

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

STRONG AND STEADY

Horatio Alger
Strong and Steady

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Horatio Alger
Strong and Steady / Or,
Paddle Your Own Canoe

To

MY YOUNG FRIENDS,

WASHINGTON AND JEFFERSON,

IN THE HOPE THAT THEY MAY EMULATE THE VIRTUES

OF THE DISTINGUISHED MEN WHOSE

NAMES THEY BEAR,

This Volume

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

"Strong and Steady" is the third volume of the "Luck and Pluck Series." Though the story is quite distinct from its predecessors, it is intended to illustrate the same general principle. Walter Conrad, the hero, is unexpectedly reduced from affluence to poverty, and compelled to fight his own way in life. Undaunted by misfortune, he makes up his mind to "paddle his own canoe," and, declining the offers of friends, sets to work with a resolute will and persistent energy, which command success in the end.

Hoping that Walter's adventures may prove of interest to his young readers, and win the same favorable verdict which has been pronounced upon his previous books, the author takes his leave for the present, with many thanks for the generous welcome so often accorded to him.

October 15, 1871.

CHAPTER I. THE ESSEX CLASSICAL INSTITUTE

"You've got a nice room here, Walter."

"Yes, you know I am to stay here two years, and I might as well be comfortable."

"It's ever so much better than my room—twice as big, to begin with. Then, my carpet looks as if it had come down through several generations. I'll bet the old lady had it when she was first married. As for a mirror, I've got a seven-by-nine looking-glass that I have to look into twice before I can see my whole face. As for the bedstead, it creaks so when I jump into it that I expect every night it'll fall to pieces like the 'one hoss shay,' and spill me on the floor. Now your room is splendidly furnished."

"Yes, it is now, but father furnished it at his own expense. He said he was willing to lay out a little money to make me comfortable."

"That's more than my father said. He told me it wouldn't do me any harm to rough it."

"I don't know but he is right," said Walter. "Of course I don't object to the new carpet and furniture,"—and he looked with pleasure at the handsome carpet with its bright tints, the black walnut bookcase with its glass doors, and the tasteful chamber furniture,—"but I shouldn't consider it any hardship if I had to rough it, as you call it."

"Wouldn't you? Then I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll change rooms. You can go round and board at Mrs. Glenn's, and I'll come here. What do you say?"

"I am not sure how my father would look on that arrangement," said Walter, smiling.

"I thought you'd find some way out," said Lemuel. "For my part, I don't believe you'd fancy roughing it any better than I."

"I don't know," said Walter; "I've sometimes thought I shouldn't be very sorry to be a poor boy, and have to work my own way."

"That's very well to say, considering you are the son of a rich man."

"So are you."

"Yes, but I don't get the benefit of it, and you do. What would you do now if you were a poor boy?"

"I can't say, of course, now, but I would go to work at something. I am sure I could earn my own living."

"I suppose I could, but I shouldn't want to."

"You're lazy, Lem, that's what's the matter with you."

"I know I am," said Lemuel, good-naturedly. "Some people are born lazy, don't you think so?"

"Perhaps you are right," answered Walter, with a smile. "Now suppose we open our Cæsar."

"I suppose we might as well. Here's another speech. I wish those old fellows hadn't been so fond of speech-making. I like the accounts of battles well enough, but the speeches are a bother."

"I like to puzzle them out, Lem."

"So don't I. How much have we got for a lesson?"

"Two sections."

While the boys are at work reading these two sections, two-thirds of the work being done by Walter, whose head is clearer and whose knowledge greater than his companion's, a little explanation shall be given, in order that we may better understand the position and prospects of the two boys introduced.

Of Lemuel Warner, it need only be said that he was a pleasant-looking boy of fourteen, the son of a prosperous merchant in New York. Walter Conrad was from a small inland town, where his father was the wealthiest and most prominent and influential citizen, having a handsome mansion-house, surrounded by extensive grounds.

How rich he was, was a matter of conjecture; but he was generally rated as high as two hundred thousand dollars. Mrs. Conrad had been dead for five years, so that Walter, who was an only child, had no immediate relation except his father. It was for this reason, perhaps, that he had been sent to the Essex Classical Institute, of which we find him a member at the opening of our story. Being a boy of talent, and well grounded in Latin, he was easily able to take a high rank in his class. Lemuel Warner had become his intimate friend, being in the same class, but considerably inferior to him in scholarship. They usually got their Latin lessons together, and it was owing to this circumstance that Lemuel made a better figure in his recitations than before Walter became a member of the school.

"There, that job's done," said Lemuel, closing his book with an air of satisfaction. "Now we can rest."

"You forget the Latin exercise."

"Oh, bother the Latin exercise! I don't see what's the use of writing Latin any way. English composition is hard enough. What's to be done?"

"You know the doctor expects each boy to write a letter in Latin, addressed to his father, not less than twelve lines in length."

"It isn't to be sent home, is it? Mr. Warner senior, I reckon, would stare a little when he got his. He wouldn't know Latin from Cherokee."

"Possibly your Latin won't differ much from Cherokee, Lem."

"What's the use of being sarcastic on a fellow, and hurting his feelings?" said Lem, laughing in a way to show that his feelings were not very seriously hurt. "I say, couldn't one crib a little from Cæsar?"

"Not very well, considering the doctor is slightly familiar with that author."

"I wonder whether Cæsar used to write home to his father when he was at boarding-school. If he did, I should like to get hold of some of his letters."

"They would probably have to be altered considerably to adapt them to the present time."

"Well, give me a sheet of paper and I'll begin."

The boys undertook their new task, and finished it by nine o'clock. I should be glad to furnish a copy of Lemuel's letter, which was written with brilliant disregard of grammatical rules; but unfortunately the original, afterwards considerably revised in accordance with suggestions from Walter, has not been preserved.

"I've a great mind to send my letter home, Walter," said Lemuel. "Father expects me to write home every week, and this would save me some trouble. Besides, he'd think I was getting on famously, to write home in Latin."

"Yes, if he didn't find out the mistakes."

"That's the rub. He'd show it to the minister the first time he called, and then my blunders would be detected. I guess I'd better wait till it comes back from the doctor corrected."

"I expect to hear from home to-morrow," said Walter.

"Why to-morrow in particular? Do you generally get letters Thursday?"

"No, my letters generally come on Saturday, and I answer them Sunday. But to-morrow is my birthday."

"Is it? Let me be the first to congratulate you. How venerable will you be?"

"As venerable as most boys of fifteen, Lem."

"You're three months older than I am, then. Do you expect a present?"

"I haven't thought much about it, but I don't believe father will forget me."

"Can't you guess what you are likely to get?"

"I can guess, but I may not be right. Father promised to give me a gold watch-chain some time. You know I have a gold watch already."

"Yes, and a regular little beauty."

"So it wouldn't surprise me much to get a chain for a present."

"You're a lucky boy. My watch is silver, and only cost twenty dollars."

"I dare say I should be just as happy with a silver watch, Lem."

"I suppose you wouldn't like to buy, would you? If so, I'll give you the chance. A fair exchange is no robbery."

"No, I suppose not; but it wouldn't do to exchange a gift."

"Perhaps, if my watch were gold and yours silver, you wouldn't have any objections."

"I don't think that would alter the case with me. A gift is a gift, whether it is more or less valuable."

"How long have you had your watch, Walter?"

"Ever since my thirteenth birthday."

"I have had mine a year. I broke the crystal and one of the hands the very first day."

"That was pretty hard usage, Lem."

"The watch had a pretty good constitution, so it has survived to the present day. But I'm getting sleepy, Walter. It's the hard study, I suppose, that's done it. I must be getting back to Ma'am Glenn's. Good-night."

"Good-night, Lem."

Lemuel Warner gathered up his books, and left the room. Walter poked the fire, putting some ashes on, so that it would keep till the next morning, and commenced undressing. He had scarcely commenced, however, when a heavy step was heard on the stairs, and directly afterwards a knock resounded upon his door.

Wondering who his late visitor could be, Walter stepped to the door, and opened it.

