

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

TRY AND TRUST; OR,
ABNER HOLDEN'S BOUND
BOY

Horatio Alger

**Try and Trust; Or, Abner
Holden's Bound Boy**

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Alger H.

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Jr. Horatio Alger

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CHAPTER I

AROUND THE BREAKFAST TABLE

“Well, wife,” said Mr. Benjamin Stanton, as he sat down to a late breakfast, “I had a letter from Ohio yesterday.”

“From Ohio? Who should write you from Ohio? Anyone I know?”

“My sister, Margaret, you remember, moved out there with her husband ten years ago.”

“Oh, it’s from her, is it?” said Mrs. Stanton, indifferently.

“No,” said her husband with momentary gravity. “It’s from a Dr. Kent, who attended her in her last illness. Margaret is dead!”

“Dear me!” returned Mrs. Stanton, uncomfortably; “and I am just out of mourning for my aunt. Do you think it will be necessary for us to go into mourning for your sister?”

“No, I think not,” said her husband. “Margaret has lived away from us so long, and people won’t know that we have had a death in the family unless we mention it.”

“Was that all the letter said—about the death, I mean?”

“Why, no,” said Mr. Stanton, with a little frown. “It seems Margaret left a child—a boy of fourteen; and, as she left no property, the doctor suggests that I should send for the boy and assume the care of him.”

“Upon my word!” said Mrs. Stanton; “you will find yourself in business if you undertake to provide for all the beggars’ brats that apply to you for assistance.”

“You must remember that you are speaking of my sister’s child,” said Mr. Stanton, who, cold and selfish and worldly as he was, had some touch of decency about him, and did not relish the term “beggars’ brats,” as applied to one so nearly related to him.

“Well, call him what you like,” said his wife; “only don’t be so foolish as to go spending your money on him when our children need all we have. There’s Maria needs a new dress immediately. She says all the girls at Signor Madalini’s dancing academy dress elegantly, and she’s positively ashamed to appear in any of her present dresses.”

“How much will it cost?” asked Mr. Stanton, opening his pocketbook.

“You may hand me seventy-five dollars. I think I can make that do.”

Without a word of remonstrance, the money was placed in her hand.

“I want some money, too,” said Tom Stanton, who had just disposed of a very hearty meal.

“What do you want it for, Tom?”

“Oh, some of the fellows are getting up a club. It’s going to be a select affair, and of course each of us has got to contribute some money. You see, we are going to hire a room, furnish it nicely with a carpet, black walnut furniture, and so on, and that’ll cost something.”

“Whose idea is it?”

“Well, Sam Paget was the first boy that mentioned it.”

“Whose son is he?”

“His father belongs to the firm of Paget, Norwood & Co. He’s awful rich.”

“Yes, it is one of our first families,” said Mr. Stanton, with satisfaction. “Is he a friend of yours, Tom?”

“Oh, yes, we are quit intimate.”

“That’s right!” said his father, approvingly. “I am glad you choose your friends so well. That’s one of the principal reasons I have for sending you to an expensive school, to get you well launched into good society.”

“Yes, father, I understand,” said Tom. “You won’t find me associating with common boys. I hold my head a little too high for that, I can tell you.”

“That’s right, my boy,” said Mr. Stanton, with satisfaction. “And now how much money do you want for this club of yours?”

“Well,” said Tom, hesitatingly, “thirty or forty dollars.”

“Isn’t that considerable?” said his father, surprised at the amount.

“Well, you see, father, I want to contribute as much as any of the boys. It would seem mean if I didn’t. There’s only a few of us to stand the expense, and we don’t want to let in any out of our own set.”

“That’s true,” said Mr. Stanton; “I approve of that. It’s all very well to talk about democracy, but I believe in those of the higher orders keeping by themselves.”

“Then you’ll give the money, father?” said Tom, eagerly.

“Yes, Tom, there’s forty dollars. It’s more than I ought to spare, but I am determined you shall stand as good a chance as any of your school-fellows. They shan’t be able to say that your father stints you in anything that your position requires.”

“Thank you, father,” said Tom, pocketing the two twenty-dollar bills with great satisfaction.

The fact was that Tom’s assessment amounted to only twenty dollars, but he thought it would be a good excuse for getting more out of his father. As to the extra money, Tom felt confident that he could find uses enough for it. He had latterly, though but fourteen years of age, contracted the habit of smoking cigars; a habit which he found rather expensive, especially as he felt bound occasionally to treat his companions. Then he liked, now and then, to drop in and get an ice-cream or some confectionery, and these little expenses counted up.

Mr. Stanton was a vain, worldly man. He was anxious to obtain an entrance into the best society. For this reason, he made it a point to send his children to the most expensive schools; trusting to their forming fashionable acquaintances, through whom his whole family might obtain recognition into those select circles for which he cherished a most undemocratic respect. For this reason it was that, though not naturally liberal, he had opened his purse willingly at the demands of Mrs. Stanton and Tom.

“Well,” said Mrs. Stanton, after Tom’s little financial affair had been adjusted, “what are you going to write to this doctor? Of course you won’t think of sending for your nephew?”

“By no means. He is much better off where he is. I shall write Dr. Kent that he is old enough to earn his own living, and I shall recommend that he be bound out to some farmer or mechanic in the neighborhood. It is an imposition to expect, because I am tolerably well off, that it is my duty to support other people’s children. My own are entitled to all I can do for them.”

“That’s so, father,” said Tom, who was ready enough to give his consent to any proposition of a selfish nature. “Charity begins at home.”

With Tom, by the way, it not only began at home, but it ended there, and the same may be said of his father. From time to time Mr. Stanton’s name was found in the list of donors to some charitable object, provided his benevolence was likely to obtain sufficient publicity, Mr. Stanton did not believe in giving in secret. What was the use of giving away money unless you could get credit for it? That was the principle upon which he always acted.

“I suppose,” continued Tom, “this country cousin of mine wears cowhide boots and overalls, and has got rough, red hands like a common laborer. I wonder what Sam Paget would say if I should introduce such a fellow to him as my cousin. I rather guess he would not want to be quite so intimate with me as he is now.”

If anything had been needed, this consideration would have been sufficient to deter Mr. Stanton from sending for his nephew. He could not permit the social standing of his family to be compromised by the presence of a poor relation from the country, rough and unpolished as he doubtless was.

Maria, too, who had been for some time silent, here contributed to strengthen the effect of Tom's words.

"Yes," said she, "and Laura Brooks, my most intimate friend, who is shocked at anything vulgar or countrified—I wouldn't have her know that I have such a cousin—oh, not for the world!"

"There will be no occasion for it," said her father, decidedly. "I shall write at once to this Dr. Kent, explaining to him my views and wishes, and how impossible it is for me to do as he so inconsiderately suggests."

"It's the wisest thing you can do, Mr. Stanton," said his wife, who was to the full as selfish as her husband.

"What is his name, father?" asked Maria.

"Whose name?"

"The boy's."

"Herbert Mason."

"Herbert? I thought it might be Jonathan, or Zeke, or some such name. Herbert isn't at all countrified."

"No," said Tom, slyly; "of course not. We all know why you like that name."

"Oh, you're mighty wise, Mr. Tom!" retorted his sister.

"It's because you like Herbert Dartmouth; but it isn't any use. He's in love with Lizzie Graves."

"You seem to know all about it," said Maria, with vexation; for Tom was not far from right in speaking of her preference for Herbert Dartmouth.

"Of course I do," said Tom; "I ought to, for he told me so himself."

"I don't believe it!" said Maria, who looked ready to cry.

"Well, you needn't; but it's so."

"Be quiet, children," said Mrs. Stanton. "Thomas, you mustn't plague your sister."

"Don't take it so hard, Maria," said Tom, in rather an aggravating tone. "There's other boys you could get. I guess you could get Jim Gorham for a beau, if you tried hard enough."

"I wouldn't have him," said Maria. "His face is all over freckles."

"Enough of this quarreling, children," said Mrs. Stanton. "I hope," she continued, addressing her husband, "you won't fail to write at once. They might be sending on the boy, and then we should be in a pretty predicament."

"I will write at once. I don't know but I ought to inclose some money."

"I don't see why you need to."

"Perhaps I had better, as this is the last I intend to do for him."

"At any rate, it won't be necessary to send much," said Mrs. Stanton.

"How much?"

