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WALTER SHERWOOD'S
PROBATION

Horatio Alger

Walter Sherwood's Probation

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Horatio Alger

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CHAPTER I

WALTER SHERWOOD'S LETTER

“Here’s a letter for you, Doctor Mack,” said the housekeeper, as she entered the plain room used as a library and sitting-room by her employer, Doctor Ezekiel Mack. “It’s from Walter, I surmise.” This was a favorite word with Miss Nancy Sprague, who, though a housekeeper, prided herself on having been a schoolmistress in her earlier days.

“Indeed, Nancy. Let me see it. Walter is really getting attentive. His last letter came to hand only two days since. He hasn’t forgotten his old guardian.”

“Oh, no, sir. He’ll never do that. He has a predilection for his old home. His heart is in the right place.”

“Just so. I wish I felt as sure about his head.”

Doctor Mack adjusted his spectacles, for he was rising sixty, and his eyes required assistance, and opened the letter. As he read it his forehead contracted, and he looked disturbed. A perusal of the letter may help us to understand why. It ran as follows:

“DEAR GUARDIAN: You will be surprised at hearing from me so soon again, but I am really forced to write. I find college life much more expensive than I supposed it would be. A fellow is expected to join two or three societies, and each costs money. I know you wouldn’t have me appear mean. Then the students have been asked to contribute to a fund for the enlargement of the library, and almost every day there is a demand for money for one object or another. As it is nearly the end of the term, I calculate that with a check for an extra hundred dollars I can get along. I am awfully sorry to ask for it, but it will come out of the money father left me, and I am sure he would wish me to keep up appearances, and not fall behind the rest of the boys.

“I stand fairly well in my studies, and I expect to be stroke oar of the college boat club. Besides this, I have been elected catcher of the college baseball club. I am thought to excel in athletic sports, and really enjoy my college life very much. Please send me the check by return of mail. Affectionately yours, WALTER.”

Doctor Mack laid the letter on the table, and slowly removed the glasses from his nose.

“One hundred dollars!” he repeated. “That is the second extra check he has written for, this term. Then his regular term bills will come due in two weeks. He is spending more than three times as much as I did when in college. Forty years have made a difference, no doubt, but not so great a difference as that. I hope the boy isn’t falling into extravagant habits. I care for that more than for the money. His father left a good fortune, of which fact he is unfortunately aware, but I don’t mean that it shall spoil him. Now, what shall I do. Shall I send him the check or not?”

Doctor Mack leaned back in his chair, and thought busily. He felt anxious about his ward, who had entered college early and was now only seventeen. Walter Sherwood was a boy of excellent talent and popular manners, but he was inclined to be self-indulgent and had a large capacity for “enjoyment.” His guardian had fondly hoped that he would lead the class in scholarship, but instead of this he was only doing “fairly well” in his studies. To be sure, he excelled in athletic sports, but, as Doctor Mack reflected, this was not generally considered the chief aim in a college course, except by some of the students themselves.

“I wish I knew just how Walter is making out,” thought the doctor. Then, after a pause, he resumed, with a sudden inspiration: “Why shouldn’t I know? I’ll go over to Euclid to-morrow with out giving Walter any intimation of my visit, and see for myself.”

It may be stated here that Walter Sherwood was a member of the sophomore class in Euclid College, situated in the town of the same name. If the reader does not find Euclid in a list of American colleges, it is because for special reasons I have thought it best to conceal the real name of the college, not wishing to bring the Institution into possible disrepute. There are some who might misjudge the college, because it contained some students who made an unprofitable use of their time.

“Nancy,” said Doctor Mack at the supper-table, “you may pack a hand-bag for me. I shall start on a journey to-morrow morning.”

“Where to, sir, if I may make so bold as to inquire?”

“I think of going to Euclid.”

“To see Master Walter?”

“Exactly.”

“You haven’t heard any bad news, I hope?” said the housekeeper anxiously.

“Oh, no.”

“Then he isn’t sick?”

“Quite the contrary. He is quite strong and athletic, I should judge, from his letter.”

“He will be glad to see you, sir.”

“Well, perhaps so. But you know, Nancy, young people don’t miss their parents and guardians as much as they are missed at home. They have plenty of excitement and society at college.”

“Yes, sir, that’s true, but I’m sure Master Walter won’t forget his old home. If you have room for some cookies I will put some into the bag. Walter is fond of them.”

“No, I think you needn’t do it, Nancy, He has a good boarding-house, and no doubt he gets all the cakes he wants. By the way, I want to take the boy by surprise, so don’t write and let him know I’m coming.”

“No, sir, I won’t.”

This was exactly what the housekeeper had intended to do, for she presumed upon her long service in the family to write a few lines occasionally to the boy whom she had known from the age of six.

“Of course I shall be pleased to give him any message from you.”

“Thank you, Doctor Mack. Tell him if he catches cold I can send him some camomile. Camomile tea is excellent in such cases. My mother and grandmother used it all their lives.”

“You seem to forget that I am a doctor, Nancy. Not that I object to camomile tea—in its place—though I can truly say that I never hankered after it.”

“How long will you be gone, doctor?”

“I can’t say exactly. You see, Euclid is nearly two hundred miles off. and I don’t know whether I can make connections.”

“Oh, well, don’t hurry! No doubt Walter will want to keep you with him as long as possible.”

“I don’t feel so sure of that,” thought the doctor shrewdly. “Boys are not usually so fond of the society of their guardians, though I don’t doubt Walter has a sincere regard for me. He is a warm-hearted boy.”

Doctor Mack was no longer in active practice. Three years before he had selected an assistant—a young Doctor Winthrop—in whom his patients had come to feel confidence, so that when he wanted to go away for a few days there was no serious objection. Unlike some elderly practitioners, Doctor Mack did not feel in the least jealous of his young assistant, but was very glad to note his popularity.

“If any one calls for me, Nancy,” he said, “say that I am away for a day or two and they can’t do better than go to Doctor Winthrop.”

“There are some that like you best, sir.”

“No doubt, no doubt! They’re used to me, you know. There’s a good deal in that. Any that please can wait for me, but my advice to them is to go to Doctor Winthrop.”

Nancy packed the doctor’s hand-bag, putting in a change of linen, a comb and brush, an extra pair of socks and a couple of handkerchiefs. Then, seeing that there was plenty of room, she slipped in a small box of cookies and a little camomile. The doctor discovered them soon after he started on his journey, and with a smile tossed the camomile out of the window, while he gave the cookies to a poor woman who was traveling with a couple of small children in the same car as himself. So that Nancy Sprague’s thoughtfulness was not wholly lost, though the intended recipient did not benefit by it.