CHAPTER II. IN THE CARS

If Walter was surprised at receiving a visit at so late an hour, he was still more surprised to recognize in the visitor Dr. Porter, the principal of the Institute.

"Good-evening, Conrad," said the doctor. "I am rather a late visitor. I was not sure but you might be in bed."

"I was just getting ready to go to bed, sir. Won't you walk in?"

"I will come in for five minutes only."

"Take the rocking-chair, sir."

All the while Walter was wondering what could be the doctor's object in calling. He was not conscious of having violated any of the regulations of the Institute, and even had he done so, it would be unusual for the principal to call upon him at such an hour. So he watched the doctor with a puzzled glance, and waited to hear him state his errand.

"Have you heard from home lately, Conrad?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, sir, I received a letter a few days since."

"Did your father speak of being unwell?"

"No, sir," said Walter, taking instant alarm. "Have—have you heard anything?"

"Yes, my boy; and that is my reason for calling upon you at this unusual hour. I received this telegram twenty minutes since."

Walter took the telegram, with trembling fingers, and read the following message:—

"Dr. Porter:—Please send Walter Conrad home by the first train. His father is very sick.

"Nancy Forbes."

"Do you think there is any danger, Dr. Porter?" asked Walter, with a pale face.

"I cannot tell, my boy; this telegram furnishes all the information I possess. Who is Nancy Forbes?"

"She is the house-keeper. I can't realize that father is so sick. He did not say anything about it when he wrote."

"Let us hope it is only a brief sickness. I think you had better go home by the first train tomorrow morning."

"Yes, sir."

"I believe it starts at half-past seven."

"I shall be ready, sir."

"By the way, are you provided with sufficient money to pay your railway fare? If not, I will advance you the necessary sum."

"Thank you, sir, I have five dollars by me, and that will be more than sufficient."

"Then I believe I need not stay any longer," and the doctor rose.

"Don't think too much of your father's sickness, but try to get a good night's sleep. I hope we shall soon have you coming back with good news."

The principal shook hands with Walter and withdrew.

When his tall form had vanished, Walter sat down and tried to realize the fact of his father's sickness; but this he found difficult.

Mr. Conrad had never been sick within his remembrance, and the thought that he might become so had never occurred to Walter. Besides, the telegram spoke of him as *very* sick. Could there be danger?

That was a point which he could not decide, and all that remained was to go to bed. It was a long time before he got to sleep, but at length he did sleep, waking in time only for a hasty preparation for the homeward journey. He was so occupied with thoughts of his father that it was not till the journey was half finished, that it occurred to him that this was his fifteenth birthday, to which he had been looking forward for some time.

The seat in front of our hero was for some time vacant; but at the Woodville station two gentlemen got in who commenced an animated conversation. Walter did not at first pay any attention to it. He was looking out of the window listlessly, unable to fix his mind upon anything except his father's sickness. But at length his attention was caught by some remarks, made by one of the gentlemen in front, and from this point he listened languidly.

"I suspected him to be a swindler when he first came to me," said the gentleman sitting next the window. "He hadn't an honest look, and I was determined not to have anything to do with his scheme."

"He was very plausible."

"Yes, he made everything look right on paper. That is easy enough. But mining companies are risky things always. I once got taken in to the tune of five thousand dollars, but it taught me a lesson. So I was not particularly impressed with the brilliant prospectus of the Great Metropolitan Mining Company, in spite of its high-sounding name, and its promised dividend of thirty per cent. Depend upon it, James Wall and his confederates will pocket all the dividends that are made."

"Very likely you are right. But it may be that Wall really believed there is a good chance of making money."

"Of course he did, but he was determined to make the money for himself, and not for the stockholders."

"I might have been tempted to invest, but all my money was locked up at the time, and I could not have done so without borrowing the money, and that I was resolved not to do."

"It was fortunate for you that you didn't, for the bubble has already burst."

"Is it possible? I was not aware of that."

"I thought you knew it. The news is in this morning's paper. There will be many losers. By the way, I hear that Mr. Conrad, of Willoughby, was largely interested."

"Then, of course, he is a heavy loser. Can he stand it?"

"I am in doubt on that point. He is a rich man, but for all that he may have gone in beyond his means."

"I am sorry for him, but that was reckless."

"Yes, he was completely taken in by Wall. He's a smooth fellow."

Walter had listened with languid attention; still, however, gathering the meaning of what was said until the mention of his father's name roused him, and then he listened eagerly, and with a sudden quickening of the pulse. He instantly connected the idea of what he had heard with his father's sudden illness, and naturally associated the two together.

"My father has heard of the failure of the company, and that has made him sick," he thought.

Though this implied a double misfortune, it relieved his anxiety a little. It supplied a cause for his father's illness. He had been afraid that his father had met with some accident, perhaps of a fatal nature. But if he had become ill in consequence of heavy losses, it was not likely that the illness was a very severe one.

He thought of speaking to the gentlemen, and making some further inquiries about the Mining Company and Mr. James Wall, but it occurred to him that his father might not like to have him pry into his affairs, and he therefore refrained.

When the gentlemen left the cars, he saw one of them had left a morning paper lying in the seat. He picked it up, and examined the columns until his eyes fell upon the following paragraph:—

"The failure of the Great Metropolitan Mining Company proves to be a disastrous one. The assets will not be sufficient to pay more than five per cent. of the amount of the sums invested by

the stockholders, possibly not that. There must have been gross mismanagement somewhere, or such a result could hardly have been reached. We understand that the affairs of the company are in the hands of assignees who are empowered to wind them up. The stockholders in this vicinity will await the result with anxiety."

"That looks rather discouraging, to be sure," thought Walter. "I suppose father will lose a good deal. But I'll tell him he needn't worry about me. I shan't mind being poor, even if it comes to that. As long as he is left to me, I won't complain."

Walter became comparatively cheerful. He felt convinced that loss of property was all that was to be apprehended, and with the elastic spirits of youth he easily reconciled himself to that. He had never had occasion to think much about money. All his wants had been provided for with a lavish hand. He had, of course, seen poor people, but he did not realize what poverty meant. He had even thought at times that it must be rather a pleasant thing to earn one's own living. Still he did not apprehend that he would have to do this. His father might have lost heavily, but probably not to such an extent as to render this necessary.

So the time passed until, about half-past eleven o'clock, the cars stopped at Willoughby station.

The station was in rather a lonely spot,—that is, no houses were very near. Walter did not stop to speak to anybody, but, on leaving the cars, carpet-bag in hand, jumped over a fence, and took his way across the fields to his father's house. By the road it would have been a mile, but it was scarcely more than half a mile by the foot-path.

So it happened that he reached home without meeting a single person. He went up the doorway to the front door and rang the bell.

The door was opened by Nancy Forbes, the house-keeper, whose name was appended to the telegram.

"So it's you, Master Walter," she said. "I am glad you are home, but it's a sad home you're come to."

"Is father *very* sick, then?" asked Walter, turning pale.

"Didn't anybody tell you, then?"

"Tell me what?"

"My dear child, your father died at eight o'clock this morning."

CHAPTER III. AT HOME

It was a terrible shock to Walter,—this sudden announcement of his father's death. When he had left home, Mr. Conrad seemed in his usual health, and he could not realize that he was dead. The news stunned him, and he stood, pale and motionless, looking into the house-keeper's face.

"Come in, Master Walter, come in, and have a cup of hot tea. It'll make you feel better."

A cup of hot tea was Nancy's invariable remedy for all troubles, physical or mental.

"Tell me about it, Nancy; I—I can't think it's true. It's so sudden."

"That's the way I feel too, Master Walter. And only yesterday morning, too, he looked just as usual. Little did I think what was to be."

"When was he first taken sick?"

Walter had seated himself on a chair in the hall, and waited anxiously for an answer.

"I didn't notice nothing till last night just after supper. Richard went to the post-office and got your father's letters. When they came he took 'em into the library, and began to read them. There was three, I remember. It was about an hour before I went into the room to tell him the carpenter had called about repairing the carriage-house. When I came in, there lay your poor father on the carpet, senseless. He held a letter tight in his hand. I screamed for help. Mr. Brier, the carpenter, and Richard came in and helped me to lift up your poor father, and we sent right off for the doctor."

