ALGER HORATIO JR.

HELPING HIMSELF; OR, GRANT THORNTON'S AMBITION

Horatio Alger
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Helping Himself; Or, Grant Thornton's Ambition:

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CHAPTER I – THE MINISTER'S SON

"I wish we were not so terribly poor, Grant," said Mrs. Thornton, in a discouraged tone.

"Is there anything new that makes you say so, mother?" answered the boy of fifteen, whom she addressed.

"Nothing new, only the same old trouble. Here is a note from Mr. Tudor, the storekeeper."

"Let me see it, mother."

Grant took a yellow envelope from his mother's hand, and drew out the inclosure, a half sheet of coarse letter paper, which contained the following lines:

"July 7, 1857.

REV. JOHN THORNTON:

DEAR SIR: Inclosed you will find a bill for groceries and other goods furnished to you in the last six months, amounting to sixty-seven dollars and thirty-four cents ($67.34). It ought to

have been paid before. How you, a minister of the Gospel, can justify yourself in using goods which you don't pay for, I can't understand. If I remember rightly, the Bible says: 'Owe no man anything.' As I suppose you recognize the Bible as an authority, I expect you to pay up promptly, and oblige,

Yours respectfully, THOMAS TUDOR."

Grant looked vexed and indignant. "I think that is an impudent letter, mother," he said.

"It is right that the man should have his money, Grant."

"That is true, but he might have asked for it civilly, without taunting my poor father with his inability to pay. He would pay if he could."

"Heaven knows he would, Grant," said his mother, sighing.

"I would like to give Mr. Tudor a piece of my mind." "I would rather pay his bill. No, Grant, though he is neither kind nor considerate, we must admit that his claim is a just one. If I only knew where to turn for money!"

"Have you shown the bill to father?" asked Grant.

"No; you know how unpractical your father is. It would only annoy and make him anxious, and he would not know what to do. Your poor father has no business faculty."

"He is a very learned man," said Grant, proudly.

"Yes, he graduated very high at college, and is widely respected by his fellow ministers, but he has no aptitude for business."

"You have, mother. If you had been a man, you would have

done better than he. Without your good management we should have been a good deal worse off than we are. It is the only thing that has kept our heads above water."

"I am glad you think so, Grant. I have done the best I could, but no management will pay bills without money."

It was quite true that the minister's wife was a woman of excellent practical sense, who had known how to make his small salary go very far. In this respect she differed widely from her learned husband, who in matters of business was scarcely more than a child. But, as she intimated with truth, there was something better than management, and that was ready cash.

"To support a family on six hundred dollars a year is very hard, Grant, when there are three children," resumed his mother.

"I can't understand why a man like father can't command a better salary," said Grant. "There's Rev. Mr. Stentor, in Waverley, gets fifteen hundred dollars salary, and I am sure he can't compare with father in ability."

"True, Grant, but your father is modest, and not given to blowing his own trumpet, while Mr. Stentor, from all I can hear, has a very high opinion of himself."

"He has a loud voice, and thrashes round in his pulpit, as if he were a—prophet," said Grant, not quite knowing how to finish his sentence.

"Your father never was a man to push himself forward. He is very modest."

"I suppose that is not the only bill that we owe," said Grant.

"No; our unpaid bills must amount to at least two hundred dollars more," answered his mother.

Grant whistled.

Two hundred and sixty-seven dollars seemed to him an immense sum, and so it was, to a poor minister with a family of three children and a salary of only six hundred dollars. Where to obtain so large a sum neither Grant nor his mother could possibly imagine. Even if there were anyone to borrow it from, there seemed no chance to pay back so considerable a sum.

Mother and son looked at each other in perplexity. Finally, Grant broke the silence.

"Mother," he said, "one thing seems pretty clear. I must go to work. I am fifteen, well and strong, and I ought to be earning my own living."

"But your father has set his heart upon your going to college, Grant."

"And I should like to go, too; but if I did it would be years before I could be anything but an expense and a burden, and that would make me unhappy."

"You are almost ready for college, Grant, are you not?"

"Very nearly. I could get ready for the September examination. I have only to review Homer, and brush up my Latin."

"And your uncle Godfrey is ready to help you through."

"That gives me an idea, mother. It would cost Uncle Godfrey as much as nine hundred dollars a year over and above all the help

I could get from the college funds, and perhaps from teaching school this winter. Now, if he would allow me that sum for a single year and let me go to work, I could pay up all father's debts, and give him a new start. It would save Uncle Godfrey nine hundred dollars."

"He has set his heart on your going to college. I don't think he would agree to help you at all if you disappoint him."

"At any rate, I could try the experiment. Something has got to be done, mother."

"Yes, Grant, there is no doubt of that. Mr. Tudor is evidently in earnest. If we don't pay him, I think it very likely he will refuse to let us have anything more on credit. And you know there is no other grocery store in the village."

"Have you any money to pay him on account, mother?"

"I have eight dollars."

"Let me have that, and go over and see what I can do with him. We can't get along without groceries. By the way, mother, doesn't the parish owe father anything?"

"They are about sixty dollars in arrears on the salary."

"And the treasurer is Deacon Gridley?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll tell you what I will do. I'll first go over to the deacon's and try to collect something. Afterward I will call on Mr. Tudor."

"It is your father's place to do it, but he has no business faculty, and could not accomplish anything. Go, then, Grant, but

remember one thing."

"What is that, mother?"

"You have a quick temper, my son. Don't allow yourself to speak hastily, or disrespectfully, even if you are disappointed. Mr. Tudor's bill is a just one, and he ought to have his money."

"I'll do the best I can, mother."

CHAPTER II – GRANT MAKES TWO BUSINESS CALLS

Deacon Gridley had a small farm, and farming was his chief occupation, but he had a few thousand dollars laid away in stocks and bonds, and, being a thrifty man, not to say mean, he managed to save up nearly all the interest, which he added to his original accumulation. He always coveted financial trusts, and so it came about that he was parish treasurer. It was often convenient for him to keep in his hands, for a month at a time, money thus collected which ought to have been paid over at once to the minister, but the deacon was a thoroughly selfish man, and cared little how pressed for money Mr. Thornton might be, as long as he himself derived some benefit from holding on to the parish funds.

The deacon was mowing the front yard of his house when Grant came up to his front gate.

"Good-morning, Deacon Gridley," said the minister's son.

"Mornin', Grant," answered the deacon. "How's your folks?"

"Pretty well in health," returned Grant, coming to business at once, "but rather short of money."