Doctor Mack had to wait over at a junction for three hours, owing to some irregularities of the trains, and did not reach Euclid till rather a late hour in the afternoon. He went to the Euclid Hotel, and entered his name,

E. MACK, Albany,

without adding M.D., and substituting Albany for the small village, thirty miles away, where he made his home.

“Strategy, doctor, strategy!” he said to himself, “I have come to spy out the land, and must not make myself too conspicuous. I am traveling, as it were, incognito.”

CHAPTER II

DR. MACK GETS SOME INFORMATION

The Euclid Hotel was distant about half a mile from the college buildings. It would hardly have paid expenses but for the patronage it received from the parents and friends of the students, who, especially on public occasions, were drawn to visit Euclid, and naturally put up at the hotel. Then the students, tired, perhaps, of the fare at the college commons, dropped in often and ordered a dinner. So, take it all in all, Euclid Hotel benefited largely by the presence of the college. No students, however, were permitted to board there, as it was thought by the college professors that the atmosphere of the hotel would be detrimental to college discipline and the steady habits they desired to inculcate in the young men under their care.

"I wonder," thought Doctor Mack, after supper was over, "whether I had better go round to the college and make an evening call on Walter?"

He was tempted to do so, for he was fond of his young ward and would have enjoyed seeing him. But then he wished, unobserved, to judge for himself whether Walter was making good use of his privileges, and this made it injudicious for him to disclose his presence in the college town.

He strolled out into the tavern yard, and observed a young man engaged in some light duties.

"Good evening, sir," said the young man, respectfully.

"Good evening, I suppose you are connected with the hotel?"

"Yes, sir; but I would rather be connected with the college."

"Then you have a taste for study?"

"Yes, sir. I began to prepare for college, and had made some progress in Latin and Greek, when my father died, and that put an end to my prospects."

"That was a pity. Has it destroyed your taste for study?"

"No, I spend an hour after I am through work in keeping up my Latin and Greek, but of course I make slow progress."

"Naturally. Now I have no doubt there are many students who do not appreciate their privileges as much as you do."

"I know it, sir. There are pretty lively boys in college. Have you a son there?"

"No."

"I didn't know but what you might have."

"What do you mean by lively?"

"I mean they care more to have a good time than to get on in their studies."

"What do they do?"

"Well, some of them belong to societies, and have a good time whenever they meet. Frequently they give little suppers at the hotel here, and keep it up till a late hour."

"Do the faculty know of this?"

"They may surmise something, but they don't interfere. Of course, it pays Mr. Daniels, the landlord, for he charges a good round sum, and, as there is no other place for the boys to go, they must pay it. There's going to be a supper here to-night."

"Indeed!"

"It is given by one of the sophomores, Walter Sherwood."

"What name did you mention?" asked Doctor Mack, startled.

"Walter Sherwood. Do you know him?"

"I know a family by the name of Sherwood," answered Doctor Mack, evasively. "What sort of a young man is he?"

“I don’t call him a young man. He is only seventeen or eighteen—one of the youngest members of the class. He is very popular among his mates—a regular jolly boy he is.”

“Does he stand well in his scholarship?”

The young man laughed.

“I don’t think he troubles himself much about studies,” he replied, “from all I hear; but he is pretty smart, learns easily, and manages to keep up respectably.”

Doctor Mack’s heart sank within him. Was this the best that could be said about his ward, the son of his old friend?

“Do you think he is dissipated?” he asked, uneasily.

“Not that I ever heard. He is fond of having a good time, and drinks wine at his suppers, but he isn’t what you would call intemperate. He would do better work in college if he wasn’t so rich.”

“So he is rich, then?”

“He must be, for he spends a good deal of money. Pendleton, one of his classmates, told me that he spent more money than any one in the class.”

“That is why he needs so many extra checks,” thought the guardian soberly.

“I am sorry he doesn’t make better use of his privileges,” he said aloud.

“Yes, sir, it is a pity. If he didn’t care so much for a good time he might stand at the head of his class—so Pendleton thinks.”

“If he were a poor boy, now, you think the result would be different?” asked Doctor Mack, thoughtfully.

“Yes, sir, I have no doubt of it.”

“When does the supper commence?”

“At half-past eight o’clock.”

“How long will it keep up?”

“Till near midnight. The landlord makes it a point to have them close before twelve. I hope they won’t disturb you, sir.”

“Are they likely to make much noise?”

“Well, sir, they make speeches, and do a good deal of singing. Then, college songs are naturally noisy.”

“Yes, so I hear.”

“What is the number of your room?”

“Number nine.”

“Why, you are nearly opposite the room where they will have their supper. I am afraid you won’t stand much chance of sleeping early.”

“Oh, never mind! I shall get an idea of what a college supper is like.”

“So you will. If you open the transom over your door you will have the full benefit of all that goes on.”

“That will suit me very well,” thought Doctor Mack.

“If you would like to be farther away, the landlord would no doubt change your room.”

“Oh, no,” said the doctor hastily. “It will suit me very well for once to listen to college songs and get an idea of how college boys enjoy themselves.”

“A very sensible old gentleman!” thought James Holden. “Some men of his age would make a fuss.”

A little before the time when the students were expected to arrive Doctor Mack shut himself up in his room, taking care to open the transom. He had ascertained from the young man, his informant, that supper had been engaged for twelve, and that the price charged per plate was two dollars and a half, all to be paid by Walter Sherwood.

“That makes thirty dollars,” he reflected. “No wonder Walter writes for extra checks. I wonder in this thirty dollars is to figure as a contribution to the library?”

From his window he could see the students as they approached the hotel. Finally he caught sight of Walter, with a college friend on each side with whom he was chatting gaily.

“What a change!” thought Doctor Mack. “It seems only yesterday that Walter started for college, a bashful, unformed boy, full of good resolutions, and determined to distinguish himself in scholarship. Now he has become a gay butterfly. And, what is worse, he has learned to deceive his old guardian, and his chief aim seems to be to have a good time. What can I do to change his course?”

The good doctor’s face assumed a thoughtful look.

“I can tell better after what I shall hear to-night,” he said to himself.

It was not long before the guests were all assembled and the feast was to begin.

Some one rapped for attention, and then Doctor Mack recognized the voice of his young ward.

“Gentlemen,” he said, “I am glad to welcome you to this festal board. After spending ten or a dozen hours in hard study”—laughter and applause—“we find it pleasant to close our books, to relax our learned brows”—more laughter—“and show our appreciation of the good things of life. As Horace, your favorite, says”—I won’t insult you by offering to translate his well-known words—“*dulce est desipere in loco*. That is what has brought us here to-night We want to *desipere in loco*.”

“So we do! Good for you!” exclaimed one and another.

