

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

DAN, THE NEWSBOY

Horatio Alger
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Horatio Alger Jr.

Dan, The Newsboy

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCING DAN

"*Evening Telegram!* Only one left. Going for two cents, and worth double the money. Buy one, sir?"

Attracted by the business-like tone of the newsboy, a gentleman paused as he was ascending the steps of the Astor House, and said, with a smile:

"You seem to appreciate the *Telegram*, my boy. Any important news this afternoon?"

"Buy the paper, and you'll see," said the boy, shrewdly.

"I see—you don't care to part with the news for nothing. Well, here are your two cents."

"Thank you, sir."

Still the gentleman lingered, his eyes fixed upon the keen, pleasant face of the boy.

"How many papers have you sold to-day, my boy?" he asked.

"Thirty-six, sir."

"Were they all *Telegrams*?"

"No; I sell all the papers. I ain't partial. I'm just as willing to

make money on the *Mail*, or *Commercial*, or *Evening Post*, as the *Telegram*."

"I see you have an eye to business. How long have you dealt in papers?"

"Three years, sir."

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"What did you do before you sold papers?"

A shadow rested on the boy's bright face.

"I didn't have to work then, sir," he said. "My father was alive, and he was well off. We lived in a nice house up town, and I went to a private school. But all at once father failed, and soon afterward he died, and then everything was changed. I don't like to think about it, sir."

The gentleman's interest was strongly excited.

"It is a sad story," he said. "Is your mother living?"

"Yes, sir. The worst of it is, that I don't make enough to support us both, and she has to work, too."

"What does she do?"

"She makes vests for a man on Chatham street."

"I hope she is well paid."

"That she is not. He only allows her twenty cents apiece."

"That is a mere pittance. She can't earn much at that rate."

"No, sir; she has to work hard to make one vest a day."

"The man can't have a conscience," said the gentleman, indignantly. "It is starvation wages."

"So it is, sir, but he pretends that he pays more than the work is worth. Oh, he's a mean fellow," pursued the boy, his face expressive of the scorn and disgust which he felt.

"What is your name, my boy?"

"Dan, sir—Dan Mordaunt."

"I hope, Dan, you make more money than your mother does."

"Oh, yes, sir. Sometimes I make a dollar a day, but I don't average that. I wish I could make enough so that mother wouldn't have to work."

"I see you are a good son. I like to hear you speak in such terms of your mother."

"If I didn't," said Dan, impetuously, "I should deserve to be kicked. She's a good mother, sir."

"I have no doubt of it. It must be hard for her to be so reduced after once living liberally. How happened it that your father failed?"

The boy's pleasant face assumed a stern expression.

"On account of a rascal, sir. His book-keeper ran off, carrying with him thirty thousand dollars. Father couldn't meet his bills, and so he failed. It broke his heart, and he didn't live six months after it."

"Have you ever heard of this book-keeper since?"

"No, sir, not a word. I wish I could. I should like to see him dragged to prison, for he killed my father, and made my mother work for a living."

"I can't blame you, Dan, for feeling as you do. Besides, it has

altered your prospects."

"I don't care for myself, sir. I can forget that. But I can't forgive the injury he has done my poor father and mother."

"Have you any idea what became of the defaulter?"

"We think that he went to Europe, just at first, but probably he returned when he thought all was safe."

"He may have gone out West."

"I shouldn't wonder, sir."

"I live in the West myself—in Chicago."

"That's a lively city, isn't it, sir?"

"We think so out there. Well, my lad, I must go into the hotel now."

"Excuse me for detaining you, sir," said Dan, politely.

"You haven't detained me; you have interested me. I hope to see you again."

"Thank you, sir."

"Where do you generally stand?"

"Just here, sir. A good many people pass here, and I find it a good stand."

"Then I shall see you again, as I propose to remain in New York for a day or two. Shall you have the morning papers?"

"Yes, sir; all of them."

"Then I will patronize you to-morrow morning. Good-day."

"Good-day, sir."

"He's a gentleman," said Dan to himself, emphatically. "It isn't every one that feels an interest in a poor newsboy. Well, I may as

well be going home. It's lonely for mother staying by herself all day. Let me see; what shall I take her? Oh, here are some pears. She's very fond of pears."

Dan inquired the price of pears at a street stand, and finally selected one for three cents.

"Better take two for five cents," said the fruit merchant.

"I can't afford it," said Dan. "Times are hard, and I have to look after the pennies. I wouldn't buy any at all if it wasn't for my mother."

"Better take another for yourself," urged the huckster.

Dan shook his head.

"Can't afford it," he said. "I must get along without the luxuries. Bread and butter is good enough for me."

Looking up, Dan met the glance of a boy who was passing—a tall, slender, supercilious-looking boy, who turned his head away scornfully as he met Dan's glance.

"I know him," said Dan to himself. "I ought to know Tom Carver. We used to sit together at school. But that was when father was rich. He won't notice me now. Well, I don't want him to," proceeded Dan, coloring indignantly. "He thinks himself above me, but he needn't. His father failed, too, but he went on living just the same. People say he cheated his creditors. My poor father gave up all he had, and sank into poverty."

This was what passed through Dan's mind. The other boy—Tom Carver—had recognized Dan, but did not choose to show it.

"I wonder whether Dan Mordaunt expected me to notice

him," he said to himself. "I used to go to school with him, but now that he is a low newsboy I can't stoop to speak to him. What would my fashionable friends say?"

Tom Carver twirled his delicate cane and walked on complacently, feeling no pity for the schoolfellow with whom he used to be so intimate. He was intensely selfish—a more exceptional thing with boys than men. It sometimes happens that a boy who passes for good-hearted changes into a selfish man; but Tom required no change to become that. His heart was a very small one, and beat only for himself.

Dan walked on, and finally paused before a large tenement-house. He went in at the main entrance, and ascended two flights of stairs. He opened a door, and found himself in the presence of the mother whom he so dearly loved.

CHAPTER II.

DAN AT HOME

While Dan was strong, sturdy, and the picture of health, his mother was evidently an invalid. She was pale, thin, and of delicate appearance. She was sitting in a cane-seated rocking-chair, which Dan had bought second-hand on one of his flush days at a small place on the Bowery. She looked up with a glad smile when Dan entered.

"I am so glad to see you, my dear boy," she said.

"Have you been lonely, mother?" asked Dan, kissing her affectionately.

"Yes, Dan, it is lonely sitting here hour after hour without you, but I have my work to think of."

"I wish you didn't have to work, mother," said Dan. "You are not strong enough. I ought to earn enough to support us both."

"Don't trouble yourself about that, my dear boy. I should feel more lonely if I had nothing to do."

"But you work all the time. I don't like to have you do that."

In truth the mother was very tired, and her feeble fingers were cramped with the stitch, stitch, stitch in endless repetition, but she put on a cheerful countenance.

"Well, Dan, I'll stop now that you are at home. You want some supper."

"Let me get it, mother."

"No, Dan, it will be a relief to me to stir around a little, as I have been sitting so long."

"Oh, I nearly forgot, mother—here's a nice pear I bought for you."

"It does look nice," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "I don't feel hungry, but I can eat that. But where is yours, Dan?"

"Oh, I've eaten mine," answered Dan, hastily.

It was not true, but God will forgive such falsehoods.

"You'd better eat half of this."

"No; I'll be—flummuxed if I do," said Dan, pausing a little for an unobjectionable word.

Mrs. Mordaunt set the little table for two. On it she spread a neat cloth, and laid the plain supper—a plate of bread, ditto of butter, and a few slices of cold meat. Soon the tea was steeped, and mother and son sat down for the evening meal.

"I say, mother, this is a jolly supper," said Dan. "I get awfully hungry by supper-time."

