers who would be kind to the poor waif whom an accident had cast among them.

But her troubles were not over for that day.

To her surprise, a few minutes after Charley Barker had taken his departure, Mr. Smithers entered the room, which was a very unusual occurrence for him, as he usually did not make his appearance until business at the store was over.

Throwing himself into a chair, he glanced at his wife, and remarked that there were traces of silent tears in her eyes and on her cheeks.

"Crying again!" he exclaimed, petulantly. "I never saw such a woman. You're always sniveling at something or another."

"Tommy's gone," she replied, bursting out weeping again.

"A good job, too. Where's he flitted to?"

"He went on board an ocean steamer with Charley Barker, and through his carelessness or stupidity, did not go ashore with the others, and was carried along."

"That boy's little better than a born idiot!" exclaimed Mr. Smithers, unfeelingly.

"I'm sure he isn't that," replied the mother, checking her tears.

"I tell you he's the fool of the family, and I'm glad to be rid of him. He'll fall on his legs—all these half-witted ones do—so dismiss that from your mind, while I tell you a bit of real trouble."

She looked at him strangely. There was that in his bloodshot eyes, his haggard appearance and somewhat disordered dress which induced her to think that something very unusual had happened. Nor was she mistaken.

"Maria," he said, "I'm ruined; don't start or go into hysterics, because there is no time for that. I didn't come home in the middle of the day to lay off. I'm here to arrange for our immediate flight."

"Flight!" she stammered. "Where? how? what do you mean? What have you done?"

"Embezzled my employer's money!"

This reply completely took Mrs. Smithers' breath away, for the communication was totally unexpected. In the shock which this announcement caused her Tommy's disappearance was quite forgotten.

"Maria," continued the wretched man, "I scarcely know how to act. You must help me in this crisis."

"Have you been discovered?" she asked.

"I know not. This morning one of the partners asked me for my books, which he wished to put into an accountant's hands. His suspicions are aroused. My salary was only two thousand dollars a year and I have been spending double. Even now the detectives may be after me."

"It is horrible!" said his wife, covering her face with her hands.

"There is no safety unless we flee," continued Smithers. "I have collected a debt due the firm, on my way home, to have money enough to go to the West. Let us pack up what is really necessary for ourselves and the children. To-night at five there is an express train to Omaha. Will you go?"

"I will," answered Mrs. Smithers.

"That is settled!" he exclaimed, with a sigh of relief, and kissing her affectionately, he added:

"You are ever good to me, Maria."

"I am only returning the love you have always shown me," she rejoined.

"Get everything in readiness," he continued, "and I will be here with a coach as the shades of night are falling. Heaven grant I may not be too late."

Mrs. Smithers watched him depart, and then went about her work like one in a dream, ransacking drawers and hastily packing up those things that she deemed would be of the greatest use to them. While she was thus occupied the children came in, and regarded her with astonishment.

"Mamma!" exclaimed Alice, "what are you doing?"

"My dear children," answered Mrs. Smithers, "circumstances have occurred which render it necessary for your father to leave Jersey City at once."

"Leave!" said Harold. "Where are we going to?"

"West. That is all I can tell you at present. Let it be sufficient for you that a great calamity has befallen us."

She did not explain matters, as she wished to conceal her husband's shame from his children.

"I don't believe it," said Harold, rudely.

"Nor I," replied Alice, in the habitual tone of disrespect which she adopted when speaking to her mother.

"It's some dodge," continued Harold. "Charley Barker has just told us about Tommy's going over to Europe, and I guess you want to steal all you can and follow him."

"Harold! Alice!" she said. "I would have spared you the pain of what I am going to tell you. It's only your wicked and undutiful conduct that forces it from me."

"Oh, yes!" replied Harold, satirically, "you care a great deal for us, we know that."

"A nice life we should have if it hadn't been for papa," chimed in Alice.

"Will you listen to me?" pleaded Mrs. Smithers, who, unaccustomed to exact obedience from the wayward children, did not know how to appease their spite and anger.

"Go on, we're listening," answered Harold.

"Your papa has been stealing the money from his employers. They have asked for his books, which are being examined by an accountant, and we do not know from one hour to another when the police will be here."

The children looked blankly at one another.

This was a revelation which they had been far from expecting, as their belief in their father's high standing and honor was so great that it would have survived anything but such a rude shock as this.

"In about an hour's time," Mrs. Smithers went on, "your father will be here with a coach, and we start for Omaha. Where we shall go from there I can't tell, but if you are wise you will help me to pack and make the best of this misfortune instead of grumbling any more."

Harold and Alice now hung down their heads for shame, and did not utter another remark to their mother, though they conversed together in a low tone.

At five o'clock everything was ready, and when the coach drove up the trunks were put outside and the family occupied the interior.

They proceeded to the railway depot, all being silent and anxious.

Smithers had been obliged to sacrifice his furniture for a small sum to a neighbor whom he could trust, and with all his worldly wealth in his pocket, amounting to about a thousand dollars, he started for that part of the American Continent known as the West.

Omaha was reached without any interference on the part of the telegraph, which seemed to indicate that if his employers had actually discovered his guilt, they either did not intend to prosecute him or could not discover where he had gone.

Three days were spent in Omaha, during which time Smithers made up his mind, according to information he had received, to locate in Silver City, a rising mining town in Nevada.

The distance between Silver City and the nearest railroad station was fifty miles or thereabouts.

When about halfway toward Silver City they met a man on horseback, riding at speed. He had lost his hat, and appeared to be in the utmost haste to leave some person or persons behind.

Seeing the approaching wagon, he drew rein, and Smithers stopped to talk to him, hoping to gain some information as to the state of the road and general condition of the country.

It had been hinted to him in more than one quarter that a band of lawless depredators occupied a valley or pass in the hills known as Dead Snake Canyon.

CHAPTER XVI.

OUT WEST.

As the stranger approached Smithers had an opportunity of observing that he was about the middle age, bronzed by exposure to the weather, and attired as befitted a raiser of stock or a farmer.

"Good-day," exclaimed Smithers. "What's the good word?"

"Good-day to you, stranger," answered the horseman. "I've nothing that I'd like to tell you, but whether it scares you or not, I reckon it's my duty to put you on your guard."

"Against what?"

"A thieving son of a gun who keeps in Dead Snake Canyon, which isn't more than three miles ahead of you."

"Is he a robber?"

"You bet he is," was the answer. "Though I didn't think he'd rob me, as I'm one of the boys myself. There isn't a man this side of the Rocky Mountains who doesn't know Joe Brady, the gambler."

"But, Mr. Brady," exclaimed Smithers, "did he try to stop you?"

"All he knew. He and two others must have heard that I was leaving Silver for Virginia City, and had considerable money about me, for they rode out from behind a bluff and commenced shooting free."

"And you escaped?"

"I did. A bullet carried off my hat, but I turned in the saddle, dropped one man, killed another's horse and the third turned tail and fled."

"Is it possible?" gasped Smithers.

"Then I made the running at a two-twenty pace, you bet, for I thought there might be more of them, and I never drew rein till I saw you in the distance."

Mrs. Smithers regarded her husband blankly, and the trepidation which this news caused the whole party to feel was written in their faces, Alice and Harold becoming particularly pale.

"Can the sheriff and his posse do nothing in the premises?" inquired Smithers.

"I guess neither the sheriff, nor the selectmen, nor the vigilance committee care to attend to business which is so far from them."

"Do they know of it?"

"Indeed they do. This fellow—Capt. Jordan, as he calls himself—has infested Dead Snake Canyon for a week or more, and has stopped a dozen travelers; but he may stop

a dozen more before he gets up the dander of the Silver citizens. I was told of him, and that's what made me take the disguise of an honest farmer."

"Perhaps they'll stop us," said Mrs. Smithers.

"That's a dead sure thing," answered Brady.

"Is there no other road, sir, that we could take to avoid this desperado?" asked Smithers.

"None that I know of."

"What will we do?" said Smithers, with a groan of despair.

"Put your money in your boots and appeal to the fellow's generosity to let you go on with your stores. Maybe he'll be after playing at higher game than robbing a poor emigrant."

"Some of those men," remarked Smithers, "are said to have some generosity."

"Oh, yes!" answered Joe Brady. "There was a fellow that practiced in California, who would never rob a woman."

"Is it any use showing fight?" inquired Smithers, displaying a new rifle and a brace of pistols.

"If you want your brains blown out on the prairie. No, no," answered Brady. "Don't anger them. You're not strong enough. Who knows how many there may be in the gang. What can one man do. Think of your wife and children, and if you can't save your property, at least try to preserve your life for their sake. And now, good-day and good luck to you," cried Joe Brady.

"The same to you," answered Smithers.

"Remember, I warned you."

"I'm not likely to forget."

The stranger made an inclination of the head to Mr. Smithers, and putting spurs to his horse, was soon out of sight.

Smithers put the team in motion again, and the oxen labored along over the rough, uneven road.

He had traversed two-thirds of the Dead Snake Canyon without meeting with any human being, and was congratulating himself upon his escape from Capt. Jordan.

But his congratulations were premature.

The canyon narrowed toward the extreme end, and certain cavernous fissures in the rocks on the left-hand side seemed to indicate a sure and safe hiding place for marauders.

A huge mass of rock lay directly in the path. It appeared as if it had been detached from the parent basalt by some tremendous convulsion of nature.

Finding it necessary to make a slight detour to avoid the obstacle, Smithers turned the heads of the oxen.

Scarcely had he turned a dozen yards before two men on foot stepped out from behind the rock. This had been their hiding place.

Crape masks covered their faces, and served effectually to conceal their features.

The foremost, who appeared to be the leader, exclaimed, in a commanding voice:

"Halt!"

Smithers, who was by no means a brave man, trembled in every limb.

Both men were armed with pistols, which, as if to increase the man's terror, they leveled at his head, and with such an accuracy of aim that he could see by the direction of the muzzle that he was completely covered.