“I regret,” Walter continued, “that all the professors have declined my urgent invitation to be present on this occasion. Professor Griggs”—the professor of mathematics—“said he would not break away from his regular diet of logarithms and radicals.” Great laughter. “I have expressly requested Mr. Daniels to provide no logarithms to-night. They don’t agree with my constitution.”

“Nor with mine!” “Nor with mine!” echoed one and another.

“I shall expect you all, after the banquet, to do something for the general entertainment. I stipulate, however, that none of the company address us in Latin or Greek.”—“We won’t!” “We won’t!”—“Sufficient for the recitation-room is the evil thereof. But I have spoken long enough. There are times when silence is golden, and one of those times is at hand. Brethren, the feast awaits you! Pitch in!”

The speaker took his seat, and then there was a noise of clinking glasses, and knives and forks came to the front. The banquet had begun.

CHAPTER III

A COLLEGE BANQUET

There was a rattling of knives and forks, a clink of glasses, and a buzz of conversation. Doctor Mack was able to hear considerable of it. There were anecdotes of the professors, accounts of narrow escapes from “flunking” in the recitation-room, and remarks by no means complimentary to some of the text-books in use in college. It was evident that the collegians assembled cared more for a good time than for study. Yet these seemed to be the chosen associates of his ward, the doctor reflected.

As the feast proceeded, he grew more sober. He felt that college life, however much it was doing for the faithful students, was only fostering self-indulgence in his ward.

“Something must be done!” reflected Doctor Mack. “Desperate diseases require desperate remedies.”

Again the chairman rapped for order, and again Walter’s voice was heard.

“Brothers,” he said, “the material part of our banquet is ended. We have gratified our appetites with the savory dishes provided by our friend Daniels. We have quaffed the rare Falernian wine, of a vintage unknown to Horace; we have quickened our wits, as I trust, under those favorable conditions, and the time has now come for the feast of reason and the flow of soul. Exhausted as we are by our labors in the classroom”—great laughter—“we have sought refreshment in the way that is most agreeable. It’s a way we have at old Euclid! Sing!”

Immediately the assembled company started up the well-known college song:

“It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
To drive dull care away.
It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
To drive dull care away.

“And we think it is no sin, sir,
To take the Freshmen in, sir,
And ease them of their tin, sir,
To drive dull care away.
It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
It’s a way we have at old Euclid,
To drive dull care away.”

There were other verses, but these will serve as specimens. All joined in the chorus, and Doctor Mack, who remembered his own college life, felt almost tempted to add his voice to those of the young men in the opposite room.

“But, pshaw!” he thought. “What would Walter and his friends think to hear an old graybeard like me taking part in the convivial songs? There is no great harm in singing college songs, if it is accompanied by good work in the recitation-room.”

“Brothers,” resumed Walter, “we will do our best to drive dull care away. Let us forget, this happy evening, that there are such things as logarithms, and sines, and tangents, and Greek tragedies. To-night our hearts shall be uplifted by sentiment and song. Brother Corbett, you will oblige us with ‘Rumsty Ho!’”

A young man with a pleasant voice sang this song, one unfamiliar to the doctor:

“A beggar man laid himself down to sleep,
Rumsty Ho! rumsty Ho!
A beggar man laid himself down to sleep
By the banks of the Mersey, so high and steep,
Rumsty Ho! rumsty Ho!

“Two thieves came walking by that way,
Rumsty Ho! rumsty Ho!
Two thieves came walking by that way,
And they came to the place where the old man lay,
Rumsty Ho! rumsty Ho!

“They stole his wallet and they stole his staff,
Rumsty Ho! rumsty Ho!
They stole his wallet and they stole his staff,
And then broke out in a great horse-laugh,
Rumsty Ho! rumsty Ho!”

There was more of this song, too. Next came “Crambambuli,” and then “Cocach-lunk” both of which were familiar to the doctor.

Then Walter said: “Brothers, I have great pleasure in stating that Professor Griggs has concluded to honor our dinner by his learned presence, and has consented to address us. Permit me to introduce Professor Theophilus Griggs.”

One of the company had made up as the mathematical professor. In a nasal tone he made a rambling speech, in which he introduced mathematical allusions, and used some of the favorite phrases of the rather dull and prosy instructor, with whom all the students were familiar, some to their sorrow. It seemed to be very amusing to the boys present, as shown by their hearty laughter, but of course Doctor Mack could not appreciate it.

Other songs and other speeches followed. Though for the most part college songs, there were some of a more serious character. Time slipped by, and at length Doctor Mack saw by his watch that it was half-past eleven.

“How long will they keep it up, I wonder?” he asked himself. “I feel drowsy.”

He was answered by the chairman.

“Brothers,” he said, “time waits for no man. The hour has arrived when, according to agreement, we must wind up our festivities. Hand in hand we will sing ‘Auld Lang Syne,’ hoping, at some auspicious season after the coming vacation is over, to have another good time. I thank you all for accepting my invitation, and hope you have enjoyed yourselves.”

“Three cheers for Sherwood!” cried one of the company.

They were given with a will. Then the parting song was sung, and the students retired to their rooms in one of the college dormitories.

Doctor Mack went thoughtfully to bed.

“It is well I came,” he reflected. “Walter has done nothing decidedly wrong as yet, but it is evident he is not improving.”

“Well,” said James Holdens as he met Doctor Mack the next morning, “did you hear the boys last night?”

“I couldn’t very well help it,” answered the doctor, smiling. “That young Sherwood seems to be very popular.”

“Yes, sir; he is very free with his money.”

“In what other way does he spend it?”

“Mr. Daniels keeps half a dozen horses to let to students and others. Sherwood hires a team at least twice a week, and of course it counts up.”

“I was not able to spend money in that way when I attended college.”

“Then you are a college graduate?” said Holden.

“Yes.”

“Did you graduate at Euclid?”

“No; I am a Yale man.”

“I congratulate you, sir; I should like to graduate from Yale.

“I hope you may, some time, my young friend. You would derive more benefit, I’ll be bound, than those young roysterers of last evening.”

“I hope they didn’t keep you awake, sir.”

“They certainly did as long as they stayed. I should have gone to bed soon afterward, but that I had something on my mind. By the way, don’t mention to any of the students that they had an unseen listener.”

“No, sir.”

Doctor Mack took the first train after breakfast, and returned to his home without seeing his ward.

Nancy Sprague questioned him eagerly.

“And how is Master Walter?” she asked.

“Very well, indeed, Nancy.”

“Was he surprised to see you?”

“He didn’t see me, Nancy.”

“He didn’t see you!” ejaculated the housekeeper.