"What did the doctor say?"

"He said it was a paralytic stroke,—a very bad one,—and ordered him to be put to bed directly. But it was of no use. He never recovered, but breathed his last this morning at eight o'clock. The doctor told me I must telegraph to your teacher; and so I did."

"Nancy, have you got that letter which my father was reading?"

"Yes, Master Walter, I put it in my pocket without reading. I think there must have been bad news in it."

She drew from her pocket a letter, which she placed in Walter's hands. He read it hastily, and it confirmed his suspicions. It was from a lawyer Mr. Conrad had asked to make inquiries respecting the Great Metropolitan Mining Company, and was as follows:—

"William Conrad, Esq.

"Dear Sir:—I have, at your request, taken pains to inform myself of the present management and condition of the Great Metropolitan Mining Company. The task has been less difficult than I anticipated, since the failure of the company has just been made public. The management has been in the hands of dishonest and unscrupulous men, and it is doubtful whether the stockholders will be able to recover anything.

"Hoping you are not largely interested, I remain,

"Yours, very respectfully,

"Andrew Holmes."

Walter re-folded the letter, and put it into his pocket. He felt that this letter had cost his father his life, and in the midst of his grief he could not help thinking bitterly of the unscrupulous man who had led his father to ruin. Had it been merely the loss of property, he could have forgiven him, but he had been deprived of the kindest and most indulgent of fathers.

"I should like to see my father," he said.

We will not accompany him into the dark chamber where his father lay, unobservant, for the first time, of his presence. Such a scene is too sacred to be described.

An hour later he came out of the chamber, pale but composed. He seemed older and more thoughtful than when he entered. A great and sudden sorrow often has this effect upon the young.

"Nancy," he said, "have any arrangements been made about the funeral?"

"No, Walter, we waited till you came. Mr. Edson will be here in a few minutes, and you can speak with him about it."

Mr. Edson, though not a professional undertaker, usually acted as such whenever there was occasion for his services. When he arrived, Walter requested him to take entire charge of the funeral.

"Are there any directions you would like to give, Walter?" asked Mr. Edson, who, like most of the villagers, had known Walter from his birth.

"No, Mr. Edson, I leave all to you."

"What relations are there to be invited?"

"My father had no near relatives. There is a cousin, Jacob Drummond, who lives in Stapleton. It will be necessary to let him know."

"Would a letter reach him in time?"

"It will be best to telegraph. Stapleton is forty miles distant, and it is doubtful if a letter would reach there in time."

"If you will write the telegram, Walter, I'll see that it's sent right off."

"I won't trouble you, Mr. Edson; you will have enough to attend to, and I can send Richard to the telegraph office, or go myself. I shall feel better for the exercise."

"Very well, Walter, I will do whatever else is necessary."

CHAPTER IV. JACOB DRUMMOND, OF STAPLETON

Jacob Drummond kept a dry-goods store in the village of Stapleton. As the village was of considerable size, and he had no competitors, he drove a flourishing trade, and had already acquired quite a comfortable property. In fact, even had he been less favorably situated, he was pretty sure to thrive. He knew how to save money better, even, than to earn it, being considered, and with justice, a very mean man. He carried his meanness not only into his business, but into his household, and there was not a poor mechanic in Stapleton, and scarcely a poor laborer, who did not live better than Mr. Drummond, who was the rich man of the place.

No one, to look at Jacob Drummond, would have been likely to mistake his character. All the lines of his face, the expression of his thin lips, his cold gray eyes, all bespoke his meanness. Poor Mrs. Drummond, his wife, could have testified to it, had she dared; but in this house, at least, the husband was master, and she dared not express the opinions she secretly entertained of the man to whom she was bound for life.

At five o'clock on the afternoon of the day after Mr. Conrad's death, Mr. Drummond entered the house, which was on the opposite side of the street from the store.

This was the supper hour, and supper was ready upon the table.

A single glance was sufficient to show that Mr. Drummond was not a man to indulge in luxurious living. There was a plate of white bread, cut in thin slices, a small plate of butter, half a pie, and a plate of cake. A small pitcher of milk, a bowl of coarse brown sugar, and a pot of the cheapest kind of tea completed the preparations for the evening meal. Certainly there was nothing extravagant about these preparations; but Mr. Drummond thought otherwise. His attention was at once drawn to the cake, and instantly a frown gathered upon his face.

"Are we going to have company to-night, Mrs. Drummond?" he asked.

"Not that I know of," answered his wife, in some surprise.

"Then why is it that you have put both pie and cake on the table?"

"There was only half a pie, Mr. Drummond," said she, nervously.

"Well, there are but three of us. You can get three good-sized pieces from half a pie. That will be one for each of us. What would you have more?"

"The cake is a cheap kind."

"No cake is cheap, Mrs. Drummond. I take it you used eggs, butter, and sugar in making it."

"Yes, but—"

"No buts, if you please, Mrs. Drummond. You are probably not aware that all these articles are very dear at present. Until they get lower we need not have cake, except when company is present."

That being the case, Mr. Drummond was not likely to be put to much expense on this score. They seldom had company, and those who came once were not anxious to come again. For even on such occasions Mr. Drummond could not forget his ruling principle. The overflowing hospitality which even in the humblest village households crowns the board with plenty when visitors are present, was never to be found there; and, besides, the visitors could not help having an uneasy suspicion that their host grudged them the niggardly entertainment he did provide. So for three years the Stapleton Sewing Circle had met but once at the Drummonds', and there was no immediate prospect of their meeting there for another three years.

It may be supposed that Mr. Drummond was not fond of good eating. This, however, would be quite a mistake. When he dined or took tea out, he always did full justice to the different dainties which were provided, and quite seemed to enjoy them as long as they were furnished at the expense of another.

"Take away the cake, if you please, Mrs. Drummond," continued her husband. "You can save it for Sunday evening."

"I am afraid it will be dried up by that time."

"If it is dry, you can steam it."

"That spoils cake."

"You seem very contrary to-night, Mrs. Drummond. I have continually to check you in your extravagant tastes. Cake and pie, indeed! If you had your way, you would double my household expenses."

Mrs. Drummond rose from the table, and meekly removed the offending cake.

Just then the third and only other member of the family entered.

This was Joshua Drummond, the only son, now eighteen years of age, though he looked scarcely more than sixteen. He inherited his father's meanness, but not his frugality. He was more self-indulgent, and, though he grudged spending money for others, was perfectly ready to spend as much as he could get hold of for himself.

CHAPTER V. JACOB DRUMMOND—CONTINUED

Over Joshua Mr. Drummond had less control than over his wife. The latter gave way meekly to his unreasonable requisitions; but Joshua did not hesitate to make opposition, being as selfish and self-willed as his father, for whom he entertained neither respect nor affection.

Joshua looked around him disdainfully.

"Is this Fast Day?" he asked.

"You know very well that Fast Day comes in April," said his father.

"I only judged from the looks of the table," said Joshua, not very respectfully. "You don't mean that we shall any of us suffer from the gout."

"Bread and butter and pie are good enough for anybody," said Mr. Drummond, stiffly.

"I don't see any pie. Excuse me, there is a little,—so little that I did not at first see it."

This was too much for Mr. Drummond's temper.

"Unmannerly boy!" he exclaimed; "if you are dissatisfied with the fare you get at home, you can engage board elsewhere."

"I would like to," muttered Joshua, in a low voice, which his father chose not to hear.

In silence he helped himself to bread and butter, and in due time accepted a piece of pie, which Mrs. Drummond made larger at the expense of her own share.

Harmony thus being restored, Mr. Drummond remarked, "I've had a telegram to-day from Willoughby."

"From Willoughby?" repeated his wife. "Isn't that where your cousin William Conrad lives?"

"He doesn't live there any longer. He's dead."

"Dead! When did he die?"

"I don't know. Yesterday, I suppose. The funeral is to be day after to-morrow."

"Shall you go?"

"Yes. It will cost me considerable; as much as five dollars or more; but he was my cousin, and it is my duty to go," said Mr. Drummond, with the air of a man who was making a great sacrifice.