"Ministers most gen'ally are," said Deacon Gridley, dryly.

"I should think they might be, with the small salaries they get," said Grant, indignantly.

"Some of 'em do get poorly paid," replied the deacon; "but I call six hundred dollars a pooty fair income."

"It might be for a single man; but when a minister has a wife and three children, like my father, it's pretty hard scratching."

"Some folks ain't got faculty," said the deacon, adding, complacently, "it never cost me nigh on to six hundred dollars a year to live."

The deacon had the reputation of living very penuriously, and Abram Fish, who once worked for him and boarded in the family, said he was half starved there.

"You get your milk and vegetables off the farm," said Grant, who felt the comparison was not a fair one. "That makes a great deal of difference."

"It makes some difference," the deacon admitted, "but not as much as the difference in our expenses. I didn't spend more'n a hundred dollars cash last year."

This excessive frugality may have been the reason why Mrs. Deacon Gridley was always so shabbily dressed. The poor woman had not had a new bonnet for five years, as every lady in the parish well knew.

"Ministers have some expenses that other people don't," persisted Grant.

"What kind of expenses, I'd like to know?"

"They have to buy books and magazines, and entertain missionaries, and hire teams to go on exchanges."

"That's something," admitted the deacon. "Maybe it amounts

to twenty or thirty dollars a year."

"More likely a hundred," said Grant.

"That would be awful extravagant sinful waste. If I was a minister, I'd be more keerful."

"Well, Deacon Gridley, I don't want to argue with you. I came to see if you hadn't collected some money for father. Mr. Tudor has sent in his bill, and he wants to be paid."

"How much is it?"

"Sixty-seven dollars and thirty-four cents."

"You don't tell me!" said the deacon, scandalized. "You folks must be terrible extravagant."

Grant hardly knew whether to be more vexed or amused.

"If wanting to have enough to eat is extravagant," he said, "then we are."

"You must live on the fat of the land, Grant."

"We haven't any of us got the gout, nor are likely to have," answered Grant, provoked. "But let us come back to business. Have you got any money for father?"

Now it so happened that Deacon Gridley had fifty dollars collected, but he thought he knew where he could let it out for one per cent, for a month, and he did not like to lose the opportunity.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you, Grant," he answered, "but folks are slow about payin' up, and—"

"Haven't you got any money collected?" asked Grant, desperately.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said the deacon, with a bright idea.

"I've got fifty dollars of my own—say for a month, till I can make collections."

"That would be very kind," said Grant, feeling that he had done the deacon an injustice.

"Of course," the deacon resumed, hastily, "I should have to charge interest. In fact, I was goin' to lend out the money to a neighbor for a month at one per cent; but I'd just as lieve let your father have it at that price."

"Isn't that more than legal interest?" asked Grant.

"Well, you see, money is worth good interest nowadays. Ef your father don't want it, no matter. I can let the other man have it."

Grant rapidly calculated that the interest would only amount to fifty cents, and money must be had.

"I think father'll agree to your terms," he said. "I'll let you know this afternoon."

"All right, Grant. It don't make a mite of difference to me, but if your father wants the money he'll have to speak for it to-day."

"I'll see that the matter is attended to," said Grant, and he went on his way, pleased with the prospect of obtaining money for their impoverished household, even on such hard terms.

Next he made his way to Mr. Tudor's store.

It was one of those country variety stores where almost everything in the way of house supplies can be obtained, from groceries to dry goods.

Mr. Tudor was a small man, with a parchment skin and

insignificant features. He was in the act of weighing out a quantity of sugar for a customer when Grant entered.

Grant waited till the shopkeeper was at leisure.

"Did you want to see me, Grant?" said Tudor.

"Yes, Mr. Tudor. You sent over a bill to our house this morning."

"And you've come to pay it. That's right. Money's tight, and I've got bills to pay in the city."

"I've got a little money for you on account," said Grant, watching Tudor's face anxiously.

"How much?" asked the storekeeper, his countenance changing.

"Eight dollars."

"Eight dollars!" ejaculated Tudor, indignantly. "Only eight dollars out of sixty-seven! That's a regular imposition, and I don't care ef your father is a minister, I stick to my words."

Grant was angry, but he remembered his mother's injunction to restrain his temper.

"We'd like to pay the whole, Mr. Tudor, if we had the money, and—"

"Do you think I can trust the whole neighborhood, and only get one dollar in ten of what's due me?" spluttered Mr. Tudor. "Ministers ought to set a better example."

"Ministers ought to get better pay," said Grant.

"There's plenty don't get as much as your father. When do you expect to pay the rest, I'd like to know? I s'pose you expect

me to go on trustin', and mebbe six months from now you'll pay me another eight dollars," said the storekeeper, with withering sarcasm.

"I was going to tell you, if you hadn't interrupted me," said Grant, "that we should probably have some more money for you to-morrow."

"How much?"

"Twenty-five dollars," answered the boy, knowing that part of the money borrowed must go in other quarters. "Will that be satisfactory?"

"That's more like!" said Tudor, calming down. "Ef you'll pay that I'll give you a leetle more time on the rest. Do you want anything this mornin'? I've got some prime butter just come in."

"I'll call for some articles this afternoon, Mr. Tudor. Here are the eight dollars. Please credit us with that sum."

"Well, I've accomplished something," said Grant to himself as he plodded homeward.

CHAPTER III – GRANT WALKS TO SOMERSET

GODFREY THORNTON, Grant's uncle, lived in the neighboring town of Somerset. He was an old bachelor, three years older than his brother, the minister, and followed the profession of a lawyer. His business was not large, but his habits were frugal, and he had managed to save up ten thousand dollars. Grant had always been a favorite with him, and having no son of his own he had formed the plan of sending him to college. He was ambitious that he should be a professional man.

It might have been supposed that he would have felt disposed to assist his brother, whose scanty salary he knew was inadequate to the needs of a family. But Godfrey Thornton was an obstinate man, and chose to give assistance in his own way, and no other. It would be a very handsome thing, he thought, to give his nephew a college education. And so, indeed, it would. But he forgot one thing. In families of limited means, when a boy reaches the age of fifteen or sixteen he is very properly expected to earn something toward the family income, and this Grant could not do while preparing for college. If his uncle could have made up his mind to give his brother a small sum annually to make up for this, all would have been well. Not that this idea had suggested itself to the Rev. John Thorn-ton. He felt grateful for his brother's

intentions toward Grant, and had bright hopes of his boy's future. But, in truth, pecuniary troubles affected him less than his wife. She was the manager, and it was for her to contrive and be anxious.