“No; the fact was, I went away on a matter of business, and it was not convenient to call on Walter. But I heard him.”

“I don’t see how you could have been near him without seeing him.”

“I shall see him soon, Nancy, and so will you. In two weeks vacation will be here. Examinations are near, and I might have interfered with his studies,” the doctor added, with a little innocent evasion.

“To be sure, sir! To be sure! I make no doubt Master Walter is a great scholar.”

“I have very strong doubts on that point myself,” thought Doctor Mack, but he did not care to express himself thus to Nancy.

“I am so glad the dear boy is coming home soon,” murmured the housekeeper. “He has been studying so hard he needs a good long rest. I will make some cookies expressly for him after he comes. I don’t believe he gets any at college.”

“I wonder what Nancy would say if she could have seen Walter presiding at the supper, and heard the songs?” thought Doctor Mack.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAY AFTER THE FEAST

The same morning, in a comfortably furnished room in Simpson Hall, sat, or rather lounged, Walter Sherwood.

"I feel sleepy this morning, Gates," he said to his chum. "I can't fix my mind on this confounded logic."

"No wonder, Sherwood. You have good reason to be tired after last evening."

"That's so! We had a good time, though. I am sorry you couldn't accept my invitation."

"I couldn't afford it, Sherwood. You know we are very differently situated. You are rich, while I am the oldest son of a country minister, with all I can do to get through college. As it is, I shall be in debt."

"Why not be in debt to me? You never would accept anything from me."

"Yes, I did. I have let you go to the entire expense of furnishing this room, though I have an equal share in it."

"Oh, that's nothing! You pay me in helping me through my lessons when I am behind. If you hadn't read my Horace to me the other day I should have flunked as sure as can be."

"It would be better for you to get your own lesson, Walter."

"Well, I suppose it would," answered his roommate, yawning. "I wish you could drive this logic into my head. I suppose I am unusually stupid this morning."

"Suppose we go over it together."

Fifteen minutes later Walter said complacently: "Thanks, old fellow; you have made it as plain as a pikestaff."

"And very likely you will get a higher mark at the recitation than I."

"Well, perhaps so," laughed Walter. "I suppose it is because I have more cheek than you."

"You can do better on slight preparation, certainly. You talk like a professor when you are on your feet."

"You want to be a professor some time, Gates, don't you?"

"Yes," answered his chum, his face flushing, "I should be proud to become a professor in old Euclid."

"It would be awfully slow, I think," returned Walter, stifling a yawn.

"What then, is your ambition?"

"I want to go out among men. I want to take an active part in the world."

"You will have to work harder than you do in college, then."

"I suppose I shall. But I am young, Gates. I am only seventeen."

"And I am nineteen, and look twenty-one."

"All the better! The older you look the better, if you are going to be a college instructor. I would have to wait a long time if I wanted to, even if I were a good deal wiser than I am now. I am so young, in short, that I can afford to have a good time."

"It seems to me that is all you think of, Sherwood."

"Oh, well, I'll reform in time and become a sober old duffer like you," and Walter Sherwood laughed carelessly.

"I hope, at any rate, that you will change your views of life. You know what Longfellow says: 'Life is real! Life is earnest!'"

"Oh, yes, I know that by heart. But it's no use, Gates, you can't make an old man of me before my time. Will it disturb you if I play a tune or two on my violin?"

"Well, to tell the truth, it will. I want to get my Greek lesson, and you had better do the same."

“No, I will read a novel, and you can read over the Greek to me when you have dug it out.”

“I will if you wish, but I am afraid I am spoiling you by doing your studying for you.”

“Remember, I was out late last night.”

“You have something almost every evening, Walter.”

“Oh, well, I’ll turn over a new leaf next term.”

“Why not begin now?”

“If you knew how stupid I feel you wouldn’t ask.”

Walter stretched himself out on a comfortable lounge, and took up a new novel which he had partially read, while Gates spread the big Greek lexicon on the study-table, and opening his Aristophanes, began slowly and laboriously to translate it into English.

Fifteen minutes passed when a knock was heard at the door.

“Come in!” called out Walter.

He looked up eagerly, hoping the visitor might prove to be one of his jovial comrades of the night before. But he did not look so well pleased when, as the door opened, he caught sight of the pudgy figure and shrewd face of Elijah Daniels, the proprietor of the Euclid Hotel.

“Good morning, Mr. Daniels.” he said, rather apprehensively. “So you have found me out.”

“No, I have found you in,” returned the landlord, with a smile. “I hope I don’t intrude upon, your studies, young gentlemen.”

“Well, I am taking a little rest from my labors,” said Walter.

“You were up rather late last evening, Mr. Sherwood.”

“That’s a fact, and you gave us a first-class supper, Daniels. You did yourself proud.”

“I did my best, Mr. Sherwood, and I am glad you were satisfied.”

“All the fellows praised the supper.”

“That’s good. I know what you young gentlemen like, and I get it, no matter what it costs. I don’t make much on the suppers I give the college boys, but of course I like to please them.”

“Your price is quite reasonable, I think.”

“I am glad you do. I have brought in the bill for last night’s entertainment, and if you can let me have the money, I shall be glad.”

“Well, the fact is, Daniels, I haven’t got the money by me this morning.”

The landlord’s countenance changed.

“I like prompt pay,” he said. “It is a good deal of trouble, and, as I said, there isn’t much money to be made.”

“That’s all right. You won’t have to wait long.”

“How long, Mr. Sherwood?”

“I expect a check for a hundred dollars from my guardian to-day. I wrote three days since, for I knew you wouldn’t like to wait.”

“A hundred dollars!” repeated the landlord, feeling a little easier in mind.

“Yes.”

“Perhaps your guardian may object to sending it.”

“Oh, no! He’s a nice old fellow, Doctor Mack is. He is very indulgent.”

“What name did you mention?”

“Doctor Mack. Ezekiel Mack.”

“Indeed! Why, we had a gentleman stopping at the hotel last night of that name.”

“What!” ejaculated Walter, in astonishment. “Do you mean to tell me that Doctor Mack—my guardian—was at the hotel last night? It can’t be. He would have called on me.”

“It may not have been the same man. Now I come to think of it, he didn’t put himself down on the book Doctor Mack. He just put himself down E. Mack. He seemed a plain sort of man.”

“Where did he register from?” asked Walter eagerly.

“From Albany.”

“Is he at the hotel now?”

“He went away by the morning train.”

“Then it couldn't have been he,” said Walter, in a tone of relief. “He doesn't live in Albany. Besides, he would have called on me. No, it must have been some other Mack.”

“Perhaps you wouldn't have liked to have him catch you at a gay supper, Mr. Sherwood?” said the landlord shrewdly.