"He was rich, wasn't he?" asked Joshua, becoming interested.

"Probably worth a hundred thousand dollars," said his father, complacently.

"I should think he might have left me something," said Joshua.

"He never saw you, Joshua," said his mother.

"Joshua stands a better chance of getting a legacy from one who doesn't know him, than from one who does," said Mr. Drummond, with grim pleasantry.

"He leaves children, doesn't he, Mr. Drummond?"

"One child—a boy. Let me see, he must be fifteen by this time."

"And his mother isn't living?"

"No."

"Poor boy!"

"He'll be a rich boy, Mrs. Drummond, and I'll tell you what, I shouldn't wonder if we had a good chance to know him."

"How so?"

"It's likely I will be appointed his guardian. I'm the nearest relative, so that will be the most proper course."

"Will he come here, then?" asked Joshua.

"Very probably."

"Then I hope you'll live better, or he won't stand it."

"When I require any advice from you, Joshua, I will apply for it," said his father.

Joshua inwardly hoped that his father would be appointed guardian, as it might make a difference in the family living; and, besides, if his cousin were rich, he meant to wheedle himself into his confidence, in the hope of future advantage.

"When shall you set out?" asked Mrs. Drummond.

"To-morrow morning, I think," said her husband. "It will be hard to leave, but it's due to my cousin's memory."

Mr. Drummond had become very punctilious all at once, considering that for the last dozen years Mr. Conrad, who had by no means admired him, had had little or no communication with him. But then he had died rich, and who knows what sort of a will he had left? At any rate, Jacob began to feel a strong interest in him now. He might have put off going to Willoughby till the morning train on the day of the funeral, for two o'clock was the hour fixed for the last ceremony; but he was in a hurry to learn all he could about the property, and secure, if possible, the guardianship for himself. This was the secret of his willingness to sacrifice time and money out of regard to his cousin's memory. The next day, therefore, he started, taking with him in his valise a lunch of bread and meat tied up in a piece of brown paper. He didn't intend to spend any more money than was absolutely necessary on tavern bills.

Shortly after his arrival, he called at the house of mourning.

"I am Jacob Drummond, of Stapleton, the cousin of the deceased," he explained to Nancy, who opened the door to admit him. "Is my young relative, Mr. Conrad's son, at home?"

"Yes, sir," said Nancy, taking an inventory of his features, and deciding that he was a very disagreeable looking man.

"Will you mention my name to him, and say that I should like to see him?"

Mr. Drummond was ushered into the parlor, where he had a little chance to look around him before Walter appeared.

"It's all nonsense wasting so much money on furniture," he mentally ejaculated. "The money spent is a dead loss when it might be drawing handsome interest."

Walter did not long keep him waiting.

Mr. Drummond rose at his entrance.

"I suppose you don't know me," he said; "but I was your father's nearest living relation."

"Mr. Drummond, I believe."

"Yes, Jacob Drummond, of Stapleton. You have probably heard your father speak of me?"

"Yes, sir," said Walter.

"I came as soon as I could after getting the telegram. I left my business to take care of itself. I wanted to offer you my sympathy on your sad loss."

Mr. Drummond's words were kind, though the reference to his sacrifice in leaving his business might have been as well left out. Still Walter could not feel as grateful as he wanted to do. Somehow he didn't fancy Mr. Drummond.

"You are very kind," he said.

"I mean to be. You know I'm your nearest relation now. I truly feel for you in your desolate condition, and though it may not be the right time to say it, I must tell you that I hope, when the funeral is over, you will accompany me home, and share our humble hospitality. Mrs. Drummond joins with me in the invitation."

Mrs. Drummond had not been consulted in the matter, but her husband thought it would sound well to say so.

"I have not had time to think of future arrangements," said Walter; "but I thank you for your invitation."

Walter did not know the motives which induced Mr. Drummond to extend this invitation, but supposed it to be meant in kindness, and so acknowledged it.

"My son Joshua, too," said Mr. Drummond, "is longing to make your acquaintance. He is older than you, but not much larger. How old are you?"

"I am fifteen."

"You are well grown of your age; Joshua is eighteen, but he will make a very pleasant companion for you. Let me hope that you will accept my invitation."

"Thank you, Mr. Drummond; I will consult my friends about it."

"I wonder how much board I could venture to ask," thought Mr. Drummond. "If I am his guardian, I can fix that to suit myself. A hundred thousand dollars would make me a rich man. That is, I could make money from it, without injuring the boy."

Mr. Drummond asked a few more questions about Mr. Conrad's sickness and death. Walter answered them, but did not think it necessary to speak of his losses by the Mining Company. Mr. Drummond was a stranger, and not a man to inspire confidence. So Walter told as little as he could. At length the visitor, having exhausted inquiries, rose.

"I shall be here to-morrow," he said. "I am stopping at the tavern. I shall return to Stapleton after the ceremony. I hope you will make up your mind to go back with me."

"I could not be ready so soon," answered Walter, doubtfully.

"I can wait till the next day."

"That will not be necessary, Mr. Drummond. I shall have no difficulty in making the journey alone, if I conclude to accept your kind invitation."

Mr. Drummond shook our hero's hand sympathetically, and at length withdrew. As he went down the avenue, he took a backward glance at the handsome mansion in which his cousin had lived.

"That boy owns all that property," he said, half enviously, "and never worked a day for it. I've had to work for all my money. But it was foolish to spend so much money on a house. A third the sum would have built a comfortable house, and the rest might have been put at interest. If it turns out that I am the boy's guardian, I think I shall sell it. That'll be the best course."

With these reflections Mr. Drummond pursued his way back to the village tavern, where he had taken the precaution to ascertain that he should be charged but a dollar and a quarter a day. He considered that a dollar would have been sufficient, but still it was proper to make some sacrifice to his cousin's memory. Mr. Conrad's mining speculation was not generally known in the village as yet, so that Mr. Drummond did not hear a word as to his loss of property.

CHAPTER VI. FUTURE PLANS

The funeral was over. Mr. Drummond, as indeed his relationship permitted, was one of the principal mourners. Considering that he had not seen Mr. Conrad for five years preceding his death, nor during that time communicated with him in any way, he appeared to be very much overcome by grief. He kept his eyes covered with a large white handkerchief, and his movements indicated suppressed agitation. He felt that this was a tribute due to a cousin who had left over one hundred thousand dollars.

When they had returned from the grave, Mr. Drummond managed to have a word with Walter.

"Have you decided to accept my offer, and make your home beneath my humble roof?" he asked.

"There has been no time to consult with my friends here, Mr. Drummond. I will let you know next week. I thank you at any rate for your kindness."

"Do come, Walter," said his cousin, twisting his mean features into an affectionate smile. "With you beneath my humble roof, I shall want nothing to complete my happiness."

Walter thanked him again, wondering at the same time why Mr. Drummond's kindness did not affect him more sensibly.

So Jacob Drummond went back to Stapleton, still ignorant of the state of Mr. Conrad's affairs, and still regarding Walter as a boy of great wealth.

When the will was opened it was found to bear date two years back, before Mr. Conrad had plunged into the speculation which had proved so disastrous to him. He bequeathed all the property which he did possess to Walter, with the exception of five hundred dollars, which were left as a legacy to his faithful house-keeper, Nancy Forbes. At the time the will was made, its provisions made Walter heir to a large fortune. Now it was quite uncertain how things would turn out. Clement Shaw, the village lawyer, an honest and upright man, was made executor, being an old and tried friend of the deceased.

With him Walter had a long and confidential conversation, imparting to him what he knew of his father's mining speculation and its disastrous result, with its probable effect in accelerating his death.

"I knew something of this before, Walter," said Mr. Shaw. "Your father spoke to me of being largely interested in the Great Metropolitan Mining Company; but of the company itself and the extent to which he was involved I knew nothing."

"I think my father must have been very seriously involved," said Walter. "It may, perhaps, swallow up the whole property."

"Let us hope not. Indeed, I can hardly believe that your father would have ventured in so deep as that."

"He had every confidence in the company; he thought he was going to double his money. If only a part of his property was threatened, I don't think it would have had such an effect upon him."