"Five dollars will do, I should think. Because he happens to be your nephew, there is no good reason why he should be thrown upon you for support."

"Perhaps it will be best to send ten dollars," said Mr. Stanton. "People are unreasonable, you know, and they might charge me with meanness, if I sent less."

"Then make it ten. It's only for once. I hope that will be the last we shall hear of him."

The room in which this conversation took place was a handsomely furnished breakfast room, all the appointments of which spoke not only of comfort, but of luxury. Mr. Stanton had been made rich by a series of lucky speculations, and he was at present carrying on a large wholesale store downtown. He had commenced with small means twenty years before, and for some years had advanced slowly, until the tide of fortune set in and made him rich. His present handsome residence he had only occupied three years, having moved to it from one of much smaller pretensions on Bleeker

Street. Tom and Maria were forbidden to speak of their former home to their present fashionable acquaintances, and this prohibition they were likely to observe, having inherited to the full the worldly spirit which actuated their parents. It will be seen that Herbert Mason was little likely to be benefited by having such prosperous relations.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING THE HERO

If my young readers do not find the town of Waverley on the map of Ohio, they may conclude that it was too small to attract the notice of the map-makers. The village is small, consisting of about a dozen houses, a church, a schoolhouse, and, as a matter of course, one of that well-known class of stores in which everything required for the family is sold, from a dress-pattern to a pound of sugar. Outside of the village there are farmhouses, surrounded by broad acres, which keep them at respectable distances from each other, like the feudal castles of the Middle Ages. The land is good, and the farmers are thrifty and well-to-do; but probably the whole town contains less than a thousand inhabitants.

In one of the houses, near the church, lived Dr. Kent, whose letter has already been referred to. He was a skillful physician, and a very worthy man, who would have been very glad to be benevolent if his limited practice had supplied him with the requisite means. But chance had directed him to a healthy and sparsely-settled neighborhood, where he was able only to earn a respectable livelihood, and indeed found himself compelled to economize at times where he would have liked to indulge himself in expense.

When Mrs. Mason died it was found that the sale of her furniture barely realized enough to defray the expenses of her funeral. Herbert, her only son, was left wholly unprovided for. Dr. Kent, knowing that he had a rich uncle in New York, undertook to communicate to him the position in which his nephew had been left, never doubting that he would cheerfully extend a helping hand to him. Meanwhile he invited Herbert to come to his house and make it his home till his uncle should send for him.

Herbert was a handsome, well-grown boy of fourteen, and a general favorite in the village. While his mother lived he had done all he could to lighten her tasks, and he grieved deeply for her loss now that she was gone. His father had ten years before failed in business in the city of New York, and, in a fit of depression, had emigrated to this obscure country village, where he had invested the few hundred dollars remaining to him in a farm, from which he was able to draw a scanty income. Being a man of liberal education, he had personally superintended the education of his son till his death, two years before, so that Herbert's attainments were considerably in advance of those of other boys of his age in the neighborhood. He knew something of Latin and French, which made him looked upon as quite a model of learning by his playmates. After his father's death he had continued the daily study of the languages, so that he was able to read ordinary French with nearly as much ease as if it were English. Though studious, he was not a bookworm, but was distinguished in athletic sports popular with boys of his age.

Enough has been said of our hero by way of introduction. Herbert's faults and virtues will appear as the record of his adventures is continued. It may be hinted only that, while he was frank, manly, and generous in his disposition, he was proud and high-spirited also, and perhaps these qualities were sometimes carried to excess. He would not allow himself to be imposed upon if he could help it. Being strong for his age, he was always able to maintain his rights, but never abused his strength by making it the instrument of tyrannizing over weaker boys.

Of course Herbert felt somewhat anxious as to his future prospects. He knew that the doctor had written to his Uncle Benjamin about him, and he hoped that he might be sent for to New York, having a great curiosity to see the city, of which he had heard so much.

"Have you heard from my uncle, Dr. Kent?" he inquired, a few days after the scene recorded in our first chapter.

His question was prompted by seeing the doctor coming into the yard with an open letter in his hand.

“Yes,” said Dr. Kent, with troubled expression and perplexed look.

“What does Uncle Benjamin say?” asked our young hero, eagerly.

“Nothing very encouraging, Herbert, I am sorry to say,” returned the doctor. “However, here is the letter; you may read it for yourself.”

Herbert received the letter from the doctor’s hands and read it through with feelings of mortification and anger.

Here it is:

“DEAR SIR: I have to acknowledge yours of the 10th inst. I regret to hear of my sister’s decease. I regret, also, to hear that her son, Herbert, is left without a provision for his support. My brother-in-law I cannot but consider culpable in neglecting to lay up something during his life upon which his widow and son might depend. I suspect that he must have lived with inconsiderate extravagance.

“As for myself, I have a family of my own to provide for, and the expense of living in a city like this is very great. In justice to them, I do not feel that it would be right for me to incur extra expense. You tell me that he is now fourteen and a stout boy. He is able, I should think, to earn his own living. I should recommend that he be bound out to a farmer or mechanic. To defray any little expenses that may arise, I enclose ten dollars, which I hope he may find serviceable. Yours etc.,

“BENJAMIN STANTON.”

This cold and selfish letter Herbert read with rising color, and a feeling of bitterness found a place in his young heart, which was quite foreign to him.

“Well, Herbert, what do you think of it?” asked the doctor.

“I think,” said Herbert, hotly, “that I don’t want to have anything to do with an uncle who could write such a letter as that.”

“He doesn’t seem to write with much feeling.” acknowledged the doctor.

“Feeling!” repeated Herbert; “he writes as if I were a beggar, and asked charity. Where is the money he inclosed, Dr. Kent?”

“I have it here in my vest pocket. I was afraid it would slip out of the letter, and so took care of it.”

“Will you let me send it back to my uncle?” asked Herbert.

“Send it back?”

“Yes, Dr. Kent; I don’t want any of his charity, and I’ll tell him so.”

“I am afraid, Herbert, that you are giving way to your pride.”

“But isn’t it a proper pride, doctor?”

“I hardly know what to say, Herbert. You must remember, however, that, as you are left quite unprovided for, even this small sum may be of use to you.”

“It isn’t the smallness of the sum that I mind,” said Herbert. “If Uncle Benjamin had written a kind letter, or showed the least feeling in it for me, or for—for mother [his voice faltered a moment], I would have accepted it thankfully. But I couldn’t accept money thrown at me in that way. He didn’t want to give it to me, I am sure, and wouldn’t if he hadn’t felt obliged to.”

Dr. Kent paced the room thoughtfully. He respected Herbert’s feelings, but he saw that it was not wise for him to indulge them. He was in a dependent situation, and it was to be feared that he would have much to suffer in time to come from the coldness and selfishness of the world.

“I will tell you what to do, Herbert,” he said, after a while. “You can accept this money as a loan, and repay it when you are able.”

“With interest?”

“Yes, with interest, if you prefer it.”

“I shall be willing to accept it on those terms,” said Herbert; “but I want my uncle to understand it.”

“You may write to your uncle to that effect, if you like.”

“Very well, Dr. Kent. Then I will write to him at once.”

“You will find some paper in my desk, Herbert. I suppose you will not object to my seeing your letter.”

“No, doctor, I intended to show it to you. You won’t expect me to show much gratitude, I hope?”

“I won’t insist upon it, Herbert,” said the doctor, smiling.

Herbert in about half an hour submitted the following note to the doctor’s inspection. It had cost him considerable thought to determine how to express himself, but he succeeded at last to his tolerable satisfaction.

“UNCLE BENJAMIN [so the letter commenced]: Dr. Kent has just shown me your reply to his letter about me. You seem to think I wish you to support me, which is not the case. All I should have asked was your influence to help me in obtaining a situation in the city, where I might support myself. I am willing to work, and shall probably find some opportunity here. The ten dollars, which you inclose, I will accept AS A LOAN, and will repay you as soon as I am able, WITH INTEREST. HERBERT MASON.”

“Will that do?” asked Herbert.

Dr. Kent smiled.

“You were careful not to express any gratitude, Herbert,” he said.

“Because I don’t feel any,” returned Herbert, promptly. “I feel grateful to you, Dr. Kent, for your great kindness. I wish I could pay you for that. I shall never forget how you attended my mother in her sickness, when there was small prospect of your being paid.”