Mr. Smithers halted the oxen, Mrs. Smithers and the children crouched down in the wagon and furtively watched the actions of the robbers.

"Hold up your arms!" commanded the captain.

Smithers did as he was directed, and extended his arms in the air.

"Where are you from, and what have you got?" was the next question.

"From Jersey City, and last from Omaha," replied Smithers. "I have a few stores in the wagon, and very little money. It is all I have to keep my wife and two children. Gentlemen, for pity's sake, don't deprive us of our only means of gaining a livelihood!"

"Oh, drop on yourself!" answered the captain, impatiently. "Play light! What are you? —a ranting preacher?"

"I was a dry-goods clerk, sir."

"What made you quit Jersey City? No lies now!"

"I—I robbed my employers, sir, and had to leave," replied Smithers, in some confusion.

The other laughed.

"That's a good joke!" he exclaimed. "You steal all you can lay your hands on, and then object to being robbed in your turn. Turn and turn about's a square deal, you know."

He advanced to the wagon.

"Get out of there! Hurry up!" he commanded.

The children hastened to comply with this order, for the man's appearance was so fierce, and the tone of his voice so brutal, that they were afraid he would shoot them without mercy.

Mrs. Smithers was the last to alight.

The captain extended his hand to assist her, but started back as soon as he beheld her face.

"Je-rusalem!" he muttered.

She stood before him calmly, and said, in a voice that trembled with emotion:

"Pray spare us, sir! We are very poor, and——"

"Stop that chinning!" cried the man, in a voice somewhat gruffer, if possible, than that he had formerly employed, and which afforded a presumption that he was striving to disguise it.

She was silent instantly.

"Ben," said the captain, "take this woman away and place her—you know where. I'll attend to the bloke and the kids."

Mrs. Smithers shrunk to the side of her husband, as if to demand that protection which she nevertheless knew he could not afford to give her.

Smithers, however, ventured to lower one of his arms, which he put around her waist.

Scarcely had he done so than a bullet whizzed over his head.

"What did I tell you?" cried the captain. "Up with that hand!"

He was fain to do as he was told, and the hand was removed from his wife's waist, to point once more toward the sky.

Ben, as the captain had called his companion, now seized Mrs. Smithers by the arm.

She resisted his attention, and uttered scream after scream; but her strength was unavailing to cope with the superior force of the ruffian, and she was gradually dragged from the spot toward one of the cavernous recesses formed in the rocks to which we have previously alluded.

When she had finally disappeared from view, the captain turned his gaze upon Smithers.

"Are these two all your children?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Smithers. "That is, my wife had a child by a former husband, a sort of vagabond fellow, and——"

"What do you say?" cried the captain, his eyes flashing angrily through his mask.

"I beg your pardon, sir, if he is any friend of yours; but the man pretended to be dead; he turned up, however, and is now, I am informed, in prison."

"So that woman is not your wife?"

"I account her so, because we all thought this Thompson dead."

"If her first husband lives, as you state, she belongs to him, as does the child."

"The child is a soft creature, and he is welcome to him, if he can find him, though it would be difficult to do so, as he has gone on a trip to Europe."

"Go!" exclaimed the captain; "I shall not touch your stores or your money, on condition that you say nothing about being robbed when you reach Silver City."

Smithers was silent.

"What!" cried the robber, angrily; "will you not purchase your life and your property at so cheap a price?"

"I want my wife, whom you have no right to detain. Take all I have, and give me her!" exclaimed Smithers.

"By your own admission, all you are entitled to are these children," said the captain. "Do you comply with my conditions, or shall I shoot you where you stand?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Smithers, shrinking back from the uplifted pistol. "Life is sweet! life is precious!"

"Swear!"

"I do!"

"Then get along with your wagon and your brats. Recollect that if anyone breaks faith with me, I will follow him to the end of the world and square accounts with him."

"You shall have no cause."

"Git!" said the captain, in a contemptuous tone.

Harold and Alice once more climbed into the wagon and Smithers caused the oxen to resume their journey.

He was glad to have escaped so easily, but he felt very mean and contemptible when he thought that he had allowed his wife to be carried off before his eyes without raising a finger to help her.

CHAPTER XVII.

KILLED BY HIS FATHER.

When Smithers reached Silver City he felt sure that the people would help him to rescue her, but he was afraid to make any noise about it.

Not that he had valued the oath he had taken, but he remembered the robber's threat, and was alarmed lest he might have been shot, for not keeping faith with him. What the desperado's motive was for making a prisoner of Mrs. Smithers he could not imagine. With the resignation of a self-seeking coward, he made up his mind that she was lost to him forever. "Papa," said Alice, "won't you try to get mamma away from that awful, mean man?"

"I fear, my dear," he replied, "that the attempt would not only be attended with great danger, but would also be useless."

"Shall we never see her again?"

"Never," answered the coward, emphatically.

"I don't care much," said Harold; "we can get along just as well without her as with her."

"But she is our mother," exclaimed Alice, "and I am very sorry for ever being rude and naughty to her, and I don't want to lose her. If papa won't try to get her back again, I will."

"You?" said her father, in astonishment.

"Yes. I feel very bad about poor mamma, and I never knew how much I loved her till now."

As she spoke she got out of the wagon.

"Where are you going?" asked Smithers.

"I'm going to ask that bold, bad man to let mamma go, and if he won't, he'll have to keep me, too, for I won't leave her."

"What madness is this?" cried her father.

"Oh, Alice was always a spoony, little fool," replied Harold.

"I've been very wicked to mamma," said Alice, setting her lips firmly together, "and I see it all now; but I should not have been if you, papa, and Harold had not told me not to mind her."

She began to walk back toward the canyon.

"Come back!" shouted Smithers. "I can't allow this, Harold, go and stop her."

"Go and stop her yourself," answered Harold. "I can't be bothered running after girls."

Mr. Smithers bit his lip till the blood came.

He had brought his son up to be undutiful and rebellious against his mother, and now he was reaping some of the crop, the seed of which he had sown.

Now he realized the full force of the saying that "it is sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child."

"Bring her back, I say," roared Smithers, who was nearly beside himself with vexation.

Still Harold did not move.

He sat on the front seat of the wagon with provoking coolness, and did not seem in the least alarmed at the display of parental wrath with which he was favored.

The fact was he had never been brought up to respect either father or mother, and he had arrived at an age when it is rather late to begin to inculcate lessons of filial obedience.

Hearing her father shout, Alice became alarmed lest he would follow and bring her back.

In his angry state of mind, and in that wild and desolate wilderness, he might even whip her.

So she commenced to run at the top of her speed, and her form grew dim and more indistinct every minute, as a slight haze was descending from the hills and enveloping the valley in mist.

"Confound you!" said Smithers to Harold, "will you do what I told you?"

"What?" asked Harold, with the same provoking calmness.

"Don't ask me questions, when you know very well what I mean. Go after your sister."

"Oh, she's all right. The robbers won't hurt her, and you know very well where she has gone."

Smithers was now in an ungovernable fury. His troubles and trials of late had not served to improve what was always a hasty temper, and to add to this he had given way to habits of drinking since quitting New York.

Even that morning he had indulged in sundry drams, which he had taken from a flask he carried in his pocket.

"If you don't do what I tell you, by thunder! I'll make you!" he cried.

Invitingly near him, at the rear of the wagon, were his pistols. He seized one and pointed it at Harold.

"Now, you young whelp!" he almost screamed, so beside himself was he with excitement, "will you obey me?"

"I'm all hunk," replied Harold, thinking his father was only trying to frighten him.

At that moment the pistol exploded. Whether Smithers pulled the trigger intentionally or whether it went off accidentally, we will charitably leave open to doubt. Certain it is that Harold fell from the wagon to the ground, which instantly became deluged with his blood. He groaned heavily, as if suffering acute agony. With a cry of alarm, Smithers cast the pistol from him, as if it had been a snake.

"Good Heaven! what have I done?" he exclaimed.

Running to the side of Harold, he raised up his head. The eyes were glazing fast, and he drew his breath with the utmost difficulty.

"Oh, Harold, my boy!" cried the wretched father. "Speak to me, speak!"

"Father, forgive," was all the boy could gasp.

"For Heaven's sake! say you are not dying, Harold—my own! Speak to me, Harold!" A faint smile curled round the corners of his livid lips. There was a rattling sound in the throat, and Harold had ceased to live.

"Oh, Heaven, be good to me. I have slain my son!" exclaimed Smithers, throwing himself on the ground in a paroxysm of grief.

He remained in a condition of stupor for more than an hour, resembling a man who had been stunned by a heavy blow.

At length he roused himself, and rising, looked around with a shudder.

There lay the body of his son Harold, stiff and cold in the embrace of death. No blandishments, no caresses, no power on earth could bring him back to life.

In the midst of that solitude an awful sense of loneliness stole over the soul of the guilty man.

He was the murderer of his child. His wife was a captive in the hands of a robber, and his daughter Alice had gone to join in her captivity. All—all had left him.

He was alone in the world—he, who a few short hours before had been blessed with the happy companionship of wife and children. It was almost more than he could bear.

Mechanically he sought in the wagon for a shovel, and in a listless manner began to dig a grave.

The coyotes had smelt blood, and were barking at a distance.

Overhead flew the lazy buzzards, for their instinct, too, told them that death was near.

An hour's work made the grave deep enough for the body, and reverentially he laid it in.

When he had filled it up with earth he sought for stones and piled a rough cairn over all that remained of the once haughty and spoiled child, Harold.

Dropping a tear over the grave, Smithers struck the oxen with the whip, and the heavy wagon rolled sluggishly on toward Silver City.

Deep down in his breast Smithers carried his weight of woe, and vainly tried to drown his load of grief and care by repeated draughts of fiery spirits.

But the attempt was useless, for the fire in his heart was raging fiercely.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHO BREAKS, PAYS."

The doctor listened to the complaint made by the son of the dead man, and assured him that he knew nothing of the theft of the corpse, when suddenly a piercing shriek was heard in the hallway.

