

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

ADRIFT IN NEW YORK:
TOM AND FLORENCE
BRAVING THE WORLD

Horatio Alger
**Adrift in New York: Tom and
Florence Braving the World**

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Jr. Horatio Alger

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CHAPTER I. THE MISSING HEIR

“Uncle, you are not looking well to-night.”

“I’m not well, Florence. I sometimes doubt if I shall ever be any better.”

“Surely, uncle, you cannot mean—”

“Yes, my child, I have reason to believe that I am nearing the end.”

“I cannot bear to hear you speak so, uncle,” said Florence Linden, in irrepressible agitation. “You are not an old man. You are but fifty-four.”

“True, Florence, but it is not years only that make a man old. Two great sorrows have embittered my life. First, the death of my dearly beloved wife, and next, the loss of my boy, Harvey.”

“It is long since I have heard you refer to my cousin’s loss. I thought you had become reconciled—no, I do not mean that,—I thought your regret might be less poignant.”

“I have not permitted myself to speak of it, but I have never ceased to think of it day and night.”

John Linden paused sadly, then resumed:

“If he had died, I might, as you say, have become reconciled; but he was abducted at the age of four by a revengeful servant whom I had discharged from my employment. Heaven knows whether he is living or dead, but it is impressed upon my mind that he still lives, it may be in misery, it may be as a criminal, while I, his unhappy father, live on in luxury which I cannot enjoy, with no one to care for me—”

Florence Linden sank impulsively on her knees beside her uncle’s chair.

“Don’t say that, uncle,” she pleaded. “You know that I love you, Uncle John.”

“And I, too, uncle.”

There was a shade of jealousy in the voice of Curtis Waring as he entered the library through the open door, and approaching his uncle, pressed his hand.

He was a tall, dark-complexioned man, of perhaps thirty-five, with shifty, black eyes and thin lips, shaded by a dark mustache. It was not a face to trust.

Even when he smiled the expression of his face did not soften. Yet he could moderate his voice so as to express tenderness and sympathy.

He was the son of an elder sister of Mr. Linden, while Florence was the daughter of a younger brother.

Both were orphans, and both formed a part of Mr. Linden's household, and owed everything to his bounty.

Curtis was supposed to be in some business downtown; but he received a liberal allowance from his uncle, and often drew upon him for outside assistance.

As he stood with his uncle's hand in his, he was necessarily brought near Florence, who instinctively drew a little away, with a slight shudder indicating repugnance.

Slight as it was, Curtis detected it, and his face darkened.

John Linden looked from one to the other. "Yes," he said, "I must not forget that I have a nephew and a niece. You are both dear to me, but no one can take the place of the boy I have lost."

"But it is so long ago, uncle," said Curtis. "It must be fourteen years."

"It is fourteen years."

"And the boy is long since dead!"

"No, no!" said John Linden, vehemently. "I do not, I will not, believe it. He still lives, and I live only in the hope of one day clasping him in my arms."

"That is very improbable, uncle," said Curtis, in a tone of annoyance. "There isn't one chance in a hundred that my cousin still lives. The grave has closed over him long since. The sooner you make up your mind to accept the inevitable the better."

The drawn features of the old man showed that the words had a depressing effect upon his mind, but Florence interrupted her cousin with an indignant protest.

“How can you speak so, Curtis?” she exclaimed. “Leave Uncle John the hope that he has so long cherished. I have a presentiment that Harvey still lives.”

John Linden’s face brightened up

“You, too, believe it possible, Florence?” he said, eagerly.

“Yes, uncle. I not only believe it possible, but probable. How old would Harvey be if he still lived?”

“Eighteen—nearly a year older than yourself.”

“How strange! I always think of him as a little boy.”

“And I, too, Florence. He rises before me in his little velvet suit, as he was when I last saw him, with his sweet, boyish face, in which his mother’s looks were reflected.”

“Yet, if still living,” interrupted Curtis, harshly, “he is a rough street boy, perchance serving his time at Blackwell’s Island, and, a hardened young ruffian, whom it would be bitter mortification to recognize as your son.”

“That’s the sorrowful part of it,” said his uncle, in a voice of anguish. “That is what I most dread.”

“Then, since even if he were living you would not care to recognize him, why not cease to think of him, or else regard him as dead?”

“Curtis Waring, have you no heart?” demanded Florence, indignantly.

“Indeed, Florence, you ought to know,” said Curtis, sinking his voice into softly modulated accents.

“I know nothing of it,” said Florence, coldly, rising from her

recumbent position, and drawing aloof from Curtis.

“You know that the dearest wish of my heart is to find favor in your eyes. Uncle, you know my wish, and approve of it, do you not?”

“Yes, Curtis; you and Florence are equally dear to me, and it is my hope that you may be united. In that case, there will be no division of my fortune. It will be left to you jointly.”

“Believe me, sir,” said Curtis, with faltering voice, feigning an emotion which he did not feel, “believe me, that I fully appreciate your goodness. I am sure Florence joins with me—”

“Florence can speak for herself,” said his cousin, coldly. “My uncle needs no assurance from me. He is always kind, and I am always grateful.”

John Linden seemed absorbed in thought.

“I do not doubt your affection,” he said; “and I have shown it by making you my joint heirs in the event of your marriage; but it is only fair to say that my property goes to my boy, if he still lives.”

“But, sir,” protested Curtis, “is not that likely to create unnecessary trouble? It can never be known, and meanwhile—”

“You and Florence will hold the property in trust.”

“Have you so specified in your will?” asked Curtis.

“I have made two wills. Both are in yonder secretary. By the first the property is bequeathed to you and Florence. By the second and later, it goes to my lost boy in the event of his recovery. Of course, you and Florence are not forgotten, but the

bulk of the property goes to Harvey.”

“I sincerely wish the boy might be restored to you,” said Curtis; but his tone belied his words. “Believe me, the loss of the property would affect me little, if you could be made happy by realizing your warmest desire; but, uncle, I think it only the part of a friend to point out to you, as I have already done, the baselessness of any such expectation.”

“It may be as you say, Curtis,” said his uncle, with a sigh. “If I were thoroughly convinced of it, I would destroy the later will, and leave my property absolutely to you and Florence.”

“No, uncle,” said Florence, impulsively, “make no change; let the will stand.”

Curtis, screened from his uncle’s view, darted a glance of bitter indignation at Florence.

“Is the girl mad?” he muttered to himself. “Must she forever balk me?”

“Let it be so for the present, then,” said Mr. Linden, wearily. “Curtis, will you ring the bell? I am tired, and shall retire to my couch early.”

“Let me help you, Uncle John,” said Florence, eagerly.

“It is too much for your strength, my child. I am growing more and more helpless.”

“I, too, can help,” said Curtis.

John Linden, supported on either side by his nephew and niece, left the room, and was assisted to his chamber.

Curtis and Florence returned to the library.

“Florence,” said her cousin, “my uncle’s intentions, as expressed to-night, make it desirable that there should be an understanding between us. Take a seat beside me”—leading her to a sofa—“and let us talk this matter over.”

With a gesture of repulsion Florence declined the proffered seat, and remained standing.

“As you please,” she answered, coldly.

“Will you be seated?”

“No; our interview will be brief.”

“Then I will come to the point. Uncle John wishes to see us united.”

“It can never be!” said Florence, decidedly.

Curtis bit his lip in mortification, for her tone was cold and scornful.

Mingled with this mortification was genuine regret, for, so far as he was capable of loving any one, he loved his fair young cousin.

“You profess to love Uncle John, and yet you would disappoint his cherished hope!” he returned.

“Is it his cherished hope?”

“There is no doubt about it. He has spoken to me more than once on the subject. Feeling that his end is near, he wishes to leave you in charge of a protector.”

“I can protect myself,” said Florence, proudly.

“You think so. You do not consider the hapless lot of a penniless girl in a cold and selfish world.”

“Penniless?” repeated Florence, in an accent of surprise.

“Yes, penniless. Our uncle’s bequest to you is conditional upon your acceptance of my hand.”

“Has he said this?” asked Florence, sinking into an armchair, with a helpless look.