“My dear boy,” said the doctor, resting his hand affectionately on Herbert’s shoulder, “I have been able to do but very little. I wish I could do more. If you wish to repay me, you can do it a hundred times over by growing up a good and honorable man; one upon whom your mother in heaven can look down with grateful joy, if it is permitted her to watch your progress here.”

“I will do my best, doctor,” said Herbert.

“The world is all before you,” proceeded Dr. Kent. “You may not achieve a brilliant destiny. It is permitted to few to do that. But whether your sphere is wide or narrow, you may exert an influence for good, AND LEAVE THE WORLD BETTER FOR YOUR HAVING LIVED IN IT.”

“I hope it may be so,” said Herbert, thoughtfully. “When I am tempted to do wrong, I will think of my mother.”

“It is the very best thing you can do, Herbert. And now for your plans. I wish I were in a situation to have you remain with me. But as that cannot be, I will do my best to get you a place.”

“I ought to be at work,” said Herbert, “as I have my living to get. I want you to take that ten dollars, doctor, as part payment of the debt I owe you.”

The doctor shook his head.

“I can’t do that, Herbert, not even to oblige you. You were too proud to accept a favor from your uncle. You will not be too proud, I hope, to accept one from me?”

“No, doctor; I am not too proud for that. You are my friend, and my uncle cares nothing for me.”

When Herbert’s letter reached New York, his uncle felt a momentary shame, for he saw that his nephew had rightfully interpreted his own selfishness and lack of feeling, and he could not help involuntarily admiring the independent spirit which would not allow him to accept the proffered money, except as a loan. But mingled with his shame was a feeling of relief, as he foresaw that Herbert’s pride would not suffer him to become a burden upon him in the future. He hardly expected ever to see the ten dollars returned with interest; but even if he lost it, he felt that he should be getting off cheap.

CHAPTER III

A COLLISION

It was a week later when an incident befell Herbert which is worthy of mention, since it brought him into collision with a man who was destined to have some influence over his future life.

A neighboring farmer, for whom, during his mother's life, he had occasionally gone on errands, drove up in front of the doctor's house, and asked Herbert if he could take his horse and wagon and drive over to the mill village to get some corn ground. Herbert was rather glad to accept this proposal, not only because he was to receive twenty-five cents for so doing, but also because he was fond of driving a horse.

He was only about a mile from the mill village, when he saw approaching him a man in a light open buggy. Herbert knew every horse in Waverley, and every man, woman, and child, for that matter, and he perceived at once that the driver was a stranger. To tell the truth, he was not very favorably impressed by his appearance. The man was very dark, with black hair and an unshaven beard of three days' growth, which did not set off his irregular and repulsive features. His mouth, partly open, revealed several yellow tusks, stained with tobacco juice. On his head he wore a broad-brimmed straw hat, rather the worse for wear.

It so happened that just at this point the middle of the road was much better than the sides, which sloped considerably, terminating in gullies which were partly full from the recent rains. The road was narrow, being wide enough for two vehicles to pass each other, if each veered to the side, but not otherwise.

Herbert observed that the buggy, which was now rapidly approaching, was kept in the center of the road, and that the driver appeared to have no intention of turning out.

"What does he mean?" thought our hero. "He cannot expect me to do the whole of the turning out. I will turn out my half, and if he wants to get by, he must do the same."

Accordingly, he turned partially to one side, as much as could be reasonably expected, and quietly awaited the approach of the man in the buggy. The latter still kept the center of the road, and did not turn out his carriage at all. As soon as it was close at hand, the driver leaned forward and exclaimed angrily:

"Turn out, boy!"

If he expected that Herbert would be intimidated by his tone he was much mistaken. Our hero was bold, and not easily frightened. He looked quietly in the man's face, and said composedly, "I have turned out."

"Then turn out more, you young vagabond! Do you hear me?"

"Yes, sir, I hear you, and should if you didn't speak half so loud."

"Curse your impudence! I tell you, turn out more!" exclaimed the stranger, becoming more and more angry. He had expected to get his own way without trouble. If Herbert had been a man, he would not have been so unreasonable; but he supposed he could browbeat a boy into doing whatever he chose to dictate. But he had met his match, as it turned out.

"I have already given you half the road," said Herbert, firmly, "and I don't intend to give you any more."

"You don't, eh? Young man, how old are you?"

"I am fourteen."

"I should think you were forty by the airs you put on."

"Is it putting on airs to insist on my rights?" asked our hero.

"Your rights!" retorted the other, laughing contemptuously.

“Yes, my rights,” returned Herbert, quietly. “I have a right to half of the road, and I have taken it. If I turn out any more, I shall go into the gully.”

“That makes no difference. A wetting won’t do you any harm. Your impudence needs cooling.”

“That may be,” said Herbert, who did not choose to get angry, but was resolved to maintain his rights; “but I object to the wetting, for all that, and as this wagon is not mine, I do not choose to upset it.”

“You are the most insolent young scamp I ever came across!” exclaimed the other, furiously. “I’ve a good mind to give you something much worse than a wetting.”

“Such as what?” asked our hero, coolly. In reply the man flourished his whip significantly. “Do you see that?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“Oh, very well,” said the other, ironically; “I’m glad you do. Perhaps you wouldn’t like to feel it?”

“No, I don’t think I should,” said Herbert, not exhibiting the least apprehension.

The stranger handled his whip, eyeing our hero viciously at the same time, as if it would have afforded him uncommon pleasure to lay it over his back. But there was something in the look of our hero which unconsciously cowed him, and, much as he wished to strike him, he held back.

“Well, you’re a cool hand,” he said, after a moment’s hesitation.

To this our hero did not see fit to make any reply. But he grasped his own whip a little tighter. So brutal had been the tone assumed by the stranger, that he was not sure but he might proceed to carry out his threat, and lay the whip over his back. He determined, in that case, to give him as good as he sent. I will not express any opinion as to the propriety of this determination, but I am certain, from what I know of our hero’s fearless spirit, that he would not have hesitated to do it, be the consequences what they might. But he did not have the opportunity.

“Once more,” demanded the stranger, furiously; “are you going to turn out?”

“No,” said the boy, decidedly.

“Then—I’ll run you down.”

So saying, he brought the whip violently on the horse’s back. The latter gave a convulsive spring forward. But his driver had not taken into consideration that the farm-wagon was the stronger of the two vehicles, and that in any collision the buggy must come off second best. So it happened that a wheel of the buggy was broken, and the driver, in the shock, thrown sprawling into a puddle on the other side of the road. The wagon suffered no damage, but the old horse, terrified, set off at a rapid pace. Herbert looked back to see if the stranger was injured, but seeing that he had already picked himself up unwounded, but decidedly dirty, he concluded to keep on his way to the mill.

The driver of the overturned vehicle was considerably more angry than hurt at this catastrophe.

It chafed his pride not a little to think that, after all his vaunts, the boy had maintained his ground, and got the better of him. For a man of forty-five to be worsted by a boy of fourteen was, it must be confessed, a little mortifying. It was something like a great ship of the line being compelled to surrender to a little monitor.

No one feels particularly dignified or good-natured when he is picking himself out of a mud puddle. Our black-haired acquaintance proved no exception to this remark. He shook his fist at the receding wagon and its occupant—a demonstration of defiance which our hero did not witness, his back being now turned to his late opponent.

Mr. Abner Holden—for this was the stranger’s name—next turned his attention to the buggy, which had been damaged to some extent, and so was likely to involve him in expense. This was another uncomfortable reflection. Meanwhile, as it was no longer in a fit state for travel, he must contrive some way to have it carried back to the stable, and, unless he could procure another vehicle, perform the rest of the journey on foot.

Luckily, some men in a neighboring field had witnessed the collision, and, supposing their services might be required, were now present to lend their aid.

“Pretty bad accident,” remarked one of them. “That ‘ere wheel’ll need considerable tinkering afore it’s fit for use. How came you to get it broke so, squire?”

“A little rascal had the impudence to dispute the road with me, and would not turn out at my bidding,” said Mr. Holden, in a tone of exasperation, which showed that his temper had been considerably soured by the accident.

“Wouldn’t turn out? Seems to me from the marks of the wheels, you must have been drivin’ along in the middle of the road. I guess you didn’t take the trouble to turn out, yourself.”

“Well, there was room enough for the boy to turn out one side,” said Holden, doggedly.