"That is my housekeeper's voice," said the doctor. "What has happened?" He rushed out of the room. "Miss Minks," exclaimed the doctor, meeting her in the passage, "why this excitement?"

"Doctor," she answered, "some one has had the audacity to enter my sleeping apartment, and has actually got into my bed. I have spoken to him in vain, and am under the impression that he must be grossly intoxicated."

Garretson, suspecting the truth, snatched the lamp from one hand, and entered the room. One glance at the bed showed him that his suspicions were well founded.

When Miss Minks realized the fact that she had been speaking to a corpse, she sank into a chair and fainted away; but as nobody took the least notice of her she speedily came to, and contented herself with groaning terribly.

It is probable that the mob would have done some serious injury to the doctor, notwithstanding the presence of the constable, had not Tommy come to the rescue.

"I must own up," he said to Bobsey.

"If you do, we shall be bounced," replied Bobsey; "and then what will we do?"

"I can't help it," said Tommy, "a joke's a joke, but the doctor mustn't suffer for our fun."

"You're a fool! Don't do it."

"I'll have to," replied Tommy.

Saying this he approached Mr. Garretson, and touched him on the shoulder.

"If you please, sir!" he exclaimed, "I and another boy did this. The doctor knew nothing about it."

Mr. Garretson regarded him angrily.

"Where is the other boy?" he said. "You must both be punished for such an outrage on decency and propriety."

Bobsey, however, wasn't to be found.

The doctor was much relieved by Tommy's avowal, and said:

"You see, sir, that what I told you was the simple truth. These mischievous boys have made all the trouble."

"Well," replied Garretson, "as the old story has it, 'who breaks, pays,' and he must suffer for it."

In his hand he carried a small cane, which he raised to strike Tommy, but the latter did not at all relish the prospect of a caning.

He ducked his head, and darting past the young man, gained the head of the kitchen stairs, down which he ran, emerging soon afterward in the street.

His quick eye soon detected Bobsey, who had climbed to the top of a lamp-post to get a better view of what was going on inside.

When he heard Tommy's voice calling him, he descended from his elevated position and joined him.

"What shall we do now?" inquired Tommy.

"Don't you want to get 'ome again?" asked Bobsey.

"Nothing I should like so much, but where's the money to come from?"

"Come on with me, right away, and we'll 'ave a good try of it anyhow. I've got a few shillings to live on vile we're looking for a ship, and I reckon ve'll be foolish to hang about 'ere hany longer, as that cop hon the door-step looks has hif he vas seeking for hus."

This advice was too good to be neglected, and Tommy put himself by the side of Bobsey, who started off down the street at a quick pace.

They walked to the east end of London, and passing over Tower Hill, gained the extensive docks which line that side of the river Thames.

Their long walk had made them tired, and they gladly sat down on an old barrel, behind them being an extensive range of warehouses, and in front, floating in the basin, a number of ships, which were either taking in or discharging cargo.

The ship nearest them was named the *Eliza Ann*, which name they read on the stern, followed by the words New York.

"That's our chance," exclaimed Tommy. "I'll bet she's come over with grain or oil, and if there's any man aboard of her who knows Jersey City, you can put up your pile we're all hunk."

"Here's a chap coming down the side. Speak to him," replied Bobsey. "We want some place to sleep to-night, and if we're going to strike a ship, it may as well be done hat once."

The man approached the boys, and saved Bobsey the trouble of speaking first by addressing them with the remark:

"What are you loafing about here for?"

"Looking for work, sir," replied Bobsey.

"Who do you think is going to employ a cockney like you?" answered the man. "Get out of here."

"Vell," said Bobsey, "you needn't be so huffish habout it. Do you own that vessel?"

"None of your business; but, if you want to know, I'm first officer."

"If you've hany hinterest in the domestic harrangements," said Bobsey, "you might hintroduce hus two has cabin boys, you know."

The first officer of the *Eliza Jane* put his hands in his pockets, and spit out a chew of tobacco.

"Do you know what cabin boys' pay is?" he asked.

"No, sir," replied Bobsey.

"It's more kicks than half pence, and if you like to take that I'll ship you."

"Thank you, sir," cried Tommy, eagerly. "I only want to get to Jersey City."

"What!" cried the man, "are you a Yankee boy?"

"You can bet I am."

"Shake on that, sonny," cried the officer. "I'm glad to meet a countryman, if he is young and out of luck."

"Do you come from Jersey City?" inquired Tommy.

"I do, and I fancy I've seen your face somewhere. Didn't you travel with Charley Barker, the undertaker's son?"

"Yes, sir," replied Tommy, eying the officer delightedly.

"And your name is——"

"Tommy Smithers."

At this answer the officer's face became very grave. He hesitated a moment.

"See here," he said. "They call me Boston Charley, and those who know me will tell you that I'm no tale carrier, but since I've happened to strike you in this odd way I'll let you know what I heard. Your father had to skip pretty lively from his home, and it is rumored that he went West—some say to California, some to Nevada."

"What for?"

"Well, if you must hear it, because he robbed his employers."

This announcement was a great shock to Tommy.

"Did mother go with him?" he inquired.

"Yes," replied Boston Charley. "They went together at a moment's notice."

CHAPTER XIX.

BOUND HOME.

"My friend and I have lost our situations through a joke," he exclaimed, "and we want to leave this country. Will you take us along with you?"

"Now you're talking, sonny," answered Boston Charley. "This ship is going to San Francisco, and if you want the straight tip, as these Londoners say, we don't have any use for boys aboard."

Tommy's countenance fell at this declaration.

"Couldn't you make room for us, sir?" he asked.

"In consideration of your being a fellow citizen, I'll chance it," answered the officer. "The cap and I are pretty good friends, and I guess I can fix it for you to-morrow. Meanwhile you can go aboard and bunk in the fo'castle to-night."

Boston Charley nodded kindly to them, and walked away, whistling a popular air.

"I say, boy," cried Tommy, "we're in luck."

"That's what I'm thinking," answered Bobsey; "and I'll tell you where that cove's head was solid. He's going to enjoy himself, and vy shouldn't ve do the same thing? Let's go on a jolly good racket, our two selves, and ven ve're on the briny ocean we shall have nothing to reproach ourselves with."

"I don't care," replied Tommy.

They found out a coffee shop, where they enjoyed a cheap supper, after which they went to the gallery of a theater, at which a drama was played representing the trials and temptations which beset Jack ashore.

Much delighted with their evening's entertainment, at midnight they reached home—that is to say, the ship; but the watch wouldn't admit them on board, and they had to sleep on the ground among some merchandise.

It was late in the morning when Boston Charley made his appearance. A few words informed him of the state of the case, and he took the boys on board the ship, where a few words spoken to the captain insured them a passage to California.

The captain was a tall, swarthy Spaniard of the name of Diaz, and Boston Charley gave the boys a little advice respecting their behavior to him.

"Lads," he said, in an undertone, "our skipper's ugly when he drinks. Don't you never sass him, because he'd as lief take a knife to you as use his fist, and I don't suppose you want to slip your cable just yet."

"Not much," answered Tommy.

At two o'clock the tide swerved, and the ship started on her voyage.

Capt. Diaz did not behave badly until the third week of the voyage, when it was evident from his flushed countenance that he had been indulging in intoxicating liquors. He would walk sullenly up and down the deck, with a rattan in his hand, giving orders one minute and contradicting them the next.

Bobsey was one morning engaged in coiling a rope, which he didn't do with the neatness and regularity which he should have observed.

"Boy," said Capt. Diaz, "do that over again, or I'll lay it over your back."

Bobsey looked up angrily at him.

"I'm doing it as well as I know how," he replied.

"Don't answer me!" shouted the captain, whose object seemed to be to pick a quarrel with some one.

"If you don't want to be answered," said the boy, "what did you speak to me for?"

"You confounded young whelp, I'll cut the heart out of you!" said the captain, raising his rattan.

The next moment it descended sharply on the boy's shoulders.

Bobsey was no coward, and big as the captain was, he did not hesitate to tackle him.

Dropping on his knees, he seized his leg with his teeth like a dog, and bit him severely on the calf.

The captain roared with pain.

Finding the boy did not let loose, he drew his knife, as Boston Charley had said he would, and made a lunge at Bobsey.

It took effect between the shoulders, causing him to relinquish his hold and fall back on the deck bleeding profusely.

This scuffle had been watched by some of the sailors, who cried "Shame!" but knowing the desperate character of the captain, they did not dare to interfere on the boy's behalf.

Boston Charley was below, as was Tommy, and the first intimation they had of the captain's attack was given them by a sailor who cried down the hatch:

"Hurry up! The skipper's stabbed a boy!"

"By thunder! it'll be bad for him if he has!" cried Boston Charley.

He and Tommy hastened on deck, and were just in time to see Capt. Diaz take up the form of Bobsey, hold it a second in the air, and then cast it into the sea, as if it had been a log of wood.

Tommy did not hesitate a moment.

With the utmost bravery he precipitated himself into the sea and struck out bravely to rescue his friend.

He could not tell whether he was seriously injured or not.

He might be mortally wounded; and again he might only be slightly hurt; at all events, he was determined to do all in his power for him.

Boston Charley here took it upon himself to do the best he could in the crisis for the safety of the boys, as Capt. Diaz did not raise his voice in their behalf. In a clear, ringing voice the first officer ordered the helm down and the sails to be lowered, while he threw over the side a couple of hencoops. In a short time the ship's course was altered, and Tommy, who had caught hold of Bobsey's right arm, was under the lee gangway.

"Lower a boat there," commanded the officer. "Lower away lively, my lads."

"*Carambo!*" cried the captain, rousing himself at last, "who is commander here?"

"When you so far forget yourself as you have done," replied Boston Charley, eying him sternly, "it becomes the duty of every man in the ship to let you know that they no longer regard you as their captain."

"You mutinous Yankee dog!" screamed the captain, hoarse with passion.

"Capt. Diaz," answered the officer, "I want you to know that an American is as good as a Spaniard, and though you are part owner of this vessel, I don't give a snap of the finger for you."