“He has told me so more than once,” returned Curtis, smoothly. “You don’t know how near to his heart this marriage is. I know what you would say: If the property comes to me I could come to your assistance, but I am expressly prohibited from doing so. I have pleaded with my uncle in your behalf, but in vain.”

Florence was too clear-sighted not to penetrate his falsehood.

“If my uncle’s heart is hardened against me,” she said, “I shall be too wise to turn to you. I am to understand, then, that my choice lies between poverty and a union with you?”

“You have stated it correctly, Florence.”

“Then,” said Florence, arising, “I will not hesitate. I shrink from poverty, for I have been reared in luxury, but I will sooner live in a hovel—”

“Or a tenement house,” interjected Curtis, with a sneer.

“Yes, or a tenement house, than become the wife of one I loathe.”

“Girl, you shall bitterly repent that word!” said Curtis, stung to fury.

She did not reply, but, pale and sorrowful, glided from the room to weep bitter tears in the seclusion of her chamber.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGER VISITOR

Curtis Waring followed the retreating form of his cousin with a sardonic smile.

“She is in the toils! She cannot escape me!” he muttered. “But”—and here his brow darkened—“it vexes me to see how she repels my advances, as if I were some loathsome thing! If only she would return my love—for I do love her, cold as she is—I should be happy. Can there be a rival? But no! we live so quietly that she has met no one who could win her affection. Why can she not turn to me? Surely, I am not so ill-favored, and though twice her age, I am still a young man. Nay, it is only a young girl’s caprice. She shall yet come to my arms, a willing captive.”

His thoughts took a turn, as he arose from his seat, and walked over to the secretary.

“So it is here that the two wills are deposited!” he said to himself; “one making me a rich man, the other a beggar! While the last is in existence I am not safe. The boy may be alive, and liable to turn up at any moment. If only he were dead—or the will destroyed—” Here he made a suggestive pause.

He took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and tried one after another, but without success. He was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice the entrance of a dark-browed,

broad-shouldered man, dressed in a shabby corduroy suit, till the intruder indulged in a short cough, intended to draw attention.

Starting with guilty consciousness, Curtis turned sharply around, and his glance fell on the intruder.

“Who are you?” he demanded, angrily. “And how dare you enter a gentleman’s house unbidden?”

“Are you the gentleman?” asked the intruder, with intentional insolence.

“Yes.”

“You own this house?”

“Not at present. It is my uncle’s.”

“And that secretary—pardon my curiosity—is his?”

“Yes; but what business is it of yours?”

“Not much. Only it makes me laugh to see a gentleman picking a lock. You should leave such business to men like me!”

“You are an insolent fellow!” said Curtis, more embarrassed than he liked to confess, for this rough-looking man had become possessed of a dangerous secret. “I am my uncle’s confidential agent, and it was on business of his that I wished to open the desk.”

“Why not go to him for the key?”

“Because he is sick. But, pshaw! why should I apologize or give any explanation to you? What can you know of him or me?”

“More, perhaps, than you suspect,” said the intruder, quietly.

“Then, you know, perhaps, that I am my uncle’s heir?”

“Don’t be too sure of that.”

“Look here, fellow,” said Curtis, thoroughly provoked, “I don’t know who you are nor what you mean, but let me inform you that your presence here is an intrusion, and the sooner you leave the house the better!”

“I will leave it when I get ready.”

Curtis started to his feet, and advanced to his visitor with an air of menace.

“Go at once,” he exclaimed, angrily, “or I will kick you out of the door!”

“What’s the matter with the window?” returned the stranger, with an insolent leer.

“That’s as you prefer, but if you don’t leave at once I will eject you.”

By way of reply, the rough visitor coolly seated himself in a luxurious easy-chair, and, looking up into the angry face of Waring, said:

“Oh, no, you won’t.”

“And why not, may I ask?” said Curtis, with a feeling of uneasiness for which he could not account.

“Why not? Because, in that case, I should seek an interview with your uncle, and tell him—”

“What?”

“That his son still lives; and that I can restore him to his—”

The face of Curtis Waring blanched; he staggered as if he had been struck; and he cried out, hoarsely:

“It is a lie!”

“It is the truth, begging your pardon. Do you mind my smoking?” and he coolly produced a common clay pipe, filled and lighted it.

“Who are you?” asked Curtis, scanning the man’s features with painful anxiety.

“Have you forgotten Tim Bolton?”

“Are you Tim Bolton?” faltered Curtis.

“Yes; but you don’t seem glad to see me?”

“I thought you were—”

“In Australia. So I was three years since. Then I got homesick, and came back to New York.”

“You have been here three years?”

“Yes,” chuckled Bolton. “You didn’t suspect it, did you?”

“Where?” asked Curtis, in a hollow voice.

“I keep a saloon on the Bowery. There’s my card. Call around when convenient.”

Curtis was about to throw the card into the grate, but on second thought dropped it into his pocket.

“And the boy?” he asked, slowly.

“Is alive and well. He hasn’t been starved. Though I dare say you wouldn’t have grieved if he had.”

“And he is actually in this city?”

“Just so.”

“Does he know anything of—you know what I mean.”

“He doesn’t know that he is the son of a rich man, and heir to the property which you look upon as yours. That’s what you

mean, isn't it?"

"Yes. What is he doing? Is he at work?"

"He helps me some in the saloon, sells papers in the evenings, and makes himself generally useful."

"Has he any education?"

"Well, I haven't sent him to boarding school or college," answered Tim. "He don't know no Greek, or Latin, or mathematics—pew, that's a hard word. You didn't tell me you wanted him made a scholar of."

"I didn't. I wanted never to see or hear from him again. What made you bring him back to New York?"

"Couldn't keep away, governor. I got homesick, I did. There ain't but one Bowery in the world, and I hankered after that—"

"Didn't I pay you money to keep away, Tim Bolton?"

"I don't deny it; but what's three thousand dollars? Why, the kid's cost me more than that. I've had the care of him for fourteen years, and it's only about two hundred a year."

"You have broken your promise to me!" said Curtis, sternly.

"There's worse things than breaking your promise," retorted Bolton.

Scarcely had he spoken than a change came over his face, and he stared open-mouthed behind him and beyond Curtis.

Startled himself, Curtis turned, and saw, with a feeling akin to dismay, the tall figure of his uncle standing on the threshold of the left portal, clad in a morning gown, with his eyes fixed inquiringly upon Bolton and himself.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNHOLY COMPACT

“Who is that man, Curtis?” asked John Linden, pointing his thin finger at Tim Bolton, who looked strangely out of place, as, with clay pipe, he sat in the luxurious library on a sumptuous chair.

“That man?” stammered Curtis, quite at a loss what to say.

“Yes.”

“He is a poor man out of luck, who has applied to me for assistance,” answered Curtis, recovering his wits.

“That’s it, governor,” said Bolton, thinking it necessary to confirm the statement. “I’ve got five small children at home almost starvin’, your honor.”

“That is sad. What is your business, my man?”

It was Bolton’s turn to be embarrassed.

“My business?” he repeated.

“That is what I said.”

“I’m a blacksmith, but I’m willing to do any honest work.”

“That is commendable; but don’t you know that it is very ill-bred to smoke a pipe in a gentleman’s house?”

“Excuse me, governor!”

And Bolton extinguished his pipe, and put it away in a pocket of his corduroy coat.

“I was just telling him the same thing,” said Curtis. “Don’t trouble yourself any further, uncle. I will inquire into the man’s circumstances, and help him if I can.”

“Very well, Curtis. I came down because I thought I heard voices.”

John Linden slowly returned to his chamber, and left the two alone.

“The governor’s getting old,” said Bolton. “When I was butler here, fifteen years ago, he looked like a young man. He didn’t suspect that he had ever seen me before.”

“Nor that you had carried away his son, Bolton.”

“Who hired me to do it? Who put me up to the job, as far as that goes?”

“Hush! Walls have ears. Let us return to business.”

“That suits me.”

“Look here, Tim Bolton,” said Curtis, drawing up a chair, and lowering his voice to a confidential pitch, “you say you want money?”