"You are a growing boy, Dan. I am glad you have an appetite."

"But you eat next to nothing, mother," said Dan, uneasily.

"I am *not* a growing boy," said Mrs. Mordaunt, smiling. "I shall relish my supper to-night on account of the pear you brought me."

"Well, I'm glad I thought of it," said Dan, heartily. "Pears ain't solid enough for me; I want something hearty to give me strength."

"Of course you do, Dan. You have to work hard."

"I work hard, mother! Why, I have the easiest time going. All I do is to walk about the streets, or stand in front of the Astor House and ask people to buy my papers. Oh, by the way, who do you think I saw to-day?"

"Any of our old friends?" asked Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Any of our old friends! I should say not," answered Dan, disdainfully. "It was Tom Carver."

"Was it he? He used to sit next you in school, didn't he?"

"Yes, for six months. Tom and I were chums."

"Did he say whether his family was well?"

"What are you thinking of, mother? Do you suppose Tom Carver would notice me, now that I am a poor newsboy?"

"Why shouldn't he?" demanded the mother, her pale face flushing. "Why shouldn't he notice my boy?"

"Because he doesn't choose to," answered Dan, with a short laugh. "Didn't you know it was disgraceful to be poor?"

"Thank Heaven, it isn't that!" ejaculated Mrs. Mordaunt.

"Well, it might as well be. Tom thinks me beneath his notice now. You should have seen him turn his head to the other side as he walked by, twirling his light cane."

"Did you speak to him, Dan?"

"What do you take me for, mother? Do you think I'd speak to a fellow that doesn't want to know me?"

"I think you are proud, my boy."

"Well, mother, I guess you're right. I'm too proud to force

myself upon the notice of Tom Carver, or any other purse-proud sneak."

Dan spoke with a tinge of bitterness, and it was evident that he felt Tom's slight more than he was willing to acknowledge.

"It's the way of the world, Dan," said his mother, sighing. "Not one of all my friends, or those whom I accounted such, in my prosperous days, has come to see us, or shown any interest in our fate."

"They can stay away. We can do without them," said Dan, sturdily.

"We must; but it would be pleasant to see some of the old faces," said his mother, plaintively. "There is no one in this house that is company for me."

"No, mother; you are an educated and refined lady, and they are poor and ignorant."

"They are very good people, some of them. There is Mrs. Burke on the next floor. She was in this afternoon, and asked if she couldn't do something for me. She thought I looked poorly, she said."

"She's a brick, mother!"

"My dear Dan, you do use such extraordinary language sometimes. You didn't talk so when we lived on Madison avenue."

"No, mother, but I associate with a different class now. I can't help catching the phrases I hear all the time. But don't mind, mother; I mean no harm. I never swear—that is, almost never. I

did catch myself at it the other day, when another newsboy stole half a dozen of my papers."

"Don't forget that you are a gentleman, Dan."

"I won't if I can help it, mother, though I don't believe anybody else would suspect it. I must take good care not to look into the looking-glass, or I might be under the impression that I was a street-boy instead of a gentleman."

"Clothes don't make the gentleman, Dan. I want you to behave and feel like a gentleman, even if your clothes are poor and patched."

"I understand you, mother, and I shall try to follow your advice. I have never done any mean thing yet that I can remember, and I don't intend to."

"I am sure of that, my dear boy."

"Don't be too sure of anything, mother. I have plenty of bad examples before me."

"But you won't be guided by them?"

"I'll try not."

"Did you succeed well in your sales to-day, Dan?"

"Pretty well. I made ninety-six cents."

"I wish I could earn as much," said Mrs. Mordaunt, sighing. "I can only earn twenty cents a day."

"You *earn* as much as I do, mother, but you don't get it. You see, there's a difference in earning and being paid. Old Gripp is a mean skinflint. I should like to force one of his twenty-cent vests down his miserly throat."

"Don't use such violent language, Dan. Perhaps he pays me all he can afford."

"Perhaps he does, but I wouldn't bet high on it. He is making a fortune out of those who sew for him. There are some men that have no conscience. I hope some time you will be free from him."

"I hope so, too, Dan, but I am thankful to earn something. I don't want all the burden of our maintenance to fall on you."

"Don't call it a burden, mother. There's nothing I enjoy so much as working for you. Why, it's fun!"

"It can't be fun on rainy, disagreeable days, Dan."

"It wouldn't be fun for you, mother, but you're not a boy."

"I am so sorry that you can't keep on with your education, Dan. You were getting on so well at school."

It was a thought that had often come to Dan, but he wouldn't own it, for he did not wish to add to his mother's sadness.

"Oh, well, mother," he said, "something may turn up for us, so we won't look down in the mouth."

"I have got my bundled work ready, Dan, if you can carry it round to Mr. Gripp's to-night."

"Yes, mother, I'll carry it. How many vests are there?"

"There are six. That amounts to a dollar and twenty cents. I hope he'll pay you to-night, for our rent comes due to-morrow."

"So it does!" ejaculated Dan, seriously. "I never thought of it. Shall we have enough to pay it? You've got my money, you know."

"We shall be a dollar short."

"Even if old Gripp pays for the vests?"

"Yes."

Dan whistled—a whistle of dismay and anxiety, for he well knew that the landlord was a hard man.

CHAPTER III.

GRIPP'S CLOTHING STORE

Nathan Gripp's clothing store was located about a quarter of a mile from the City Hall, on Chatham street. Not many customers from Fifth avenue owned him as their tailor, and he had no reputation up town. His prices were undeniably low, though his clothes were dear enough in the end.

His patrons were in general from the rural districts, or city residents of easy tastes and limited means.

The interior of the store was ill-lighted, and looked like a dark cavern. But nearly half the stock was displayed at the door, or on the sidewalk, Mr. Gripp himself, or his leading salesman, standing in the door-way with keen, black eyes, trying to select from the moving crowds possible customers.

On the whole Gripp was making money. He sold his clothes cheap, but they cost him little. He paid the lowest prices for work, and whenever told that his wages would not keep body and soul together, he simply remarked:

"That's nothing to me, my good woman. If you don't like the pay, leave the work for somebody else."

But unfortunately those who worked for Mr. Gripp could not afford to leave the work for somebody else. Half wages were better than none, and they patiently kept on wearing out their

strength that Nathan might wax rich, and live in good style up town.

Mr. Gripp himself was standing in the door-way when Dan, with the bundle of vests under his arm, stopped in front of the store. Mr. Gripp was a little doubtful whether our hero wished to become a customer, but a glance at the bundle dispelled his uncertainty, and revealed the nature of his errand.

"I've brought home half a dozen vests," said Dan.

"Who from?" asked Gripp, abruptly, for he never lavished any of the suavity, which was a valuable part of his stock in trade, on his work people.

"Mrs. Mordaunt."

"Take them into the store. Here, Samuel, take the boy's bundle, and see if the work is well done."

It was on the tip of Dan's tongue to resent the doubt which these words implied, but he prudently remained silent.

The clerk, a callow youth, with long tow-colored locks, made sleek with bear's grease, stopped picking his teeth, and motioned to Dan to come forward.

"Here, young feller," he said, "hand over your bundle."

"There it is, young feller!" retorted Dan.

The clerk surveyed the boy with a look of disapproval in his fishy eyes.

"No impudence, young feller!" he said.

"Where's the impudence?" demanded Dan. "I don't see it."

"Didn't you call me a young feller?"

"You've called me one twice, but I ain't at all particular. I'd just as lief call you an old feller," said Dan, affably.

"Look here, young chap, I don't like your manners," said the clerk, with an irritating consciousness that he was getting the worst of the verbal encounter.

"I'm sorry for that," answered Dan, "because they're the best I've got."

"Did you make these vests yourself?" asked the salesman, with a feeble attempt at humor.