The captain brandished the knife threateningly.

"Put up that skewer," said the mate, contemptuously. "I'm not a boy."

The only reply which Diaz made to this defiant and somewhat irritating speech was to aim a blow at the speaker.

But Boston Charley, with the rapidity of lightning, drew a pistol from his pocket and sent a bullet through the fleshy part of the captain's right arm.

The knife fell from his grasp, and the injured limb hung uselessly by his side, while its owner reeled against the mast.

"I'll have a terrible revenge for this!" hissed the captain between his teeth.

Boston Charley paid no further attention to him.

The boat had been lowered, and while the altercation was going on the sailors had picked up both Tommy and the wounded boy.

They were just in time, for Tommy was nearly exhausted.

When Bobsey was laid on the deck Tommy bent over him, peering curiously into his face.

The mate took him by the arm and led him away, as his experienced eye told him that the lad was dead.

"Oh! don't take me away!" cried Tommy. "He is the only friend I've got."

The mate pointed with his finger to the sky.

"He has a Friend up aloft, sonny, and that's the only one he will want now," he said.

Capt. Diaz had remained in a motionless condition for more than five minutes, but his eyes watched the movements of Boston Charley with the restlessness of a lynx.

All at once he stooped down and picked up the knife which had dropped from his hand when the mate shot him.

He held it in his left hand, and with a demoniac yell he rushed upon Boston Charley.

"Look out!" cried Tommy, who, seeing that Charley had his back turned to the enemy, feared he would be assassinated.

Turning sharply around, the mate did not hesitate a moment in drawing out his pistol.

He had not a second to lose. In fact, so sudden was the captain's attack upon him, that he had not time to take aim, so he fired at random, and Capt. Diaz fell, mortally wounded, by the side of the boy whom, in a moment of passion, he had so foully murdered a short time before.

The crew, who had watched this series of events in surprise and horror, now ran aft.

"Boys," cried Boston Charley, "I call you all to witness that I did this in self-defense."

The men showed the feeling they had in the matter by seizing the body of the captain and casting it overboard with as little concern as he had shown in disposing of the boy Bobsey.

Boston Charley now took command of the ship, and was obeyed by the men as if he was entitled to the position.

Tommy's life was now made much easier, for he only had to wait on the new captain.

"A penny for your thoughts, my boy," exclaimed the captain one day, as he noticed Tommy in a melancholy mood.

"You shall have them for nothing, sir," replied Tommy. "I was wondering how I could find out my folks."

"Tell you what, Tommy," said the captain, "when we reach 'Frisco I'll take all the money that's coming to me, and we'll start for Nevada together."

"You and I, sir?" asked Tommy, with great joy at the prospect of having such a good traveling companion.

"Yes; I guess there is more money in mining than seafaring, and I'll try my luck."

Boston Charley did not waver in his resolution. When the ship reached San Francisco, and the crew were paid off by the owner, he, with Tommy, started at once for Nevada.

He had taken quite a fancy to Tommy, and treated him with as much care and attention as a father would bestow on a son.

CHAPTER XX.

TOMMY'S COURAGEOUS RESOLVE.

Leaving Tommy to pursue his journey, we must return to Smithers, who, it will be remembered, wended his solitary way toward Silver City, after the capture of his wife by the robbers, the desertion of his daughter Alice, who ran to her mother's assistance, and the shocking death of Harold.

Trying to dismiss all the unpleasant recollections of the day from his mind, Smithers drank more whisky, and in time reached the city to which he had emigrated.

Entering the city through a spacious street which was named Broadway, he then halted his wagon.

A man of tall stature and cadaverous cast of countenance, who was lounging in front of a saloon, with his hands in his pockets and a cigar in his mouth, approached the wagon, eyed it critically, and then regarded Smithers with an inquisitive air.

"Born East, I calculate, stranger?" he said.

"Yes," replied Smithers.

"I'm glad to make your acquaintance. I'm Maj. Allston, and well known in this town."

The major might have added that he was too well known to be trusted, for, though a smart, clever man, he made a scanty and precarious living by his wits.

"See here, major," said Smithers, "I'm a stranger, and not posted. You can call me Smithers. I've got a few hundred dollars and the goods in the wagon. My intention was to open a corner grocery to get a living."

"Won't do; there are too many of them. I'll tell you what to do, and you can bet your life that I know this community better than you," said the major.

"I guess you ought to."

"You take me into partnership, and we'll run a game. The boys round here are all gamblers, and there are three games in full blast every night, all making money—dead piles of it—and no skin at that. Sail right in with me. I know all the boys, and I can work the racket."

"But where's your share of the capital?"

Maj. Allston touched his forehead.

"Here," he said. "I've talent and experience. That's worth all the money you can put into the concern. Is it a go?"

Desperate and callous as he was, Smithers did not care much what he did; he fancied that running a faro bank was an easy business, and less tiresome than working hard all day behind the counter of a store.

"I'll do it," he replied, after a momentary pause for consideration.

"Shake on that," cried the major, in a high state of delight.

"Well, partner," exclaimed Smithers, "I'm in your hands now. What shall we do first?"

"Leave it all to me. I'll sell the wagon, team and stores to my friend who keeps that saloon behind me. We'll engage his rooms over the store, and hire a nigger to wait on the guests. I've got all the tools for the game, and we'll open to-morrow night. I believe in doing things quickly—that's me. Come and take a drink on me."

Smithers made no objection. Whichever way the current of his fate ran, he was willing to go with it just then.

The major certainly showed himself a man of brains. In a couple of hours he had sold the stores, wagon, and team, engaged the rooms for the game, with the sleeping apartments overhead, hired a negro, and begun business, which proved very successful.

One afternoon, when the major and his partner were in the gaming rooms discussing their future prospects, there was a ring at the bell below.

The negro descended the stairs and saw a boy on the sidewalk, who looked tired, worn and travel-stained.

"What do you want, sonny, hey?" asked the negro, eying him suspiciously.

"If you please," replied the boy, "I want a job, and they told me that perhaps the major, who keeps here, would require an office lad."

"Go 'long; take yourself off right away," answered Cæsar, "we've no use for boys here. If you're hungry I'll gib you ten cents to buy some molasses and a bit of bacon."

"It's work I want," rejoined the boy. "I have been informed that I've a relative in this town, but I can't find him. I and a friend came from San Francisco, but the Indians attacked us, killed my friend, and robbed us of all we had. Speak to your boss for me."

Hearing that there was some conversation going on downstairs, Smithers exclaimed:

"What do you stand chinning there for?"

The boy started as he heard the voice.

"I must go upstairs!" he exclaimed. Rushing forward, the boy upset the darky, and sprang up the stairs, at the head of which Mr. Smithers was standing.

"Who are you, and what do you want here?" asked the latter.

"Don't you know me?"

"Why, yes, I think I do. Is it—can it be——"

Smithers hesitated.

"It is I—Tommy," replied our hero. "Oh! father, I never felt so glad in my life as I do at striking you."

"How did you find me out?" asked Smithers, who did not appear well pleased at the encounter.

"I heard you were here, and I started with a friend to discover you. The redskins killed my friend, and I came on alone."

The major had been listening to this conversation, and he beckoned to the boy.

"Where's your mother?" he asked.

"She came with father," was the reply.

Smithers smothered an oath.

"Father," exclaimed Tommy, "I've gone through a deal since I left Jersey City, and I've come here chiefly to see mother! Where is she?"

"Dead!"

"And little Alice and Harold?"

"Dead also!"

The tears came into Tommy's eyes.

The major looked intently at Smithers.

"Say, pard," he exclaimed, "why didn't you tell me this before? Did you see your family shot down?"

"No, but they were captured by Capt. Jordan."

"Didn't it ever occur to you that, if you'd been a man, you would have raised a hand for them? If you'd told me, if you'd said a word to the boys we'd have made a raid on the Snake Canyon, and Jordan wouldn't have stopped any more travelers."

Tommy looked up with determination.

"If father hasn't courage enough to go after mamma, I'll go by myself!" he exclaimed.

"Bully for you, my boy," said the major.

"What's the use, she's dead and gone now; don't talk like a fool, Tommy," remarked Smithers.

"The boy's no fool," answered the major. "I honor him for his resolve, and I'll give him a pistol to fight with."

He took one from his pocket, and presented it to Tommy.

"That's to rescue your mother with," he continued.

"Thank you, sir," replied Tommy.

"If you're not back in three days I'll raise all Silver City, and we'll root out this robber, if he hasn't skipped, but I'll bet a five-dollar bill that you capture Capt. Jordan."

Tommy bestowed a look of gratitude upon Maj. Allston, and kept at a respectable distance from Smithers.

A man at this moment entered the apartment, and hearing the remark, exclaimed:

"I'll see to that."

Maj. Allston turned round and looked curiously at the stranger.

"You'll do what?" he asked.

"I'll raise you fifty dollars, and you daren't go me a cent better."

"On what?"

"The bet you just made, to the effect that this boy would capture me."

"You!" cried the major, in surprise. "I never saw you before, and certainly did not speak of you."

"You are wrong in both cases," replied the stranger.

"How?"

"We met three years ago in California, when I saved you from being hanged for a horse thief."

"Great Scott!" cried the major. "Who are you?"

"Then I was Pedro Gormez, the bandit; now I am Capt. Jordan, on the same graft."

"By thunder! cap, you're right!" said the major. "I was doomed to swing, and if it hadn't been for you and your brave boys I shouldn't be sitting in this chair now."

Capt. Jordan, the robber of the Dead Snake Canyon, sat down.

"What brings you here, cap?" asked the major. "It isn't exactly safe for you to be in the city. If the boys knew it——"

"That's what I came about, knowing I could count on you, owing to that little service I did you down in California."

"Yes, yes."

"I keep myself posted, and I heard that the boys were going to make a raid on the canyon."

"They did talk of it," replied the major.

"Well, I want you to stop that. I'm going to quit in a day or two, and shall not give your people any more trouble."