After Grant had arranged the matters referred to in the preceding chapter, he told his mother that he proposed to go to Somerset to call on his uncle.

"No, Grant, I don't object, though I should be sorry to have you lose the chance of an education."

"I have a very fair education already, mother. Of course I should like to go to college, but I can't bear to have you and father struggling with poverty. If I become a business man, I may have a better chance to help you. At any rate, I can help you sooner. If I can only induce Uncle Godfrey to give you the sum my education would cost him, I shall feel perfectly easy."

"You can make the attempt, my son, but I have doubts about your success."

Grant, however, was more hopeful. He didn't see why his uncle should object, and it would cost him no more money. It seemed to him very plain sailing, and he set out to walk to Somerset, full of courage and hope.

It was a pretty direct road, and the distance—five miles—was not formidable to a strong-limbed boy like Grant. In an hour and a half he entered the village, and soon reached the small one-story building which served his uncle as an office.

Entering, he saw his uncle busy with some papers at his desk.

The old lawyer raised his eyes as the door opened.

"So it's you, Grant, is it?" he said. "Nobody sick at home, eh?"

"No, Uncle Godfrey, we are all well."

"I was afraid some one might be sick, from your coming over. However, I suppose you have some errand in Somerset."

"My only errand is to call upon you, uncle."

"I suppose I am to consider that a compliment," said the old bachelor, not ill pleased. "Well, and when are you going to be ready for college?"

"I can be ready to enter in September," replied Grant.

"That is good. All you will have to do will be to present yourself for examination. I shall see you through, as I have promised."

"You are very kind, Uncle Godfrey," said Grant; and then he hesitated.

"It's Thornton family pride, Grant. I want my nephew to be somebody. I want you to be a professional man, and take a prominent place in the world."

"Can't I be somebody without becoming a professional man, or–"

"Or, what?" asked his uncle, abruptly.

"Getting a college education?" continued Grant.

"What does this mean?" asked the old lawyer, knitting his brow. "You're not getting off the notion of going to college, I hope?"

"I should like to go to college, uncle."

"I'm glad to hear that," said Godfrey Thornton, relieved. "I thought you might want to grow up a dunce, and become a bricklayer or something of that kind."

Somehow Grant's task began to seem more difficult than he had anticipated.

"But," continued Grant, summoning up his courage, "I am afraid it will be rather selfish."

"I can't say I understand you, Grant. As long as I am willing to pay your college bills, I don't see why there is anything selfish in your accepting my offer."

"I mean as regards father and mother."

"Don't I take you off their hands? What do you mean?"

"I mean this, Uncle Godfrey," said Grant, boldly, "I ought to be at work earning money to keep them. Father's income is very small, and—"

"You don't mean to say you want to give up going to college?" said Godfrey Thornton, hastily.

"I think I ought to, uncle."

"Why?"

"So that I can find work and help father along. You see, I should be four years in college, and three years studying a profession, and all that time my brother and sister would be growing older and more expensive, and father would be getting into debt."

Uncle Godfrey's brow wore a perceptible frown.

"Tell me who has put this idea into your head?" he said. "I am

sure it isn't your father."

"No one put it into my head, Uncle Godfrey. It's my own idea."

"Humph! old heads don't grow on young shoulders, evidently. You are a foolish boy, Grant. With a liberal education you can do something for your family."

"But it is so long to wait," objected Grant.

"It will be a great disappointment to me to have you give up going to college, but of course I can't force you to go," said his uncle, coldly. "It will save me three hundred dollars a year for four years-I may say for seven, however. You will be throwing away a grand opportunity."

"Don't think I undervalue the advantage of a college training, uncle," said Grant, eagerly. "It isn't that. It's because I thought I might help father. In fact, I wanted to make a proposal to you."

"What is it?"

"You say it will cost three hundred dollars a year to keep me in college?"

"Well?"

"Would you be willing to give father two hundred a year for the next four years, and let me take care of myself in some business place?"

"So this is your proposal, is it?"

"Yes, sir."

"All I have got to say is, that you have got uncommon assurance. You propose to defeat my cherished plan, and want me to pay two hundred dollars a year in acknowledgment of your

consideration."

"I am sorry you look upon it in that light, Uncle Godfrey."

"I distinctly decline your proposal. If you refuse to go to college, I wash my hands of you and your family. Do you understand that?"

"Yes, Uncle Godfrey," answered Grant, crestfallen.

"Go home and think over the matter. My offer still holds good. You can present yourself at college in September, and, if you are admitted, notify me."

The lawyer turned back to his writing, and Grant understood that the interview was over.

In sadness he started on his return walk from Somerset. He had accomplished nothing except to make his uncle angry. He could not make up his mind what to do.

He had walked about four miles when his attention was sharply drawn by a cry of terror. Looking up quickly, he saw a girl of fourteen flying along the road pursued by a drunken man armed with a big club. They were not more than thirty feet apart, and the situation was critical.

Grant was no coward, and he instantly resolved to rescue the girl if it were a possible thing.

CHAPTER IV – A TIMELY RESCUE

"I will save her if I can," said Grant to himself.

The task, however, was not an easy one. The drunken man was tall and strongly made, and his condition did not appear to interfere with his locomotion. He was evidently half crazed with drink, and his pursuit of the young girl arose probably from a blind impulse; but it was likely to be none the less serious for her. Grant saw at once that he was far from being a match for the drunkard in physical strength. If he had been timid, a regard for his personal safety would have led him to keep aloof. But he would have despised himself if he had not done what he could for the girl—stranger though she was—who was in such peril.

It chanced that Grant had cut a stout stick to help him on his way. This suggested his plan of campaign. He ran sideways toward the pursuer, and thrust his stick between his legs, tripping him up. The man fell violently forward, and lay as if stunned, breathing heavily. Grant was alarmed at first, fearing that he might be seriously hurt, but a glance assured him that his stupor was chiefly the result of his potations.

Then he hurried to overtake the girl, who, seeing what had taken place, had paused in her flight.

"Don't be frightened," said Grant. "The man can't get up at present. I will see you home if you will tell me where you live."

"I am boarding at Mrs. Granger's, quarter of a mile back,

mamma and I," answered the girl, the color, temporarily banished by fright, returning to her cheeks.

"Where did you fall in with this man?" inquired Grant.

"I was taking a walk," answered the girl, "and overtook him. I did not take much notice of him at first, and was not aware of his condition till he began to run after me. Then I was almost frightened to death, and I don't think I ever ran so fast in my life."