"I will thoroughly examine into the affair," said Mr. Shaw. "Meanwhile, Walter, hope for the best! It can hardly be that the whole property is lost. Do not be too anxious."

"Do not fear for me on that account," said Walter. "I always looked forward to being rich, it is true, but I can bear poverty. If the worst comes, and I am penniless, I am strong, and can work. I can get along as well as thousands of other boys, who have to support themselves."

Walter did not speak boastfully, but in a calm, confident way, that argued a consciousness of power.

"Yes," said the lawyer, regarding him attentively, "I think you are right there. You are just the boy who can make his own way; but I hope you will not be obliged to do so."

"There is one thing I want to say, Mr. Shaw," said Walter, "and that is about the money my father leaves in his will to Nancy."

"The circumstances were different. She will not expect it now; that is, of course, unless things turn out more favorably than we fear."

"That is not what I mean. Nancy must have the money, if there is so much left after settling the estate."

"But suppose only five hundred dollars are left? Of course I hope it will be much more, but we must think of all contingencies."

"If only five hundred dollars are left, let Nancy have them."

"But, Walter, consider yourself."

"I am young and strong. Nancy has spent her best years in my father's service, and she is no longer young. It is right that she should have some provision. Besides, my father meant her to have it, and I want to carry out his wishes."

"This is all very generous, Walter; but I am afraid it is inconsiderate. It would not be your father's wish to provide even for Nancy, however faithful she may have been, at the expense of his son."

"It is right," said Walter. "Besides, Mr. Shaw, I find that Nancy had laid up six hundred dollars, which she had deposited in my father's hands. That also must be paid, if there is enough to pay it; if not, I will take it upon myself to pay whenever I am able."

"You're an excellent boy, Walter," said Mr. Shaw. "I always had a good opinion of you, and I find it is more than deserved. I honor you for the resolution you have expressed, though I cannot quite agree with you about the five hundred dollars. As to the debt, that must be paid, if there is money enough to pay it. But we can leave the further discussion of this question for the present. Now let us consider what is to become of you in the mean time. You were at the Essex Classical Institute, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"You would like to go back again, I suppose."

"No, Mr. Shaw. It is an expensive school, and while it is uncertain how my father's affairs will come out, I should not feel justified in going there."

"Perhaps you are right. Of course you cannot stay here, and keep house by yourself. I would invite you to my own house, but my wife is an invalid, and I have to consider her in the matter."

"Thank you, Mr. Shaw; but I think perhaps I had better accept the offer of Mr. Drummond, of Stapleton. He invites me to make my home at his house, and, for the present, perhaps, that will be the best arrangement."

"I am not acquainted with Mr. Drummond. He is a relation, I believe."

"Yes, he is my father's cousin, and so, of course, my second cousin."

"I think I saw him at the funeral."

"Yes, he was present."

Mr. Shaw had seen Jacob Drummond, and had not been very favorably impressed by his appearance. Still, his offer was not one to be hastily rejected, for no better reason than a little prejudice, which might prove unfounded. Accordingly he said, "Well, Walter, as you say, I am not sure whether this may not be the best arrangement for you, that is, for the present. If you don't like to stay at Stapleton, you can write me, and I will see what I can do for you."

"Thank you, Mr. Shaw."

Nancy was much troubled at the thought of parting from Walter, whom she had known from his infancy; but a situation was immediately offered her in the village, and Walter promised to take her as his house-keeper whenever he had a home of his own, and this comforted her, although it was likely to be a long time first, since our hero was at present but fifteen.

"Your six hundred dollars shall be paid, Nancy," said Walter, "as soon as father's affairs are settled."

"Don't bother yourself about that, Master Walter," said Nancy. "I've got fifty dollars in my trunk, and I don't need the other at all. I can wait for it five years."

"It won't be necessary to wait as long as that, Nancy."

"And so you are going to that Mr. Drummond's? I'm sorry for it. I don't like the man's looks at all."

"He may be a good man. He was kind to invite me."

"He isn't a good man," said Nancy, positively. "He's got a mean sort of look to his face."

"You mustn't try to prejudice me before I go to him, Nancy."

"You'll think as I do before you've been there a week," said Nancy, shaking her head. "I took a good look at him when he was here, and I didn't like his looks."

"He isn't very handsome," said Walter, smiling; "but everybody can't be handsome."

Secretly he did not wonder much at Nancy's prejudice. Mr. Drummond certainly was a mean-looking man. How he could be so nearly related to his father, who was a generous, open-handed, and open-hearted man, was surprising. Still Walter was just enough to reserve his judgment until his opportunities of judging were greater than at present.

He wrote a brief letter to Stapleton, to the following effect:—

"Mr. Drummond:—

"Dear Sir:—I will accept the invitation you were kind enough to extend to me, for the present, at least, and will come to Stapleton about the middle of next week. You are the only relation of my father that I know of, and I think it would be his wish that I should go to you. If it should be inconvenient for you to receive me at that time, please write me at once.

"Yours, respectfully,

"Walter Conrad."

In return, Walter received a letter couched in the most cordial terms, in which Mr. Drummond signed himself, "Your affectionate cousin." He was delighted, he said, to think that he was about to receive, under his humble roof, the son of his revered and lamented cousin.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. DRUMMOND'S HUMBLE ROOF

"Mrs. Drummond," said her husband, "young Mr. Conrad will be here by four o'clock this afternoon. You will have a nice supper ready at five."

"Shall I have cake and pie both?" inquired Mrs. Drummond, doubtfully.

"Certainly. Indeed, it may be as well to have two kinds of pie, say apple and pumpkin; and, as we have not had hot biscuit for some time, you may bake some."

Mrs. Drummond looked at her husband as if she had doubts as to his sanity. Such a luxurious meal was quite unheard of in the Drummond household.

"Cake, two kinds of pie, and hot biscuit!" she repeated.

"Yes," he replied. "I am not in general in favor of such extra living, but it is well to pay some respect to the memory of my deceased kinsman in the person of his son. Being the son of a rich man, he has been accustomed to rich living, and I wish him, on his advent into our family, to feel at home."

Mrs. Drummond prepared to obey her husband's directions with alacrity.

"Joshua will get a good supper for once," she thought, thinking more of her son than of the stranger who was to enter the family. "How surprised he will be to see such a variety on the table!"

Not that Joshua was strictly confined to the spare diet of his father's table. Through his mother's connivance there was generally an extra piece of pie or cake in the pantry laid aside for him. Had Mr. Drummond suspected this, he would have been very angry; but, being at the store the greater portion of the time, he was not aware of the extra indulgence.

Mr. Drummond himself met Walter at the depot.

"I am delighted to welcome you to Stapleton, my young friend," he said, shaking his hand cordially. "In the affliction which has come upon you, let me hope that you will find a haven of rest beneath my humble roof."

"I wonder why he always speaks of his 'humble roof,'" thought Walter. "Does he live in a shanty, I wonder?"

He made suitable acknowledgments, and proceeded to walk beside Mr. Drummond to the house which he termed humble.

It did not deserve that name, being a substantial two-story house, rather ugly architecturally, but comfortable enough in appearance.

"That is my humble dwelling," said Mr. Drummond, pointing it out. "It is not equal to the splendid mansion in which you have been accustomed to live, for my worldly circumstances differ widely from those of your late lamented parent; but I trust that in our humble way we shall be enabled to make you comfortable."

"Thank you, Mr. Drummond; I have no doubt of that. Your house looks very comfortable."

"Yes, it is plain and humble, but comfortable. We are plain people. We are not surrounded by the appliances of wealth, but we manage, in our humble way, to get through life. That is my son Joshua, who is looking out of the front window. I hope you may become good friends, considering how nearly you are related."

Walter raised his eyes, and saw Joshua, whose small, mean features, closely resembling his father's, expressed considerable curiosity. Walter secretly doubted whether he should like him; but this doubt he kept to himself.

Mr. Drummond opened the outer door, and led the way in.

"This is my wife, Mrs. Drummond," he said, as she approached, and kindly welcomed the young stranger.