“You are slightly mistaken, stranger,” said the other, who was disgusted at the traveler’s unreasonableness. “There wasn’t room; as anyone can see that’s got eyes in his head. Didn’t the youngster turn out at all?”

“Yes,” snapped Holden, not relishing the other’s free speech.

“Then it seems you were the one that would not turn out. If you had been a leetle more accommodating, this accident couldn’t have happened. Fair play’s my motto. If a feller meets you halfway, it’s all you have a right to expect. I reckon it’ll cost you a matter of ten dollars to get that ‘ere buggy fixed.”

Holden looked savagely at the broken wheel, but that didn’t mend matters. He would have answered the countryman angrily, but, as he stood in need of assistance, this was not good policy.

“What would you advise me to do about it?” he inquired.

“You will have to leave the buggy where it is just now. Where did you get it?”

“Over at the mill village.”

“Well, you’d better lead the horse back—‘tain’t more’n a mile or so—get another wagon, and tell ‘em to send for this.”

“Well, perhaps that is the best way.”

“Where was you goin’?”

“Over to Waverley.”

“That’s where the boy came from.”

“What boy?”

“The boy that upset you.”

“What is his name?” asked Abner Holden, scowling.

“His name is Herbert Mason, son of the Widder Mason that died two or three weeks since. Poor boy, he’s left alone in the world.”

“Where’s he stopping?” asked Holden, hardly knowing why he asked the question.

“Dr. Kent took him in after the funeral, so I heard; but the selectmen of Waverley are trying to find him a place somewheres, where he can earn his own livin’. He’s a smart, capable boy, and I guess he can do ‘most a man’s work.”

Abner Holden looked thoughtful. Some plan had suggested itself to him which appeared to yield him satisfaction, for he began to look decidedly more comfortable, and he muttered to himself: “I’ll be even with him YET. See if I don’t.”

“How far am I from Waverley?” he asked, after a slight pause.

“Well, risin’ three miles,” drawled the other.

“If I could get somebody to go back with this horse, I don’t know but what I’d walk to Waverley. Are you very busy?”

“Well, I don’t know but I could leave off for a short time,” said the other, cautiously. “Work’s pretty drivin’, to be sure. What do you cal’late to pay?”

“How much would it be worth?”

“Well, there’s the walk there and back, and then again there’s the time.”

“You can mount the horse going.”

“I guess fifty cents’ll about pay me.”

Mr. Holden took out his pocketbook and paid the required sum.

“By the way,” he said, as if incidentally, “who is the chairman of the selectmen in the village of Waverley?”

“You ain’t thinkin’ of takin’ that boy, be you?” said the other, curiously.

“I’ve had enough to do with him; I don’t want ever to lay eyes on him again.”

“Well, I dunno as I should, if I was you,” said the countryman, rather slyly.

“You haven’t answered my question yet,” said Holden, impatiently.

“Oh, about the cheerman of the selectmen. It’s Captain Joseph Ross.”

“Where does he live?”

“A leetle this side of the village. You’ll know the house, well enough. It’s a large, square house painted white, with a well-sweep in front.”

Without a word of thanks for the information, Abner Holden turned, and began to walk toward Waverley. Perhaps his object in making these inquiries has been guessed. It happened that he needed a boy, and, for more reasons than one, he thought he should like to have Herbert bound to him. Herbert, as he had noticed, was a stout boy, and he probably could get a good deal of work out of him. Then, again, it would be gratifying to him to have our hero in subjection to him. He could pay him off then, ten times over, for his insolence, as he chose to term it.

“I’ll break his proud spirit,” thought Abner Holden. “He’ll find he’s got a master, if I get hold of him. He don’t know me yet, but he will some time.”

Mr. Holden resolved to wait on Captain Ross at once, and conclude arrangements with him to take Herbert before our hero had returned from the mill village. He pictured, with a grim smile, Herbert’s dismay when he learned who was to be his future master.

With the help of a handkerchief dipped into a crystal stream at the roadside, Abner Holden succeeded in effacing some of the muddy stains upon his coat and pantaloons, and at length got himself into presentable trim for calling upon a “selectman.”

At length he came in sight of the house which had been described to him as that of Captain Ross. There was a woman at the well-sweep engaged in drawing water.

“Does Captain Ross live here?” he inquired.

“Yes, sir.”

“Is he at home?”

“He’s over in the three-acre lot. Was you wantin’ to see him?”

“I should like to. Is the field far away?”

“No, it’s just behind the house.”

“Then I guess I’ll go and find him. I want to see him on a little matter of business.”

Mr. Holden crossed a mowing-field, and then, climbing over a stone wall, found himself at the edge of the three-acre lot. The captain was superintending one or two hired men, and, as he had his coat off, had probably been assisting them.

“Captain Ross?” said Abner Holden, interrogatively.

“That’s my name.”

“You are chairman of the selectmen, I believe?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I understand that you have a boy that you want to bind out.”

“I reckon you mean Herbert Mason.”

“Yes, I believe that’s the name I heard.”

“Are you in want of a boy?”

“Yes, I am looking out for one.”

“What is your business?”

“I keep a store, but I should want him to work on land part of the time.”

“Do you live hereabouts?”

“Over at Cranston.”

“If you’ll come to the house, we’ll talk the matter over. The boy’s a good boy, and we want to get a good place for him. His mother was a widder, and he’s her only son. He’s a smart, capable lad, and good to work.”

“I’ve no doubt he’ll suit me. I’ll take him on your recommendation.”

“We should want him to go to school winters. He’s a pretty good scholar already. His father was a larned man, and used to teach him before he died. If he had lived, I reckon Herbert would certainly have gone to college.”

“I’ll agree to send him to school in the winter for the next two years,” said Holden, “and will give him board and clothes, and when he’s twenty-one a freedom suit, and a hundred dollars. Will that do?”

“I don’t know but that’s reasonable,” said Captain Ross, slowly. “The boy’s a bit high-spirited, but if you manage him right, I guess you’ll like him.”

“I’ll manage him!” thought Abner Holden. “Can I take him with me to-morrow?” he asked. “I don’t come this way very often.”

“Well, I guess that can be arranged. We’ll go over to Dr. Kent’s after dinner, and see if they can get him ready.”

“In the meantime,” said Holden, afraid that the prize might slip through his fingers, “suppose we make out the papers. I suppose you have full authority in the matter.”

Captain Ross had no objection, and thus poor Herbert was unconsciously delivered over to the tender mercies of a man who had very little love for him.

CHAPTER IV

A DISAGREEABLE SURPRISE

After his collision with the traveler, Herbert hurried on to the mill, intent upon making up for lost time. He was satisfied with having successfully maintained his rights; and, as he had no reason to suppose he should ever again see his unreasonable opponent, dismissed him from his thoughts.

On reaching the mill, he found he should have to remain an hour or two before he could have his grain ground. He was not sorry for this, as it would give him an opportunity to walk around the village.

"I wish," he thought, "I could get a place in one of the stores here. There's more going on than there is in Waverley, and I could go over Sundays to see Dr. Kent's family."

On the spur of the moment, he resolved to inquire if some of the storekeepers did not require help. There was a large dry-goods store—the largest in the village—kept by Beckford & Keyes. He entered and inquired for the senior partner.

"Mr. Beckford is not in," said the clerk. "Mr. Keyes is standing at that desk."

Herbert went up to the desk, and said inquiringly, "Mr. Keyes?"

"That is my name," said that gentleman, pleasantly. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"I am in search of a place," said our hero, "and I thought you might have a vacancy here."

"We have none just at present," said Mr. Keyes, who was favorably impressed by Herbert's appearance; "but it is possible we may have in a few weeks. Where do you live? Not in the village, I suppose?"

"No, sir," said Herbert, and a shadow passed over his face, "My mother died three weeks since, and I am now stopping at the house of Dr. Kent."

"Dr. Kent—ah, yes, I know the doctor. He is an excellent man."

"He is," said Herbert, warmly. "He has been very kind to me."

"What is your name?"

"Herbert Mason."

"Then, Herbert, I will promise to bear you in mind. I will note down your name and address, and as soon as we have a vacancy I will write to you. Come into the store whenever you come this way."

"Thank you," said Herbert.

He left the store feeling quite encouraged. Even if the chance never amounted to anything, the kind words and manner of the storekeeper gave him courage to hope that he would meet with equal kindness from others. Kind words cost nothing, but they have a marvelous power in lightening the burdens of the sorrowful and cheering the desponding.