“Well, no, I'd a little rather receive him in my room, with a book open before me.”

“He might object to pay out money for such doings.”

“He won't know anything about it. Just leave your bill, Mr. Daniels, and as soon as I get the check I'll call round and pay it.”

“There's another bill, too, a livery bill. I brought that along, too.”

“How much is it?” asked Walter anxiously.

“Eighteen dollars.”

“I didn't think it was as much as that!”

“Bills mount up faster than you young gentlemen think for. I suppose, however, you can afford to pay it?”

“Oh, yes!” said Walter carelessly.

“Your uncle may think it rather steep, eh?”

“I wrote him that I had some extra expenses this time.”

“Then I suppose you can't do anything for me this morning?”

“No, Daniels; just leave both bills, and I feel quite sure that I can pay you in a day or two. I suppose you can change a check?”

“I'll manage to.”

The landlord retired, leaving the bills behind him.

“Do you know, Sherwood,” said his chum gravely “I think you are foolishly extravagant.”

“Well, perhaps I am.”

“You are spending three times as much as I am.”

“I'll do better next term. I wish my guardian would hurry along that check.”

Two days later a letter came for Walter in the familiar handwriting of Doctor Mack. He tore it open hastily, and as he read it he turned pale and sank into a chair.

“What's the matter?” asked Gates.

“Matter enough!” answered Walter, in a hollow voice. “My money is lost, and I've got to leave college!”

CHAPTER V

WALTER TAKES MATTERS PHILOSOPHICALLY

Walter's announcement, recorded at the close of the preceding chapter, fell like a thunderbolt on his room-mate.

"You have lost your money?" repeated Gates, in a tone of incredulity. "You don't mean it!"

"Read that letter, Gates," said Walter, pushing it over to his chum.

The letter was, of course, from Doctor Mack, and ran thus:

"DEAR WALTER: Your letter asking for an extra check for one hundred dollars came to hand three or four days since. I have delayed answering for two reasons. I am satisfied that you are spending more money than is necessary, and, moreover, I have shrunk from communicating to you some unpleasant intelligence. Upon me have devolved the investment and management of your property, and while I have tried to be cautious, there have been losses which I regret. In one case three-fourths of an investment has been lost. Of course, you didn't know this, or you would have been less free in your expenditures.

"I am not prepared to tell you how you stand. I think it will be prudent for you to leave college at the end of this term, and for a year to seek some employment. During that time I will do what I can to settle matters on a better footing, and perhaps at the end of that time you will be able to return to your studies. You are so young—I think you must be younger than the majority of your classmates—that you can afford to lose the time.

"I send you a check for sixty dollars in place of a hundred. I wish you to have your regular term bills sent to me, and I will forward checks in payment. I will see that you leave Euclid owing no man anything. When you come home for the vacation we can consult as to the future. I hope you will not be much depressed or cast down by the news I send. Your money is not all lost, and I may be able, in the course of twelve months, to recover in a large measure what has been sunk.

"Your affectionate guardian, EZEKIEL MACK."

"A regular sockdolager, isn't it, Gates?" said Walter.

"I don't see that it's so bad," answered Gates slowly. "Your money isn't all lost."

"But I must leave college."

"True; but, as your guardian says, you are young, and if you come back at the end of a year you will still be a year younger than I for your standing. Of course, I am sorry to have you go."

"I am sure of that, Gates."

"Is the prospect of working for a year so unpleasant to you, Walter?"

"No, I can't say it is," said Walter, brightening up, "not if I can choose my employment. I shouldn't like to go behind the counter in a grocery store, or—"

"Black boots for a living?"

"Well, hardly," said Walter, laughing.

"Probably your guardian will consult your preferences."

"I wish I could arrange to travel. I should like to see something of the world."

"Why not? You might get an agency of some kind. One college vacation—last summer—I traveled about as book agent."

"How did you like it?"

"Not very much. I met with a good many rebuffs, and was occasionally looked upon with suspicion, as I could see. Still, I made a living, and brought back thirty dollars to start me on my new term."

"Just what my supper cost the other evening."

"Yes; I didn't think it wise to spend the money in the same way."

“You have cheered me up, Gates. I really believe I shall like to spend a year in some kind of business.”

“Write your guardian to that effect. He may be blaming himself for his agency in your misfortune, and a cheerful letter from you will brighten him up.”

“All right! I will.”

Walter sat down and dashed off the following note:

“DEAR GUARDIAN: Your letter just received. I won't pretend that I am not sorry for the loss of my money, but I am sure that you acted for the best. Don't trouble yourself too much about the matter. Perhaps it will all come out right in a year or so. In the meantime I think I shall find it not unpleasant to work for a year if you will let me select the kind of business I am to follow.

“I will make the money you sent me do for the present, and will send you my term bills as you desire. You can depend upon my settling up as cheap as possible, though I confess I have not hitherto been nearly as economical as I might have been. Now that I know it is necessary, you shall have no reason to complain of me.

“Your affectionate ward, WALTER SHERWOOD.”

“What do you think of that, Gates?” asked Walter, giving the letter to his chum to read.

“Excellent! It shows the right spirit.”

“I am glad you think so.”

“Do you know, Walter, I think I have more occasion for regret than you? I must bid farewell to my room-mate and this pleasant room.”

“To your room-mate, yes, but not necessarily to the room.”

“I shall have to furnish it in very different style for the present. I am not sure that I can afford a carpet. The luxury of my present surroundings, I am afraid, will spoil me for humble quarters.”

“Don't borrow any trouble about that. I shall leave you the furniture as it stands, and when I come back to college, even if we are in different classes, you must take me in again.”

“Of course I will agree to an arrangement so much in my favor, but perhaps your guardian will think you had better sell the furniture and realize what you can.”

“No, I am sure he won't. There's nothing mean about Doctor Mack. You can take in any one you please in my place, only I am to come back at the end of a year if things turn out well.”

“I heartily hope you will come back, and if you will excuse my saying so, with a more earnest spirit, and a determination to do justice to your really excellent talents.”

“Good advice! I'll adopt it. I'll begin to do better at once. I was intending to take a drive this evening, but it would cost me two dollars, and I will stay at home and save the money.”

“Come with me on a walk, instead.”

“I will.”

“We will go to the top of Mount Legar. At sunset there will be a fine view from there.”

“I must stop on the way and pay Mr. Daniels what I owe him. He will lose a good deal by my going away.”

“True; but his loss will be your gain.”

At the outset of their walk the two students called at the hotel, and found Mr. Daniels on the piazza.

“Glad to see you, Mr. Sherwood,” said the landlord briskly.

“I think you will be, Mr. Daniels, for I have come to pay your bills.”