"I think I shall like her," thought Walter, suffering his glance to rest for a moment on her mild, placid features; "she is evidently quite superior to her husband."

"Joshua, come here and welcome Mr. Conrad," said his father.

Joshua came forward awkwardly, and held out his hand with the stiffness of a pump-handle.

"How dy do?" he said. "Just come?"

"Yes," said Walter, accepting the hand, and shaking it slightly.

"Are you tired with your journey, Mr. Conrad?" asked Mrs. Drummond. "Perhaps you would like to be shown to your room."

"Thank you," said Walter. "I will go up for a few minutes."

"Where are you going to put our young friend, Mrs. Drummond?"

"In the spare chamber."

"That is right. You will find some difference, Mr. Conrad, between our humble accommodations and the sumptuous elegance of your own home; but we will try and make it up by a hearty welcome."

"I wish he wouldn't use the word *humble* so much," thought Walter.

Walter went upstairs, preceded by Mr. Drummond, who insisted on carrying his carpet-bag, for his trunk would not arrive till the next day, having been forwarded by express.

"I say, mother," remarked Joshua, "the old man's awfully polite to this young fellow."

"You shouldn't speak of your father in that way, Joshua."

"Oh, what's the odds? He is an old man, isn't he? I just wish he'd be as polite to me. I say, I hope he'll like his boarding-place. What are you going to have for supper?"

"Hot biscuit, cake, and two kinds of pie."

"Whew! won't the old man look like a thundercloud?"

"That's what he told me to get. You do your father injustice, Joshua."

Mrs. Drummond knew in her secret heart that her husband was intensely mean; but she was one of those who like to think as well as possible of every one, and was glad of an opportunity to prove that he could, on rare occasions, be more generous.

"Father's brain must be softening," said Joshua, after recovering in a measure from his astonishment. "I hope it will be permanent. Isn't supper most ready?"

"At five o'clock, Joshua."

"This young chap's got a lot of money, I suppose, and the governor's after some of it. That explains the matter."

"I wish you wouldn't speak so disrespectfully of your father, Joshua."

"I won't if he'll keep on as he's begun. I'm glad this young Conrad has come to board here. I'm going to get thick with him."

"He seems like a very nice boy," said Mrs. Drummond.

"I don't care what sort of a boy he is, as long as he's got the tin. I'm going to make him treat."

"You must be considerate of his feelings, Joshua. Remember that he has just lost his father."

"Suppose he has, there's no need of looking glum about it."

Had Jacob Drummond died, Joshua would have borne the loss with the greatest fortitude. Of that there was no doubt. Indeed, he would rather have hailed the event with joy, if, as he expressed it, the "old man did the right thing," and left him the bulk of his property. Though such feelings did not do Joshua much credit, it must be said in extenuation that his father was far from being a man to inspire affection in any one, however nearly related.

At five o'clock they sat down to supper.

"I hope, Mr. Conrad," said Jacob, "you will be able to relish our humble repast."

"Humble again!" thought Walter. He was about to say that everything looked very nice, when Joshua broke in.

"If you call this humble, I don't know what you'd say to the suppers we commonly have."

Mr. Drummond, who desired, for this day, at least, to keep up appearances, frowned with vexation.

"Joshua," he said, "I desire that you will act in a more gentlemanly way, or else leave the table."

As leaving the table on the present occasion would have been, indeed, a deprivation, Joshua thought it wise not to provoke his father too far, at any rate until after he had made sure of his supper. He therefore left most of the conversation to his father.

"Have you ever been in Stapleton before, Mr. Conrad?" asked Mr. Drummond.

"No, sir; never."

"It is not a large place, but it is growing; the people are plain, but they have kind hearts. I hope you may like the town after a while."

"Thank you, sir; I have no doubt I shall."

"If you feel inclined for a walk, Joshua will go out with you after supper, and show you the mill-dam, the church, and the school-house. He will also point out the store—it is only across the way—where, in my humble way, I try to earn a living. I shall be very glad if you will come in and take a look inside. I may be busy, for work has accumulated during my absence, but Joshua will show you around."

"Thank you, sir."

"Will you have another cup of tea, Mr. Conrad?" asked Mrs. Drummond.

"Thank you."

"May I ask, Mr. Conrad,—excuse my intruding the question,—who is left executor of your father's estate?"

"Mr. Shaw, the lawyer in our village."

"Is he? Do you have confidence in him?"

"He is an excellent man, very honest and upright. He was an intimate friend of my father."

"Ah, indeed! I am glad of it. Then he will consult your interests."

"Yes, sir, I feel quite safe in his hands."

"I am so glad to hear you say so. So many lawyers, you know, are tricky."

"Mr. Shaw is not tricky."

"We have no lawyer here," pursued Mr. Drummond. "You will perhaps be surprised to hear it, but my humble services are frequently called into requisition, in administering and settling estates."

"Indeed, sir."

"Yes; but I am glad you have got a man you can trust. Mrs. Drummond, I think Mr. Conrad will have another piece of pie."

Supper was over at length, and Walter, by invitation, went out to walk with Joshua.

CHAPTER VIII.

WALTER MAKES A REVELATION

Walter did not anticipate a very pleasant walk with Joshua. The little he had seen of that young man did not prepossess him in his favor. However, having no other way of spending his time, he had no objection to the walk.

"That's the old man's store just across the street," said Joshua, as they emerged from the house.

"Your father's?"

"Of course. Don't you see the name on the sign?" Walter did see it, but never having been accustomed to speak of his own father as "the old man," he was not quite sure he apprehended Joshua's meaning.

"You were an only child, weren't you?" said Joshua.

"Yes," said Walter, soberly.

He could not help thinking what a comfort it would have been to him to have either brother or sister. He would have felt less alone in the world.

"So am I," said Joshua; adding, complacently, "Between you and I, the old man has laid up quite a snug sum. Of course it'll all come to me some day."

"I am glad to hear it," said Walter, rather wondering that Joshua should have made such a communication to a comparative stranger.

"To hear the old man talk," pursued Joshua, "you'd think he was awful poor. He's stingy enough about everything in the house. There isn't a family in town that don't live better than we do."

"I thought we had a very good supper," said Walter, who experienced not a little disgust at Joshua's charges against his father.

"That was because you were with us. The old man laid himself out for the occasion."

"I am sorry if any difference was made on my account."

"Well, I aint. It's the first decent supper I've eaten at home since the Sewing Circle met at our house three years ago."

"Is that the church?" asked Walter, desirous of diverting the conversation into another channel.

"Yes, that's the old meeting-house. I hate to go there. The minister's an old fogy."

"What is that I see through the trees? Is it a river?"

"No, it's a pond."

"Do you ever go out on it?"

"Not very often. I tried to get the old man to buy me a boat, but he wouldn't do it. He's too stingy."

"I wouldn't talk so about your father."

"Why not?"

"Because he is entitled to your respect."

"I don't know about that. If he'd treat me as he ought to, I'd treat him accordingly. He never gives me a cent if he can help it. Now how much do you think he allows me a week for spending money?"

"I can't tell."

"Only fifty cents, and I'm eighteen years old. Isn't that mean?"

"It isn't a very large sum."

"Of course not. He ought to give me five dollars a week, and then I'd buy my own clothes. Now I have to take up with what I can get. He wanted to have his old overcoat, that he'd worn three winters, made over for me; but I wouldn't stand it. I told him I'd go without first."

Though these communications did not raise Joshua in the estimation of Walter, the latter could not help thinking that there was probably some foundation for what was said, and the prejudice against Mr. Drummond, for which he had blamed himself as without cause, began to find some extenuation.

"When I talk to the old man about his stinting me so," continued Joshua, "he tells me to go to work and earn some money."

"Why don't you do it?"

"He wants me to go into his store, but he wouldn't pay me anything. He offered me a dollar and a half a week; but I wasn't going to work ten or twelve hours a day for no such sum. If I could get a light, easy place in the city, say at ten dollars a week, I'd go. There aint any chance in Stapleton for a young man of enterprise."

"I've thought sometimes," said Walter, "that I should like to get a place in the city; but I suppose I couldn't get enough at first to pay my board."