"Yes," was Dan's unexpected rejoinder. "That's the way I amuse my leisure hours."

"Humph!" muttered the tallow-faced young man, "I'll take a look at them."

He opened the bundle, and examined the vests with an evident desire to find something wrong.

He couldn't find any defect, but that didn't prevent his saying: "They ain't over-well made."

"Well, they won't be over-well paid," retorted Dan. "So we're even."

"I don't know if we ought to pay for them at all."

"Honesty is the best policy, young feller," said Dan.

"No more of your impudence!" said the clerk, sharply. "Wait here a minute till I speak to Mr. Gripp."

He kept Dan before the counter, and approached the proprietor.

"Well, what is it, Samuel?" asked Mr. Gripp, stroking his jet-

black whiskers. "Are the vests all right?"

"Pretty well, sir, but the boy is impudent."

"Ha! how is that?"

"He keeps calling me 'young feller.'"

"Anything more?"

"He don't seem to have any respect for me—or you," he added, shrewdly.

Nathan Gripp frowned. He cared very little about his clerk, but he resented any want of respect to himself. He felt that the balance at his bankers was large enough to insure him a high degree of consideration from his work-people at least.

"How many vests are there?" he asked.

"Half a dozen."

"And the boy wants his pay, I suppose."

"He hasn't asked for it, but he will. They always do."

"Tell him we only pay when a full dozen are finished and brought in. We'll credit him, or his mother, with these."

"That'll pay them off," thought the astute clothing merchant.

Samuel received this order with inward satisfaction, and went back smiling.

"Well, young feller," said he, "it's all right. The vests ain't over-well done, but we'll keep 'em. Now you can go."

But Dan did not move.

"It seems to me you've forgotten something," he said.

"What's that?"

"You haven't paid me for the work."

"It's all right. We'll pay when the next half dozen are brought in. Will you take 'em now?"

Dan was disagreeably surprised. This was entirely out of the usual course, and he knew very well that the delay would be a great inconvenience.

"We've always been paid when we brought in work," he said.

"We've changed our rule," said the clerk, nonchalantly. "We only pay when a full dozen are brought in."

"What difference does it make to you? We need the money, and can't wait."

"It's my orders, young feller. It's what Mr. Gripp just told me."

"Then I'll speak to him," said Dan, promptly.

"Just as you like."

Dan approached the proprietor of the establishment.

"Mr. Gripp," said he, "I've just brought in half a dozen vests, but your clerk here won't pay me for them."

"You will get your pay, young man, when you bring in another half dozen."

"But, Mr. Gripp, we need the money. We haven't got a big bank account. Our rent is due to-morrow."

"Is it, indeed? I don't see how that concerns me."

"Will you pay me to-night as a favor?" pleaded Dan, humbling himself for his mother's sake.

"I can't break over my rule," said Nathan Gripp. "Besides, Samuel says the work isn't very well done."

"Then he lies!" exclaimed Dan, provoked.

"Do you hear that, Mr. Gripp?" ejaculated the angry Samuel, his tallowy complexion putting on a faint flush. "Didn't I tell you he was impudent?"

Nathan Gripp's small black eyes snapped viciously.

"Boy," said he, "leave my store directly. How dare you address me in such a way, you young tramp?"

"I'm no more a tramp than yourself," retorted Dan, now thoroughly angry.

"Samuel, come here, and put out this boy!" exclaimed Nathan, too dignified to attempt the task himself.

Samuel advanced, nothing loth, his fishy eyes gleaming with pleasure.

"Get out, you vagabond!" he exclaimed, in the tone of authority.

"You're a couple of swindlers!" exclaimed Dan. "You won't pay for honest work."

"Out with him, Samuel!" ordered Gripp.

Samuel seized Dan by the shoulder, and attempted to obey orders, but our hero doubled him up with a blow from his fist, and the luckless clerk, faint and gasping, staggered and nearly fell.

Dan stepped out on the sidewalk, and raising his hat, said, with mock politeness, "Good-morning, gentlemen!" and walked away, leaving Gripp and his assistant speechless with anger.

CHAPTER IV.

AN ODD COUPLE

When Dan's excitement was over, he felt that he had won a barren victory. He had certainly been badly treated, and was justified in yielding to his natural indignation; but for all that he had acted unwisely.

Nathan Gripp had not refused payment, he had only postponed it, and as he had the decided advantage, which money always has when pitted against labor, it would have been well to have been conciliatory. Now Gripp would undoubtedly annoy him with further delay, and refuse to give Mrs. Mordaunt any further work.

"I suppose I've acted like a fool," said Dan to himself, with compunction. "My spunk is always getting the better of me, and I am afraid poor mother will have to suffer. Well, there's no use crying for spilt milk; I must see what I can do to mend matters."

While these thoughts were passing through Dan's mind he found himself passing the clothing establishment of Jackson & Co., who were special rivals of Mr. Gripp.

"Perhaps I can get some work for mother here," thought Dan. "I'll try, at any rate."

He entered, and looking about him, attracted the attention of a clerk.

"Do you want something in our line to-day?" asked the clerk, pleasantly.

"Yes, I do," said Dan, "if you're giving things away; but as I've got a note of ten thousand dollars to meet to-morrow, I can't pay anything out."

"Your credit ought to be good," said the salesman, smiling, "but we don't trust."

"All right," said Dan; "I may as well proceed to business. My mother makes vests for amusement. Can you give her any work?"

"I will speak to Mr. Jackson. One of our hands is sick, and if your mother understands how to do the work, we may be able to give her some."

The young man went to the rear of the store, and returned with the proprietor.

"Has your mother any experience?" asked the proprietor, a big man, with sandy whiskers.

He was an Englishman, as any one might see, and a decided improvement on Nathan Gripp, whom he cordially hated.

"Yes, sir; she has been making vests for the last two years."

"For whom has she been working?"

"For Nathan Gripp."

"Humph! Has Gripp discharged her?"

"No, sir; she has discharged him."

Mr. Jackson laughed, and nodded to his salesman. He rather enjoyed this allusion to his rival.

"Then she didn't like Gripp?"

"No, sir. He paid her starvation wages and made her wait for the money. He's a mean fellow."

"I don't admire him much myself," said the Englishman. "How much now did he pay for vest-making?"

"Twenty cents apiece."

"We don't pay much more ourselves. There is so much competition that we have to sell low."

"Mother would rather make for you at eighteen cents than for Gripp for twenty," said Dan.

Mr. Jackson was pleased, but he said, by way of drawing out Dan:

"How do you know but I am a mean skinflint, too?"

"You don't look like one," said the boy.

Mr. Jackson smiled graciously.

"Joseph," said he, "have we any vests ready for making?"

"Yes, sir. We have some bundles of half a dozen each."

"Take this boy's name and address and give him one. My boy, we will pay your mother twenty-five cents each, but we expect good work."

"You will be satisfied, sir," said Dan, confidently, and he left the store in excellent spirits.

"It's turned out right, after all," thought he; "but I am afraid we shall miss the money old Gripp owed mother. I don't know how we are going to pay the rent to-morrow. We shall be over two dollars short unless something turns up."

Dan carried the bundle of work home, and told his mother

what had happened. She was pleased with the increase of pay, but that was in the future. It would be a week before she could collect any pay from Jackson & Co., and the landlord would not wait.

"I wish I could think of some way of raising money," said Dan, putting his face between his hands and looking thoughtful. "If you only had some jewels, mother, that we could raise money on now, we would be all right."

"I have nothing but my wedding-ring," said Mrs. Mordaunt, sadly.

"You must keep that, mother. Don't part with that unless you are obliged to."

"I would rather not, Dan, but if there is no other way—"

"There must be another way. I will find another way. Just don't think of it any more, mother. When does the landlord come?"