“Of course I do.”

“Well, I don’t give money for nothing.”

“I know that. What’s wanted now?”

“You say the boy is alive?”

“He’s very much alive.”

“Is there any necessity for his living?” asked Curtis, in a sharp, hissing tone, fixing his eyes searchingly on Bolton, to see how his hint would be taken.

“You mean that you want me to murder him?” said Bolton, quickly.

“Why not? You don’t look over scrupulous.”

“I am a bad man, I admit it,” said Bolton, with a gesture of repugnance, “a thief, a low blackguard, perhaps, but, thank Heaven! I am no murderer! And if I was, I wouldn’t spill a drop of that boy’s blood for the fortune that is his by right.”

“I didn’t give you credit for so much sentiment, Bolton,” said Curtis, with a sneer. “You don’t look like it, but appearances are deceitful. We’ll drop the subject. You can serve me in another way. Can you open this secretary?”

“Yes; that’s in my line.”

“There is a paper in it that I want. It is my uncle’s will. I have a curiosity to read it.”

“I understand. Well, I’m agreeable.”

“If you find any money or valuables, you are welcome to them. I only want the paper. When will you make the attempt?”

“To-morrow night. When will it be safe?”

“At eleven o’clock. We all retire early in this house. Can you force an entrance?”

“Yes; but it will be better for you to leave the outer door unlocked.”

“I have a better plan. Here is my latchkey.”

“Good! I may not do the job myself, but I will see that it is done. How shall I know the will?”

“It is in a big envelope, tied with a narrow tape. Probably it

is inscribed: 'My will.' ”

“Suppose I succeed, when shall I see you?”

“I will come around to your place on the Bowery. Good-night!”

Curtis Waring saw Bolton to the door, and let him out. Returning, he flung himself on a sofa.

“I can make that man useful!” he reflected. “There is an element of danger in the boy’s presence in New York; but it will go hard if I can’t get rid of him! Tim Bolton is unexpectedly squeamish, but there are others to whom I can apply. With gold everything is possible. It’s time matters came to a finish. My uncle’s health is rapidly failing—the doctor hints that he has heart disease—and the fortune for which I have been waiting so long will soon be mine, if I work my cards right. I can’t afford to make any mistakes now.”

CHAPTER IV.

FLORENCE

Florence Linden sat in the library the following evening in an attitude of depression. Her eyelids were swollen, and it was evident she had been weeping. During the day she had had an interview with her uncle, in which he harshly insisted upon her yielding to his wishes, and marrying her cousin, Curtis.

“But, uncle,” she objected, “I do not love him.”

“Marry him, and love will come.”

“Never!” she said, vehemently.

“You speak confidently, miss,” said Mr. Linden, with irritation.

“Listen, Uncle John. It is not alone that I do not love him. I dislike him—I loathe—him.”

“Nonsense! that is a young girl’s extravagant nonsense.”

“No, uncle.”

“There can be no reason for such a foolish dislike. What can you have against him?”

“It is impressed upon me, uncle, that Curtis is a bad man. There is something false—treacherous—about him.”

“Pooh! child! you are more foolish than I thought. I don’t say Curtis is an angel. No man is; at least, I never met any such. But he is no worse than the generality of men. In marrying him

you will carry out my cherished wish. Florence, I have not long to live. I shall be glad to see you well established in life before I leave you. As the wife of Curtis you will have a recognized position. You will go on living in this house, and the old home will be maintained.”

“But why is it necessary for me to marry at all, Uncle John?”

“You will be sure to marry some one. Should I divide my fortune between you and Curtis, you would become the prey of some unscrupulous fortune hunter.”

“Better that than become the wife of Curtis Waring—”

“I see, you are incorrigible,” said her uncle, angrily. “Do you refuse obedience to my wishes?”

“Command me in anything else, Uncle John, and I will obey,” pleaded Florence.

“Indeed! You only thwart me in my cherished wish, but are willing to obey me in unimportant matters. You forget the debt you owe me.”

“I forget nothing, dear uncle. I do not forget that, when I was a poor little child, helpless and destitute, you took me in your arms, gave me a home, and have cared for me from that time to this as only a parent could.”

“You remember that, then?”

“Yes, uncle. I hope you will not consider me wholly ungrateful.”

“It only makes matters worse. You own your obligations, yet refuse to make the only return I desire. You refuse to comfort

me in the closing days of my life by marrying your cousin.”

“Because that so nearly concerns my happiness that no one has a right to ask me to sacrifice all I hold dear.”

“I see you are incorrigible,” said John Linden, stormily. “Do you know what will be the consequences?”

“I am prepared for all.”

“Then listen! If you persist in balking me, I shall leave the entire estate to Curtis.”

“Do with your money as you will, uncle. I have no claim to more than I have received.”

“You are right there; but that is not all.”

Florence fixed upon him a mute look of inquiry.

“I will give you twenty-four hours more to come to your senses. Then, if you persist in your ingratitude and disobedience, you must find another home.”

“Oh, uncle, you do not mean that?” exclaimed Florence, deeply moved.

“I do mean it, and I shall not allow your tears to move me. Not another word, for I will not hear it. Take twenty-four hours to think over what I have said.”

Florence bowed her head on her hands, and gave herself up to sorrowful thoughts. But she was interrupted by the entrance of the servant, who announced:

“Mr. Percy de Brabazon.”

An effeminate-looking young man, foppishly dressed, followed the servant into the room, and made it impossible for

Florence to deny herself, as she wished to do.

“I hope I see you well, Miss Florence,” he simpered.

“Thank you, Mr. de Brabazon,” said Florence, coldly. “I have a slight headache.”

“I am awfully sorry, I am, upon my word, Miss Florence. My doctor tells me it is only those whose bwains are vewy active that are troubled with headaches.”

“Then, I presume, Mr. de Brabazon,” said Florence, with intentional sarcasm, “that you never have a headache.”

“Weally, Miss Florence, that is vewy clevah. You will have your joke.”

“It was no joke, I assure you, Mr. de Brabazon.”

“I—I thought it might be. Didn’t I see you at the opewa last evening?”

“Possibly. I was there.”

“I often go to the opewa. It’s so—so fashionable, don’t you know?”

“Then you don’t go to hear the music?”

“Oh, of course, but one can’t always be listening to the music, don’t you know. I had a fwiend with me last evening—an Englishman—a charming fellow, I assure you. He’s the second cousin of a lord, and yet—you’ll hardly credit it—we’re weally vewy intimate. He tells me, Miss Florence, that I’m the perfect image of his cousin, Lord Fitz Noodle.”

“I am not at all surprised.”

“Weally, you are vewy kind, Miss Florence. I thought it a great

compliment. I don't know how it is, but everybody takes me for an Englishman. Strange, isn't it?"

"I am very glad."

"May I ask why, Miss Florence?"

"Because— Well, perhaps I had better not explain. It seems to give you pleasure. You would, probably, prefer to be an Englishman."

"I admit that I have a great admiration for the English character. It's a great pity we have no lords in America. Now, if you would only allow me to bring my English friend here—

"I don't care to make any new acquaintances. Even if I did, I prefer my own countrymen. Don't you like America, Mr. de Brabazon?"

"Oh, of course, if we only had some lords here."

"We have plenty of flunkeys."

"That's awfully clever, 'pon my word."

"Is it? I am afraid you are too complimentary. You are very good-natured."

"I always feel good-natured in your company, Miss Florence. I—wish I could always be with you."

"Really! Wouldn't that be a trifle monotonous?" asked Florence, sarcastically.

"Not if we were married," said Percy, boldly breaking the ice.

"What do you mean, Mr. de Brabazon?"

"I hope you will excuse me, Miss Florence—Miss Linden, I mean; but I'm awfully in love with you, and have been ever so

long—but I never dared to tell you so. I felt so nervous, don't you know? Will you marry me? I'll be awfully obliged if you will."

Mr. de Brabazon rather awkwardly slipped from his chair, and sank on one knee before Florence.