Herbert left the store, feeling that he should consider himself truly fortunate if he could obtain a place in such an establishment. But there was a rough experience before him, of which at present he guessed nothing.

After sauntering about the village a little longer, and buying a stick of candy for little Mary Kent, the doctor's only daughter, who was quite attached to Herbert, our hero got back to the mill in time to receive his bags of meal, with which he was soon on his way homeward.

About the place where he met Mr. Holden he was hailed by a man at work in the field—the same who had taken back that gentleman's horse to the stable.

"Well, boy, you had a kind of scrimmage, didn't you, coming over?"

"Did you see it?" asked Herbert.

"Yes," said the other, grinning. "I seed the other feller in the mud puddle. He was considerably riled about it."

"It was his own fault. I gave him half the road."

"I know it; but there's some folks that want more than their share."

“Was his buggy broken? I don’t know but I ought to have stopped to help him, but he had been so unreasonable that I didn’t feel much like it.”

“His wheel got broken. I drew the buggy into the bushes. There ‘tis now. It’ll cost him a matter of ten dollars to fix it.”

“I’m sorry for that,” said Herbert; “but I can’t see that I was to blame in the matter. If I had turned out as he wanted me to, I should have tipped over, and, as the wagon didn’t belong to me, I didn’t think it right to risk it.”

“Of course not. You wasn’t called on to give in to such unreasonableness.”

“Where did the man go?”

“He concluded to walk on to Waverley, and hired me to take the horse back to the stable. He wanted to know who you were.”

“Did he?”

“Maybe he’s goin’ to sue you for damages.”

“I don’t believe he’ll get much if he does,” laughed our hero. “My property is where he can’t get hold of it.”

“Ho! ho!” laughed the other, understanding the joke.

After this conversation Herbert continued on his way, and, after delivering the grain, took his way across the fields to his temporary home. He entered by the back yard. Little Mary came running out to meet him.

“Have oo come back, Herbert?” she said. “Where have oo been?”

“Been to buy Mary some candy,” he said, lifting her up and kissing her.

“Whose horse is that at the gate?” asked Herbert, as the doctor’s wife entered the room.

“It belongs to Captain Ross,” she said. “He has come on business connected with you.”

“Connected with me!” repeated Herbert, in surprise.

“Yes, my dear boy, I am afraid we must make up our minds to lose you.”

“Has he found a place for me?” asked Herbert, in a tone of disappointment.

“Yes, I believe he has bound you out to a man in Cranston.”

“I am sorry,” said Herbert.

“I shall be sorry to have you go, Herbert, but I thought you wanted to go.”

“So I do; but by waiting a few weeks I could probably get a place in Beckford & Keyes’ store, at the mill village.”

“What makes you think so?”

Herbert detailed his interview of the morning with the junior partner. Just at this moment the doctor entered the kitchen.

“Have you told him?” he inquired, looking at his wife.

“Yes, and he says that but for this he might probably have got a chance to go into Beckford’s store at the mill village.”

“I am sorry for this. They are good men, and he would have been near us, while Cranston is forty miles away.”

“Who is the man that wants me?” asked Herbert.

“A Mr. Holden. He is in the other room with Captain Ross. It was all arranged before they came. He wants you to go with him to-morrow morning.”

“So soon?” said Herbert, in dismay.

“Yes. At first he wished you to set off with him this afternoon; but I told him decidedly you could not be ready.”

“Quite impossible,” said Mrs. Kent. “Some of Herbert’s clothes are in the wash, and I can’t have them ready till evening.”

“You had better come into the other room, Herbert,” said the doctor. “I will introduce you to your new employer.”

Herbert followed the doctor into the sitting-room. His first glance rested on Captain Ross, whom he knew. He went up and shook hands with him. Next he turned to Mr. Holden, and to his inexpressible astonishment, recognized his opponent of the morning.

“Mr. Holden, Herbert,” introduced the doctor. “Mr. Holden, this is the boy we have been speaking of.”

“I have seen Mr. Holden before,” said Herbert, coldly.

“Yes,” said Mr. Holden, writhing his disagreeable features into an unpleasant smile. “We have met before.”

Dr. Kent looked from one to the other in surprise, as if seeking an explanation.

“Our acquaintance doesn’t date very far back,” said Mr. Holden. “We met this morning between here and the mill village.”

“Indeed,” said the doctor; “you passed each other, I suppose.”

“Well, no; I can’t say we did exactly,” said Mr. Holden, with the same unpleasant smile, “We tried to, but the road being narrow, there was a collision, and I came off second-best.”

“I hope there was no accident.”

“Oh, nothing to speak of. I got tipped out, and my clothes, as you may observe, suffered some. As for my young friend here, he rode on uninjured.”

“You must excuse my not stopping to inquire if I could help you,” said Herbert; “but my horse was frightened by the collision, and I could not easily stop him.”

“Oh, it’s of no consequence,” said Mr. Holden, in an off-hand manner. He was determined not to show himself out in his true colors until he had got Herbert absolutely under his control.

“But where is your horse, Mr. Holden?” asked Captain Ross. “I think you were walking when you came to my house.”

“I sent it back to the village by a man I met on the road, my buggy being disabled.”

“Your carriage wasn’t much injured, I hope.”

“Oh, no, not much.”

“I don’t see exactly how it could happen,” said Captain Ross. “I thought the road from here to the mill village was broad enough at any point for carriages to pass each other.”

“I didn’t dream,” said Mr. Holden, not noticing this remark, “that the young man I had engaged was my young acquaintance of the morning.”

Herbert looked at him, puzzled by his entire change of manner—a change so sudden that he suspected its genuineness.

The more he thought of it, the more unwilling he felt to live with Mr. Holden. But could it be avoided? He resolved to try. He accordingly told the doctor and Captain Ross of the promise that Mr. Keyes had made him.

“It would be a good place,” said the captain; “but it ain’t certain. Now, here’s Mr. Holden, ready to take you at once.”

“If I was in the mill village I could come over and see my friends here now and then. Besides, I think I should like being in a store.”

“Oh, I’ve got a store, too,” said Mr. Holden, “and I should expect you to tend there part of the time. I don’t think I can let you off, my young friend,” he added, with a disagreeable smile. “I think we shall get along very well together.”

Herbert did not feel at all sure of this, but he saw that it would do no good to remonstrate farther, and kept silence. Soon after, Mr. Holden and Captain Ross rose to go.

“I’ll call round for my young friend about nine to-morrow morning,” said Abner Holden, with an ingratiating smile.

“We will endeavor to have him ready,” said the doctor.

After they went away Herbert wandered about in not the best of spirits. He was convinced that he should not be happy with Mr. Holden, against whom he had conceived an aversion, founded partly

upon the occurrences of the morning, and partly on the disagreeable impression made upon him by Abner Holden's personal appearance.

CHAPTER V

THE ENVELOPE

Herbert woke up early the next morning, and a feeling of sadness came over him as he reflected that it was his last morning in Waverley. He was going out into the world, and, as he could not help thinking, under very unfavorable auspices. New scenes and new experiences usually have a charm for a boy, but Mr. Holden's disagreeable face and unpleasant smile rose before him, and the prospect seemed far from tempting.

When he came downstairs, he found Mrs. Kent in the kitchen.

"You are up early, Mrs. Kent," said Herbert.

"Yes, Herbert; I want you to have a good breakfast before you go."

It certainly was a nice breakfast. Tender beefsteak, warm biscuit, golden butter, potatoes fried crisp and brown, and excellent coffee, might have tempted any appetite. Herbert, in spite of his sadness, did full justice to the bountiful meal.

The family had hardly risen from breakfast when the sound of wheels was heard outside, and directly there was a knock at the door.

"It's Mr. Holden," said the doctor, looking from the front window.

"Must we part from you so soon, Herbert?" said Mrs. Kent, affectionately.

"Where oo goin', Herbert?" asked little Mary, clinging to his knee,

"Herbert's going away, Mary," said he, stooping and kissing his little friend.

"Herbert mustn't go 'way," said the little girl, in discontent.

"Herbert come back soon, and bring candy for Mary," he said, wishing that his words might come true.

By that time Mr. Holden had entered, and was surveying the scene with his disagreeable smile.

"Little Mary is quite attached to Herbert," said the doctor.