"Generally between twelve and one."

"Then we shall have all the forenoon to forage round in. It's only two dollars and a half we want. I ought to be able to raise two dollars and a half."

"That is a great deal of money to us now, Dan."

"I wonder whether Shorty wouldn't lend it to me?" said Dan, reflectively.

"Who is Shorty, my son?"

"He is a little hump-backed dwarf that keeps a cigar stand down on Broadway, not far from Trinity Church. He has a good trade, and doesn't waste his money. Yes, I will ask Shorty."

"I hope he will be willing to grant your request, Dan."

"I hope so, too. He's a good-natured fellow, Shorty is, and he'll do it, if he can. I'll see him the first thing to-morrow morning."

Somewhat cheered by Dan's confident tone, Mrs. Mordaunt went to sleep as early as usual, forgetting the trouble possibly in store.

The next morning, before selling his papers, Dan went round to Shorty's stand.

"Good-morning, Dan," said the dwarf, in a singularly melodious voice.

"Good-morning, Shorty. I thought I'd find you here."

"Yes, I begin business early."

"I am going to ask a favor of you," said Dan, abruptly.

"What is it, Dan?"

"Our rent's due to-day, and we are two dollars and a half short. I can make the fifty cents before noon. Can you lend me two dollars till I am able to pay it?"

To Dan's dismay Shorty shook his head.

"I wish I could, Dan, but there's something in the way."

"If you're afraid I won't pay you back, you needn't think of that. I never went back on a fellow that lent me money yet."

"I am not afraid of trusting you, Dan, but I haven't got the money."

"I understand," said Dan, coldly, for he suspected this to be a subterfuge.

"No, you don't understand," said Shorty, eagerly. "You think

what I say is a sham, but you wouldn't if you knew all."

"If I knew all," repeated Dan, surprised.

"Yes, I shall have to tell you. I didn't mean to, but I don't want you to misunderstand me. The fact is, Dan," Shorty added, sheepishly, "I've got more than myself to provide for now."

"What? You don't mean to say?" ejaculated Dan.

"I was married yesterday, Dan," said the cigar dealer, almost apologetically, "and I've been buying furniture, and the fact is, I haven't got a cent to spare."

"Of course you haven't," said Dan. "I never dreamed of this. Is your wife—about your size?"

"No, Dan, she's rather tall. There she is, crossing the street. Do you see her?"

Dan looked, and saw a tall woman, of twenty-five or thereabouts, approaching the cigar stand. She was very plain, with a large mouth and a long, aquiline nose.

"That's my wife," said the cigar dealer, regarding his tall partner with evident pride. "Julia, my dear, this is my friend, Dan Mordaunt."

"Glad to see any friend of my husband," said the lady, in a deep, hoarse voice, which might have been mistaken for a man's. "He must come and see us."

"So I will, thank you," answered Dan, surveying the female grenadier with a wondering glance.

"We live at No. – Varick street, Dan, and I shall be very glad to see you any evening."

"By gracious!" said Dan to himself, "that's the queerest match I ever heard of. She might take Shorty up in her arms and carry him off. I don't think he'll beat her very often," and Dan smiled at the thought.

The morning wore away, and at eleven o'clock Dan had earned forty cents. He began to get discouraged. There didn't seem to be much prospect of raising the rent before twelve o'clock.

CHAPTER V. EFFECTING A LOAN

As Dan stood on the sidewalk with his bundle of papers, and only forty cents toward the two dollars and a half required for the rent, he felt like many a business man who has a note to meet and not enough money on hand to pay it. Indeed, he was worse off, for generally business men have friends who can help them with a temporary loan, but Dan's friends were quite as poor as himself. One, however, Dick Stanton, a mere boy, had the reputation of being more saving than his companions. It was known that he had an account in the Bowery Savings Bank, and among the street boys he was considered wealthy.

"Perhaps I can borrow two dollars of him," thought Dan, as Dick passed him on his way to Canal street.

"I say, Dick," said Dan, "stop a minute. I want to speak to you."

"Go ahead, Dan."

"I want you to lend me two dollars. Our rent is due, and I can raise it all but that."

Dick shook his head, and was about to speak, when Dan said hurriedly, for he felt that it was his last chance:

"You needn't be afraid of me, Dick; I'll pay you sure, and give you more interest, too, than you get in the bank."

"I haven't got any money in the bank, Dan."

"You had last week," said Dan, suspiciously.

"So I had, but I haven't now."

"You don't want to lend—that's what's the matter."

"You are mistaken, Dan. I'm not a bit afraid of lending to you, but I have lent my money already."

"Who to?" asked Dan, ungrammatically, falling into a mistake made by plenty of greater age and better experience than himself. "Of course it isn't any of my business," he added, "if you don't want to tell."

"I don't mind telling you, Dan. I've lent it to my aunt. She's got two children, and a hard time to get along. Perhaps I shall never see it again, but I couldn't refuse her."

"Of course you couldn't," said Dan, heartily. "You've done right, and you won't be sorry for it. I wish I knew some way of making two dollars before twelve o'clock."

"Are you in urgent need of two dollars, my boy?" asked a pleasant voice.

Dan turned, and met the face of the stranger introduced in the first chapter.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "I want it the worst way."

"Have you been extravagant and run up bills, Dan?"

"No, sir; the only bill we have is the rent, and that comes due this noon."

"How much is it?"

"Six dollars, sir."

"I thought you said you wanted to borrow *two* dollars."

"I've got four dollars toward it, sir."

"Do you often fall behind when rent day comes, Dan?"

"No, sir; this is the first time in two years."

"How do you account for it? Has business been duller than usual during the last month?"

"Yes, sir, I think it has. There hasn't been as much news in the papers, and my sales have fallen off. There's another thing, too."

"What is that?"

"Mother has a dollar and twenty cents due her, and she can't collect it."

"Is it for making vests?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Gripp won't pay till she has made a full dozen."

"That seems inconsiderate."

"Oh, he's a mean fellow."

"I've a great mind to buy the debt of you."

"I wish you would, sir," said Dan, eagerly. "That would leave only sixty cents short, for I shall make ten cents more before twelve o'clock, it's likely."

"It is only half-past eleven. To put you quite at ease, I mean to lend you five dollars, and help you collect your mother's bill."

"You are very kind, sir," said Dan, surprised and grateful; "but I don't need so much."

"You may get short again when I am not here to assist you."

"Are you not afraid I shall never pay you, sir?"

"That thought won't keep me awake nights," said the

gentleman, laughing.

"You sha'n't lose anything by me, sir; I promise you that," said Dan, earnestly.

"Then come into the hotel with me, and we will arrange the matter in a business-like way."

"All right, sir."

Dan followed his new friend into the Astor House, and up stairs into a pleasant bedroom, which in its comfortable apartments reminded Dan of the days before his father's failure.

"I wish I could live so again," he thought. "I don't like a tenement-house."

Mr. Grant—for this was his name—took writing materials from his valise, and seated himself at a table.

"I am going to draw up a note for you to sign," he said. "I probably understand better than you the necessary form."

"Thank you, sir."

His pen ran rapidly over the paper, and in a minute or two he handed Dan the following form of acknowledgment:

"New York, Sept. 15, 18—.

"For value received I promise to pay to Alexander Grant five dollars on demand with interest."

"Now," said Mr. Grant, "put your name at the bottom."

Dan did so.

"I added 'with interest,' but only as a form; I shall require none."

"I would rather pay it, sir."

"That may be as you please. How much will six per cent. interest make it amount to in a year?"

"Five dollars and thirty cents," answered Dan, promptly.

"Good! I see you have not forgotten what you learned in school."

"I have ciphered through cube root," said Dan, with some pride. "I am not sure whether I remember that now, but I could do any sum in square root."