"I'll see to it," said the major.

Suddenly Smithers left the room, but quiet as had been his movements, his absence was noticed by the bandit.

"Where has that cur gone?" he inquired.

"I'll be hanged if I know," replied the major.

"Gone to raise the town, I guess," said Capt. Jordan. "Well, I won't give him the chance. My horse is outside, and I'll skip."

"Good-day, cap. Come and see me again," said the major.

Capt. Jordan moved toward the door.

Tommy placed himself before him.

"You don't go from here," he exclaimed, "before you tell me about my mother."

"She is quite well, so is Alice. As for Harold, you must ask the man you call your father about him, for his hand is red with his boy's blood."

"Why don't you let mamma go away?" asked Tommy.

"Simply because she doesn't want to," was the reply.

Tommy smiled disdainfully, as if he did not believe this.

"Come and see for yourself," exclaimed the robber. "I will promise not to harm a hair of your head."

"That's a fair offer, and I accept it."

"You will come?"

"Expect me to-morrow."

The robber nodded his head approvingly, and quitted the room.

Tommy sank into a chair and looked down, as if trying to recollect something.

"What's troubling you?" asked the major.

"I've seen that man somewhere, and I can't recollect where," he replied.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite. The face is as familiar to me as my own."

He tapped his forehead with his finger, but the recollection would not come to him, though he was positive that he had seen Capt. Jordan somewhere or another.

His remarks about his mother he could not understand, for it seemed incredible that she would choose to remain a prisoner in the bandit's cave. All was a mystery to him.

He was roused from his lethargy by the sound of voices in the street.

A pistol shot was heard. This was followed by another and another.

Rushing to the window, whither the major had preceded him, he saw a man on horseback dashing wildly up the street.

This was the robber captain.

Smithers had met the sheriff of Silver City, and given the alarm, which caused a body of citizens to assemble.

The robber had barely time to mount his horse and ride for dear life.

Fortunately for him, the shots which were fired did not touch either him or his horse, and he made his escape.

CHAPTER XXI.

FINDING A FATHER.

Smithers returned to the room.

"I'll have to break with you," exclaimed the major, "if you go on this way."

"What for?" asked Smithers.

"Didn't you hear that fellow say that he had saved my life? See here," continued the major, "I want you to understand that you can't play fast and loose with me. Capt. Jordan will think I put up a job on him."

The major continued to grumble, but Smithers took no notice either of him or Tommy.

In an hour's time it grew dark, and while the partners were preparing for the business of the evening, Tommy being very tired, stole off to a bed which had been prepared for him in the house.

It was some time, however, before he could get to sleep.

He was haunted by the face of Capt. Jordan, and in vain tried to remember where he had seen it before. That it was familiar to him he was certain.

"I know him, I know him," he muttered, "but to save my life I can't place him. However, I'll go to the cavern in the Snake Canyon to-morrow, and then——"

He broke off abruptly.

What would happen then, he could not tell, but he felt assured that important events were about to take place, which would influence his future career.

Early in the morning he descended from his bedroom. No one was about. The major and Smithers had kept the gaming room open till four o'clock, and then went to bed.

Passing through the city he walked over the prairie until he came within sight of the Dead Snake Canyon.

Scarcely had he entered the valley than he was surprised to hear the voice of Capt. Jordan.

"Welcome, my lad," he cried. "Your mother is waiting to see you. Follow me."

A winding path conducted them to the entrance to the cavern in which the robber lived.

In a rude vault, illuminated by the rays of the sun, Tommy saw Mrs. Smithers seated on a roughly made chair, with Alice by her side.

She rose hastily, and embraced him with every demonstration of fondness.

"My dear, dear child, I am so glad to see you once more," she cried. "How much you must have gone through since we last met."

Tommy returned her caresses, and replied:

"I am happy now, mamma, because I have found you. But why do you stay here?"

"I have my reasons," she replied.

"You would go if you could?" he asked.

"No, my child. I am happy and contented. Soon we shall leave here and——"

"We?" interrupted Tommy. "Do you include Capt. Jordan?"

"I do."

"But he is a robber."

"He will give up this life, and we shall live happily. It is not his fault, he has told me all. With me to guide him he will reform."

"What is he to you, mother?" said Tommy, in perplexity.

Capt. Jordan was standing close by. Looking at him, she exclaimed:

"Shall I tell him?"

"Yes," was the laconic reply.

"He is my husband—the man I loved before I met Smithers, whom I married, thinking my first love dead."

A new light now burst upon Tommy.

"He your husband, mamma?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, my dear, and your father," she said.

Now Tommy knew why the face had haunted him so.

Capt. Jordan was no other than the man Thompson, who had taken him from Jersey City, and so nearly got him into trouble in New York.

"Do you love him, mamma?" he asked.

"I do," she replied.

"Then I will give him my hand," said Tommy, "and if you are not ashamed to be called his wife, I am proud to be his son."

Capt. Jordan, or Thompson, took the boy's hand and imprinted a kiss on his forehead.

"You shall never have cause to regret calling me father," he exclaimed.

For the first time in many months Tommy felt a sense of dreamy happiness stealing over him.

He had found his mother, and, what was more, he had met his father under circumstances which induced him to like him better than he had done at their first interview.

The result of Tommy's venturing into the cave was certainly such as to surprise him greatly, for he was far from thinking that Capt. Jordan, the famous freebooter, was his

father, and that his mother was living with him of her own choice instead of being confined as a prisoner, which all supposed.

Thompson, or Jordan, was very anxious to quit the life he was leading and had promised to do so shortly, at the solicitations of his wife, and he wished to go further west. Tommy's mother added her entreaties to those of his father that he would accompany them, and having no tie to bind him to Smithers, he consented.

Little Alice had quite lost all her haughtiness, and, removed from the influence of Smithers, she found much to love in the character of her mother, and though she felt some repulsion toward Thompson, she grew to like him a little in time.

Thompson was only waiting in the cave to make one more venture before he left it forever.

He had received notice that a wagon containing bars of silver would leave Silver City on a certain day, and he intended to attack it as it passed through the canyon.

With this amount of valuable property he thought he could do well as a farmer, and live a life of peace and contentment, but he forgot that ill-gained wealth rarely if ever does its possessor any good.

It was early one morning when a shot was heard in the valley.

Tommy sprang to his feet, he having been engaged in conversation with his mother.

"What is that?" he cried.

"Oh," replied his mother, with a heavy sigh, "it's an attack on some poor traveler. I wish all this work was over."

"So do I," said Tommy. "Why do you stay here, mother, when you could go away so easily?"

"I don't know what to do, my dear," replied she, in her usual weak-minded and undecided way. "Thompson is your father and legally my husband. I am afraid he would kill me if I thwarted him. As for Smithers, I despise him for his pride and his trickery. I wish I had never married."

"Don't say that, mamma, for my sake," exclaimed Tommy.

She pressed her lips to his face and kissed him tenderly.

"They call you the fool of the family," she replied. "But to me you were always bright and amiable."

This conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Thompson, who held some papers in his hand, which he was examining with apparent interest. Suddenly he uttered a loud cry of rage.

"A thousand curses!" he exclaimed. "This is bad luck!"

"What is?" inquired his wife.

"If we had only known who this fellow was he would not have got off so easily."

"And who is he?"

"Who? The famous detective Berghausen, and here in my hand is a warrant for the arrest of Smithers for robbing his employers in New York."

Thompson bit his lips and frowned darkly, as if his mind was ill at ease.

"I ought to kill Berghausen," he said, as if talking to himself. "It is the only way to play a safe game, but if I ride after him I may miss the silver, and not have a chance of such a stake again."

Setting his broad-brimmed hat jauntily on one side of his head, he quitted the cavern.

Tommy looked anxiously at his mother.

"It is my opinion," he exclaimed, "that you would be better without either, of such men as Thompson or Smithers."

"Remember, Tommy, that he is your father."

"I know it, and cannot help feeling sorry for it. He is a bold, bad man, and although he says he will lead a good life in future, I am sure he'll never be anything but a thief, and a low one at that."

The unhappy woman shook her head sadly.

"I fear," she said, "that there is no rest for me this side of the grave. I must fulfill my destiny."

Covering her face with her hands she wept bitterly.

Tommy went outside and walked up and down in deep thought, for he was in the midst of plenty now, which seemed to make a man of him.

He felt restless and excited. Coming events cast their shadows before, and he had that remarkable silent admonition that something of great importance was about to happen.

He was roused from his meditation by his mother's voice.

"Tommy!" she cried.

"Well, mamma?" he replied.

"Have you seen Alice?"

"No."

"She is not in the cave, and I notice that her hat and little cloak are missing. Where can she have gone?"

Tommy reflected a moment.

"I think I know, mamma," he said.

"If you can guess, you are smarter than I am," she replied.

"I remarked," continued Tommy, "that she listened with peculiar attention when she heard a man had gone to Silver City to arrest Mr. Smithers. He is her father, and she always had a great affection for him."

"I am aware of that."

"Then it is my opinion that she has gone to Silver City in order to put Mr. Smithers on his guard, and enable him to flee from the officers of justice."

"It is possible, but what danger may she not encounter on the way! If she gets benighted the wolves will kill her. Poor child, she is unarmed, and I should break my heart if anything happened to her."

"Mother!" exclaimed Tommy, "I know what you would say. You wish me to go and find Alice."

"Oh! yes, if it is not asking too much."

"I will set off at once."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE FINAL TRAGEDY.

Seeing that his pistol was loaded, Tommy started at once after Alice, who actually had started for the distant city to warn Smithers of the danger in which he stood.

Skirting the huge masses of rock which lay about on all sides of the valley, Tommy succeeded in quitting the Dead Snake Canyon without attracting the notice of his father. Once out on the undulating prairie, he slipped out more boldly, and walked rapidly along the track which served as a road. Some distance ahead of him he fancied he saw a slender form which might be that of Alice. He quickened his movements. In a short time he was able to satisfy himself that it actually was the little girl proceeding on her chivalrous journey without exhibiting any apparent symptoms of fatigue.