"You were in serious danger. He was fast overtaking you."

"I saw that he was, and I believe I should have dropped if you had not come up and saved me. How brave you were!"

Grant colored with pleasure, though he disclaimed the praise.

"Oh, it was nothing!" he said, modestly. "But we had better start at once, for he may revive."

"Oh, let us go then," exclaimed the girl in terror, and, hardly knowing what she did, she seized Grant's arm. "See, he is beginning to stir. Do come quickly!"

Clinging to Grant's arm, the two hastened away, leaving the inebriate on the ground.

Grant now had leisure to view more closely the girl he had rescued. She was a very pretty girl, a year or two younger than himself, with a bright, vivacious manner, and her young rescuer thought her very attractive.

"Do you live round here?" she asked.

"I live in Colebrook, the village close by. I was walking from Somerset."

"I should like to know the name of the one who has done me

so great a service."

"We will exchange names, if you like," said Grant, smiling. "My name is Grant Thornton. I am the son of Rev. John Thornton, who is minister in Colebrook."

"So you are a minister's son. I have always heard that minister's sons are apt to be wild," said the girl, smiling mischievously.

"I am an exception," said Grant, demurely.

"I am ready to believe it," returned his companion. "My name is Carrie Clifton; my mother is a minister's daughter, so I have a right to think well of ministers' families."

"How long have you been boarding in this neighborhood, Miss Carrie?"

"Only a week. I am afraid I shan't dare to stay here any longer."

"It is not often you would meet with such an adventure as this. I hope you won't allow it to frighten you away."

"Do you know that drunken man? Does he live nearby?"

"I think he is a stranger—a tramp. I never saw him before, and I know almost everybody who lives about here."

"I am glad he doesn't live here."

"He will probably push on his way and not come this way again during the summer."

"I hope you are right. He might try to revenge himself on you for tripping him up."

"I don't think he saw me to recognize me. He was so drunk that he didn't know what he was about. When he gets over

his intoxication he probably won't remember anything that has happened."

By this time they had reached the gate of the farmhouse where Carrie was boarding, and Grant prepared to leave her.

"I think you are safe now," he said.

"Oh, but I shan't let you go yet," said the girl. "You must come in and see mother."

Grant hesitated, but he felt that he should like to meet the mother of a young lady who seemed to him so attractive, and he allowed himself to be led into the yard. Mrs. Clifton was sitting in a rustic chair under a tree behind the house. There Grant and his companion found her. Carrie poured forth her story impetuously, and then drawing Grant forward, indicated him as her rescuer.

Her mother listened with natural alarm, shuddering at the peril from which her daughter had so happily escaped.

"I cannot tell how grateful I am to you for the service you have done my daughter," she said, warmly. "You are a very brave boy. There is not one in ten who would have had the courage to act as you did."

"You praise me more than I deserve, Mrs. Clifton. I saw the man was drunk, and I did not really run much risk in what I did. I am very thankful that I was able to be of service to Miss Carrie."

"It is most fortunate that you were at hand. My daughter might have been killed."

"What do you think, mother? He is a minister's son," said Carrie, vivaciously.

"That certainly is no objection in my eyes," said Mrs. Clifton, smiling, "for I am a minister's daughter. Where does your father preach?"

"His church is only a mile distant, in the village."

"I shall hear him, then, next Sunday. Last Sunday Carrie and I were both tired, and remained at home, but I have always been accustomed to go to church somewhere."

"Papa will be here next Sunday," said Carrie. "He can only come Saturday night on account of his business."

"Does he do business in New York?" asked Grant.

"Yes; his store is on Broadway."

"We live on Madison Avenue, and whenever you are in the city we shall be very glad to have you call," said Mrs. Clifton, graciously.

"Thank you; I should like to call very much," answered Grant, who was quite sincere in what he said. "But I don't often go to New York."

"Perhaps you will get a place there some time," suggested Carrie.

"I should like to," replied Grant.

"Then your father does not propose to send you to college?" It was Mrs. Clifton who said this.

"He wishes me to go, but I think I ought to go to work to help him. He has two other children besides me."

"Is either one a girl?" asked Carrie.

"Yes; I have a sister of thirteen, named Mary."

"I wish you would bring her here to see me," said Carrie. "I haven't got acquainted with any girls yet."

Mrs. Clifton seconded the invitation, and Grant promised that he would do so. In fact, he was pleased at the opportunity it would give him of improving his acquaintance with the young lady from New York. He returned home very well pleased with his trip to Somerset, though he had failed in the object of his expedition.

CHAPTER V – MRS. THORNTON'S PEARLS

The next Sunday Mrs. Clifton and her daughter appeared at church, and Grant had the pleasure of greeting them. He was invited with his sister to take supper with them on the next Monday afternoon, and accepted the invitation. About sunset he met his new friends walking, with the addition of the husband and father, who, coming Saturday evening from New York, had felt too fatigued to attend church. Mr. Clifton, to whom he was introduced, was a portly man in middle life, who received Grant quite graciously, and made for himself acknowledgment of the service which our hero had rendered his daughter.

"If I ever have the opportunity of doing you a favor, Master Thornton, you may call upon me with confidence," he said.

Grant thanked him, and was better pleased than if he had received an immediate gift.

Meanwhile Deacon Gridley kept his promise, and advanced the minister fifty dollars, deducting a month's interest. Even with this deduction Mrs. Thornton was very glad to obtain the money. Part of it was paid on account to Mr. Tudor, and silenced his importunities for a time. As to his own plans, there was nothing for Grant to do except to continue his studies, as he might enter college after all.

If any employment should offer of a remunerative character, he felt that it would be his duty to accept it, in spite of his uncle's objections; but such chances were not very likely to happen while he remained in the country, for obvious reasons.

Three weeks passed, and again not only Mr. Tudor, but another creditor, began to be troublesome.

"How soon is your father going to pay up his bill?" asked Tudor, when Grant called at the store for a gallon of molasses.

"Very soon, I hope," faltered Grant.

"I hope so, too," answered the grocer, grimly.

"Only three weeks ago I paid you thirty-three dollars," said Grant.

"And you have been increasing the balance ever since," said Tudor, frowning.

"If father could get his salary regularly—" commenced Grant.

"That's his affair, not mine," rejoined the grocer. "I have to pay my bills regular, and I can't afford to wait months for my pay."

Grant looked uncomfortable, but did not know what to say.

"The short and the long of it is, that after this week your father must either pay up his bill, or pay cash for what articles he gets hereafter."