"It is a pity you could not have remained in school."

"I should like to; but it's no use crying for spilt milk."

"As long as you didn't spill it yourself," added Mr. Grant.

"No, sir; it was not my fault that I had to leave school."

Mr. Grant folded up the note and carefully deposited it in his wallet.

"The next thing is to hand you the money," he said. "Shall I give you a five-dollar bill, or small bills?"

"Small bills, sir, if it is just as convenient."

Mr. Grant placed in Dan's hands two two-dollar bills and a one.

"One thing more," he said. "Give me an order on Mr. Gripp for the money due your mother. It is as well to have it in your own handwriting. I won't tell you how to write it. See if you can find a way."

Dan wrote an order, which Mr. Grant pronounced satisfactory.

"On the whole," said he, "I believe I will take you with me

when I call upon Mr. Gripp. Can you call here at three o'clock this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"That is settled, then. We will see whether Mr. Gripp will be any more polite to me than he was to you."

"He will be surprised to see me in your company," said Dan, laughing.

"It is a good thing to surprise the enemy, Dan. A surprise often leads to victory. When does your landlord call for his rent?"

"Between twelve and one."

"Then I won't detain you longer. Remember your appointment at three."

"I won't forget it, sir."

"Well, I'm in luck!" said Dan to himself, as he emerged into the street. "Who would have thought that a stranger would lend me so large a sum? He's a trump, and no mistake. Now, if I could only sell the four papers I have left before twelve o'clock. I don't want to get stuck on them."

Fortune was not tired of favoring Dan. In ten minutes he had sold his papers, and turned his steps toward the humble home where his mother was awaiting, not without anxiety, the visit of an unamiable landlord.

CHAPTER VI.

MORE THAN A MATCH

Mrs. Mordaunt looked up anxiously as Dan entered the room. She had little expectation that he had been able in one morning to make up the large deficiency in the sum reserved for the rent, but there was a possibility, and she clung to that. Dan thought of postponing the relation of his good news, but when he saw his mother's anxious face, he felt that it would be cruel.

So when she said, "Well, Dan?" he nodded his head cheerfully.

"I've got it, mother," he said.

"Thank God for all His goodness!" ejaculated Mrs. Mordaunt, fervently.

"You see He hasn't forgotten us," said Dan, gleefully.

"No, my boy, it is a rebuke to my momentary want of faith. How could you raise so large a sum? Surely you did not earn it in one forenoon?"

"You're right there, mother. I'm not smart enough to earn two dollars before twelve o'clock."

"But you've got the money, Dan?"

"Look at this, mother," and Dan displayed the bills.

"Where did you get them, Dan?" asked his mother, astonished.

"I borrowed them."

"I didn't know we had a friend left, able or willing to lend us that sum."

"I borrowed them of Alexander Grant, of St. Louis, and gave my note for them," answered Dan, in a tone of some importance.

"Alexander Grant, of St. Louis! I don't remember that name."

"He's a new friend of mine, mother. I haven't known him over twenty-four hours. As the old friends have treated us so badly, I'm goin' in for new ones."

"You quite mystify me, Dan. Tell me all about it."

Dan did so.

"He's very kind to a stranger, Dan. Heaven will reward him, I am sure."

"I hope it will, mother. I wish I was a rich man. I should enjoy helping those who needed it. If I ever get rich—though it doesn't look much like it now—I will do all the good I can. I wonder rich men don't do it oftener."

"It springs from thoughtlessness sometimes, Dan."

"And from selfishness pretty often," added Dan, whose views of human nature were considerably less favorable than they had been in his more prosperous days. "A good many men are like Tom Carver, as he is now and will be when he is grown up."

"Perhaps there are more good and generous men than we suppose, Dan," urged his mother, who liked to think well of her fellow-beings.

"Like Mr. Gripp and our landlord, for instance. By the way, I hear Mr. Grab's steps on the stairs. I want to deal with him. Just

you step into the bedroom, mother."

Mrs. Mordaunt had no desire to meet Mr. Grab, but she was a little afraid of Dan's impetuous temper.

"You will treat him respectfully, won't you, Dan?" she urged, as she turned to go into the adjoining room.

Dan's eyes danced with fun.

"I'll treat him with all the respect he deserves, mother," he answered.

Mrs. Mordaunt looked a little doubtful, for she understood Dan, but did not say more, for Mr. Grab was already knocking at the door.

"Don't come out, whatever you hear, mother," said Dan, in a low voice. "I'll come out all right, though I shall tantalize him a little at first."

The knock was repeated.

"Come in!" Dan called out, in a loud, clear tone.

The door opened, and a thin, undersized man, with bushy red hair and the look of a cross mastiff, entered the room.

Before his entrance Dan had seated himself in the plain wooden rocking-chair with his feet on a cricket. He looked quite easy and unconcerned.

"How are you, Grab?" he said, in a friendly manner.

"You might call me *Mr.* Grab," returned the landlord, angrily.

"I've no objection, I'm sure, Mr. Grab," said Dan. "How is your health? You're looking very yellow. Got the jaundice?"

"I am perfectly well, and I am not yellow at all. Do you mean

to insult me?" demanded Grab, irritated.

"I wouldn't do that for a cent, Mr. Grab. I am glad you feel well, though you ain't looking so. It's very friendly of you to come round to see me and mother."

"Where is your mother?" snapped Mr. Grab.

"She is engaged just now, and won't have the pleasure of seeing you."

"But I *must* see her."

"Must! You are quite mistaken. You can't see her. You can see me."

"I've seen more of you than I want to already," said Grab.

"That isn't talking like a friend, Mr. Grab," said Dan, "when I'm so glad to see you. Perhaps you have come on business."

"Of course I have come on business, and you know very well what that business is, you young monkey."

"Thank you, Mr. Grab, you are very complimentary. It isn't about the rent, is it?"

"Of course it is!" snapped the landlord.

"Oh, dear, how could I have forgotten that it was rent-day," said Dan, with well-feigned confusion.

Mr. Grab's brow grew dark. He concluded that he wasn't going to collect the rent, and that always chafed him.

"It's your business to know when rent-day comes," he said, bringing down his fist with such emphasis on the table that he hurt his knuckles, to Dan's secret delight.

"Please don't break the table, Grab," said Dan.

"Oh, blast the table!" said Grab, surveying his red knuckles.

"We haven't got any blasting powder, and I don't think it would be a very interesting experiment. It might blow you up, for you are nearest to it."

"Have done with this trifling, boy," said the landlord.

"I am afraid you got out of the wrong end of the bed this morning, Mr. Grab. You should control yourself."

"Look here, boy," said the landlord, savagely, "do you know what I am tempted to do?"

"No, what is it?" asked Dan, indifferently.

"I am strongly tempted to chastise you for your impudence."

Dan looked critically at the small, thin form, and secretly decided that Mr. Grab would find it difficult to carry out his threat.

"Oh, how you frighten me!" he said. "I don't believe I shall sleep any to-night."

Mr. Grab made a motion to pound on the table again, but he looked at his red knuckles and wisely forbore.

"I can't waste any more time," he said. "You must pay your rent, or turn out. I want six dollars."

"Won't it do, Mr. Grab, if we pay you next week?"

"No, it won't. The rent must be paid to-day, or out you go."

"Why doesn't Dan pay him?" thought Mrs. Mordaunt, uneasily. "Really, he ought not to tease the poor man so. He has such a bad temper, he might hurt Dan."

"Mr. Gripp is owing mother for work. As soon as he pays her,

I will call round at your office and pay you."

"It won't do," said Grab. "I won't let you stay here another night, and I mean to have security for my money, too."

So saying, the landlord seized the bundle of vests which lay on the table beside him.

This aroused Dan to action.