"I am sorry," said Mr. Holden, "that I have no little girls, as Herbert seems fond of them."

Herbert doubted if he could become attached to anyone related to Mr. Holden.

"I'm a bachelor," said Mr. Holden, "though perhaps I ought to be ashamed to say so. If I had had the good fortune early in life to encounter a lady like your good wife here, it might have been different."

"It isn't too late yet, Mr. Holden," said the doctor.

"Well, perhaps not. If Mrs. Kent is ever a widow, I may try my luck."

"What a disagreeable man," thought the doctor's wife, not propitiated by the compliment. "Herbert," she said, "here are a couple of handkerchiefs I bought in the village yesterday. I hope you will find them useful."

"Yes; no doubt he will," said Mr. Holden, laughing. "He will think of you whenever he has a bad cold."

Nobody even smiled at this witty sally, and, Mr. Holden, a little disappointed, remarked: "Well, time's getting on. I guess we must be going, as we have a long journey before us."

The whole family accompanied Herbert to the road. After kissing Mary and Mrs. Kent, and shaking the doctor cordially by the hand, Herbert jumped into the wagon. Just before the horse started the doctor handed our hero a sealed envelope, saying, "You can open it after a while."

Though, like most boys of his age, Herbert had a great horror of making a baby of himself, he could hardly help crying as he rode up the street, and felt that he had parted from his best friends. His eyes filled with tears, which he quietly wiped away with the corner of his handkerchief.

"Come, come, don't blubber, boy," said Mr. Holden, coarsely.

Herbert was not weak enough to melt into tears at an unkind word. It roused his indignation, and he answered, shortly, "When you see me blubbering, it'll be time enough to speak, Mr. Holden."

"It looked a good deal like it, at any rate," said Abner. "However, I'm glad if I'm mistaken. There's nothing to cry about that I can see."

"No, perhaps not," said Herbert; "but there's something to be sorry for."

"Something to be sorry for, is there?" said Abner Holden.

"Yes."

"Well, what is it?"

"I've left my best friends, and I don't know when I shall see them again."

"Nor I," said Mr. Holden. "But I think it's high time you left them."

"Why?" asked Herbert, indignantly.

"Because they were petting you and making too much of you. You won't get such treatment as that from me."

"I don't expect it," said our hero.

"That's lucky," said Abner Holden, dryly. "It's well that people shouldn't expect what they are not likely to get."

Here a sense of the ludicrous came over Herbert as he thought of being Mr. Holden's pet, and he laughed heartily. Not understanding the reason of his sudden mirth, that gentleman demanded, in a tone of irritation, "What are you making a fool of yourself about?"

"What am I laughing at?" said Herbert, not liking the form of the question.

"Yes," snarled Abner.

"The idea of being your pet," explained Herbert, frankly.

Mr. Holden did not appreciate the joke, and said roughly, "You better shut up, if you know what's best for yourself."

They rode along in silence for a few minutes. Then Abner Holden, thinking suddenly of the envelope which Dr. Kent had placed in Herbert's hand at parting, and feeling curious as to its contents, asked:

"What did the doctor give you just as you were starting?"

"It was an envelope."

"I know that; but what was there in it?"

"I haven't looked," said our hero.

He felt a little satisfaction in snubbing Mr. Holden, whom he saw he would never like.

"Why don't you open it?"

"I didn't think of it before."

"I suppose there is some present inside."

Herbert decided to open the envelope, out of respect for Dr. Kent. On opening it, he drew out a five-dollar bill, and a few penciled words, which were as follows:

"DEAR HERBERT: I would gladly give you more if I had the means. I hope you will use the inclosed money in any way that may be most serviceable to you. You must write to me often. Be a good boy, as you always have been; let your aims be noble; try to do right at all hazards, and may God bless your efforts, and make you a good and true man. Such is the prayer of your affectionate friend, GEORGE KENT."

Herbert read these lines with emotion, and inwardly resolved that he would try to carry out the recommendations laid down. His thoughts were broken in upon by Mr. Holden, whose sharp eyes detected the bank-note.

"There's money in the letter, isn't there?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"Five dollars."

“Five dollars, hey?” he said. “You’d better give it to me to keep for you.”

“Thank you, Mr. Holden; I can take care of it, myself.”

“It isn’t a good plan for boys to have so large a sum of money in their possession,” said Abner Holden, who was anxious to secure it himself.

“Why not?” asked Herbert.

“Because they are likely to spend it improperly.”

“Dr. Kent didn’t seem to think I was likely to do that.”

“No; he trusted you too much.”

“I hope it won’t prove so.”

“You’d better keep out of the way of temptation. You might lose it, besides.”

“I don’t often lose things.”

“Come, boy,” said Mr. Holden, getting impatient; “Dr. Kent, no doubt, intended that I should take care of the money for you. You’d better give it up without further trouble.”

“Why didn’t he give it to you, then?” demanded Herbert.

“He supposed you would give it to me.”

Mr. Holden’s motive for getting the money into his own hands was twofold. First, he knew that without money Herbert would be more helpless and more in his power. Secondly, as he had agreed to supply Herbert with clothing, he thought he might appropriate the money towards this purpose, and it would be so much of a saving to his own pocket. Perhaps Herbert suspected some such design. At any rate, he had no intention of gratifying Mr. Holden by giving up the money.

“Well, are you going to give me the money?” blustered Abner Holden, taking out his pocketbook, ready to receive it.

“No,” said Herbert.

“You’ll repent this conduct, young man,” said Holden, scowling.

“I don’t think I shall,” said our hero. “I don’t understand why you are so anxious to get hold of the money.”

“It is for your good,” said Abner.

“I’d rather keep it,” said Herbert.

Abner Holden hardly knew what to do. The money was by this time safely stowed away in Herbert’s pocket, where he could not very well get at it. However, he had a plan for getting it which he resolved to put into practice when they stopped for dinner.

CHAPTER VI ON THE WAY

By the time they had ridden twenty miles both Herbert and Mr. Holden felt hungry. The fresh air had produced a similar effect upon both. They approached a broad, low building with a swinging sign and a long piazza in front, which it was easy to see was a country tavern.

“Do you feel hungry, boy?” inquired Abner Holden.

“Yes, sir,” returned our hero.

“So do I. I think I shall get some dinner here. You can get some, too, if you like.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Oh, there’s no occasion to thank me,” said Mr. Holden, dryly. “I shall pay for my dinner, and if you want any, you can pay for yours.”

Herbert looked surprised. As he had entered Mr. Holden’s employ, he supposed of course that the latter would feel bound to provide for him, and it certainly seemed mean that he should be compelled to pay for his own dinner. However, he was beginning to suspect that his new employer was essentially a mean man.

“How much will it cost?” asked Herbert, at length.

“Thirty-seven cents,” was the reply.

It must be remembered that this was in the day of low prices, when gold was at par, and board could be obtained at first-class city hotels for two dollars and a half a day, and in country villages at that amount by the week.

“Thirty-seven cents!” Herbert hardly liked to break in upon his scanty hoard, but the morning air had sharpened his appetite, and he felt that he must have something to eat. Besides, he remembered one thing which fortunately Mr. Holden did not know, that in addition to the five dollars which Dr. Kent had given him he had the ten dollars sent him by his uncle, and not only that, but a little loose change which he had earned.

“Well, are you going to get out?” asked Abner Holden. “It’s nothing to me whether you take dinner or not.”

“Yes, I guess I will.”

“Very well,” said Holden, who had a reason for being pleased with his decision.

Both went into the tavern. There were two or three loungers on a settle, who gazed at them curiously. One of them at once appeared to recognize Abner Holden.

“How dy do, Holden?” he said. “Who’ve you got with you?”

“A boy I’ve taken,” said Holden, shortly.

“A pretty smart-looking boy. Where’d you pick him up?”

“Over in Waverley. He’s got some pretty high notions, but I guess I’ll take ‘em out of him in time.”

“Yes,” chuckled the other; “I warrant you will.”

While this conversation was going on Herbert had entered the tavern, but he could not avoid hearing what was said, including Mr. Holden’s reply. He was not frightened, but inwardly determined that he would do his duty, and then if Mr. Holden saw fit to impose upon him, he would make what resistance he was able.

“I wonder what high notions he means,” thought our hero. “If he expects to make a slave of me, he will be mistaken, that’s all.”