"Very well," said Grant, coldly. He was too proud to remonstrate. Moreover, though he felt angry, he was constrained to admit that the grocer had some reason for his course.

"Something must be done," he said to himself, but he was not

wise enough to decide what that something should be.

Though he regretted to pain his mother, he felt obliged to report to her what the grocer had said.

"Don't be troubled, mother," he said, as he noticed the shade of anxiety which came over her face. "Something will turn up."

Mrs. Thornton shook her head.

"It isn't safe to trust to that, Grant," she said; "we must help ourselves."

"I wish I knew how," said Grant, perplexed.

"I am afraid I shall have to make a sacrifice," said Mrs. Thornton, not addressing Grant, but rather in soliloquy.

Grant looked at his mother in surprise. What sacrifice could she refer to? Did she mean that they must move into a smaller house, and retrench generally? That was all that occurred to him.

"We might, perhaps, move into a smaller house, mother," said he, "but we have none too much room here, and the difference in rent wouldn't be much."

"I didn't mean that, Grant. Listen, and I will tell you what I do mean. You know that I was named after a rich lady, the friend of my mother?"

"I have heard you say so."

"When she died, she left me by will a pearl necklace and pearl bracelets, both of very considerable value."

"I have never seen you wear them, mother."

"No; I have not thought they would be suitable for the wife of a poor minister. My wearing them would excite unfavorable

comment in the parish."

"I don't see whose business it would be," said Grant, indignantly.

"At any rate, just or not, I knew what would be said," Mrs. Thornton replied.

"How is it you have never shown the pearl ornaments to me, mother?"

"You were only five years old when they came to me, and I laid them away at once, and have seldom thought of them since. I have been thinking that, as they are of no use to me, I should be justified in selling them for what I can get, and appropriating the proceeds toward paying your father's debts."

"How much do you think they are worth, mother?"

"A lady to whom I showed them once said they must have cost five hundred dollars or more."

Grant whistled.

"Do you mind showing them to me, mother?" he asked.

Mrs. Thornton went upstairs, and brought down the pearl necklace and bracelets. They were very handsome and Grant gazed at them with admiration.

"I wonder what the ladies would say if you should wear them to the sewing circle," he said, humorously.

"They would think I was going over to the vanities of this world," responded his mother, smiling. "They can be of no possible use to me now, or hereafter, and I believe it will be the best thing I can do to sell them."

"Where can you sell them? No one here can afford to buy them."

"They must be sold in New York, and I must depend upon you to attend to the business for me."

"Can you trust me, mother? Wouldn't father—"

"Your father has no head for business, Grant. He is a learned man, and knows a great deal about books, but of practical matters he knows very little. You are only a boy, but you are a very sensible and trustworthy boy, and I shall have to depend upon you."

"I will do the best I can, mother. Only tell me what you want me to do."

"I wish you to take these pearls, and go to New York. You can find a purchaser there, if anywhere. I suppose it will be best to take them to some jewelry store, and drive the best bargain you can."

"When do you wish me to go, mother?"

"There can be no advantage in delay. If tomorrow is pleasant, you may as well go then."

"Shall you tell father your plan?"

"No, Grant, it might make him feel bad to think I was compelled to make a sacrifice, which, after all, is very little of a sacrifice to me. Years since I decided to trouble him as little as possible with matters of business. It could do no good, and, by making him anxious, unfitted him for his professional work."

Mrs. Thornton's course may not be considered wise by some,

but she knew her husband's peculiar mental constitution, and her object at least was praiseworthy, to screen him from undue anxiety, though it involved an extra share for herself.

The next morning Grant took an early breakfast, and walked briskly toward the depot to take the first train for New York.

The fare would be a dollar and a quarter each way, for the distance was fifty miles, and this both he and his mother felt to be a large outlay. If, however, he succeeded in his errand it would be wisely spent, and this was their hope.

At the depot Grant found Tom Calder, a youth of eighteen, who had the reputation of being wild, and had been suspected of dishonesty. He had been employed in the city, so that Grant was not surprised to meet him at the depot.

"Hello, Grant! Where are you bound?" he asked.

"I am going to New York."

"What for?"

"A little business," Grant answered, evasively. Tom was the last person he felt inclined to take into his confidence.

"Goin' to try to get a place?"

"If any good chance offers I shall accept it—that is, if father and mother are willing."

"Let's take a seat together—that's what I'm going for myself."

CHAPTER VI – GRANT GETS INTO UNEXPECTED TROUBLE

TOM CALDER was not the companion Grant would have chosen, but there seemed no good excuse for declining his company. He belonged to a rather disreputable family living in the borders of the village. If this had been all, it would not have been fair to object to him, but Tom himself bore not a very high reputation. He had been suspected more than once of stealing from his school companions, and when employed for a time by Mr. Tudor, in the village store, the latter began to miss money from the till; but Tom was so sly that he had been unable to bring the theft home to him. However, he thought it best to dispense with his services.

"What kind of a situation are you goin' to try for?" asked Tom, when they were fairly on their way.

"I don't know. They say that beggars mustn't be choosers."

"I want to get into a broker's office if I can," said Tom.

"Do you consider that a very good business?" asked Grant.

"I should say so," responded Tom, emphatically.

"Do they pay high wages?"

"Not extra, but a feller can get points, and make something out of the market."

"What's that?" asked Grant, puzzled.

"Oh, I forgot. You ain't used to the city," responded Tom, emphatically. "I mean, you find out when a stock is going up, and you buy for a rise."

"But doesn't that take considerable money?" asked Grant, wondering how Tom could raise money to buy stocks.

"Oh, you can go to the bucket shops," answered Tom.

"But what have bucket shops to do with stocks?" asked Grant, more than ever puzzled.

Tom burst into a loud laugh.

"Ain't you jolly green, though?" he ejaculated.

Grant was rather nettled at this.

"I don't see how I could be expected to understand such talk," he said, with some asperity.

"That's where it is—you can't," said Tom. "It's all like A, B, C to me, and I forgot that you didn't know anything about Wall Street. A bucket shop is where you can buy stock in small lots, putting down a dollar a share as margin. If stocks go up, you sell out on the rise, and get back your dollar minus commission."

"Suppose they go down?"

"Then you lose what you put up."

"Isn't it rather risky?"

"Of course there's some risk, but if you have a good point there isn't much."

This was Tom Calder's view of the matter. As a matter of fact, the great majority of those who visit the bucket shops lose all they put in, and are likely sooner or later to get into difficulty; so

that many employers will at once discharge a clerk or boy known to speculate in this way.