"Please arise, Mr. de Brabazon," said Florence, hurriedly. "It is quite out of the question—what you ask—I assure you."

"Ah! I see how it is," said Percy, clasping his hands sadly. "You love another."

"Not that I am aware of."

"Then I may still hope?"

"I cannot encourage you, Mr. de Brabazon. My heart is free, but it can never be yours."

"Then," said Percy, gloomily, "there is only one thing for me to do."

"What is that?"

"I shall go to the Bwooklyn Bwidge, climb to the parapet, jump into the water, and end my misewable life."

"You had better think twice before adopting such a desperate resolution, Mr. de Brabazon. You will meet others who will be kinder to you than I have been—"

"I can never love another. My heart is broken. Farewell, cruel girl. When you read the papers tomorrow morning, think of the unhappy Percy de Brabazon!"

Mr. de Brabazon folded his arms gloomily, and stalked out of the room.

"If my position were not so sad, I should be tempted to smile,"

said Florence. "Mr. de Brabazon will not do this thing. His emotions are as strong as those of a butterfly."

After a brief pause Florence seated herself at the table, and drew toward her writing materials.

"It is I whose heart should be broken!" she murmured; "I who am driven from the only home I have ever known. What can have turned against me my uncle, usually so kind and considerate? It must be that Curtis has exerted a baneful influence upon him. I cannot leave him without one word of farewell."

She took up a sheet of paper, and wrote, rapidly:

"Dear Uncle: You have told me to leave your house, and I obey. I cannot tell you how sad I feel, when I reflect that I have lost your love, and must go forth among strangers—I know not where. I was but a little girl when you gave me a home. I have grown up in an atmosphere of love, and I have felt very grateful to you for all you have done for me. I have tried to conform to your wishes, and I would obey you in all else—but I cannot marry Curtis; I think I would rather die. Let me still live with you as I have done. I do not care for any part of your money—leave it all to him, if you think best—but give me back my place in your heart. You are angry now, but you will some time pity and forgive your poor Florence, who will never cease to bless and pray for you. Good-bye!

"Florence."

She was about to sign herself Florence Linden, but reflected that she was no longer entitled to use a name which would seem

to carry with it a claim upon her uncle.

The tears fell upon the paper as she was writing, but she heeded them not. It was the saddest hour of her life. Hitherto she had been shielded from all sorrow, and secure in the affection of her uncle, had never dreamed that there would come a time when she would feel obliged to leave all behind her, and go out into the world, friendless and penniless, but poorest of all in the loss of that love which she had hitherto enjoyed.

After completing the note, Florence let her head fall upon the table, and sobbed herself to sleep.

An hour and a half passed, the servant looked in, but noticing that her mistress was sleeping, contented herself with lowering the gas, but refrained from waking her.

And so she slept on till the French clock upon the mantle struck eleven.

Five minutes later and the door of the room slowly opened, and a boy entered on tiptoe. He was roughly dressed. His figure was manly and vigorous, and despite his stealthy step and suspicious movements his face was prepossessing.

He started when he saw Florence.

“What, a sleeping gal!” he said to himself. “Tim told me I’d find the coast clear, but I guess she’s sound asleep, and won’t hear nothing. I don’t half like this job, but I’ve got to do as Tim told me. He says he’s my father, so I s’pose it’s all right. All the same, I shall be nabbed some day, and then the family’ll be disgraced. It’s a queer life I’ve led ever since I can remember. Sometimes

I feel like leaving Tim, and settin' up for myself. I wonder how 'twould seem to be respectable.”

The boy approached the secretary, and with some tools he had brought essayed to open it. After a brief delay he succeeded, and lifted the cover. He was about to explore it, according to Tim's directions, when he heard a cry of fear, and turning swiftly saw Florence, her eyes dilated with terror, gazing at him.

“Who are you?” she asked in alarm, “and what are you doing there?”

CHAPTER V.

DODGER

The boy sprang to the side of Florence, and siezed her wrists in his strong young grasp.

“Don’t you alarm the house,” he said, “or I’ll—”

“What will you do?” gasped Florence, in alarm. The boy was evidently softened by her beauty, and answered in a tone of hesitation:

“I don’t know. I won’t harm you if you keep quiet.”

“What are you here for?” asked Florence, fixing her eyes on the boy’s face; “are you a thief?”

“I don’t know—yes, I suppose I am.”

“How sad, when you are so young.”

“What! miss, do you pity me?”

“Yes, my poor boy, you must be very poor, or you wouldn’t bring yourself to steal.”

“No. I ain’t poor; leastways, I have enough to eat, and I have a place to sleep.”

“Then why don’t you earn your living by honest means?”

“I can’t; I must obey orders.”

“Whose orders?”

“Why, the gov’nor’s, to be sure.”

“Did he tell you to open that secretary?”

“Yes.”

“Who is the guv’nor, as you call him?”

“I can’t tell; it wouldn’t be square.”

“He must be a very wicked man.”

“Well, he ain’t exactly what you call an angel, but I’ve seen wuss men than the guv’nor.”

“Do you mind telling me your own name?”

“No; for I know you won’t peach on me. Tom Dodger.”

“Dodger?”

“Yes.”

“That isn’t a surname.”

“It’s all I’ve got. That’s what I’m always called.”

“It is very singular,” said Florence, fixing a glance of mingled curiosity and perplexity upon the young visitor.

While the two were earnestly conversing in that subdued light, afforded by the lowered gaslight, Tim Bolton crept in through the door unobserved by either, tiptoed across the room to the secretary, snatched the will and a roll of bills, and escaped without attracting attention.

“Oh, I wish I could persuade you to give up this bad life,” resumed Florence, earnestly, “and become honest.”

“Do you really care what becomes of me, miss?” asked Dodger, slowly.

“I do, indeed.”

“That’s very kind of you, miss; but I don’t understand it. You are a rich young lady, and I’m only a poor boy, livin’ in a Bowery

dive.”

“What’s that?”

“Never mind, miss, such as you wouldn’t understand. Why, all my life I’ve lived with thieves, and drunkards, and bunco men, and—”

“But I’m sure you don’t like it. You are fit for something better.”

“Do you really think so?” asked Dodger, doubtfully.

“Yes; you have a good face. You were meant to be good and honest, I am sure.”

“Would you trust me?” asked the boy, earnestly, fixing his large, dark eyes eloquently on the face of Florence.

“Yes, I would if you would only leave your evil companions, and become true to your better nature.”

“No one ever spoke to me like that before, miss,” said Dodger, his expressive features showing that he was strongly moved. “You think I could be good if I tried hard, and grow up respectable?”

“I am sure you could,” said Florence, confidently.

There was something in this boy, young outlaw though he was, that moved her powerfully, and even fascinated her, though she hardly realized it. It was something more than a feeling of compassion for a wayward and misguided youth.

“I could if I was rich like you, and lived in a nice house, and ’sociated with swells. If you had a father like mine—”

“Is he a bad man?”

“Well, he don’t belong to the church. He keeps a gin mill, and

has ever since I was a kid.”

“Have you always lived with him?”

“Yes, but not in New York.”

“Where then?”

“In Melbourne.”

“That’s in Australia.”

“Yes, miss.”

“How long since you came to New York?”

“I guess it’s about three years.”

“And you have always had this man as a guardian? Poor boy!”

“You’ve got a different father from me, miss?”

Tears forced themselves to the eyes of Florence, as this remark brought forcibly to her mind the position in which she was placed.

“Alas!” she answered, impulsively, “I am alone in the world!”

“What! ain’t the old gentleman that lives here your father?”

“He is my uncle; but he is very, very angry with me, and has this very day ordered me to leave the house.”

“Why, what a cantankerous old ruffian he is, to be sure!” exclaimed the boy, indignantly.

“Hush! you must not talk against my uncle. He has always been kind to me till now.”

“Why, what’s up? What’s the old gentleman mad about?”

“He wants me to marry my cousin Curtis—a man I do not even like.”

“That’s a shame! Is it the dude I saw come out of the house a little while ago?”

“Oh, no; that’s a different gentleman. It’s Mr. de Brabazon.”

“You don’t want to marry him, do you?”