“Money is always welcome, Mr. Sherwood. You have no idea how much I lose by trusting students. There was Green, of the last graduating class, left college owing me forty-five dollars. He has gone West somewhere, and I never expect to get a cent of my money.”

“You came pretty near losing by me, Daniels.”

“How is that?” queried the landlord, looking surprised.

"I've lost a lot of money, or my guardian has for me, and I've got to leave college at the end of this term."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated Mr. Daniels regretfully.

"It's all true. My guardian wrote me about it this morning."

"I suppose you're a good deal cut up about it, Mr. Sherwood."

"Well, I was at first, but I may be able to come back after a year or two. I shall go into some business, and meanwhile my guardian will do what he can to recover the money lost. It isn't so bad, after all."

"I shall be sorry to have you go, Mr. Sherwood."

"You will miss my bills, at any rate. I wouldn't have given that supper the other evening if I had known how things stood. I would have put the thirty dollars to better use."

"Well, you've paid up like a gentleman, anyway. I hope you'll come back in a year as rich as ever. You wanted a team to-night, James told me."

"That was before I got my guardian's letter. I shall walk, instead of taking a carriage-ride."

"I will let the account stand, if you wish."

"No. I can't afford to run up any bills. Good night, Mr. Daniels."

"You did right, Walter," said Gates. "It is a bad thing to run up bills."

"Especially when you are poor. It seems odd to be poor."

"I am used to it, Walter. You don't seem very sad over it."

"I am not. That is what puzzles me. I really begin to think I like it."

CHAPTER VI

TRUE FRIEND AND FALSE

A college community is for the most part democratic. A poor student with talent is quite as likely to be a favorite as the heir to a fortune, often more so. But there are always some snobs who care more for dollars than sense. So Walter was destined to find out, for he made no secret of his loss of fortune. Most of his college friends sympathized with him, but there was one who proved unreliable.

This was Harvey Warner, the son of a man who had made a fortune during the Civil War, some said as a sutler. Harvey professed to be very aristocratic, and had paid especial attention to Walter, because he, too, had the reputation of being wealthy. He had invited Walter to pass a couple of weeks at the summer residence of the Warners, near Lake George. This, however, was before he had heard of Walter's loss of fortune. As soon as he learned this, he decided that the invitation must be withdrawn. This would be awkward, as he had been on very intimate terms with our hero, and had been a guest at the banquet.

Not foreseeing the effect of his changed circumstances on the mind of his late friend, Walter, meeting him on the campus the day afterward, called out, familiarly: "How are you, old fellow? Why didn't you come round to my room last evening?"

"I had another engagement, Sherwood," answered Warner, stiffly.

"You ought to give me the preference," said Walter, not observing the other's change of manner.

"Ahem! a man must judge for himself, you know. By the way, is it true that you have lost all your money?"

"I don't know how much I have lost, but I am not coming back to college next year."

"You are in hard luck," said Warner coldly. "By the way, I think we shall have to give up that plan for the summer."

"What plan?"

"Why, you know I invited you to visit me at Lake George."

Walter began to comprehend.

"Why, are you not going to be there?" he asked,

"Yes, but the house will be full of other fellows, don't you know?"

"So that there will be no room for me," said Walter calmly, looking Warner full in the face.

"Awfully sorry, and all that sort of thing," drawled Warner. "Besides, I suppose you will have to go to work."

"Yes, I expect to go to work—after awhile. Probably I shall take a few weeks for rest. By the way, when did you find out that your home would be full—of other fellows?"

"Got a letter from my sister this morning. Besides—in your changed circumstances, don't you know, you might find it awkward to be living in a style you couldn't keep up."

"Thank you, Warner. You are very considerate. I really didn't give you credit for so much consideration."

"Don't mention it! Of course with your good sense you understand?"

"I think I do."

"And, by the way, I believe you borrowed two dollars of me last week. If it is inconvenient for you to pay the whole at once, you might hand me a dollar."

"And I called that fellow my friend!" said Walter to himself.

"You are very considerate again, but I think I would rather pay the whole at once. Can you change a ten?"

Harvey Warner looked surprised. He had jumped to the conclusion that Walter was the next thing to a pauper, and here he was better supplied with money than himself.

"I am not sure that I have as much money here," he said.

"Then come with me to the drug-store; I am going to buy a bottle of tooth-wash, and will change the bill there."

Warner accepted this proposal.

"I'd better make sure of my money while he has it," he reflected.

"I hope you're not very much disappointed about the visit?" he said.

"Not at all! I should have had to decline. I have been invited to spend a month at the Adirondacks with Frank Clifford."

"You don't mean it!" ejaculated Warner enviously.

Clifford was a member of an old family, and an invitation from him was felt to confer distinction. Warner himself would have given a good deal to be on sufficiently intimate terms to receive such a compliment.

"When did he invite you?" he asked suggestively.

Walter saw what was in his mind, and answered, with a smile:

"He invited me this morning."

"Had he heard—"

"Of my loss of fortune? Oh, yes! But why should that make any difference?"

"I wouldn't go, if I were you."

"Why not?"

"You are going to be a poor man."

"I don't know about that."

"You are poor now, at any rate."

"Well, perhaps so, but am I any the worse for that?"

"I thought you would understand my meaning."

"I do, but I am glad that all my friends don't attach the importance you do to the possession of fortune. Good morning!"

"I suppose it's the way of the world!" thought Walter, as his quondam friend left him. "But, thank Heaven, all are not mercenary! I've got a few friends left, anyhow."

A few rods farther on he met Victor Creswell, perhaps the richest student in the junior class.

"What's this I hear, Walter?" he asked. "Have you lost your money?"

"Some of it, I believe."

"And you are not coming back to college?"

"I shall stay out a year. Perhaps I can come back then."

"You needn't leave at all. My governor allows me a hundred dollars a month for my own use—spending money, you know. I'll give you half of it, if that will enable you to pull through."

Walter was touched.

"You are a friend worth having, Creswell," he said. "But I really think I shall enjoy being out of college for a year. I shall find out what is in me. But I sha'n't forget your generous offer."

"Better accept it, Sherwood. I can get along well enough on fifty dollars a month."

"I won't accept it for myself, but I'll tell you something. My chum, Gates, is very hard pushed. You know he depends wholly on himself, and twenty-five dollars just at this time would be a godsend to him. He is worried about paying his bills. If, now, you would transfer a little at your generosity to him—"

"I don't know him very well, but if you speak well of him that is enough. I shall be glad to help him. Let me see how much I can spare."

He drew out a wallet, and from it four ten dollar bills.

"Here are forty dollars," he said. "Give them to him, but don't let him know where they came from."