All at once he beheld a tall form spring from the high grass among which it had been concealed. The long hair, ornamented with feathers, the red skin, and the dirty blanket in which the form was wrapped, assured him that the apparition was that of an Indian. Though comparatively rare in that part of the country, bands occasionally crossed the prairie and did not hesitate to rob, burn and murder where they had the opportunity. In the hand of the Indian was an uplifted tomahawk. Horribly afraid of some tragedy, Tommy increased his pace to a run, hoping to come up in time to prevent the dastardly redskin from doing any harm to the little girl. But he was too late. The Indian uttered a terrible whoop and, in pure wantonness, made a slashing blow at Alice.

The child, frightened at the war cry, turned, and beholding the savage, sank upon her knees, holding up her hands in supplication.

What she said Tommy could not hear, but even at the distance he was from her he fancied he saw her lips move. Possibly she begged for mercy, possibly she prayed for help.

The cruel tomahawk, however, cut short her prayers, or her supplications, and sank deep into her brain, causing her to die without another word.

A fiendish laugh came from the Indian. His knife was instantly in requisition, and with a dexterity born of practice, he cut off her beautiful, flowing hair. He had murdered the poor child for her scalp.

Burning with rage and indignation, Tommy bounded over the ground, and when he got near enough he sank on one knee. Raising his pistol he fired. The Indian was hit, but not mortally.

He uttered a howl like that of a wild beast, and looked for his enemy, who was not so much hidden in the sage bark and chaparral as to be invisible.

But before he could load his rifle another shot from Tommy brought him to his knee, and a third rolled him over like a bullock.

The Indian appeared to be dead, but to make sure that the life had really left the wretch, Tommy struck him again and again with his own tomahawk, which he picked up from the ground, and hacked at him as he would have cut a mad dog or a venomous reptile.

"Poor child," he said, as he stooped down and kissed the blood-stained features of little Alice. "This is very hard. I would have gladly laid down my life to save hers, but it is one comfort that her young life is avenged on the person of this bloodthirsty savage."

Alice was quite dead. Near the spot where she fell was a cairn or heap of stones. Strangely enough it chanced that this cairn was the one erected by Smithers over the body of his son Harold, whom he had so cruelly killed on this very spot.

Perhaps the very ground which was drinking up the life blood of Alice had absorbed that of her brother.

Not being able to carry the body to the city for interment, and not liking to leave it to the mercy of the wolves, Tommy tore down some of the stones. Reverently lifting the body, he placed it in the center of the heap, and covered it again with the biggest stones his strength would permit him to lift.

Then the brother and sister were buried in one rude grave.

"Poor Alice!" said Tommy. "God bless her!"

His first impulse was to return to the cave and carry to his mother the melancholy news of Alice's death.

She had already been informed of the decease of Harold, and had grieved much in consequence; but come to think of it, he felt a conviction that she would like him, if possible, to save Smithers from the impending arrest.

Following out this train of thought Tommy turned round again and walked toward Silver City. It was quite late in the day when he arrived there, but he soon found Mr. Smithers, and told him all the sad news.

"But this is not all," said Tommy. "You are in danger of——"

"Of what?"

"Arrest. The detective, Berghausen, is in this city looking for you, and you may expect him here at any moment. Your only safety is instant flight."

Smithers looked the picture of despair.

"I must fly," he exclaimed, after a pause. "Truly has it been said that there is no rest for the wicked. But it is hard to have no place to lay one's head, and to be a wanderer on the face of the earth. Why was I not content with little? All this comes of pride and living beyond my income. Take warning by my fate, boy, and whatever your circumstances in life may be, rest satisfied with it. Pride must have a fall."

"Had you not better take what money you can, hire a horse, and start, sir?" said Tommy.

"Yes, yes. It is very good of you to do all this for me, Tommy. I had no right to expect it, for I always treated you badly."

"Mother always taught me to forgive my enemies," answered Tommy; "and, of course, I could not expect you to like me so well as Harold and Alice."

Going to the safe he took from it a large roll of bills.

There was a voice on the stairs.

"Ha!" he cried, "what is that?"

"For Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Tommy, "get away somehow. It may be the detective. Can you not get out at the roof?"

"I know not."

The noise increased.

The next moment the door was pushed open, and a tall, thick-set man appeared on the threshold.

"You're my prisoner!" he shouted. "I know you from a photograph. Up with your arms, or I'll give you some lead."

Smithers failed to comply with his request, and hastily drew a pistol, which he fired at the detective.

His hand trembled so that the bullet went wide of its mark, and Berghausen, seeing that he meant fight, and that his life was in danger if he did not adopt violent means, returned the fire.

He was cool and collected, and did not miss his mark. Smithers uttered a cry, and pressing his hand to his heart, staggered against the wall, and fell on the carpet, mortally wounded.

"I'm sorry," remarked Berghausen, coolly; "but I had to do it."

Tommy had flown to Smithers' side.

"Are you much hurt?" he asked.

"Done for, my lad," exclaimed Smithers, speaking with difficulty. "My race is run. It will soon be all over, and I can't say I regret it."

"Shall I fetch a doctor?"

"No use. Pray God have mercy on my sinful soul!"

These were the last words he uttered, for though his lips continued to move at intervals for some minutes, no coherent sound came from them.

The sheriff, who was a man named Dunbarton, happened to be passing at the time, and, hearing the shots, thought it his business to enter the house. He saw the blood-stained corpse of Smithers.

"What's this?" he exclaimed.

"I am a detective, with a warrant for this man's arrest for robbing his employers in New York," replied Berghausen, "and I killed him in self-defense."

"Well," said the sheriff, "if you'll take my advice, you'll leave town and get back mighty quick."

"What for?"

"The boys liked Smithers, and knew his pard well; they might take it into their heads to lay you out."

"That's so," answered the detective.

Accordingly he got out of the house, and made his way out of the town, for he felt somewhat the hint given him was equivalent to an order.

Tommy had not been noticed by anyone.

Seeing that he could be of no further use to the sheriff or to Smithers, who was now beyond mortal aid, he too left the house.

At the extremity of the town he overtook a wagon. It was guarded by two men heavily armed, and he saw Berghausen talking to them.

"You can go along with us," said one of the men, "if you can fight, for we've got silver in the wagon, and are told to look out for Capt. Jordan."

"Good enough," replied the detective.

"May I go with you also?" asked Tommy.

"No; we don't want any boys hanging onto us," was the answer.

Tommy shrank behind at this ungracious reply, and the wagon moved on.

Soon the shades of night began to fall, and, feeling very tired, Tommy threw himself down on the sage brush, and fell fast asleep. When he awoke the sun was riding high in the heavens.

"I must hurry up," he remarked. "If the wagon traveled all night, it has reached the canyon ere this, and either Thompson has captured it, or Berghausen and the others have overcome him."

He was naturally very anxious to know what had happened, and walked at his quickest pace, his heart beating wildly with anxiety.

It was midday when he reached the calm and pleasant valley, passing in through the high rocks on either side, whose quaintly shaped forms seemed to resemble giant sentinels.

Going direct to the cave, he found it empty. In vain he called to his mother. There was no answer. Alarmed and still more anxious than before, he proceeded to explore the valley.

All at once he distinguished his mother's form seated on a fragment of rock. At her feet was the body of a man.

One glance enabled Tommy to comprehend what had happened.

Approaching her, he took her hand, saying:

"Mother, it is all over now."

She raised her tear-stained face to his. Then she lowered it once more, and cast her gaze sorrowfully upon the corpse, which was that of the bandit, Thompson.

"We are alone in the world now," continued Tommy. "Smithers is dead, shot by Berghausen; Alice was killed by an Indian, but I will protect you."

"He attacked the wagon," explained she. "He was killed at the first fire. His servant's body is down there"—pointing with her finger—"with the body of one of the travelers, who was killed."

"Come away, mother," said Tommy. "I'll return and bury the bodies."

"What are we to do now?" demanded Tommy's mother. "The future seems such a blank to me. Oh! thank God that you are spared to me, Tommy."

"Mother," said Tommy, "while I was burying the bodies, a man came along on horseback. He was looking for me. His name is Maj. Allston. He was Mr. Smithers' partner, and he gave me a roll of bills, which he said was Smithers' share of the profits of the game they played. It is over two thousand dollars. Let us go back to New York. We will start in business, and we shall not want."

Mrs. Smithers drew him to her bosom, and embraced him tenderly.

"God bless you, Tommy. I will live for your sake, but I had very dark thoughts in my mind just now—oh! so bad and wicked; may I be forgiven for them."

The next day they went to the depot, and the swift locomotive conveyed two travel-stained passengers back to the East.

They started in a little business, and Tommy, no longer the fool of the family, showed such industry and smartness that he prospered.

The mother and son were very happy together, and soon the checkered and eventful past was forgotten.

THE END.