“No, no!”

“I’m glad of that. He don’t look as if he knew enough to come in when it rained.”

“The poor young man is not very brilliant, but I think I would rather marry him than Curtis Waring.”

“I’ve seen him, too. He’s got dark hair and a dark complexion, and a wicked look in his eye.”

“You, too, have noticed that?”

“I’ve seen such as him before. He’s a bad man.”

“Do you know anything about him?” asked Florence, eagerly.

“Only his looks.”

“I am not deceived,” murmured Florence, “it’s not wholly prejudice. The boy distrusts him, too. So you see, Dodger,” she added, aloud, “I am not a rich young lady, as you suppose. I must leave this house, and work for my living. I have no home any more.”

“If you have no home,” said Dodger, impulsively, “come home with me.”

“To the home you have described, my poor boy? How could I do that?”

“No; I will hire a room for you in a quiet street, and you shall be my sister. I will work for you, and give you my money.”

“You are kind, and I am glad to think I have found a friend when I need one most. But I could not accept stolen money. It

would be as bad as if I, too, were a thief.”

“I am not a thief! That is, I won’t be any more.”

“And you will give up your plan of robbing my uncle?”

“Yes, I will; though I don’t know what my gov’nor will say. He’ll half murder me, I expect. He’ll be sure to cut up rough.”

“Do right, Dodger, whatever happens. Promise me that you will never steal again?”

“There’s my hand, miss—I promise. Nobody ever talked to me like you. I never thought much about bein’ respectable, and growin’ up to be somebody, but if you take an interest in me, I’ll try hard to do right.”

At this moment, Mr. Linden, clad in a long morning gown, and holding a candle in his hand, entered the room, and started in astonishment when he saw Florence clasping the hand of one whose appearance led him to stamp as a young rough.

“Shameless girl!” he exclaimed, in stern reproof. “So this is the company you keep when you think I am out of the way!”

CHAPTER VI.

A TEMPEST

The charge was so strange and unexpected that Florence was overwhelmed. She could only murmur:

“Oh, uncle!”

Her young companion was indignant. Already he felt that Florence had consented to accept him as a friend, and he was resolved to stand by her.

“I say, old man,” he bristled up, “don’t you go to insult her! She’s an angel!”

“No doubt you think so,” rejoined Mr. Linden, in a tone of sarcasm. “Upon my word, miss, I congratulate you on your elevated taste. So this is your reason for not being willing to marry your Cousin Curtis?”

“Indeed, uncle, you are mistaken. I never met this boy till to-night.”

“Don’t try to deceive me. Young man, did you open my secretary?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And robbed it into the bargain,” continued Linden, going to the secretary, and examining it. He did not, however, miss the will, but only the roll of bills. “Give me back the money you have taken from me, you young rascal!”

“I took nothing, sir.”

“It’s a lie! The money is gone, and no one else could have taken it.”

“I don’t allow no one to call me a liar. Just take that back, old man, or I—”

“Indeed, uncle, he took nothing, for he had only just opened the secretary when I woke up and spoke to him.”

“You stand by him, of course, shameless girl! I blush to think that you are my niece. I am glad to think that my eyes are opened before it is too late.”

The old merchant rang the bell violently, and aroused the house. Dodger made no attempt to escape, but stood beside Florence in the attitude of a protector. But a short time elapsed before Curtis Waring and the servants entered the room, and gazed with wonder at the *tableau* presented by the excited old man and the two young people.

“My friends,” said John Linden, in a tone of excitement, “I call you to witness that this girl, whom I blush to acknowledge as my niece, has proved herself unworthy of my kindness. In your presence I cut her off, and bid her never again darken my door.”

“But what has she done, uncle?” asked Curtis. He was prepared for the presence of Dodger, whom he rightly concluded to be the agent of Tim Bolton, but he could not understand why Florence should be in the library at this late hour. Nor was he able to understand the evidently friendly relations between her and the young visitor.

“What has she done?” repeated John Linden. “She has introduced that young ruffian into the house to rob me. Look at that secretary! He has forced it open, and stolen a large sum of money.”

“It is not true, sir,” said Dodger, calmly, “about taking the money, I mean. I haven’t taken a cent.”

“Then why did you open the secretary?”

“I did mean to take money, but she stopped me.”

“Oh, she stopped you?” repeated Linden, with withering sarcasm. “Then, perhaps, you will tell me where the money is gone?”

“He hasn’t discovered about the will,” thought Curtis, congratulating himself; “if the boy has it, I must manage to give him a chance to escape.”

“You can search me if you want to,” continued Dodger, proudly. “You won’t find no money on me.”

“Do you think I am a fool, you young burglar?” exclaimed John Linden, angrily.

“Uncle, let me speak to the boy,” said Curtis, soothingly. “I think he will tell me.”

“As you like, Curtis; but I am convinced that he is a thief.”

Curtis Waring beckoned Dodger into an adjoining room.

“Now, my boy,” he said, smoothly, “give me what you took from the secretary, and I will see that you are not arrested.”

“But, sir, I didn’t take nothing—it’s just as I told the old duffer. The girl waked up just as I’d got the secretary open, and I didn’t

have a chance.”

“But the money is gone,” said Curtis, in an incredulous tone.

“I don’t know nothing about that.”

“Come, you’d better examine your pockets. In the hurry of the moment you may have taken it without knowing it.”

“No, I couldn’t.”

“Didn’t you take a paper of any kind?” asked Curtis, eagerly.

“Sometimes papers are of more value than money.”

“No, I didn’t take no paper, though Tim told me to.”

Curtis quietly ignored the allusion to Tim, for it did not suit his purpose to get Tim into trouble. His unscrupulous agent knew too much that would compromise his principal.

“Are you willing that I should examine you?”

“Yes, I am. Go ahead.”

Curtis thrust his hand into the pockets of the boy, who, boy as he was, was as tall as himself, but was not repaid by the discovery of anything. He was very much perplexed.

“Didn’t you throw the articles on the floor?” he demanded, suspiciously.

“No, I didn’t.”

“You didn’t give them to the young lady?”

“No; if I had she’d have said so.”

“Humph! this is strange. What is your name?”

“Dodger.”

“That’s a queer name; have you no other?”

“Not as I know of.”

“With whom do you live?”

“With my father. Leastways, he says he’s my father.”

There was a growing suspicion in the mind of Curtis Waring. He scanned the boy’s features with attention. Could this ill-dressed boy—a street boy in appearance—be his long-lost and deeply wronged cousin?

“Who is it that says he is your father?” he demanded, abruptly.

“Do you want to get him into trouble?”

“No, I don’t want to get him into trouble, or you either. Better tell me all, and I will be your friend.”

“You’re a better sort than I thought at first,” said Dodger. “The man I live with is called Tim Bolton.”

“I though so,” quickly ejaculated Curtis. He had scarcely got out the words before he was sensible that he had made a mistake.

“What! do you know Tim?” inquired Dodger, in surprise.

“I mean,” replied Curtis, lamely, “that I have heard of this man Bolton. He keeps a saloon on the Bowery, doesn’t he?”

“Yes.”

“I thought you would be living with some such man. Did he come to the house with you tonight?”

“Yes.”

“Where is he?”

“He stayed outside.”

“Perhaps he is there now.”

“Don’t you go to having him arrested,” said Dodger, suspiciously.

“I will keep my promise. Are you sure you didn’t pass out the paper and the money to him? Think now.”

“No, I didn’t. I didn’t have a chance. When I came into the room yonder I saw the gal asleep, and I thought she wouldn’t hear me, but when I got the desk open she spoke to me, and asked me what I was doin’.”

“And you took nothing?”

“No.”

“It seems very strange. I cannot understand it. Yet my uncle says the money is gone. Did anyone else enter the room while you were talking with Miss Linden?”

“I didn’t see any one.”

“What were you talking about?”

“She said the old man wanted her to marry you, and she didn’t want to.”

“She told you that?” exclaimed Curtis, in displeasure.

“Yes, she did. She said she’d rather marry the dude that was here early this evenin’.”

“Mr. de Brabazon!”