"If I had any money I'd buy some stock to-day; that is, as soon as I get to the city," continued Tom. "You couldn't lend me five dollars, could you?"

"No, I couldn't," answered Grant, shortly.

"I'd give you half the profits."

"I haven't got the money," Grant explained.

"That's a pity. The fact is, I'm rather short. However, I know plenty of fellows in the city, and I guess I can raise a tenner or so."

"Then your credit must be better in New York than in Colebrook," thought Grant, but he fore-bore to say so.

Grant was rather glad the little package of pearls was in the pocket furthest away from Tom, for his opinion of his companion's honesty was not the highest.

When half an hour had passed, Tom vacated his seat.

"I'm going into the smoking car," he said, "to have a smoke. Won't you come with me?"

"No, thank you. I don't smoke."

"Then it's time you began. I've got a cigarette for you, if you'll try it."

"Much obliged, but I am better off without it."

"You'll soon get over that little-boy feeling. Why, boys in the city of half your age smoke."

"I am sorry to hear it."

"Well, ta-ta! I'll be back soon."

Grant was not sorry to have Tom leave him. He didn't enjoy his company, and besides he foresaw that it would be rather embarrassing if Tom should take a fancy to remain with him in the city. He didn't care to have anyone, certainly not Tom, learn on what errand he had come to the city.

Two minutes had scarcely elapsed after Tom vacated his seat, when a pleasant-looking gentleman of middle age, who had been sitting just behind them, rose and took the seat beside Grant.

"I will sit with you if you don't object," said he.

"I should be glad of your company," said Grant, politely.

"You live in the country, I infer?"

"Yes, sir."

"I overheard your conversation with the young man who has just left you. I suspect you are not very much alike."

"I hope not, sir. Perhaps Tom would say the same, for he thinks me green."

"There is such a thing as knowing too much—that isn't desirable to know. So you don't smoke?"

"No, sir."

"I wish more boys of your age could say as much. Do I understand that you are going to the city in search of employment?"

"That is not my chief errand," answered Grant, with some hesitation. "Still, if I could hear of a good chance, I might induce my parents to let me accept it."

"Where do you live, my young friend?"

"In Colebrook. My father is the minister there."

"That ought to be a recommendation, for it is to be supposed you have been carefully trained. Some of our most successful business men have been ministers' sons."

"Are you in business in New York, sir?" asked Grant, thinking he had a right by this time to ask a question.

"Yes; here is my card."

Taking the card, Grant learned that his companion was Mr. Henry Reynolds and was a broker, with an office in New Street.

"I see you are a broker, sir," said Grant. "Tom Calder wants to get a place in a broker's office."

"I should prefer that he would try some other broker," said Mr. Reynolds, smiling. "I don't want a boy who deals with the bucket shops."

At this point Tom re-entered the car, having finished his cigarette. Observing that his place had been taken, he sat down at a little distance.

"When you get ready to take a place," said the broker, "call at my office, and though I won't promise to give you a place, I shall feel well disposed to if I can make room for you."

"Thank you, sir," said Grant, gratefully. "I hope if I ever do enter your employment, I shall merit your confidence."

"I have good hopes of it. By the way, you may as well give me your name."

"I am Grant Thornton, of Colebrook," said our hero.

Mr. Reynolds entered the name in a little pocket diary, and

left the seat, which Tom Calder immediately took.

"Who's that old codger?" he asked.

"The gentleman who has just left me is a New York business man."

"You got pretty thick with him, eh?"

"We talked a little."

Grant took care not to mention that Mr. Reynolds was a broker, as he knew that Tom would press for an introduction in that case.

When they reached New York, Tom showed a disposition to remain with Grant, but the latter said: "We'd better separate, and we can meet again after we have attended to our business."

A meeting place was agreed upon, and Tom went his way.

Now came the difficult part of Grant's task. Where should he go to dispose of his pearls? He walked along undecided, till he came to a large jewelry store. It struck him that this would be a good place for his purpose, and he entered.

"What can I do for you, young man?" asked a man of thirty behind the counter.

"I have some pearl ornaments I would like to sell," said Grant.

"Indeed," said the clerk, fixing a suspicious glance upon Grant; "let me see them."

Grant took out the necklace and bracelets, and passed them over. No sooner had he done so than a showily dressed lady advanced to the place where he was standing, and held out her hand for the ornaments, exclaiming: "I forbid you to buy those

articles, sir. They are mine. The boy stole them from me, and I have followed him here, suspecting that he intended to dispose of them."

"That is false," exclaimed Grant, indignantly. "I never saw that woman before in my life."

"So you are a liar as well as a thief!" said the woman. "You will please give me those pearls, sir."

The clerk looked at the two contestants in indecision. He was disposed to believe the lady's statement.

CHAPTER VII – MRS. SIMPSON COMES TO GRIEF

"Surely I have a right to my own property," said the showily dressed lady in a tone of authority, which quite imposed upon the weak-minded salesman.

"I dare say you are right, ma'am," said he, hesitatingly.

"Of course I am," said she.

"If you give her those pearls, which belong to my mother, I will have you arrested," said Grant, plucking up spirit.

"Hoity-toity!" said the lady, contemptuously. "I hope you won't pay any regard to what that young thief says."

The clerk looked undecided. He beckoned an older salesman, and laid the matter before him. The latter looked searchingly at the two. Grant was flushed and excited, and the lady had a brazen front.

"Do you claim these pearls, madam?" he said.

"I do," she answered, promptly.

"How did you come by them?"

"They were a wedding present from my husband."

"May I ask your name?"

The lady hesitated a moment, then answered:

"Mrs. Simpson."

"Where do you live?"

There was another slight hesitation. Then came the answer:

"No.—Madison Avenue."

Now Madison Avenue is a fashionable street, and the name produced an impression on the first clerk.

"I think the pearls belong to the lady," he whispered.

"I have some further questions to ask," returned the elder salesman, in a low voice.

"Do you know this boy whom you charge with stealing your property?"

"Yes," answered the lady, to Grant's exceeding surprise; "he is a poor boy whom I have employed to do errands."

"Has he had the run of your house?"

"Yes, that's the way of it. He must have managed to find his way to the second floor, and opened the bureau drawer where I kept the pearls."

"What have you to say to this?" asked the elder salesman.

"Please ask the lady my name," suggested Grant.

"Don't you know your own name?" demanded the lady, sharply.