“Sit down there, and I’ll go and order dinner,” said Mr. Holden, entering.

Just then, however, the landlord came in and greeted Abner Holden, whom he appeared to know.

“I want dinner for two, Mr. Robinson,” he said.

“For two! You haven’t brought your wife along with you, Holden?” he said, jocosely.

“No, I haven’t come across any such lady yet. I’ve got a boy here who is bound to me. And hark you, landlord,” he added, in a lower voice, that Herbert might not hear, “he will pay you for his dinner out of a five-dollar bill which he has with him. **YOU NEEDN’T GIVE BACK THE CHANGE TO HIM, BUT TO ME.**”

“Yes, I understand,” said the landlord, winking.

“I prefer to keep the money for him. He has refused to give it up and this will give me a chance to get hold of it without any fuss.”

“All right.”

“If he kept it himself he’d spend it in some improper way.”

“Just so. I’ll attend to it.”

Now our hero was gifted with pretty sharp ears, and he caught enough of this conversation to understand Mr. Holden’s plot, which he straightway determined should not succeed.

“You shan’t take me in this time, Mr. Holden,” he thought.

He opened his pocketbook to see if he had enough small change to pay for his dinner without intrenching upon his bill. There proved to be a quarter and two half-dimes, amounting, of course, to thirty-five cents. This would not be quite sufficient.

“I must change the bill somewhere,” he said to himself.

Looking out of the tavern window, he saw the village store nearly opposite. He took his cap and ran over. There was a clerk leaning with his elbows upon the counter, appearing unoccupied.

It occurred to Herbert that he might want some paper and envelopes. He inquired the price.

“We sell the paper at a penny a sheet, and the envelopes will cost you eight cents a package.”

“Then you may give me twelve sheets of paper and a package of envelopes,” said Herbert.

The package was done up for him and in payment he tendered the bill.

The clerk gave him back four dollars and eighty cents in change. He put the money in his pocketbook, and the paper and envelopes in his jacket-pocket, and returned to the tavern well pleased with his success. Mr. Holden was in the barroom, taking a glass of “bitters,” and had not noticed the absence of our hero.

Dinner was soon ready.

There was some beefsteak and coffee and a whole apple pie. Herbert surveyed the viands with satisfaction, having a decidedly good appetite. He soon found, however, that hungry as he was, he stood a poor chance with Abner Holden; that gentleman, being a very rapid eater, managed to appropriate two-thirds of the beefsteak and three-quarters of the pie. However, the supply being abundant, Herbert succeeded in making a satisfactory repast, and did not grudge the amount which he knew he should have to pay for it before leaving.

“Now,” said Abner Holden, his eyes twinkling at the thought of our hero’s coming discomfiture, “we’ll go and settle our bill.”

“Very well,” said Herbert, quietly.

They entered the public room and advanced to the bar.

“This boy wants to pay for his dinner, Mr. Robinson,” said Abner, significantly.

“How much will it be?” asked Herbert.

“Thirty-seven cents.”

Herbert took out of his vest pocket a quarter, a dime and two cents, and handed them over.

To say that Abner Holden looked amazed is not sufficient. He looked disgusted and wronged, and glared at Herbert as if to inquire how he could have the face to outrage his feelings in that way.

“Ho! ho!” laughed the landlord, who, having no interest in the matter, was amused at the course affairs had taken.

Herbert suppressed his desire to laugh, and looked as if he had no knowledge of Mr. Holden's plans.

"Where did you get that money?" growled Abner, with a scowl.

"Out of my vest pocket," said Herbert, innocently.

"I know that, of course, but I thought you had only a bill."

"Oh, I got that changed at the store."

"How dared you go over there without my permission?" roared Abner.

"I didn't think it necessary to ask your permission to go across the street."

"Well, you know it now. Don't you go there again without my knowledge."

"Very well, sir."

"Did you buy anything at the store?" continued Mr. Holden.

"Yes, sir."

"What was it?"

"Some paper and envelopes."

"Humph!" muttered Abner, discontentedly.

He proceeded to pay his own bill and in a few minutes got into the wagon and drove off rather sulkily. Herbert saw that Mr. Holden was disturbed by the failure of his little plan, and felt amused rather than otherwise. But when he reflected that he was going to live with this man, and be, to a considerable extent under his control, he felt inclined to be sad. One thing he resolved that he would not submit to tyranny. The world was wide, and he felt able to earn his own living. He would give Mr. Holden a trial, and if he treated him with reasonable fairness he would remain with him. But he was not going to be any man's slave.

Meanwhile they were getting over the road, and a few more hours brought them to their journey's end.

Abner Holden's house stood in considerable need of paint. It had no great pretensions to architectural beauty, being about as handsome for a house as Abner Holden was for a man. There was a dilapidated barn, a little to one side, and the yard was littered up with a broken wagon, a woodpile and various odds and ends, giving the whole a very untidy look.

"Is this where you live, Mr. Holden?" asked Herbert, looking about him.

"Yes, and I'm glad to get home. Do you know how to unharness a horse?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then jump out and unharness this horse. A man will come for it to-morrow."

Herbert did as directed. Then he took his little trunk from the wagon, and went with it to the back door and knocked.

CHAPTER VII A NEW HOME

The door was opened by an elderly woman, rather stout, who acted as Abner Holden's housekeeper. Though decidedly homely, she had a pleasant look, which impressed Herbert favorably. He had feared she might turn out another edition of Mr. Holden, and with two such persons he felt that it would be difficult to get along.

"Come right in," said Mrs. Bickford, for that was her name. "Let me help you with your trunk. You can set it down here for the present."

"Thank you," said Herbert.

"You must be tired," said the housekeeper.

"No, not very," said our hero. "We rode all the way."

"Well, it's tiresome riding, at any rate, when it's such a long distance. You came from Waverley, Mr. Holden tells me."

"Yes."

"And that is more than thirty miles away, isn't it?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"So you've come to help Mr. Holden?" she added, after a pause.

"Yes, I suppose so," said Herbert, rather seriously.

"What is your name?"

"Herbert Mason."

"I hope, Herbert, we shall be able to make you comfortable."

"Thank you," said Herbert, a little more cheerful, as he perceived that he was to have one friend in Mr. Holden's household.

"Has Mr. Holden generally kept a boy?" he asked.

"Yes, he calculates to keep one most of the time."

"Who was the last one?"

"His name was Frank Miles."

"Was he here long?" asked Herbert, in some curiosity.

"Well, no," said the housekeeper, "he did not stay very long."

"How long?"

"He was here 'most a month."

"'Most a month? Didn't he like it?"

"Well, no; he didn't seem to like Mr. Holden much."

Herbert was not much surprised to hear this. He would have thought Frank Miles a singular sort of a boy if he had liked Abner Holden.

"Have any of the boys that have been here liked Mr. Holden?" he asked.

"I can't say as they have," said Mrs. Bickford, frankly; "and somehow they don't seem to stay long."

"Why didn't they like him?"

"Sh!" said the housekeeper, warningly.

Herbert looked round and saw his employer entering the room.

"Well, boy, have you put up the horse?" he asked, abruptly.

"Yes sir."

"Did you give him some hay?"

"Yes, sir."

"And some grain?"

“No, I didn’t know where it was kept. If you’ll tell me, I’ll do it now.”

“No, you needn’t. He isn’t to have any. He’s only a hired horse.”

Considering that the hired horse had traveled over thirty miles, Herbert thought he was entitled to some oats; but Mr. Holden was a mean man, and decided otherwise.

“Where is Herbert to sleep, Mr. Holden?” asked the housekeeper.

“Up garret.”

“There’s a small corner bedroom in the second story,” suggested Mrs. Bickford, who knew that the garret was not very desirable.

“I guess he won’t be too proud to sleep in the garret,” said Mr. Holden. “Shall you?” he continued, turning to Herbert.

“Put me where you please,” said Herbert, coldly.

“Then it shall be the garret. You can take your trunk up now. Mrs. Bickford will show you the way.”

“It’s too heavy for you, Herbert,” said the housekeeper; “I will help you.”

“Oh, he can carry it alone,” said Abner Holden. “He isn’t a baby.”

“I’d rather help him,” said the housekeeper, taking one handle of the trunk. “You go first, Herbert, You’re young and spry, and can go faster than I.”

On the second landing Herbert saw the little bedroom in which the housekeeper wanted to put him. It was plainly furnished, but it was light and cheerful, and he was sorry he was not to have it.