He sprang to his feet, his eyes flashing with anger.

"Put down that bundle, Mr. Grab!" he exclaimed.

"Then pay me my rent," said the landlord, recoiling a little.

"Put down that bundle before you say another word about rent.

It isn't my mother's or mine. You have no business with it."

"What do you mean, boy, by your impudence?" demanded the landlord, a little uneasily.

"I mean that if you take that bundle from the room, I shall put you in charge of the nearest policeman on a charge of stealing."

"That is nonsense," said Grab; but he looked nervous, and laid down the bundle.

"All right, Grab," said Dan. "Now, as I don't want any more of your company, I'll pay the rent, if you'll give me a receipt."

"Have you got the money?" asked Grab, astonished.

"Of course I have. I never told you I hadn't."

"You made me think so."

"It isn't my business what you think. There, that is settled, and now, Mr. Grab, I have the honor of wishing you good-evening. I hope you won't hurt your knuckles again."

Mr. Grab left the room, inwardly wishing that he could wring

Dan's neck.

"Oh, Dan, how could you?" asked his mother, reproachfully, as she re-entered the room.

"He deserves it all," said Dan. "Didn't he turn out the poor Donovans on a cold day last winter? I have no pity for him."

"He may turn us out."

"Not as long as we pay the rent."

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GRIPP IS WORSTED

Punctually at three o'clock Dan knocked at the door of Mr. Grant's room in the Astor House.

That gentleman looked at his watch as he admitted our hero.

"You are punctual to the minute," he said. "Your watch keeps excellent time."

"I'll tell you why," answered Dan, smiling. "I always keep it at Tiffany's. I don't dare to carry it for fear it will get out of order."

"You ought to have a watch," said Mr. Grant. "That will come in time."

"I hope so," said Dan. "Then I could be sure to keep my business appointments. Now I have to depend on the City Hall clock. I'd rather look at it than carry it round."

"Well, Dan, do you think Mr. Gripp is prepared to receive us?"

"He'll be glad to see you. He'll think you are going to buy some clothes. I don't think he'll be very happy to see me."

"He must see us both, or neither. Has he any good clothes?"

"Yes, sir—good enough for me. I don't think you would like to patronize his establishment."

"By the way, Dan, you have given me an order for money, and I have not handed you the equivalent."

"You may not get the money, sir."

"I will make the effort at any rate. By the way, Dan, that coat of yours is getting shabby."

"It is the best I have, sir. Boys in my business don't have to dress much."

"That gives me an idea. Please hand me my hat, and we will start."

The two left the Astor House together. One or two of Dan's associates whom they encountered on the way, were surprised to see him walking on terms of apparent friendly companionship with a well-to-do stranger, but decided that Dan was probably acting as his guide.

They found Mr. Gripp standing as usual in the door-way of his shop watching for customers. He did not at first observe Dan, but his attention was drawn to Mr. Grant.

"Walk in, sir," he said, obsequiously. "You will find what you want here. Styles fashionable, and as for prices—we defy competition."

Alexander Grant paused, and looked critically about him. He understood very well the sort of establishment he was about to enter, and would not have thought of doing so but in Dan's interests.

He stepped over the threshold, and Dan was about to follow, when the eagle eye of Mr. Gripp recognized our hero.

"Clear out, you young rascal!" he exclaimed. "Don't you come round here any more."

Dan did not answer, for he knew Mr. Grant would do so for

him.

Mr. Grant turned back, and said, quietly:

"To whom are you speaking, sir?"

"I beg your pardon, sir—it's that boy."

"Then, sir, you will oblige me by stopping at once. That boy is in my company and under my protection."

Nathan Gripp stared as if transfixed.

"Do you know him, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"You are mistaken in him, sir. He's an artful young rascal. He was here yesterday, and acted outrageously. He assaulted my clerk and insulted me."

"I have nothing to do with that. He is in my company, and if I enter the store he will."

"Oh, of course, if he's with you he can come in. Samuel, show the gentleman what he wants."

Dan smiled, and nothing but a sense of his own interest prevented Mr. Gripp from objecting to his entrance.

"What will I show you, sir?" asked the callow young man named Samuel, glaring at Dan in vivid remembrance of the blow which had doubled him up.

"Have you any coats and vests that will fit this young gentleman?"

"Young gentleman!" repeated Samuel, mechanically, glancing at Dan in silent hatred.

"That means me, Samuel," said Dan, mischievously. "Samuel

is an old friend of mine, Mr. Grant."

"I think we can fit him," said Samuel, by no means relishing the task of waiting upon his young opponent. "Take off your coat, young feller."

"Don't be too familiar, Samuel. You may call me Mr. Mordaunt," said Dan.

"I'll be – if I do," muttered the young man.

Dan took off his coat, and tried on the one submitted to his inspection. He afterward tried on the vest, and they proved to be a good fit.

"Do they suit you, Dan?" asked Mr. Grant.

"Yes, sir, they fit as well as if they had been made for me."

"What is the price of these articles, young man?" asked Mr. Grant.

"Twelve dollars," answered Samuel.

"He'll take eight," suggested Dan, in a low voice.

Mr. Grant knew well enough the ways of Chatham street merchants to appreciate the suggestion.

"That is too high," he said, quietly.

Samuel, who was trained to read customers, after a glance at Mr. Grant's face, prepared to reduce the price.

"We might say eleven," he said, meditatively. "Shall I put them up?"

"Not at that price."

"You don't want us to give 'em away?" said Samuel, in the tone of one whose reasonable demands had been objected to.

"There is no fear of that, I apprehend," returned Mr. Grant, dryly.

"I've no objection, I'm sure," remarked Dan, on his own account.

"I'd make a few remarks to you, young feller, if you were alone," he read in the eyes of the indignant salesman, and Dan enjoyed the restraint which he knew Samuel was putting upon himself.

"You are still asking too much," said the customer.

"What'll you give, sir?" asked Samuel, diplomatically.

"Eight dollars."

"Eight dollars! Why the cloth cost more than that!" protested Samuel.

"The work didn't cost you much, I presume."

"We pay the highest prices for work in this establishment, sir," said Samuel, hastily.

He forgot that Dan knew better.

"So they do, Mr. Grant," said Dan. "They pay twenty cents apiece for making vests."

"We pay more than that to our best hands," said Samuel.

"You told me you never paid more," retorted Dan.

Mr. Grant interrupted this discussion.

"Young man," said he, "I will give you eight dollars for the clothes."

"Say nine, sir."

"Not a cent more."

As the regular price was eight dollars—when they couldn't get any more—Samuel felt authorized to conclude the bargain without consulting Mr. Gripp.

"Shall I do up the clothes?" he asked.

"No," said Dan, "I'll wear 'em. You may put up my old ones."

Samuel felt it derogatory to his dignity to obey the orders of our hero, but there was no alternative.

The bundle was placed in Dan's hands.

"Now write me a receipt for the price," said Mr. Grant.

This was done.

Mr. Grant counted out six dollars and eighty cents.

"I have an order upon you for the balance," he said.

"I don't understand," ejaculated Samuel.

"Your principal owes my young friend, or his mother, one dollar and twenty cents for work. This you will receive as part of the price."

"I must see Mr. Gripp," said Samuel.

Mr. Gripp came forward frowning.

"We can't take the order, sir," he said. "The boy's money is not yet due."

"Isn't the work done and delivered?"

"Yes, sir; but it is our rule not to pay till a whole dozen is delivered."

"Then it is a rule which you must break," said Mr. Grant, firmly.

"We can't."

"Then I refuse to take the suit."

Nathan Gripp did not like to lose the sale on the one hand, or abdicate his position on the other.

"Tell your mother," he said to Dan, "that when she has finished another half-dozen vests I will pay her the whole."