“Creswell, you’re a trump!” said Walter, shaking his hand vigorously. “You don’t know how happy you will make him.”

“Oh, that’s all right. But I’m sorry you won’t let me do something for you.”

“I will if I need it.”

“Good!” said Creswell, in a tone of satisfaction. “Now, mind, you don’t hesitate.”

Walter, happy in the happiness he was going to confer, made his way quickly to his own room. Gates sat at the table with a troubled brow, writing some figures on a piece of paper.

“What are you about, Gates?” asked his chum.

“I have been thinking.” said Gates wearily, “that perhaps I ought to do what you have decided to do.”

“What’s that?”

“Leave college.

“But why?”

“I am so troubled to pay my bills. I wrote to my uncle last week—he is a well-to-do farmer—asking him if he wouldn’t send me fifteen dollars to help pay my term bills. I promised to come and help him in the farm work during July.”

“What does he say?” asked Walter, smiling, Gates couldn’t understand why.

“That he never pays for work in advance—he doesn’t approve of it.”

“He could afford it?”

“Oh, yes; he’s got a good sum in the savings-bank, but he is a very cautious man. I don’t see how I’m going to get through. Perhaps I had better take a year away from college.”

“There is no need of that. I have some money here for you.”

“Some money for me?”

“Yes,” and Walter placed four ten-dollar bills on the table.

“But, Walter, you are in no position to lend me money.”

“True; the money doesn’t come from me.”

“But who besides you would do me such a great favor?”

“One of the rich fellows in college—no, I can’t tell you his name. You can take it without hesitation.”

“But it must have been to you that he lent it.”

“No, he understands that it is to be given to you. Will it help you?”

“Will it help me? It will carry me through gloriously,” and Gates was radiant with pleasure.

“Are you going to leave college now?”

“No; this help is providential. I will never be distrustful again.”

“I wish Creswell could see how much happiness his gift has brought with it,” thought Walter.

CHAPTER VII

WALTER'S EXPERIMENT BEGINS

After a conference between Walter and his guardian it was decided that he should wait till the first of September before seeking for any business position. Walter, who was somewhat impulsive, was disposed to start at once, but Doctor Mack said: "No, you are entitled to a vacation. When your class resumes study at Euclid, it will be time for you to begin to earn your living."

"I am not sure that I deserve a vacation," said Walter frankly. "I have not studied as hard at I ought."

"Very probably. You have not been in earnest. You are a year older now, and you have a better understanding of your position."

"You are very charitable, my dear guardian," said Walter.

Doctor Mack smiled.

"I am quite aware," he said, "that old heads are not often to be found on young shoulders."

"Then you think it will be right for me to enjoy myself this summer?"

"I want you to do so."

"One of my college friends, Frank Clifford, has invited me to pass a month with him in the Adirondacks. The Cliffords have a lodge not far from Blue Mountain Lake. Frank's mother and sisters will be abroad, and he wants me to keep him company."

"I can think of no objection. How shall you spend your time?"

"In hunting and fishing. There are splendid chances for both up there, so Clifford says."

"Go and have your good time. When you come back we will talk of your future plans."

Walter's stay was prolonged to eight weeks, and when he returned it was already nearing the end of August. He was browned by exposure, and looked the picture of health.

"Now I am ready to go to work, Doctor Mack," he said. "Have you any plans for me?"

"How would you like to go into a drug-store? I have a college classmate who is a very successful druggist in Syracuse."

Walter shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't believe I have a taste for making pills," he said.

"I thought not. What do you think of entering a dry-goods store? I am acquainted with the head of a prominent establishment in New York."

"It is a very respectable position, but I should feel cabined, cribbed, confined in it."

"I am at the end of my tether. Have you formed any plans of your own?"

"Well, not exactly."

"But you have thought somewhat on the subject?"

"Yes," answered Walter.

"If at all possible, I shall let you have your own way."

"You may think me foolish," said Walter hesitatingly.

"I don't know. Let me hear what you have to propose."

"I thought," said Walter eagerly, "I would like to go out West."

"What would you do when you got there?"

"There must be lots of things to do."

"Very likely. You might buy an ax and clear the virgin forests."

"I am afraid I wouldn't be a success at that."

"You have no definite idea as to what you would do?"

"No. I could tell better when I got out there."

“Now, about the expense. How much money would you need? You would require to live till you begin to earn something.”

“How much will it cost me to get to Chicago?”

“Say about twenty-five dollars.”

“I think, guardian, if you will advance me a hundred dollars, that will be sufficient.”

“For how long a time?”

“For a year. You see, I expect to earn my own living by the time I have spent fifty dollars in all. I should go to a cheap boarding-place, of course. I should be able to pay my way.”

“You will be content, then, with a hundred dollars, Walter?”

“Yes; perhaps I could make it do on less.”

“No; you shall have a hundred. If absolutely necessary, you can send for more.”

“No,” said Walter confidently; “I won’t do that. I shall get along somehow. I want to make a man of myself.”

“That is a commendable ambition. Still, sometimes a young man finds it hard to obtain employment. If you had a trade, now, it might be different. Suppose, for instance, you were a journeyman tailor, you could readily find a place in Chicago or any good-sized city.”

“I shouldn’t care to be a tailor.”

“I shouldn’t care to employ you if you were,” said his guardian, smiling. “One thing I would like to guard you against. Don’t be too particular about what you take up. With so small an outfit as you have stipulated for, you will have to go to work at something soon. Then, again, you won’t be able to live as well as you have been accustomed to do here and in college.”

“I understand that, and am prepared for it. I want to rough it.”

“Possibly you will have your wish granted. I don’t want to discourage you, Walter. I only want to prepare you for what may, and probably will, come.”

“Do you know any one in Chicago, Doctor Mack? I might find it pleasant to have an acquaintance.”

“Yes, I know a retired merchant named Archer. He lives on Indiana Avenue. I don’t remember the number, but you can easily find his name in the directory. His name is Allen Archer.”

Walter noted the name in a new memorandum book which he had purchased.

“Where would you advise me to put up on my arrival in Chicago?” he asked.

“There are several good houses—the Sherman, Tremont, Palmer House; but they will be beyond your means. Indeed, any hotel will be. Still you might go to some good house for a day. That will give you time to hunt up a modest boarding-house.”

“An excellent plan!” said Walter, in a tone of satisfaction. “Do you know, my dear guardian, I shall go out in the best of spirits. I feel—in Shakespeare’s words—that the world is mine oyster.”

“I hope you will be able to open it, Walter. You have my best wishes. Don’t forget that you will have to depend on yourself.”

“I won’t forget it. I wish it was time for me to start.”