“You could have had that bedroom just as well as not,” said Mrs. Bickford. “It’s never used. But Mr. Holden’s rather contrary, and as hard to turn as a—”

“A mule?” suggested Herbert, laughing.

“It’s pretty much so,” said the housekeeper, joining in the laugh.

They went up a narrow staircase and emerged into a dark garret, running the whole length of the house without a partition. The beams and rafters were visible, for the sloping sides were not plastered. Herbert felt that he might as well have been in the barn, except that there was a small cot bedstead in the center of the floor.

“It isn’t very pleasant,” said the housekeeper.

“No,” said Herbert, “I don’t think it is.”

“I declare, it’s too bad you should have to sleep here. Mr. Holden isn’t very considerate.”

“I guess I can stand it,” said our hero, “though I should rather be downstairs.”

“I’ll bring up the trap and set it before you go to bed,” said Mrs. Bickford.

“The trap!” repeated Herbert, in surprise.

“Yes, there’s rats about, and I suppose you’d rather have a trap than a cat.”

“Yes; the cat would be about as bad as the rats.”

At this moment Abner Holden’s voice was heard at the bottom of the stairs, and Mrs. Bickford hurried down, followed by our hero.

“I thought you were going to stay up there all day,” said Mr. Holden. “What were you about up there?”

“That is my business,” said Mrs. Bickford, shortly.

The housekeeper was independent in her feelings, and, knowing that she could readily obtain another situation, did not choose to be browbeaten by Mr. Holden. He was quite aware of her value, and the difficulty he would experience in supplying her place, and he put some constraint over himself in the effort not to be rude to her. With Herbert, however, it was different. HE was BOUND to him, and therefore in his power. Abner Holden exulted in this knowledge, and with the instinct of a petty tyrant determined to let Herbert realize his dependence.

“You may go out and saw some wood,” he said. “You’ll find the saw in the woodshed.”

“What wood shall I saw?”

“The wood in the woodpile, stupid.”

“Very well, sir,” said our hero, quietly.

Herbert thought Mr. Holden was losing no time in setting him to work. However, he had resolved to do his duty, unpleasant as it might be, as long as Abner Holden only exacted what was reasonable, and Herbert was aware that he had a right to require him to go to work at once. Mrs. Bickford, however, said a word in his favor.

“I’ve got wood enough to last till to-morrow, Mr. Holden,” she said.

“Well, what of it?”

“It’s likely the boy is tired.”

“What’s he done to make him tired, I should like to know? Ridden thirty miles, and eaten a good dinner!”

“Which I paid for myself,” said Herbert.

“What if you did?” said Abner Holden, turning to him. “I suppose you’ll eat supper at my expense, and you’d better do something, first, to earn it.”

“That I am willing to do.”

“Then go out to the woodpile without any more palavering.”

“Mr. Holden,” said the housekeeper, seriously, after Herbert had gone out, “if you want to keep that boy, I think you had better be careful how you treat him.”

“Why do you say that?” demanded Abner, eying her sharply. “Has he been saying anything to you about me?”

“No.”

“Then why did you say that?”

“Because I can see what kind of a boy he is.”

“Well, what kind of a boy is he?” asked Abner, with a sneer.

“He is high-spirited, and will work faithfully if he’s treated well, but he won’t allow himself to be imposed upon.”

“How do you know that?”

“I can read it in his face. I have had some experience with boys, and you may depend upon it that I am not mistaken.”

“He had better do his duty,” blustered Abner, “if he knows what’s best for himself.”

“He will do his duty,” said the housekeeper, firmly, “but there is a duty which you owe to him, as well as he to you.”

“Don’t I always do my duty by boys, Mrs. Bickford?”

“No, Mr. Holden, I don’t think you do. You know very well you can never get a boy to stay with you.”

“This boy is bound to me, Mrs. Bickford—legally bound.”

“That may be; but if you don’t treat him as he ought to be treated, he will run away, take my word for it.”

“If he does, he’ll be brought back, take my word for that, Mrs. Bickford. I shall treat him as I think he deserves, but as to petting and pampering the young rascal I shall do nothing of the kind.”

“I don’t think you will,” said the housekeeper. “However, I’ve warned you.”

“You seem to take a good deal of interest in the boy,” said Abner, sneeringly.

“Yes, I do.”

“After half an hour’s acquaintance.”

“I’ve known him long enough to see that he’s better than the common run of boys, and I hope that he’ll stay.”

“There’s no doubt about that,” said Abner Holden, significantly. “He’ll have to stay, whether he wants to or not.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE GHOST IN THE ATTIC

After working two hours at the woodpile, Herbert was called in to tea. There was no great variety, Abner Holden not being a bountiful provider. But the bread was sweet and good, and the gingerbread fresh. Herbert's two hours of labor had given him a hearty appetite, and he made a good meal. Mrs. Bickford looked on approvingly. She was glad to see that our hero enjoyed his supper.

There was tea on the table, and, after pouring out a cup for Mr. Holden, the housekeeper was about to pour out one for Herbert.

"He don't want any tea," said Abner, noticing the action. "Keep the cup for yourself, Mrs. Bickford."

"What do you mean, Mr. Holden?" asked the housekeeper, in surprise.

"Tea isn't good for a growing boy. A glass of cold water will be best for him."

"I don't agree with you, Mr. Holden," said the housekeeper, decidedly. "Herbert has been hard at work, and needs his tea as much as you or I do."

Therefore, without waiting for his permission, she handed the cup to Herbert, who proceeded to taste it.

Abner Holden frowned, but neither Herbert nor the housekeeper took much notice of it. The latter was somewhat surprised at this new freak on the part of Abner, as he had never tried to deprive any of Herbert's predecessors of tea or coffee. But the fact was, Mr. Holden disliked Herbert, and was disposed to act the petty tyrant over him. He had neither forgotten nor forgiven the boy's spirited defiance when they first met, nor his refusal to surrender into his hands the five dollars which the doctor had given him.

Feeling tired by eight o'clock, Herbert went up to his garret room and undressed himself. An instinct of caution led him to take out the money in his porte-monnaie, and put it in his trunk, which he then locked, and put the key under the sheet, so that no one could get hold of it without awakening him. This precaution proved to be well taken.

Herbert lay down upon the bed, but did not immediately go to sleep. He could not help thinking of his new home, and the new circumstances in which he was placed. He did not feel very well contented, and felt convinced from what he had already seen of Mr. Holden, that he should never like him. Then thoughts of his mother, and of her constant and tender love, and the kind face he would never more see on earth, swept over him, and almost unmanned him. To have had her still alive he would have been content to live on dry bread and water.

He thought, too, of the doctor's family and their kindness. How different it would have been if he might have continued to find a home with them! But when he was tempted to repine, the thought of his mother's Christian instructions came to him, and he was comforted by the reflection, that whatever happened to him was with the knowledge of his Father in heaven, who would not try him above his strength.

Try and trust! That was almost the last advice his mother had given him, as the surest way of winning the best success.

"Yes," he thought, "I will try and trust, and leave the rest with God."

Meanwhile Mr. Holden had not been able to keep out of his head the five dollars which he knew Herbert possessed. He was a mean man, and wished to appropriate it to his own use. Besides this, he was a stubborn man, and our hero's resistance only made him the more determined to triumph over his opposition by fair means or foul. It struck him that it would be a good idea to take advantage of our hero's slumber, and take the money quietly from his pocketbook while he was unconscious.

Accordingly, about eleven o'clock, he went softly up the attic stairs with a candle in his hand, and, with noiseless steps, approached the bed. Herbert's regular breathing assured him that he was asleep. Abner Holden took up his pants and felt for his pocketbook. He found it, and drew it out with exultation.

"Aha!" he thought; "I've got it."

But this brief exultation was succeeded by quick disappointment. The pocketbook proved to be quite empty.

"Curse it!" muttered Abner, "what has the boy done with his money?"

It was at this moment that Herbert, his eyes possibly affected by the light, awoke, and he discovered his employer examining his pocketbook.

His first feeling was indignation, but the sight of Abner Holden's disappointed face amused him, and he determined not to reveal his wakefulness, but to watch, him quietly.

"Perhaps he's got two pocketbooks," thought Abner. But in this he was mistaken.

Next he went to Herbert's trunk, and tried it, but found it locked.

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