“Yes, that’s the name.”

“Upon my word, she was very confidential. You are a queer person for her to select as a confidant.”

“Maybe so, sir; but she knows I’m her friend.”

“You like the young lady, then? Perhaps you would like to marry her yourself?”

“As if she’d take any notice of a poor boy like me. I told her

if her uncle sent her away, I'd take care of her and be a brother to her."

"How would Mr. Tim Bolton—that's his name, isn't it?—like that?"

"I wouldn't take her to where he lives."

"I think, myself, it would hardly be a suitable home for a young lady brought up on Madison Avenue. There is certainly no accounting for tastes. Miss Florence—"

"That's her name, is it?"

"Yes; didn't she tell you?"

"No; but it's a nice name."

"She declines my hand, and accepts your protection. It will certainly be a proud distinction to become Mrs. Dodger."

"Don't laugh at her!" said Dodger, suspiciously.

"I don't propose to. But I think we may as well return to the library."

"Well," said Mr. Linden, as his nephew returned with Dodger.

"I have examined the boy, and found nothing on his person," said Curtis; "I confess I am puzzled. He appears to have a high admiration for Florence—"

"As I supposed."

"She has even confided to him her dislike for me, and he has offered her his protection."

"Is this so, miss?" demanded Mr. Linden, sternly.

"Yes, uncle," faltered Florence.

"Then you can join the young person you have selected

whenever you please. For your sake I will not have him arrested for attempted burglary. He is welcome to what he has taken, since he is likely to marry into the family. You may stay here to-night, and he can call for you in the morning.”

John Linden closed the secretary, and left the room, leaving Florence sobbing. The servants, too, retired, and Curtis was left alone with her.

“Florence,” he said, “accept my hand, and I will reconcile my uncle to you. Say but the word, and—”

“I can never speak it, Curtis! I will take my uncle at his word. Dodger, call for me to-morrow at eight, and I will accept your friendly services in finding me a new home.”

“I’ll be on hand, miss. Good-night!”

“Be it so, obstinate girl!” said Curtis, angrily. “The time will come when you will bitterly repent your mad decision.”

CHAPTER VII.

FLORENCE LEAVES HOME

Florence passed a sleepless night. It had come upon her so suddenly, this expulsion from the home of her childhood, that she could not fully realize it. She could not feel that she was taking her last look at the familiar room, and well-remembered dining-room, where she had sat down for the last time for breakfast. She was alone at the breakfast table, for the usual hour was half-past eight, and she had appointed Dodger to call for her at eight.

“Is it true, Miss Florence, that you’re going away?” asked Jane, the warm-hearted table girl, as she waited upon Florence.

“Yes, Jane,” answered Florence, sadly.

“It’s a shame, so it is! I didn’t think your uncle would be so hard-hearted.”

“He is disappointed because I won’t marry my Cousin Curtis.”

“I don’t blame you for it, miss. I never liked Mr. Waring. He isn’t half good enough for you.”

“I say nothing about that, Jane; but I will not marry a man I do not love.”

“Nor would I, miss. Where are you going, if I may make so bold?”

“I don’t know, Jane,” said Florence, despondently.

“But you can’t walk about the streets.”

“A trusty friend is going to call for me at eight o’clock; when he comes admit him.”

“It is a—a young gentleman?”

“You wouldn’t call him such. He is a boy, a poor boy; but I think he is a true friend. He says he will find me a comfortable room somewhere, where I can settle down and look for work.”

“Are you going to work for a living, Miss Florence?” asked Jane, horrified.

“I must, Jane.”

“It’s a great shame—you, a lady born.”

“No, Jane, I do not look upon it in that light. I shall be happier for having my mind and my hands occupied.”

“What work will you do?”

“I don’t know yet. Dodger will advise me.”

“Who, miss?”

“Dodger.”

“Who is he?”

“It’s the boy I spoke of.”

“Shure, he’s got a quare name.”

“Yes; but names don’t count for much. It’s the heart I think of, and this boy has a kind heart.”

“Have you known him long?”

“I saw him yesterday for the first time.”

“Is it the young fellow who was here last night?”

“Yes.”

“He isn’t fit company for the likes of you, Miss Florence.”

“You forget, Jane, that I am no longer a rich young lady. I am poorer than even you. This Dodger is kind, and I feel that I can trust him.”

“If you are poor, Miss Florence,” said Jane, hesitatingly, “would you mind borrowing some money of me? I’ve got ten dollars upstairs in my trunk, and I don’t need it at all. It’s proud I’ll be to lend it to you.”

“Thank you, Jane,” said Florence, gratefully. “I thought I had but one friend. I find I have two—”

“Then you’ll take the money? I’ll go right up and get it.”

“No, Jane; not at present. I have twenty dollars in my purse, and it will last me till I can earn more.”

“But, miss, twenty dollars will soon go,” said Jane, disappointed.

“If I find that I need the sum you so kindly offer me, I will let you know, I promise that.”

“Thank you, miss.”

At this point a bell rang from above.

“It’s from Mr. Curtis’ room,” said Jane.

“Go and see what he wants.”

Jane returned in a brief time with a note in her hand.

“Mr. Curtis asked me if you were still here,” she explained, “and when I told him you were he asked me to give you this.”

Florence took the note, and, opening it, read these lines:

“Florence: Now that you have had time to think over your plan of leaving your old home, I hope you have come

to see how foolish it is. Reflect that, if carried out, a life of poverty and squalid wretchedness amid homely and uncongenial surroundings awaits you; while, as my wife, you will live a life of luxury and high social position. There are many young ladies who would be glad to accept the chance which you so recklessly reject. By accepting my hand you will gratify our excellent uncle, and make me the happiest of mortals. You will acquit me of mercenary motives, since you are now penniless, and your disobedience leaves me sole heir to Uncle John. I love you, and it will be my chief object, if you will permit it, to make you happy.

“*Curtis Waring.*”

Florence ran her eyes rapidly over this note, but her heart did not respond, and her resolution was not shaken.

“Tell Mr. Waring there is no answer, Jane, if he inquires,” she said.

“Was he tryin’ to wheedle you into marryin’ him?” asked Jane.

“He wished me to change my decision.”

“I’m glad you’ve given him the bounce,” said Jane, whose expressions were not always refined. “I wouldn’t marry him myself.”

Florence smiled. Jane was red haired, and her nose was what is euphemistically called *retroussé*. Even in her own circles she was not regarded as beautiful, and was hardly likely to lead a rich man to overlook her humble station, and sue for her hand.

“Then, Jane, you at least will not blame me for refusing my cousin’s hand?”

“That I won’t, miss. Do you know, Miss Florence”—and here Jane lowered her voice—“I’ve a suspicion that Mr. Curtis is married already?”

“What do you mean, Jane?” asked Florence, startled.

“There was a poor young woman called here last month and inquired for Mr. Curtis. She was very sorrowful-like, and poorly dressed. He came up when she was at the door, and he spoke harshlike, and told her to walk away with him. What they said I couldn’t hear, but I’ve a suspicion that she was married to him, secretlike for I saw a wedding ring upon her finger.”

“But, Jane, it would be base and infamous for him to ask for my hand when he was already married.”

“I can’t help it, miss. That’s just what he wouldn’t mind doin’. Oh, he’s a sly deceiver, Mr. Curtis. I’d like to see him foolin’ around me.”

Jane nodded her head with emphasis, as if to intimate the kind of reception Curtis Waring would get if he attempted to trifle with her virgin affections.

“I hope what you suspect is not true,” said Florence, gravely. “I do not like or respect Curtis, but I don’t like to think he would be so base as that. If you ever see this young woman again, try to find out where she lives. I would like to make her acquaintance, and be a friend to her if she needs one.”

“Shure, Miss Florence, you will be needin’ a friend yourself.”

“It is true, Jane. I forgot that I am no longer a young lady of fortune, but a penniless girl, obliged to work for a living.”

“What would your uncle say if he knew that Mr. Curtis had a wife?”

“We don’t know that he has one, and till we do, it would not be honorable to intimate such a thing to Uncle John.”