"Yes, but I don't think you do."

"Can you answer the boy's question, Mrs. Simpson?"

"Of course I can. His name is John Cavanaugh, and the very suit he has on I gave him."

Grant was thunderstruck at the lady's brazen front. She was outwardly a fine lady, but he began to suspect that she was an impostor.

"I am getting tired of this," said the so-called Mrs. Simpson, impatiently. "Will you, or will you not, restore my pearls?" "When we are satisfied that they belong to you, madam," said the elder salesman, coolly. "I don't feel like taking the responsibility, but will send for my employer, and leave the matter to him to decide."

"I hope I won't have long to wait, sir."

"I will send at once."

"It's a pretty state of things when a lady has her own property kept from her," said Mrs. Simpson, while the elder clerk was at the other end of the store, giving some instructions to a boy.

"I don't in the least doubt your claim to the articles, Mrs. Simpson," said the first salesman, obsequiously. "Come, boy, you'd better own up that you have stolen the articles, and the lady will probably let you off this time."

"Yes, I will let him off this time," chimed in the lady. "I don't want to send him to prison."

"If you can prove that I am a thief, I am willing to go," said Grant, hotly.

By this time the elder salesman had come back.

"Is your name John Cavanaugh, my boy?" he asked.

"No, sir."

"Did you ever see this lady before?"

"No, sir."

The lady threw up her hands in feigned amazement.

"I wouldn't have believed the boy would lie so!" she said.

"What is your name?"

"My name is Grant Thornton. I live in Colebrook, and my father is Rev. John Thornton."

"I know there is such a minister there. To whom do these pearls belong?"

"To my mother."

"A likely story that a country minister's wife should own such valuable pearls," said Mrs. Simpson, in a tone of sarcasm.

"How do you account for it?" asked the clerk.

"They were given my mother years since, by a rich lady who was a good friend of hers. She has never had occasion to wear them."

Mrs. Simpson smiled significantly.

"The boy has learned his story," she said. "I did not give you credit for such an imagination, John Cavanaugh."

"My name is Grant Thornton, madam," said our hero, gravely.

Five minutes later two men entered the store. One was a policeman, the other the head of the firm. When Grant's eye fell on the policeman he felt nervous, but when he glanced at the gentleman his face lighted up with pleasure.

"Why, it's Mr. Clifton," he said.

"Grant Thornton," said the jeweler, in surprise. "Why, I thought—"

"You will do me justice, Mr. Clifton," said Grant, and thereupon he related the circumstances already known to the reader.

When Mrs. Simpson found that the boy whom she had selected as an easy victim was known to the proprietor of the place, she became nervous, and only thought of escape.

"It is possible that I am mistaken," she said. "Let me look at the pearls again."

They were held up for her inspection.

"They are very like mine," she said, after a brief glance; "but I see there is a slight difference."

"How about the boy, madam?" asked the elder clerk.

"He is the very image of my errand boy; but if Mr. Clifton knows him, I must be mistaken. I am sorry to have given you so much trouble. I have an engagement to meet, and must go."

"Stop, madam!" said Mr. Clifton, sternly, interposing an obstacle to her departure, "we can't spare you yet."

"I really must go, sir. I give up all claim to the pearls."

"That is not sufficient. You have laid claim to them, knowing that they were not yours. Officer, have you ever seen this woman before?"

"Yes, sir, I know her well."

"How dare you insult me?" demanded Mrs. Simpson; but there was a tremor in her voice.

"I give her in charge for an attempted swindle," said Mr. Clifton.

"You will have to come with me, madam," said the policeman. "You may as well go quietly."

"Well, the game is up," said the woman, with a careless laugh.

"It came near succeeding, though."

"Now, my boy," said the jeweler, "I will attend to your business. You want to sell these pearls?"

"Yes, sir; they are of no use to mother, and she needs the money."

"At what do you value them?"

"I leave that to you, sir. I shall be satisfied with what you think them worth."

The jeweler examined them attentively. After his examination was concluded, he said: "I am willing to give four hundred dollars for them. Of course they cost more, but I shall have to reset them."

"That is more than I expected," said Grant, joyfully. "It will pay all our debts, and give us a little fund to help us in future."

"Do you wish the money now? There might be some risk in a boy like you carrying so much with you."

"What would you advise, Mr. Clifton?"

"That you take perhaps a hundred dollars, and let me bring the balance next Saturday night, when I come to pass Sunday at Colebrook."

"Thank you, sir; if it won't be too much trouble for you."

CHAPTER VIII – GRANT TAKES A DECISIVE STEP

Grant came home a messenger of good tidings, as his beaming face plainly showed. His mother could hardly believe in her good fortune, when Grant informed her that he had sold the pearls for four hundred dollars.

"Why, that will pay up all your father's debts," she said, "and we shall once more feel independent."

"And with a good reserve fund besides," suggested Grant.

On Saturday evening he called on Mr. Clifton, and received the balance of the purchase money. On Monday, with a little list of creditors, and his pocket full of money, he made a round of calls, and paid up everybody, including Mr. Tudor.

"I told you the bill would be paid, Mr. Tudor," he said, quietly, to the grocer.

"You mustn't feel hard on me on account of my pressing you, Grant," said the grocer, well pleased, in a conciliatory tone. "You see, I needed money to pay my bills."

"You seemed to think my father didn't mean to pay you," said Grant, who could not so easily get over what he had considered unfriendly conduct on the part of Mr. Tudor.

"No, I didn't. Of course I knew he was honest, but all the same I needed the money. I wish all my customers was as honest as

your folks."

With this Grant thought it best to be contented. The time might come again when they would require the forbearance of the grocer; but he did not mean that it should be so if he could help it. For he was more than ever resolved to give up the project of going to college. The one hundred and fifty dollars which remained after paying the debts would tide them over a year, but his college course would occupy four; and then there would be three years more of study to fit him for entering a profession, and so there would be plenty of time for the old difficulties to return. If the parish would increase kis father's salary by even a hundred dollars, they might get along; but there was such a self-complacent feeling in the village that Mr. Thornton was liberally paid, that he well knew there was no chance of that.

Upon this subject he had more than one earnest conversation with his mother.

"I should be sorry to have you leave home," she said; "but I acknowledge the force of your reasons."

"I shouldn't be happy at college, mother," responded Grant, "if I thought you were pinched at home."

"If you were our only child, Grant, it would be different."

"That is true; but there are Frank and Mary who would suffer. If I go to work I shall soon be able to help you take care of them."

"You are a good and unselfish boy, Grant," said his mother.