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111— Buffalo Bill and the Overland Mail By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
112— Buffalo Bill on the Deadwood Trail By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
113— Buffalo Bill in Apache Land By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
114— Buffalo Bills Blindfold Duel By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
115— Buffalo Bill and the Lone Camper By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
116— Buffalo Bill's Merry War By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
117— Buffalo Bill's Star Play By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
118— Buffalo Bill's War Cry By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
119— Buffalo Bill on Black Panther's Trail By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
120— Buffalo Bill's Slim Chance By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
121— Buffalo Bill Besieged By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
122— Buffalo Bill's Bandit Round-up By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
123— Buffalo Bill's Surprise Party By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
124— Buffalo Bill's Lightning Raid By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
125— Buffalo Bill in Mexico By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
126— Buffalo Bill's Traitor Foe By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
127— Buffalo Bill's Tireless Chase By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

128— Buffalo Bill's Boy Bugler By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
129— Buffalo Bill's Sure Guess By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
130— Buffalo Bill's Record Jump By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
131— Buffalo Bill in the Land of Dread By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
132— Buffalo Bill's Tangled Clue By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
133— Buffalo Bill's Wolf Skin By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
134— Buffalo Bill's Twice Four Puzzle By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
135— Buffalo Bill and the Devil Bird By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
136— Buffalo Bill and the Indian's Mascot By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
137— Buffalo Bill Entrapped By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
138— Buffalo Bill's Totem Trail By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
139— Buffalo Bill at Fort Challis By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
140— Buffalo Bill's Determination By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
141— Buffalo Bill's Battle Axe By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
142— Buffalo Bill's Game with Fate By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
143— Buffalo Bill's Comanche Raid By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
144— Buffalo Bill's Aerial Island By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
145— Buffalo Bill's Lucky Shot By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
146— Buffalo Bill's Sioux Friends By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
147— Buffalo Bill's Supreme Test By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
148— Buffalo Bill's Boldest Strike By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
149— Buffalo Bill and the Red Hand By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
150— Buffalo Bill's Dance with Death By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
151— Buffalo Bill's Running Fight By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
152— Buffalo Bill in Harness By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
153— Buffalo Bill Corralled By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
154— Buffalo Bill's Waif of the West By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
155— Buffalo Bill's Wizard Pard By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
156— Buffalo Bill and Hawkeye By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
157— Buffalo Bill and Grizzly Dan By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
158— Buffalo Bill's Ghost Play By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
159— Buffalo Bill's Lost Prisoner By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
160— Buffalo Bill and The Klan of Kau By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
161— Buffalo Bill's Crow Scouts By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
162— Buffalo Bill's Lassoed Spectre By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
163— Buffalo Bill and the Wanderers By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

164— Buffalo Bill and the White Queen By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
165— Buffalo Bill's Yellow Guardian By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
166— Buffalo Bill's Double "B" Brand By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
167— Buffalo Bill's Dangerous Duty By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
168— Buffalo Bill and the Talking Statue By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
169— Buffalo Bill Between Two Fires By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
170— Buffalo Bill and the Giant Apache By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
171— Buffalo Bill's Best Bet By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
172— Buffalo Bill's Blockhouse Siege By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
173— Buffalo Bill's Fight for Right By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
174— Buffalo Bill's Sad Tidings By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
175— Buffalo Bill and "Lucky" Benson By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
176— Buffalo Bill Among the Sioux By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
177— Buffalo Bill's Mystery Box By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
178— Buffalo Bill's Worst Tangle By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
179— Buffalo Bill's Clean Sweep By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
180— Buffalo Bill's Texas Tangle By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
181— Buffalo Bill and the Nihilists By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
182— Buffalo Bill's Emigrant Trail By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
183— Buffalo Bill at Close Quarters By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
184— Buffalo Bill and the Cattle Thieves By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
185— Buffalo Bill at Cimaroon Bar By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
186— Buffalo Bill's Ingenuity By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
187— Buffalo Bill on a Cold Trail By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
188— Buffalo Bill's Red Hot Totem By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
189— Buffalo Bill Under a War Cloud By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
190— Buffalo Bill and the Prophet By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
191— Buffalo Bill and the Red Renegade By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
192— Buffalo Bill's Mailed Fist By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
193— Buffalo Bill's Round-up By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
194— Buffalo Bill's Death Message By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
195— Buffalo Bill's Redskin Disguise By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
196— Buffalo Bill, the Whirlwind By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
197— Buffalo Bill in Death Valley By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
198— Buffalo Bill and the Magic Button By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
199— Buffalo Bill's Friend in Need By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

200— Buffalo Bill With General Custer By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
201— Buffalo Bill's Timely Meeting By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
202— Buffalo Bill and the Skeleton Scout By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
203— Buffalo Bill's Flag of Truce By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
204— Buffalo Bill's Pacific Power By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
205— Buffalo Bill's Impersonator By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
206— Buffalo Bill and the Red Marauders By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
207— Buffalo Bill's Long Run By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
208— Buffalo Bill and Red Dove By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
209— Buffalo Bill on the Box By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
210— Buffalo Bill's Bravo Partner By Col. Prentiss Ingraham
211— Buffalo Bill's Strange Task By Col. Prentiss Ingraham

BOOKS FOR YOUNG MEN

MERRIWELL SERIES

Stories of Frank and Dick Merriwell

Fascinating Stories of Athletics

A half million enthusiastic followers of the Merriwell brothers will attest the unfailing interest and wholesomeness of these adventures of two lads of high ideals, who play fair with themselves, as well as with the rest of the world.

These stories are rich in fun and thrills in all branches of sports and athletics. They are extremely high in moral tone, and cannot fail to be of immense benefit to every boy who reads them.

They have the splendid quality of firing a boy's ambition to become a good athlete, in order that he may develop into a strong, vigorous, right-thinking man.

ALL TITLES ALWAYS IN PRINT

1 —	Frank Merriwell's School Days	By Burt L. Standish
2 —	Frank Merriwell's Chums	By Burt L. Standish
3 —	Frank Merriwell's Foes	By Burt L. Standish
4 —	Frank Merriwell's Trip West	By Burt L. Standish
5 —	Frank Merriwell Down South	By Burt L. Standish
6 —	Frank Merriwell's Bravery	By Burt L. Standish
7 —	Frank Merriwell's Hunting Tour	By Burt L. Standish
8 —	Frank Merriwell in Europe	By Burt L. Standish
9 —	Frank Merriwell at Yale	By Burt L. Standish
10 —	Frank Merriwell's Sports Afield	By Burt L. Standish
11 —	Frank Merriwell's Races	By Burt L. Standish
12 —	Frank Merriwell's Party	By Burt L. Standish
13 —	Frank Merriwell's Bicycle Tour	By Burt L. Standish
14 —	Frank Merriwell's Courage	By Burt L. Standish
15 —	Frank Merriwell's Daring	By Burt L. Standish
16 —	Frank Merriwell's Alarm	By Burt L. Standish
17 —	Frank Merriwell's Athletes	By Burt L. Standish
18 —	Frank Merriwell's Skill	By Burt L. Standish
19 —	Frank Merriwell's Champions	By Burt L. Standish
20 —	Frank Merriwell's Return to Yale	By Burt L. Standish
21 —	Frank Merriwell's Secret	By Burt L. Standish

22— Frank Merriwell's Danger By Burt L. Standish
23— Frank Merriwell's Loyalty By Burt L. Standish
24— Frank Merriwell in Camp By Burt L. Standish
25— Frank Merriwell's Vacation By Burt L. Standish
26— Frank Merriwell's Cruise By Burt L. Standish
27— Frank Merriwell's Chase By Burt L. Standish
28— Frank Merriwell in Maine By Burt L. Standish
29— Frank Merriwell's Struggle By Burt L. Standish
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32— Frank Merriwell's Hard Luck By Burt L. Standish
33— Frank Merriwell's Protégé By Burt L. Standish
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52— Frank Merriwell's Generosity By Burt L. Standish
53— Frank Merriwell's Tricks By Burt L. Standish
54— Frank Merriwell's Temptation By Burt L. Standish
55— Frank Merriwell on Top By Burt L. Standish
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57— Frank Merriwell's Mascot By Burt L. Standish

58— Frank Merriwell's Reward By Burt L. Standish
59— Frank Merriwell's Phantom By Burt L. Standish
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61— Frank Merriwell's Victories By Burt L. Standish
62— Frank Merriwell's Iron Nerve By Burt L. Standish
63— Frank Merriwell in Kentucky By Burt L. Standish
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66— Frank Merriwell's Set Back By Burt L. Standish
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68— Frank Merriwell's Club By Burt L. Standish
69— Frank Merriwell's Trust By Burt L. Standish
70— Frank Merriwell's False Friend By Burt L. Standish
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82— Dick Merriwell's Revenge By Burt L. Standish
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89— Dick Merriwell's Dash By Burt L. Standish
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111— Frank Merriwell's Rough Deal By Burt L. Standish
112— Dick Merriwell's Threat By Burt L. Standish
113— Dick Merriwell's Persistence By Burt L. Standish
114— Dick Merriwell's Day By Burt L. Standish
115— Frank Merriwell's Peril By Burt L. Standish
116— Dick Merriwell's Downfall By Burt L. Standish
117— Frank Merriwell's Pursuit By Burt L. Standish
118— Dick Merriwell Abroad By Burt L. Standish
119— Frank Merriwell in the Rockies By Burt L. Standish
120— Dick Merriwell's Pranks By Burt L. Standish
121— Frank Merriwell's Pride By Burt L. Standish
122— Frank Merriwell's Challengers By Burt L. Standish
123— Frank Merriwell's Endurance By Burt L. Standish
124— Dick Merriwell's Cleverness By Burt L. Standish
125— Frank Merriwell's Marriage By Burt L. Standish
126— Dick Merriwell, the Wizard By Burt L. Standish
127— Dick Merriwell's Stroke By Burt L. Standish
128— Dick Merriwell's Return By Burt L. Standish
129— Dick Merriwell's Resource By Burt L. Standish

130— Dick Merriwell's Five By Burt L. Standish

In order that there may be no confusion, we desire to say that the books listed below will be issued during the respective months in New York City and vicinity. They may not reach the readers at a distance promptly, on account of delays in transportation.

To be published in January, 1926.

131— Frank Merriwell's Tigers By Burt L. Standish
132— Dick Merriwell's Polo Team By Burt L. Standish

To be published in February, 1926.

133— Frank Merriwell's Pupils By Burt L. Standish
134— Frank Merriwell's New Boy By Burt L. Standish

To be published in March, 1926.

135— Dick Merriwell's Home Run By Burt L. Standish
136— Dick Merriwell's Dare By Burt L. Standish
137— Frank Merriwell's Son By Burt L. Standish

To be published in April, 1926.

138— Dick Merriwell's Team Mate By Burt L. Standish
139— Frank Merriwell's Leaguers By Burt L. Standish

To be published in May, 1926.

140— Frank Merriwell's Happy Camp By Burt L. Standish
141— Dick Merriwell's Influence By Burt L. Standish

To be published in June, 1926.