“It will come soon enough. You had better get out your clothes, and get them mended, if necessary, and put in order. Nancy will do all she can for you, and the tailor will do the rest. Better not take much with you. When you get settled I will forward your trunk by express.”

When Nancy Sprague heard of Walter’s plans she was much disturbed.

“Oh, Master Walter,” she said, in a tragic tone, “is it true that you’ve lost all your money and have got to go out into the cold world to make a living?”

“I believe I have lost some money, Nancy, but I rather like the idea of working for my living.”

“Oh, you poor child, you little know what it is. I can’t bear to think of it. I can’t see how Doctor Mack can let you go.”

“I should be very sorry if he refused. It isn’t so bad, to work for a living. Haven’t you always done it?”

“Yes, but that’s different. I was always poor, and I am used to it.”

“I’m going to get used to it.”

“Walter—don’t tell your guardian what I am saying—but I’ve got two hundred dollars in the savings bank, and I shall be very glad to give you some of it. You will take it, now, won’t you? I can get it out to-morrow.”

“Nancy, you are a true friend,” said Walter, really moved by the unselfish devotion of the house-keeper; “but I sha’n’t need it. I shall take a hundred dollars with me, and long before it is gone I shall be earning my living.”

“You’ll send for it if you need it?”

“Yes; if I find I am very hard up, and there is no other way, I will send for it.”

Nancy brightened up, much pleased and relieved by this assurance.

“I couldn’t bear to think of your suffering for a meal of victuals when we have so much in the house. I don’t see why you can’t stay at home and get a place in the village.”

Walter laughed.

“It wouldn’t suit me at all, Nancy. I am going West to grow up with the country.”

“I wish I could be somewhere near, to look after you.”

“It would be of no use, Nancy. Women are in great demand out there—at any rate in Dakota—and you’d be married in less than no time, if you went.”

“You are only joking now, Master Walter.”

“Not at all! I read the other day that of ten schoolma’ams who went out to Dakota last fall, eight were married within three months.”

“Nobody could marry me against my will,” said Nancy resolutely.

“Perhaps he would find a way of overcoming your objections,” said Walter, laughing. “But I am afraid Doctor Mack couldn’t do without you. He couldn’t spare you and me both.”

“That’s true,” assented Nancy, who had not been so much alarmed at the matrimonial dangers hinted at by Walter as might have been anticipated. Had a good opportunity offered, I am inclined to think Nancy would have been willing to change her name. After all, she was only forty-nine, and I have known more than one to surrender single blessedness with all its charms at and beyond that age.

At last the day of departure came. Valise in hand, Walter jumped aboard the stage that was to convey him to the railroad-station. He shook hands with his guardian and Nancy, the driver whipped up his horses, and a new period in Walter’s life had commenced.

“I wonder how he’ll come out?” mused Doctor Mack thoughtfully. “Have I acted for the best in letting him go? Well, time alone can tell.”

CHAPTER VIII

WALTER BUYS A WATCH

Walter was tempted to stop over at Niagara, as his ticket would have allowed him to do, but he was also very anxious to reach Chicago and get to work. "I can visit Niagara some other time," he reflected. "Now I can spare neither the money nor the time."

Hour after hour sped by, until with a little thrill of excitement Walter learned by consulting his railroad guide that he was within fifty miles of Chicago. He looked out of the car window, and surveyed with interest the country through which they were speeding at the rate of thirty-five miles an hour. His attention was drawn from the panorama outside by a voice:

"Is this seat engaged?"

Walter looked up, and his glance rested on a man of perhaps thirty-five, dressed in a light suit, and wearing a tall white hat.

"No, sir," answered Walter politely, removing his gripsack from the seat.

"I don't want to incommode you," said the stranger, as he took the place thus vacated.

"You don't in the least," said Walter.

"I suppose you are going to Chicago?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are you going farther—out to Dakota, for instance?"

"No, sir. Chicago is far enough west for me at present."

"I live in Dakota. I have a long journey to make after we reach Chicago."

"I don't know about Dakota. Is it a good place for business?"

"It is going to be. Yes, Dakota has a bright future. I have a pleasant little home out there. I had to go East on business, and stayed a little longer than I intended. In fact I spent more money than I anticipated, and that makes me a little short."

It struck Walter that his new acquaintance for a stranger was very confidential.

"Is it possible he will propose to borrow money of me?" he asked himself. He did not quite know what to say, but politeness required him to say something.

"I am sorry," he replied, in a sympathizing tone.

"I should like to take a train this evening for my home," continued the stranger.

"I hope you will be able to do so."

"Well, there's one drawback. I haven't got money enough to buy a through ticket. Under these circumstances I am going to offer you a bargain."

Walter looked surprised and expectant. The stranger drew a gold watch from his pocket—a very handsome gold watch, which looked valuable.

"You see that watch?" he said. "How much do you think it is worth?"

"It looks like a nice watch. I am no judge of values."

"It cost me ninety dollars six months since. Now I need the money, and I will sell it to you for twenty-five."

"But that would be a great sacrifice."

"So it would, but I need the money. Of course, if you haven't got the money—"

"I have that amount of money," said Walter, "but I haven't got it to spare. I might need it."

"Then all you need to do is to sell the watch or pawn it. You could sell it for fifty dollars without trouble."

"Why don't you do that?" asked Walter shrewdly.

“Because I haven’t the time. I want, if possible, to go on to-night. If you had a wife and two children waiting for you, whom you had not seen for two months, you wouldn’t mind losing a few dollars for the sake of seeing them a little sooner.”

“Very likely,” answered Walter, to whom his companion’s explanation seemed plausible.

Walter was tempted, but he reflected that twenty-five dollars represented a third of the money he had with him, so he put away the temptation, but with reluctance. He had a silver watch, bought for him, when he entered college, at a cost of fifteen dollars, and like the majority of boys of his age he felt that he should much prefer to carry a gold one. Still he must be prudent.

“No,” he said, shaking his head, “I don’t think I had better buy the watch. I presume you will find some one else on the train who would be glad of the bargain.”

“Very likely, but we are near Chicago, and I haven’t time to look around. Come, I’ll make you a still better offer, though I ought not to do so. You may have the watch for twenty dollars. That money will get me through, and I won’t haggle about five dollars.”

“Twenty dollars!” repeated Walter thoughtfully.

“Yes, look at the watch. Isn’t it a beauty?”

“Yes; I like the appearance of it very much.”

“If you get out of money, you can easily pawn it for more than the sum I ask for it.”

Certainly this was an important consideration. Walter felt that he would be foolish to lose so good a chance. It was a pity that the stranger should be forced to make such a sacrifice, yet it really seemed that he would be doing him a favor, as well as benefiting himself, by accepting his proposition.

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