"You get a place!" exclaimed Joshua, in astonishment. "I thought you was going to college."

"Father intended I should; but his death will probably change my plans."

"I don't see why."

"It is expensive passing through college; I cannot afford it."

"Oh, that's all humbug. You're talking like the old man."

"How do you know that it is humbug?" demanded Walter, not very well pleased with his companion's tone.

"Why, you're rich. The old man told me that your father left a hundred thousand dollars. You're the only son; you told me so yourself."

"Your father is mistaken."

"What, wasn't your father rich?" asked Joshua, opening his small eyes in amazement.

"My father was unfortunate enough to get involved in a speculation, by which he lost heavily. I can't tell how his affairs stand till they are settled. I may be left penniless."

"Do you mean that?" asked Joshua, stopping short and facing his companion.

"I generally mean what I say," said Walter, rather stiffly.

Joshua's answer was a low whistle of amazement.

"Whew!" he said. "That's the biggest joke I've heard of lately;" and he followed up this remark by a burst of merriment.

Walter surveyed him with surprise. He certainly did not know what to make of Joshua's conduct.

"I don't see any joke about it," he said. "I don't complain of being poor, for I think I can earn my own living; but it doesn't strike me as a thing to laugh at."

"I was laughing to think how the old man is taken in. It's rich!"

Joshua burst into another fit of boisterous laughter.

"How is he taken in?"

"He thinks you're worth a hundred thousand dollars," said Joshua, going off in another peal of merriment.

"Well, he is mistaken, that's all. I don't see how he is taken in."

"He's been doing the polite, and treating you as if you was a prince of the blood. That's the reason he told the old woman to get up such a nice supper, he expected to get you to take him for a guardian, and then he'd have the handling of your money. Won't he be mad when he finds out how he's been taken in? Giving you the best room too! Are you sure that none of the property will be left?"

"Probably not much."

That Walter listened with mortification and disgust to what Joshua had told him about his father's selfish designs, is only what might be expected. It is always disagreeable to find out the meanness of those whom you have supposed kind to you for your own sake. This, to Walter, who had been accustomed to an atmosphere of kindness, was a painful discovery. It was his first experience

of the coldness and hollowness of the world, and to the sensitive nature of youth this first revelation is very painful and very bitter.

"I am sorry to think that your father made such a mistake," he said, coldly. "I will take care to undeceive him."

"What! You're not going to tell him, are you?"

"Certainly. I meant to do so; but I did not suppose he invited me just because he thought I was rich."

"What for, then?"

"Being my father's cousin and nearest relation, it didn't seem very strange that he should have invited me on that account."

"The old man's a shrewd one," said Joshua, rather admiringly. "He knows which way his bread is buttered. He don't lay himself out for no poor relations, not if he knows it."

"I am sorry if he has laid himself out for me under a mistake."

"I aint. It's a good joke on the old man. Besides, we all got a better supper by it. Don't you tell him about it till to-morrow."

"Why not?"

"Because, if you do, we'll have a mean breakfast as usual. I just want him to think you're rich a little while longer, so we can have something decent for once."

"I don't feel willing to deceive your father any longer. I have not willingly deceived him at all."

"You're a fool then!"

"Look here," said Walter, flushing a little, "I don't allow anybody to call me by that name."

"No offence," said Joshua, whose physical courage was not very great. "I didn't mean anything, of course, except that it was foolish to blurt it all out to-night, when there isn't any need of it. There isn't such an awful hurry, is there?"

"I would rather your father knew at once."

"To-morrow will be soon enough."

"At any rate I shall tell him to-morrow, then. But I've got tired walking. Suppose we go back."

"Just as you say."

They went back together. Mr. Drummond was in the store, but Mrs. Drummond was at home.

"You didn't go far," she said. "But I suppose you were tired, Mr. Conrad."

"A little," answered Walter.

"I wonder," thought our hero, "whether she will change as soon as she finds out that I am poor?" Somehow he felt that she would not. She seemed very different from her husband and son, and Walter was inclined to like her better.

Joshua went out again soon, not having much taste for staying at home; and, as Walter retired early, he did not see either him or his father again till the next morning at breakfast.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW MR. DRUMMOND TOOK THE NEWS

Joshua's anticipations of a good breakfast were realized. As he entered the room where the table was set, he saw a dish of beefsteak, another of fried potatoes, and some hot biscuit. This with coffee was very much better than the breakfast usually provided in the Drummond household.

Joshua burst into a fresh fit of laughter, thinking how his father had been taken in.

"What's the matter, Joshua?" asked his mother, who was the only one in the room besides himself.

"Oh, it's the richest joke, mother!"

"What is?" asked Mrs. Drummond, perplexed.

"I can't tell you now, but you'll find out pretty soon. Ho, ho!"

And Joshua commenced to laugh again.

"Has Mr. Conrad come downstairs?"

"I haven't seen Mr. Conrad this morning," answered Joshua, imitating his mother's tone in repeating the name.

Just then Walter entered, and said "Good-morning."

"Good-morning, Mr. Conrad," said Mrs. Drummond. "I hope you slept well."

"Very well, thank you," said Walter.

Mr. Drummond here entered from the street, having been for an hour in the store opposite.

"Good-morning, Mr. Conrad," he said. "I trust you rested well, and can do justice to our humble repast. I have been in the store an hour. We who are not endowed with the gifts of Fortune must be early astir."

Joshua tried to suppress a laugh, but not with entire success.

"What are you snickering at, Joshua?" demanded Mr. Drummond, in a displeased tone. "I don't know what Mr. Conrad will think of your manners."

"You'll excuse them, won't you, Mr. Conrad?" asked Joshua, beginning to chuckle again.

Knowing very well the source of his amusement, and feeling his own position to be an awkward one, Walter was all the more resolved to impart to Mr. Drummond without delay the posture of his father's affairs. He did not answer Joshua's appeal.

"I don't see what has got into you this morning, Joshua," said Mrs. Drummond, mildly. "You seem in very good spirits."

"So I am," said Joshua, with a grin.

His father suspected that the unusual excellence of the breakfast had something to do with Joshua's mirth, and was afraid he would let out something about it. This made him a little nervous, as he wanted to keep up appearances before his young guest.

Walter's appetite was not very good. His father's death weighed heavily upon him, and Joshua's revelation of the night before was not calculated to cheer him. It was mortifying to think that Mr. Drummond's gracious manner was entirely owing to his supposed wealth; but of this he entertained little doubt. He was anxious to have the truth known, no matter how unfavorably it might affect his position with the Drummonds. There were some, he knew, whose kindness did not depend on his reputed wealth. "You have a poor appetite, Mr. Conrad," said Mr. Drummond. "Let me give you another piece of steak."

"No, I thank you," said Walter.

"I'll take another piece, father," said Joshua.

"I have already helped you twice," said his father, frowning.

"I'm hungry this morning," said Joshua, who, knowing that he could not expect another as good breakfast, determined to do full justice to this.

"If you are, you need not overeat yourself," said Mr. Drummond, depositing on his son's outstretched plate a square inch of meat.

Joshua coolly helped himself to fried potatoes, and appropriated a hot biscuit, much to his father's annoyance. He resolved to give Joshua a private hint that he must be more sparing in his eating. He did not like to speak before Walter, desiring to keep up with him the character of a liberal man. Joshua understood his father's feelings, and it contributed to the enjoyment which he felt at the thought of how richly his father was sold.

At length breakfast was over.

"I must go back to the store," said Mr. Drummond. "Joshua will look after you, Mr. Conrad. I hope you will be able to pass the time pleasantly."

"If you can spare me five minutes, Mr. Drummond, I should like to speak to you in private," said Walter, determined to put an end to the misunderstanding at once.

"Certainly. I can spare five or ten minutes, or more, Mr. Conrad. Won't you walk into the parlor?"

The parlor was a very dreary-looking room, dark, cold, and cheerless. A carpet, of an ugly pattern, covered the floor; there was a centre-table in the middle of the room with a few books that were never opened resting upon it. Half-a-dozen cane-bottomed chairs stood about the room, and there were besides a few of the stock articles usually to be found in country parlors, including a very hard, inhospitable-looking sofa. As the Drummonds did not have much company, this room was very seldom used.