142— Dick Merriwell, Freshman By Burt L. Standish
143— Dick Merriwell's Staying Power By Burt L. Standish

BOOKS THAT NEVER GROW OLD

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Clean Adventure Stories for Boys

The Most Complete List Published

The following list does not contain all the books that Horatio Alger wrote, but it contains most of them, and certainly the best.

Horatio Alger is to boys what Charles Dickens is to grown-ups. His work is just as popular to-day as it was years ago. The books have a quality, the value of which is beyond computation.

There are legions of boys of foreign parents who are being helped along the road to true Americanism by reading these books which are so peculiarly American in tone that the reader cannot fail to absorb some of the spirit of fair play and clean living which is so characteristically American.

In this list will be included certain books by Edward Stratemeyer, Oliver Optic, and other authors who wrote the Alger type of stories, which are equal in interest and wholesomeness with those written by the famous author after which this great line of books for boys is named.

ALL TITLES ALWAYS IN PRINT

1—	Driven From Home	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
2—	A Cousin's Conspiracy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
3—	Ned Newton	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
4—	Andy Gordon	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
5—	Tony, the Tramp	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
6—	The Five Hundred Dollar Check	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
7—	Helping Himself	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
8—	Making His Way	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
9—	Try and Trust	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
10—	Only an Irish Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
11—	Jed, the Poorhouse Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
12—	Chester Rand	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
13—	Grit, the Young Boatman of Pine Point	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
14—	Joe's Luck	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
15—	From Farm Boy to Senator	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
16—	The Young Outlaw	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
17—	Jack's Ward	By Horatio Alger, Jr.

18—	Dean Dunham	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
19—	In a New World	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
20—	Both Sides of the Continent	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
21—	The Store Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
22—	Brave and Bold	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
23—	A New York Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
24—	Bob Burton	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
25—	The Young Adventurer	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
26—	Julius, the Street Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
27—	Adrift in New York	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
28—	Tom Brace	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
29—	Struggling Upward	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
30—	The Adventures of a New York Telegraph Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
31—	Tom Tracy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
32—	The Young Acrobat	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
33—	Bound to Rise	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
34—	Hector's Inheritance	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
35—	Do and Dare	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
36—	The Tin Box	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
37—	Tom, the Bootblack	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
38—	Risen from the Ranks	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
39—	Shifting for Himself	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
40—	Wait and Hope	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
41—	Sam's Chance	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
42—	Striving for Fortune	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
43—	Phil, the Fiddler	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
44—	Slow and Sure	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
45—	Walter Sherwood's Probation	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
46—	The Trials and Triumphs of Mark Mason	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
47—	The Young Salesman	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
48—	Andy Grant's Pluck	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
49—	Facing the World	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
50—	Luke Walton	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
51—	Strive and Succeed	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
52—	From Canal Boy to President	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
53—	The Erie Train Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.

54— Paul, the Peddler	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
55— The Young Miner	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
56— Charlie Codman's Cruise	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
57— A Debt of Honor	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
58— The Young Explorer	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
59— Ben's Nugget	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
60— The Errand Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
61— Frank and Fearless	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
62— Frank Hunter's Peril	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
63— Adrift in the City	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
64— Tom Thatcher's Fortune	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
65— Tom Turner's Legacy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
66— Dan, the Newsboy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
67— Digging for Gold	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
68— Lester's Luck	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
69— In Search of Treasure	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
70— Frank's Campaign	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
71— Bernard Brook's Adventures	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
72— Robert Coverdale's Struggles	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
73— Paul Prescott's Charge	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
74— Mark Manning's Mission	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
75— Rupert's Ambition	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
76— Sink or Swim	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
77— The Backwoods Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
78— Tom Temple's Career	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
79— Ben Bruce	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
80— The Young Musician	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
81— The Telegraph Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
82— Work and Win	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
83— The Train Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
84— The Cash Boy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
85— Herbert Carter's Legacy	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
86— Strong and Steady	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
87— Lost at Sea	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
88— From Farm to Fortune	By Horatio Alger, Jr.
89— Young Captain Jack	By Horatio Alger, Jr.

90— Joe, the Hotel Boy By Horatio Alger, Jr.
91— Out for Business By Horatio Alger, Jr.
92— Falling in With Fortune By Horatio Alger, Jr.
93— Nelson, the Newsboy By Horatio Alger, Jr.
94— Randy of the River By Horatio Alger, Jr.
95— Jerry, the Backwoods Boy By Horatio Alger, Jr.
96— Ben Logan's Triumph By Horatio Alger, Jr.
97— The Young Book Agent By Horatio Alger, Jr.
98— The Last Cruise of *The Spitfire* By Edward Stratemeyer
99— Reuben Stone's Discovery By Edward Stratemeyer
100— True to Himself By Edward Stratemeyer
101— Richard Dare's Venture By Edward Stratemeyer
102— Oliver Bright's Search By Edward Stratemeyer
103— To Alaska for Gold By Edward Stratemeyer
104— The Young Auctioneer By Edward Stratemeyer
105— Bound to Be an Electrician By Edward Stratemeyer
106— Shorthand Tom By Edward Stratemeyer
107— Fighting for His Own By Edward Stratemeyer
108— Joe, the Surveyor By Edward Stratemeyer
109— Larry, the Wanderer By Edward Stratemeyer
110— The Young Ranchman By Edward Stratemeyer
111— The Young Lumberman By Edward Stratemeyer
112— The Young Explorers By Edward Stratemeyer
113— Boys of the Wilderness By Edward Stratemeyer
114— Boys of the Great Northwest By Edward Stratemeyer
115— Boys of the Gold Fields By Edward Stratemeyer
116— For His Country By Edward Stratemeyer
117— Comrades in Peril By Edward Stratemeyer
118— The Young Pearl Hunters By Edward Stratemeyer
119— The Young Bandmaster By Edward Stratemeyer
120— Boys of the Fort By Edward Stratemeyer
121— On Fortune's Trail By Edward Stratemeyer
122— Lost in the Land of Ice By Edward Stratemeyer
123— Bob, the Photographer By Edward Stratemeyer
124— Among the Missing By Oliver Optic
125— His Own Helper By Oliver Optic

126— Honest Kit Dunstable By Oliver Optic
127— Every Inch a Boy By Oliver Optic
128— The Young Pilot By Oliver Optic
129— Always in Luck By Oliver Optic
130— Rich and Humble By Oliver Optic
131— In School and Out By Oliver Optic
132— Watch and Wait By Oliver Optic
133— Work and Win By Oliver Optic
134— Hope and Have By Oliver Optic
135— Haste and Waste By Oliver Optic
136— Royal Tarr's Pluck By Oliver Optic
137— The Prisoners of the Cave By Oliver Optic
138— Louis Chiswick's Mission By Oliver Optic
139— The Professor's Son By Oliver Optic
140— The Young Hermit By Oliver Optic
141— The Cruise of *The Dandy* By Oliver Optic
142— Building Himself Up By Oliver Optic
143— Lyon Hart's Heroism By Oliver Optic
144— Three Young Silver Kings By Oliver Optic
145— Making a Man of Himself By Oliver Optic
146— Striving for His Own By Oliver Optic
147— Through by Daylight By Oliver Optic
148— Lightning Express By Oliver Optic
149— On Time By Oliver Optic
150— Switch Off By Oliver Optic

In order that there may be no confusion, we desire to say that the books listed below will be issued during the respective months in New York City and vicinity. They may not reach the readers at a distance promptly, on account of delays in transportation.

To be published in January, 1926.

151— Brake Up By Oliver Optic
152— Bear and Forbear By Oliver Optic

To be published in February, 1926.

153— The "Starry Flag" By Oliver Optic
154— Breaking Away By Oliver Optic

To be published in March, 1926.

155— Seek and Find By Oliver Optic
156— Freaks of Fortune By Oliver Optic

To be published in April, 1926.

157— Make or Break By Oliver Optic
158— Down the River By Oliver Optic

To be published in May, 1926.

159— The Boat Club By Oliver Optic
160— All Aboard By Oliver Optic

To be published in June, 1926.

161— Now or Never By Oliver Optic
162— Try Again By Oliver Optic
163— Poor and Proud By Oliver Optic

NICK CARTER STORIES

New Magnet Library

Not a Dull Book in This List

Nick Carter stands for an interesting detective story. The fact that the books in this line are so uniformly good is entirely due to the work of a specialist. The man who wrote these stories produced no other type of fiction. His mind was concentrated upon the creation of new plots and situations in which his hero emerged triumphantly from all sorts of troubles and landed the criminal just where he should be—behind the bars.

The author of these stories knew more about writing detective stories than any other single person.

Following is a list of the best Nick Carter stories. They have been selected with extreme care, and we unhesitatingly recommend each of them as being fully as interesting as any detective story between cloth covers which sells at ten times the price.

If you do not know Nick Carter, buy a copy of any of the New Magnet library books, and get acquainted. He will surprise and delight you.

ALL TITLES ALWAYS IN PRINT

850— Wanted: A Clew	By Nicholas Carter
851— A Tangled Skein	By Nicholas Carter
852— The Bullion Mystery	By Nicholas Carter
853— The Man of Riddles	By Nicholas Carter
854— A Miscarriage of Justice	By Nicholas Carter
855— The Gloved Hand	By Nicholas Carter
856— Spoilers and the Spoils	By Nicholas Carter
857— The Deeper Game	By Nicholas Carter
858— Bolts from Blue Skies	By Nicholas Carter
859— Unseen Foes	By Nicholas Carter
860— Knaves in High Places	By Nicholas Carter
861— The Microbe of Crime	By Nicholas Carter
862— In the Toils of Fear	By Nicholas Carter
863— A Heritage of Trouble	By Nicholas Carter
864— Called to Account	By Nicholas Carter
865— The Just and the Unjust	By Nicholas Carter
866— Instinct at Fault	By Nicholas Carter
867— A Rogue Worth Trapping	By Nicholas Carter

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