“Shure, he wouldn’t be particular. It’s all his fault that you’re obliged to leave home, and go into the streets. Why couldn’t he take no for an answer, and marry somebody else, if he can find anybody to have him?”

“I wish, indeed, that he had fixed his affections elsewhere,” responded Florence, with a sigh.

“Shure, he’s twice as old as you, Miss Florence, anyway.”

“I shouldn’t mind that so much, if that was the only objection.”

“It’ll be a great deal better marryin’ a young man.”

“I don’t care to marry any one, Jane. I don’t think I shall ever marry.”

“It’s all very well to say that, Miss Florence. Lots of girls say so, but they change their minds. I don’t mean to live out always myself.”

“Is there any young man you are interested in, Jane?”

“Maybe there is, and maybe there isn’t, Miss Florence. If I ever do get married I’ll invite you to the wedding.”

“And I’ll promise to come if I can. But I hear the bell. I think my friend Dodger has come.”

“Shall I ask him in, miss?”

“No. Tell him I will be ready to accompany him at once.”

She went out into the hall, and when the door was opened the

visitor proved to be Dodger. He had improved his appearance so far as his limited means would allow. His hands and face were thoroughly clean; he had bought a new collar and necktie; his shoes were polished, and despite his shabby suit, he looked quite respectable. Getting a full view of him, Florence saw that his face was frank and handsome, his eyes bright, and his teeth like pearls.

“Shure, he’s a great deal better lookin’ than Mr. Curtis,” whispered Jane. “Here, Mr. Dodger, take Miss Florence’s valise, and mind you take good care of her.”

“I will,” answered Dodger, heartily. “Come, Miss Florence, if you don’t mind walking over to Fourth Avenue, we’ll take the horse cars.”

So, under strange guidance, Florence Linden left her luxurious home, knowing not what awaited her. What haven of refuge she might find she knew not. She, like Dodger, was adrift in New York.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FRIENDLY COMPACT

Florence, as she stepped on the sidewalk, turned, and fixed a last sad look on the house that had been her home for so many years. She had never anticipated such a sundering of home ties, and even now she found it difficult to realize that the moment had come when her life was to be rent in twain, and the sunlight of prosperity was to be darkened and obscured by a gloomy and uncertain future.

She had hastily packed a few indispensable articles in a valise which she carried in her hand.

“Let me take your bag, Miss Florence,” said Dodger, reaching out his hand.

“I don’t want to trouble you, Dodger.”

“It ain’t no trouble, Miss Florence. I’m stronger than you, and it looks better for me to carry it.”

“You are very kind, Dodger. What would I do without you?”

“There’s plenty that would be glad of the chance of helping you,” said Dodger, with a glance of admiration at the fair face of his companion.

“I don’t know where to find them,” said Florence, sadly. “Even my uncle has turned against me.”

“He’s an old chump!” ejaculated Dodger, in a tone of disgust.

“Hush! I cannot hear a word against him. He has always been kind and considerate till now. It is the evil influence of my Cousin Curtis that has turned him against me. When he comes to himself I am sure he will regret his cruelty.”

“He would take you back if you would marry your cousin.”

“Yes; but that I will never do!” exclaimed Florence, with energy.

“Bully for you!” said Dodger. “Excuse me,” he said, apologetically. “I ain’t used to talkin’ to young ladies, and perhaps that ain’t proper for me to say.”

“I don’t mind, Dodger; your heart is in the right place.”

“Thank you, Miss Florence. I’m glad you’ve got confidence in me. I’ll try to deserve it.”

“Where are we going?” asked the young lady, whose only thought up to this moment had been to get away from the presence of Curtis and his persecutions.

They had now reached Fourth Avenue, and a surface car was close at hand.

“We’re going to get aboard that car,” said Dodger, signaling with his free hand. “I’ll tell you more when we’re inside.”

Florence entered the car, and Dodger, following, took a seat at her side.

They presented a noticeable contrast, for Florence was dressed as becomed her station, while Dodger, in spite of his manly, attractive face, was roughly attired, and looked like a working boy.

When the conductor came along, he drew out a dime, and tendered it in payment of the double fare. The money was in the conductor's hand before Florence was fully aware.

"You must not pay for me, Dodger," she said.

"Why not?" asked the boy. "Ain't we friends?"

"Yes, but you have no money to spare. Here, let me return the money."

And she offered him a dime from her own purse.

"You can pay next time, Miss Florence. It's all right. Now, I'll tell you where we are goin'. A friend of mine, Mrs. O'Keefe, has a lodgin' house, just off the Bowery. I saw her last night, and she says she's got a good room that she can give you for two dollars a week—I don't know how much you'd be willing to pay, but—"

"I can pay that for a time at least. I have a little money, and I must find some work to do soon. Is this Mrs. O'Keefe a nice lady?"

"She ain't a lady at all," answered Dodger, bluntly. "She keeps an apple-stand near the corner of Bowery and Grand Street; but she's a good, respectable woman, and she's good-hearted. She'll be kind to you, and try to make things pleasant; but if you ain't satisfied—"

"It will do for the present. Kindness is what I need, driven as I am from the home of my childhood. But you, Dodger, where do you live?"

"I'm goin' to take a small room in the same house, Miss Florence."

"I shall be glad to have you near me."

"I am proud to hear you say that. I'm a poor boy, and you're a rich lady, but—"

"Not rich, Dodger. I am as poor as yourself."

"You're a reg'lar lady, anyway. You ain't one of my kind, but I'm going to improve and raise myself. I was readin' the other day of a rich man that was once a poor boy, and sold papers like me. But there's one thing in the way—I ain't got no eddication."

"You can read and write, can't you, Dodger?"

"Yes; I can read pretty well, but I can't write much."

"I will teach you in the evenings, when we are both at leisure."

"Will you?" asked the boy, with a glad smile. "You're very kind—I'd like a teacher like you."

"Then it's a bargain, Dodger," and Florence's face for the first time lost its sad look, as she saw an opportunity of helping one who had befriended her. "But you must promise to study faithfully."

"That I will. If I don't, I'll give you leave to lick me."

"I shan't forget that," said Florence, amused. "I will buy a ruler of good hard wood, and then you must look out. But, tell me, where have you lived hitherto?"

"I don't like to tell you, Miss Florence. I've lived ever since I was a kid with a man named Tim Bolton. He keeps a saloon on the Bowery, near Houston Street. It's a tough place, I tell you. I've got a bed in one corner—it's tucked away in a closet in the day."

"I suppose it is a drinking saloon?"

“Yes, that’s what it is.”

“And kept open very late?”

“Pretty much all night.”

“Is this Tim Bolton any relation of yours?”

“He says he’s my father; but I don’t believe it.”

“Have you always lived with him?”

“Ever since I was a small kid.”

“Have you always lived in New York?”

“No; I was out in Australia. Tim was out in the country part of the time, and part of the time he kept a saloon in Melbourne. There was thieves and burglars used to come into his place. I knew what they were, though they didn’t think I did.”

“How terrible for a boy to be subjected to such influences.”

“But I’ve made up my mind I won’t live with Tim no longer. I can earn my own livin’ sellin’ papers, or smashin’ baggage, and keep away from Tim. I’d have done it before if I’d had a friend like you to care for me.”

“We will stand by each other, Dodger. Heaven knows I need a friend, and if I can be a friend to you, and help you, I will.”

“We’ll get out here, Miss Florence. I told Mrs. O’Keefe I’d call at her stand, and she’ll go over and show you your room.”

They left the car at the corner of Grand Street, and Dodger led the way to an apple-stand, presided over by a lady of ample proportions, whose broad, Celtic face seemed to indicate alike shrewd good sense and a kindly spirit.

“Mrs. O’Keefe,” said Dodger, “this is the young lady I spoke

to you about—Miss Florence Linden.”

“It’s welcome you are, my dear, and I’m very glad to make your acquaintance. You look like a rare leddy, and I don’t know how you’ll like the room I’ve got for you.”

“I cannot afford to be particular, Mrs. O’Keefe. I have had a—a reverse of circumstances, and I must be content with an humble home.”