"Take a seat, Mr. Conrad," said Mr. Drummond, seating himself.

Mr. Drummond was far from anticipating the nature of Walter's communication. Indeed, he cherished a hope that our hero was about to ask his assistance in settling up the estate,—a request with which, it is needless to say, he would gladly have complied.

"I don't suppose you know how I am situated," Walter commenced. "I mean in relation to my father's estate."

"I suppose it was all left to you, and very properly. I congratulate you on starting in the world under such good auspices. I don't, of course, know how much your father left, but—"

"It is not certain that my father left anything," said Walter, thinking it best to reveal every thing at once.

"*What!*" exclaimed Mr. Drummond, his lower jaw falling, and looking very blank.

"My father made some investments recently that turned out badly."

"But he was worth a very large property,—it can't all be lost."

"I am afraid there will be very little left, if anything. He lost heavily by some mining stock, which he bought at a high figure, and which ran down to almost nothing."

"There's the house left, at any rate."

"My father borrowed its value, I understand; I am afraid that must go too."

Now, at length, it flashed upon Mr. Drummond how he had been taken in. He thought of the attentions he had lavished upon Walter, of the extra expense he had incurred, and all as it appeared for a boy likely to prove penniless. He might even expect to live upon him. These thoughts, which rapidly succeeded each other, mortified and made him angry.

"Why didn't you tell me this before, young man?" he demanded with asperity.

His change of tone and manner showed Walter that Joshua was entirely right in his estimate of his father's motives, and he in turn became indignant.

"When did you expect me to tell you, Mr. Drummond?" he said quickly. "I only arrived yesterday afternoon, and I tell you this morning. I would have told you last night, if you had been in the house."

"Why didn't you tell me when I was at Willoughby?"

"I had other things to think of," said Walter, shortly. "The thought of my father's death and of my loss shut out everything else."

"Well, what are you going to do?" asked Mr. Drummond, in a hard tone.

"I shall have to earn my own living," said Walter. "I am well and strong, and am not afraid."

"That is a good plan," said Mr. Drummond, who knew Walter so little as to fear that he wanted to become dependent upon him.

"When I was of your age I had my own living to earn. What do you propose to do?"

"Have you a vacancy for me in your store? Joshua told me you wished him to go in."

"You couldn't earn much, for you don't know anything of the business."

"I should not expect to. I am perfectly willing to work for my board until I find out how my father's affairs are going to turn out."

This proposal struck Mr. Drummond favorably. He judged that Walter would prove a valuable assistant when he was broken in, for it was easy to see that he had energy. Besides, it was desirable to keep him near until it was decided whether Mr. Conrad's affairs were really in as bad a state as his son represented. Even if a few thousand dollars were left, Mr. Drummond would like the handling of that sum. Then, again, no one knew better than Mr. Drummond that Walter's board would cost him very little; for, of course, he would at once return to his usual frugal fare.

"Very well," he said; "you can go into the store on those terms. As you say, you've got your own living to earn, and the sooner you begin the better."

Walter had not said this, but he agreed with Mr. Drummond.

It may be thought strange that our hero should have been willing to enter the employment of such a mean man; but he thought it wisest to remain in the neighborhood until he could learn something definite about his father's affairs. He prepared to go to work at once, partly because he didn't wish to be dependent, partly because he foresaw that he should be happier if employed.

When Mr. Drummond and Walter came out of the parlor, Joshua was waiting in the next room, and looked up eagerly to see how his father bore the communication. He was disappointed when he saw that Mr. Drummond looked much as usual.

"Conrad has been telling me," said Mr. Drummond, "that his father lost a good deal of money by speculation, and it is doubtful whether he has left any property."

"I am very sorry," said Mrs. Drummond; and Walter saw and appreciated her look of sympathy.

"As he will probably have to work for a living, he has asked for a place in my store," pursued Mr. Drummond, "and I have agreed to take him on trial. Conrad, you may get your hat and come over at once."

Joshua whistled in sheer amazement. The affair had by no means terminated as he anticipated.

CHAPTER X. MR. DRUMMOND'S STORE

Mr. Drummond's store was of fair size, and contained a considerable and varied stock of dry goods. Not only the people of Stapleton, but a considerable number of persons living outside the town limits, but within a radius of half-a-dozen miles, came there to purchase goods.

Besides Mr. Drummond there was a single salesman, a young man of twenty-two, who wore a cravat of immense size, and ostentatiously displayed in his bosom a mammoth breastpin, with a glass imitation diamond, which, had it been real, would have been equal in value to the entire contents of the store. This young man, whose name was Nichols, received from Mr. Drummond the munificent salary of four hundred dollars per annum. Having a taste for dress, he patronized the village tailor to the extent of his means, and considerably beyond, being at this moment thirty dollars in debt for the suit he wore.

Besides this young man, there had formerly been a younger clerk, receiving a salary of four dollars weekly. He had been dismissed for asking to have his pay raised to five dollars a week, and since then Mr. Drummond had got along with but one salesman. As, however, the business really required more assistance, he was quite willing to employ Walter on board wages, which he estimated would not cost him, at the most, more than two dollars a week.

"Mr. Nichols," said Mr. Drummond, "I have brought you some help. This is Walter Conrad, a distant relative." (Had Walter been rich, he would have been a near relative.) "He knows nothing of the business. You can take him in charge, and give him some idea about prices, and so forth."

"Yes, sir," said the young man, in an important tone. "I'll soon break him in."

Mr. Nichols, who gave up what little mind he had to the subject of clothes, began to inspect Walter's raiment. He had sufficient knowledge to perceive that our hero's suit was of fine fabric, and tastefully made. That being the case, he concluded to pay him some attention.

"I'm glad you've come," he said. "I have to work like a dog. I'm pretty well used up to-day. I was up till two o'clock dancing."

"Were you?"

"Yes. There was a ball over to Crampton. I go to all the balls within ten miles. They can't do without me."

"Can't they?" asked Walter, not knowing what else to say.

"No. You see there isn't much style at these country balls,—I mean among the young men. They don't know how to dress. Now I give my mind to it, and they try to imitate me. I don't trust any tailor entirely. I just tell him what I want, and how I want it. Higgins, the tailor here, has improved a good deal since he began to make clothes for me."

"Indeed!"

"Where do you have your clothes made?"

"In Willoughby. That's where I have always lived till I came here."

"Is there a good tailor there?"

"I think so; but then I am not much of a judge."

Just then a customer came in, and Mr. Nichols was drawn away from his dissertation on dress.

"Just notice how I manage," he said in a low voice.

Accordingly Walter stood by and listened.

"Have you any calicoes that you can recommend?" asked the woman, who appeared to be poor.

"Yes, ma'am, we've got some of the best in the market,—some that will be sure to suit you."

He took from the shelves and displayed a very ugly pattern.

"I don't think I like that," she said. "Haven't you got some with a smaller figure?"

"The large figures are all the rage just now, ma'am. Everybody wears them."

"Is that so?" asked the woman, irresolutely.

"Fact, I assure you."

"How much is it a yard?"

"Fifteen cents only."

"Are you sure it will wash?"

"Certainly."

"I should like to look at something else."

"I'll show you something else, but this is the thing for you."

He brought out a piece still uglier; and finally, after some hesitation, his customer ordered ten yards from the first piece. He measured it with an air, and, folding it up, handed it to the customer, receiving in return a two-dollar bill, which the poor woman sighed as she rendered in, for she had worked hard for it.

"Is there anything more, ma'am?"

"A spool of cotton, No. 100."

When the customer had left the store, Nichols turned complacently to Walter.

"How did you like that calico?" he asked.

"It seemed to me very ugly."

"Wasn't it, though? It's been in the store five years. I didn't know as we should ever get rid of it."

"I thought you said it was all the rage."

"That's all gammon, of course."

"Haven't you got any prettier patterns?"

"Plenty."

"Why didn't you show them?"

"I wanted to get off the old rubbish first. It isn't everybody that would buy it; but she swallowed everything I said."

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