He reflected that the stranger would be gone, and Dan would be in his power.

"Thank you," said Dan, "but mother's agreed to work for Jackson. He pays better."

"Then you'll have to wait for your pay," said Mr. Gripp, sharply.

"Don't you care to sell this suit?" asked Mr. Grant, quickly.

"Yes, sir, but under the circumstances we must ask all cash."

"You won't get it, sir."

"Then I don't think we care to sell," said Gripp, allowing his anger to overcome his interest.

"Very good. I think, Dan, we can find quite as good a bargain at Jackson's. Mr. Gripp, do I understand that you decline to pay this bill?"

"I will pay when the other half-dozen vests are made," said Gripp, stubbornly.

"I have nothing to do with that. The bill is mine, and it is with me you have to deal. The boy has nothing to do with it."

"Is that so?" asked Gripp, in surprise.

"It is. You may take your choice. Settle the bill now, or I shall immediately put it in a lawyer's hands, who will know how to

compel you to pay it."

A determined will carries the day.

"Take this gentleman's money, Samuel," said Gripp, in a tone of annoyance.

There was no further trouble. Dan walked out of the store better dressed than he had been since the days of his prosperity.

"How can I thank you, Mr. Grant?" he said, gratefully.

"By continuing to care for your mother, my lad. You are lucky to have a mother living. Mine is dead, God bless her! Now, my lad, what do you think of my success in collecting bills?"

"You were too many for old Gripp, sir. He won't sleep to-night."

"He doesn't deserve to, for he grows rich by defrauding the poor who work for him."

Opposite the City Hall Park Dan and his friend separated.

"I shall not see you again, my boy," said Mr. Grant, "for I take the evening train. If you ever come to St. Louis, find me out."

"I will, sir."

"That's a good man," said Dan, as he wended his way homeward. "If there were more such, it would be good for poor people like mother and me. If I ever get rich, I mean to help along those that need it."

CHAPTER VIII.

MIKE RAFFERTY'S TRICK

Dan carefully husbanded the money which Mr. Grant had lent him, and the result was that for two months he was comparatively easy in his circumstances. His mother earned five cents more daily, on account of the higher price she received for work, and though this was a trifle, it was by no means to be despised where the family income was so small as in the case of the Mordaunts.

Still Dan was not satisfied.

"Mother," said he, "I suppose I ought to be contented with earning enough to pay our expenses, but I should like to be saving something."

"Yes, Dan, it would be pleasant. But we ought to be thankful for what we are now receiving."

"But, mother, suppose I should fall sick? What should we do then?"

Mrs. Mordaunt shuddered.

"Don't mention such a thing, Dan," she said. "The very idea terrifies me."

"But it might happen, for all that."

"Don't you feel well, Dan? Is anything the matter with you?" asked Mrs. Mordaunt, anxiously.

"Don't be frightened, mother," answered Dan, laughing. "I'm

as strong as a horse, and can eat almost as much. Still, you know, we would feel safer to have a little money in the savings-bank."

"There isn't much chance of that, Dan, unless we earn more than we do now."

"You are right there. Well, I suppose there is no use thinking of it. By the way, mother, you've got enough money on hand to pay the rent to-morrow, haven't you?"

"Yes, Dan, and a dollar over."

"That's good."

The door of the room was partly open, and the last part of the conversation was heard by Mike Rafferty, the son of the tenant who occupied the room just over the Mordaunts. He was a ne'er-do-well, who had passed more than one term of imprisonment at Blackwell's Island. His mother was an honest, hard-working washerwoman, who toiled early and late to support herself and her three children. Mike might have given her such assistance that she could have lived quite comfortably, for her own earnings were by no means inconsiderable. Her wash-tub paid her much more than Mrs. Mordaunts needle could possibly win, and she averaged a dollar a day where her more refined neighbor made but twenty-five cents. But Mike, instead of helping, was an additional burden. He got his meals regularly at home, but contributed scarcely a dollar a month to the common expenses. He was a selfish rowdy, who was likely to belong permanently to the shiftless and dangerous classes of society.

Mike had from time to time made approaches to intimacy with

Dan, who was nearly two years younger, but Dan despised him for his selfishly burdening his mother with his support, and didn't encourage him. Naturally, Mike hated Dan, and pronounced him "stuck up" and proud, though our hero associated familiarly with more than one boy ranking no higher in the social scale than Mike Rafferty.

Only the day before, Mike, finding himself out of funds, encountering Dan on the stairs, asked for the loan of a quarter.

"I have no money to spare," answered Dan.

"You've got money, Dan; I saw you take out some a minute ago."

"Yes, I've got the money, but I won't lend it."

"You're a mane skinflint," said Mike, provoked.

"Why am I?"

"Because you've got the money, and you won't lend it."

"What do you want to do with it?"

"I want to go to the Old Bowery to-night, if you must know."

"If you wanted it for your mother I might have lent it to you, though I need all I can earn for my own mother."

"It's for my mother I want it, thin," said Mike. "I guess I won't go to the theater to-night."

"That's too thin. Your mother would never see the color of it."

"Won't you lend me, thin?"

"No, I can't. If you want money, why don't you earn it, as I do?"

"I ain't lucky."

"It isn't luck. If you go to work and sell papers or black boots, you will be able to help your mother and pay your way to the theater yourself."

"Kape your advice to yourself," said Mike, sullenly. "I don't want it."

"You'd rather have my money," said Dan, good-humoredly.

"I'll never see that. You're too mane."

"All right. I'll be *mane*, then."

"I'd like to put a head on you," muttered Mike.

"I've got one already. I don't need another," said Dan.

"Oh, you think you're mighty smart wid your jokes," said Mike.

Dan smiled and walked off, leaving Mike more his enemy than ever.

This was the boy who overheard Mrs. Mordaunt say that she had more than the rent already saved up. Mike's cupidity was excited. He knew that it must amount to several dollars, and this he felt would keep him in cigarettes and pay for evenings at the theater for several days.

"I wish I had it," he said to himself. "I wonder where the ould woman kapes it."

The more Mike thought of it the more he coveted this money, and he set to work contriving means to get possession of it.

Finally he arranged upon a plan.

About three o'clock in the afternoon he knocked at Mrs. Mordaunt's door. She answered the knock in person.

"Mike Rafferty!" she said, in surprise. "Won't you come in?"

"Oh, no; I can't. It's bad news I bring you about Dan."

"What is it? Tell me quick, in Heaven's name!" she exclaimed, her heart giving a great bound.

"He's been run over, ma'am, by a hoss, in front of the Astor House, and they took him into the drug store at the corner. He wants you to go right over."

"Is he—badly hurt?" asked the agonized mother.

"I guess he's broke his leg," said Mike.

In two minutes Mrs. Mordaunt, trembling with apprehension, her faltering limbs almost refusing to bear her weight, was on her way to the Astor House.

As Mike had calculated, she did not stop to lock the door.

The young scape-grace entered the deserted room, rummaged about till he found the scanty hoard reserved for the landlord, and then went off whistling.

"Now I'll have a bully time," he said to himself. "Didn't I fool the ould woman good?"

CHAPTER IX.

MIKE'S THEFT IS DISCOVERED

Dan was standing in front of the Astor House, talking to a boy acquaintance, when his mother tottered up to him in a state of great nervous agitation.

"Why, mother, what's the matter?" asked Dan, in surprise. "What brings you out this afternoon?"

"Oh, Dan!" she gasped, "are you hurt?"

Dan opened his eyes in wonder. It occurred to him that his mother must have lost her mind.

"Hurt!" he repeated.

"Yes; they told me you were run over, and had your leg broken."

"My leg broken! Who told you so?"

"Mike Rafferty."