“Then I’ll go over and show it to you. Here, Kitty, come and mind the stand,” she called to a girl about thirteen across the street, “and don’t let anybody steal the apples. Look out for Jimmy Mahone, he stole a couple of apples right under my nose this mornin’, the young spalpeen!”

As they were crossing the street, a boy of fourteen ran up to Dodger.

“Dodger,” said he, “you’d better go right over to Tim Bolton’s. He’s in an awful stew—says he’ll skin you alive if you don’t come to the s’loon right away.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW HOME

“You can tell Tim Bolton,” said Dodger, “that I don’t intend to come back at all.”

“You don’t mean it, Dodger?” said Ben Holt, incredulously.

“Yes, I do. I’m going to set up for myself.”

“Oh, Dodger,” said Florence, “I’m afraid you will get into trouble for my sake!”

“Don’t worry about that, Miss Florence. I’m old enough to take care of myself, and I’ve got tired of livin’ with Tim.”

“But he may beat you!”

“He’ll have to get hold of me first.”

They had reached a four-story tenement of shabby brick, which was evidently well filled up by a miscellaneous crowd of tenants; shop girls, mechanics, laborers and widows, living by their daily toil.

Florence had never visited this part of the city, and her heart sank within her as she followed Mrs. O’Keefe through a dirty hallway, up a rickety staircase, to the second floor.

“One more flight of stairs, my dear,” said Mrs. O’Keefe, encouragingly. “I’ve got four rooms upstairs; one of them is for you, and one for Dodger.”

Florence did not reply. She began to understand at what cost

she had secured her freedom from a distasteful marriage.

In her Madison Avenue home all the rooms were light, clean and luxuriously furnished. Here— But words were inadequate to describe the contrast.

Mrs. O’Keefe threw open the door of a back room about twelve feet square, furnished in the plainest manner, uncarpeted, except for a strip that was laid, like a rug, beside the bedstead.

There was a washstand, with a mirror, twelve by fifteen inches, placed above it, a pine bureau, a couple of wooden chairs, and a cane-seated rocking-chair.

“There, my dear, what do you say to that?” asked Mrs. O’Keefe, complacently. “All nice and comfortable as you would wish to see.”

“It is—very nice,” said Florence, faintly, sacrificing truth to politeness.

“And who do you think used to live here?” asked the apple-woman.

“I’m sure I don’t know.”

“The bearded woman in the dime museum,” answered Mrs. O’Keefe, nodding her head. “She lived with me three months, and she furnished the room herself. When she went away she was hard up, and I bought the furniture of her cheap. You remember Madam Berger, don’t you, Dodger?”

“Oh, yes, I seen her often.”

“She got twenty-five dollars a week, and she’d ought to have saved money, but she had a good-for-nothin’ husband that drank

up all her hard earnin's."

"I hope she didn't drink herself," said Florence, who shuddered at the idea of succeeding a drunken tenant.

"Not a drop. She was a good, sober lady, if she did work in a dime museum. She only left here two weeks ago. It isn't every one I'd be willin' to take in her place, but I see you're a real leddy, let alone that Dodger recommends you. I hope you'll like the room, and I'll do all I can to make things pleasant. You can go into my room any hour, my dear, and do your little cookin' on my stove. I s'pose you'll do your own cookin'?"

"Well, not just at present," faltered Florence. "I am afraid I don't know much about cooking."

"You'll find it a deal cheaper, and it's more quiet and gentale than goin' to the eatin'-houses. I'll help you all I can, and glad to."

"Thank you, Mrs. O'Keefe, you are very kind," said Florence, gratefully. "Perhaps just at first you wouldn't object to taking me as a boarder, and letting me take my meals with you. I don't think I would like to go to the eating-houses alone."

"To be sure, my dear, if you wish it, and I'll be glad of your company. I'll make the terms satisfactory."

"I have no doubt of that," said Florence, feeling very much relieved.

"If I might be so bold, what kind of work are you going to do?"

"I hardly know. It has come upon me so suddenly. I shall have to do something, for I haven't got much money. What I should like best would be to write—"

“Is it for the papers you mean?”

“Oh, no; I mean for some author or lawyer.”

“I don’t know much about that,” said Mrs. O’Keefe. “In fact, I don’t mind tellin’ you, my dear, that I can’t write myself, but I earn a good livin’ all the same by my apple-stand. I tell you, my dear,” she continued in a confidential tone, “there is a good dale of profit in sellin’ apples. It’s better than sewin’ or writin’. Of course, a young leddy like you wouldn’t like to go into the business.”

Florence shook her head, with a smile.

“No, Mrs. O’Keefe,” she said. “I am afraid I haven’t a business turn, and I should hardly like so public an employment.”

“Lor’, miss, it’s nothin’ if you get used to it. There’s nothin’ dull about my business, unless it rains, and you get used to havin’ people look at you.”

“It isn’t all that are worth looking at like you, Mrs. O’Keefe,” said Dodger, slyly.

“Oh, go away wid your fun, Dodger,” said the apple-woman, good-naturedly. “I ain’t much to look at, I know.”

“I think there’s a good deal of you to look at, Mrs. O’Keefe. You must weigh near three hundred.”

“I’ve a good mind to box your ears, Dodger. I only weigh a hundred and ninety-five. But I can’t be bothered wid your jokes. Can you sew, Miss Florence?”

“Yes; but I would rather earn my living some other way, if possible.”

“Small blame to you for that. I had a girl in Dodger’s room last year who used to sew for a livin’. Early and late she worked, poor thing, and she couldn’t make but two dollars a week.”

“How could she live?” asked Florence, startled, for she knew very little of the starvation wages paid to toiling women.

“She didn’t live. She just faded away, and it’s my belief the poor thing didn’t get enough to eat. Every day or two I’d make an excuse to take her in something from my own table, a plate of meat, or a bit of toast and a cup of tay, makin’ belave she didn’t get a chance to cook for herself, but she got thinner and thinner, and her poor cheeks got hollow, and she died in the hospital at last.”

The warm-hearted apple-woman wiped away a tear with the corner of her apron, as she thought of the poor girl whose sad fate she described.

“You won’t die of consumption, Mrs. O’Keefe,” said Dodger. “It’ll take a good while for you to fade away.”

“Hear him now,” said the apple-woman, laughing. “He will have his joke, Miss Florence, but he’s a good bye for all that, and I’m glad he’s goin’ to lave Tim Bolton, that ould thafe of the worruld.”

“Now, Mrs. O’Keefe, you know you’d marry Tim if he’d only ask you.”

“Marry him, is it? I’d lay my broom over his head if he had the impudence to ask me. When Maggie O’Keefe marries ag’in, she won’t marry a man wid a red nose.”

“Break it gently to him, Mrs. O’Keefe. Tim is just the man to break his heart for love of you.”

Mrs. O’Keefe aimed a blow at Dodger, but he proved true to his name, and skillfully evaded it.

“I must be goin’,” he said. “I’ve got to work, or I can’t pay room rent when the week comes round.”

“What are you going to do, Dodger?” asked Florence.

“It isn’t time for the evenin’ papers yet, so I shall go ’round to the piers and see if I can’t get a job at smashin’ baggage.”

“But I shouldn’t think any one would want to do that,” said Florence, puzzled.

“It’s what we boys call it. It’s just carryin’ valises and bundles. Sometimes I show strangers the way to Broadway. Last week an old man paid me a dollar to show him the way to the Cooper Institute. He was a gentleman, he was. I’d like to meet him ag’in. Good-by, Miss Florence; I’ll be back some time this afternoon.”

“And I must be goin’, too,” said Mrs. O’Keefe. “I can’t depend on that Kitty; she’s a wild slip of a girl, and just as like as not I’ll find a dozen apples stole when I get back. I hope you won’t feel lonely, my dear.”

“I think I will lie down a while,” said Florence. “I have a headache.”

She threw herself on the bed, and a feeling of loneliness and desolation came over her.

Her new friends were kind, but they could not make up to her for her uncle’s love, so strangely lost, and the home she had left

behind.

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