"Then I wish I had him here," said Dan, indignantly; "I'd let him know whether my leg is broken or not. You bet I would!"

"Haven't you been run over, then?"

"Not that I know of, and I guess it couldn't be done without my knowing it."

"I am so glad, so relieved!" sighed Mrs. Mordaunt. "I don't know how I got here, I was so agitated."

"When did Mike Rafferty tell you this cock-and-bull story,

mother?" asked Dan.

"Only a few minutes ago. He said you had been taken into a drug store, and wanted me to come right over."

"It's a mean trick he played on you, mother," said Dan, indignantly. "I don't see what made him do it."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Mordaunt. "He must have meant it as a joke."

"A pretty poor joke. I'll get even with him for that."

"I don't mind it now, Dan, since I have you safe. I am ready to forgive him. He didn't know how much he was distressing me."

"Then he ought to have known. You may forgive him if you want to; I sha'n't."

"I will go home now, Dan. I feel a good deal happier than I did when I was hurrying over here."

"I will go with you, mother. I have sold my papers, and sha'n't work any more this afternoon. Where did you leave Mike? I hope I can come across him soon."

"I left him at the door of our room."

"Did you lock the door when you came away, mother?" asked Dan.

"No; I believe not."

"Then let us go home at once. Some one might get in."

"There isn't much to take, Dan," said Mrs. Mordaunt, with a faint smile.

"There is our rent money, mother."

"I didn't think of that."

"We shall be in a pretty pickle if that is lost."

"You don't think Mike would take it do you, Dan?"

"I think he would if he knew where to find it."

"I wish I had brought it with me," said Mrs. Mordaunt, in a tone of anxiety.

"Don't fret, mother; I guess it's all right."

"Perhaps you had better go home at once without waiting for me, Dan. You can go quicker."

"All right; I'll do it. Where is the money?"

"In my pocket-book, in the drawer of the work-table."

"Are the drawers locked?"

"No."

"Then hereafter you'd better lock them. Well, I'll be off, and will meet you at the room."

Dan was not long in reaching his humble home. The more he thought of it, the more he distrusted Mike, and feared that he might have had a sinister design in the deception he had practiced upon his mother. To lose the rent money would be a serious matter. Mr. Grab hated him, he knew full well, and would show no mercy, while in the short time remaining it would be quite impossible to make up the necessary sum.

Dan sprang up the stairs, several at a bound, and made his way at once to the little work-table. He pulled the drawer open without ceremony, and in feverish haste rummaged about until, to his great joy, he found the pocket-book.

His heart gave a joyous bound.

"It's all right, after all," he said. "Mike isn't so bad as I thought him."

He opened the pocket-book, and his countenance fell. There was a twenty-five cent scrip in one of the compartments, and that was all.

"He's stolen the money, after all," he said, his heart sinking. "What are we going to do now?"

He waited till his mother reached home. She looked inquiringly at him. One glance told her what had happened.

"Is it gone, Dan?" she gasped.

"That is all that is left," answered Dan, holding up the scrip.

"Mike could not be wicked enough to take it."

"Couldn't he, though? You don't know him as I do, mother. He's a mean thief, and he sent you off to have a clear field. I wish you had locked the door."

"I couldn't think of that, or anything else, Dan, when I thought you were hurt."

"That's why he told you."

"What can we do, Dan? Mr. Grab will be angry when he finds we can't pay him."

"I will try to find Mike; and if I do, I will get the money if I can. That's the first thing."

Dan went up stairs at once, and knocked at Mrs. Rafferty's door.

She came to the door, her arms dripping with suds, for she had been washing.

"Is it you, Dan?" she said. "And how is your mother to-day?"

"Is Mike in?" asked Dan, abruptly, too impatient to answer the question.

"No; he went out quarter of an hour ago."

"Did he tell you where he was going, Mrs. Rafferty?"

"Yes, he did. He said he was going over to Brooklyn to see if he could get a job, shure. Did you want him?"

"Yes, I did, Mrs. Rafferty. I'm sorry to tell you that Mike has played a bad trick on my mother."

"Oh, whirra, whirra, what a bye he is!" wailed Mrs. Rafferty. "He's always up to something bad. Sorra bit of worruk he does, and I at the wash-tub all day long."

"He's a bad son to you, Mrs. Rafferty."

"So he is, Dan, dear. I wish he was like you. And what kind of trick has he played on your good mother?"

"He told her that I had been run over and broken my leg. Of course she went out to find me, thinking it was all true, and while she was away he took the money from her pocket-book."

Some mothers would have questioned this statement, but Mrs. Rafferty knew to her cost that Mike was capable of stealing, having been implicated in thefts on several occasions.

"Was it much, Dan?" she asked.

"Six or seven dollars. I can't say just how much."

"Oh, what a bad bye! I don't know what to do wid him, shure."

"It was the money we were to pay our rent with to-morrow," continued Dan. "It is a very serious matter."

"I wish I could make it up to you, Dan, dear. It's a shame it is."

"You are an honest woman, Mrs. Rafferty, but you ought not to make it up. I wish I could find Mike. Do you think he has really gone to Brooklyn."

"Shure, I don't know. He said so."

"He might have done it as a blind, just to put me on the wrong scent."

"So he might, shure."

"Well, Mrs. Rafferty, I can't stop any longer. I'll try to find him."

He went down stairs and told his mother what he had discovered or failed to discover.

"Don't wait supper for me, mother," he said. "I'm going in search of Mike."

"You won't fight with him, Dan?" said Mrs. Mordaunt, anxiously.

"I can't promise, mother. I will only agree to be prudent. I am not going to submit to the loss without trying to get the money back, you may be sure of that."

So Dan went down stairs, considerably perplexed in mind. Mike was sure to keep out of the way for a time at least, anticipating that Dan would be upon his track. While our hero was searching for him, he would have plenty of opportunities of spending the money of which he had obtained unlawful possession. To punish him without regaining the contents of the lost pocket-book would be an empty triumph. In the street below

Dan espied Terence Quinn, an acquaintance of Mike.

"How are you, Terence?" he said. "Have you seen anything of Mike?"

"I saw him only a few minutes ago."

"Where did he go?"

"I don't know."

"I want to see him on business."

"I'll tell you where he'll be this evening."

"Where?"

"He's going to the Old Bowery, and I'm goin' wid him."

"Does he treat?"

"Yes."

"Where did he get the money?"

"He didn't tell me," said Terence.

"He's taken the rent money. I'm sure of it now," said Dan to himself. "I wish I knew where to find him."

CHAPTER X.

DAN AS A DETECTIVE

Dan quickly decided that if Mike had been going to Brooklyn, he would not have announced it under the circumstances.

"He meant to send me there on a wild-goose chase," he reflected. "I am not quite so green as he takes me to be."

Dan could not decide as easily where Mike had gone. Hood says in his poem of "The Lost Heir,"

"A boy as is lost in London streets is like a needle in a bundle of hay."

A hunt for a boy in the streets of New York is about equally hopeless. But Dan did not despair.

"I'll just stroll round a little," he said to himself. "Maybe I'll find him."

Dan bent his steps toward the Courtlandt-street Ferry.

"Perhaps Mike has gone to Jersey City," he said to himself. "Anyway, I'll go over there."

It was not an expensive journey. Six cents would defray Dan's expenses both ways, and he was willing to incur this expense. He meant to look about him, as something might turn up by which he could turn an honest penny.

Something did turn up.

Near him in the cabin of the ferry-boat sat a gentleman of

middle age, who seemed overloaded with baggage. He had two heavy carpet-bags, a satchel, and a bundle, at which he looked from time to time with a nervous and uncomfortable glance. When the boat touched shore he tried to gather his various pieces of luggage, but with indifferent success. Noticing his look of perplexity, Dan approached him, and said, respectfully:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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