"I don't know about that, mother; I am consulting my own happiness as well as yours."

"Yet you would like to go to college?"

"If we had plenty of money, not otherwise. I don't want to enjoy advantages at the expense of you all."

"Your Uncle Godfrey will be very angry," said Mrs. Thornton, thoughtfully.

"I suppose he will, and I shall be sorry for it. I am grateful to him for his good intentions toward me, and I have no right to expect that he will feel as I do about the matter. If he is angry, I shall be sorry, but I don't think it ought to influence me."

"You must do as you decide to be best, Grant. It is you who are most interested. But suppose you make up your mind to enter upon a business career, what chance have you of obtaining a place?"

"I shall call upon Mr. Reynolds, and see if he has any place for me."

"Who is Mr. Reynolds?" asked his mother, in some surprise.

"I forgot that I didn't tell you of the gentleman whose acquaintance I made on my way up to the city. He is a Wall Street broker. His attention was drawn to me by something that he heard, and he offered to help me, if he could, to get employment."

"It would cost something to go to New York, and after all there is no certainty that he could help you," said Mrs. Thornton, cautiously.

"That is true, mother, but I think he would do something for me."

However Grant received a summons to New York on other business. Mrs. Simpson, as she called herself, though she had no right to the name, was brought up for trial, and Grant was needed as a witness. Of course his expenses were to be paid. He resolved to take this opportunity to call at the office of Mr. Reynolds.

I do not propose to speak of Mrs. Simpson's trial. I will merely say that she was found guilty of the charge upon which she had been indicted, and was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

When Grant was released from his duties as witness, he made his way to Wall Street, or rather New Street, which branches out from the great financial thoroughfare, and had no difficulty in finding the office of Mr. Reynolds.

"Can I see Mr. Reynolds?" he asked of a young man, who was writing at a desk.

"Have you come to deliver stock? If so, I will take charge of it."

"No," answered Grant; "I wish to see him personally."

"He is at the Stock Exchange just at present. If you will take a seat, he will be back in twenty minutes, probably."

Grant sat down, and in less than the time mentioned, Mr. Reynolds entered the office. The broker, who had a good memory for faces, at once recognized our hero.

"Ha, my young friend from the country," he said; "would you like to see me?"

"When you are at leisure, sir," answered Grant, well pleased at the prompt recognition.

"You will not have to wait long. Amuse yourself as well as you can for a few minutes."

Promptness was the rule in Mr. Reynolds' office. Another characteristic of the broker was, that he was just as polite to a boy as to his best customer. This is, I am quite aware, an unusual trait, and, therefore, the more to be appreciated when we meet with it.

Presently Mr. Reynolds appeared at the door of his inner office, and beckoned to Grant to enter.

"Take a seat, my young friend," he said; "and now let me know what I can do for you."

"When I met you in the cars," said Grant, "you invited me, if I ever wanted a position, to call upon you, and you would see if you could help me."

"Very true, I did. Have you made up your mind to seek a place?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are your parents willing you should come to New York?"

"Yes, sir. That is, my mother is willing, and my father will agree to whatever she decides to be best."

"So far so good. I wouldn't engage any boy who came against his parents' wishes. Now let me tell you that you have come at a very favorable time. I have had in my employ for two years the son of an old friend, who has suited me in every respect; but now he is to go abroad with his father for a year, and I must supply his place. You shall have the place if you want it."

"Nothing would suit me better," said Grant, joyfully. "Do you think I would be competent to fulfill the duties?"

"Harry Becker does not leave me for two weeks. He will initiate you into your duties, and if you are as quick as I think you are at learning, that will be sufficient."

"When shall I come, sir?"

"Next Monday morning. It is now Thursday, and that will give you time to remove to the city."

"Perhaps I had better come Saturday, so as to get settled in a boarding-house before going to work. Could you recommend some moderate priced boarding-house, Mr. Reynolds?"

"For the first week you may come to my house as my guest. That will give you a chance to look about you. I live at 58 West 3-th Street. You had better take it down on paper. You can come any time on Monday. That will give you a chance to spend Sunday at home, and you need not go to work till Tuesday."

Grant expressed his gratitude in suitable terms, and left the office elated at his good fortune. A surprise awaited him. At the junction of Wall and New Streets he came suddenly upon a large-sized bootblack, whose face looked familiar.

"Tom Calder!" he exclaimed. "Is that you?"

CHAPTER IX – 'UNCLE GODFREY PARTS FROM GRANT

When Tom Calder turned round and saw who had addressed him, he turned red with mortification, and he tried to hide his blacking box. He was terribly mortified to have it known that he had been forced into such a business. If Tom had nothing worse to be ashamed of he need not have blushed, but he was suffering from false shame.

"When did you come to the city?" he stammered.

"Only this morning."

"I suppose you are surprised to see me in this business," said Tom, awkwardly.

"There is nothing to be ashamed of," said Grant. "It is an honest business."

"It's an awful come down for me," said Tom, uncomfortably. "The fact is, I've had hard luck."

"I am sorry to hear that," said Grant.

"I expected a place in Wall Street, but I came just too late, and things are awful dull anyway. Then I was robbed of my money."

"How much?" asked Grant, curiously, for he didn't believe a word of it.

"Eight dollars and thirty-three cents," replied Tom, glibly.

"I thought you were too smart to be robbed," said Grant, slyly.

"If it had been a green boy from the country like me, now, it wouldn't have been surprising."

"I was asleep when I was robbed," explained Tom, hurriedly. "A fellow got into my room in the night, and picked my pocket. I couldn't help that, now, could I?"

"I suppose not."

"So I had to get something to do, or go back to Colebrook. I say, Grant–"

"Well?"

"Don't you tell any of the fellers at home what business I'm in, that's a good fellow."

"I won't if you don't want me to," said Grant.

"You see, it's only a few days till I can get something else to do."

"It's a great deal better blacking boots than being idle, in my opinion," said Grant.

"That's the way I look at it. But you didn't tell me what you came to the city for?"

"I'm coming here for good," announced Grant.

"You haven't got a place, have you?" ejaculated Tom, in surprise.

"Yes, I am to enter the office of Mr. Reynolds, a stock broker. There is his sign."

"You don't say so I. Why, that's just the sort of place I wanted. How did you get the chance?"

"I got acquainted with Mr. Reynolds on board the cars that

day we came to New York together."

"And you asked him for the place?"

"I asked him this morning."

"You might have given me the chance," grumbled Tom, enviously. "You knew it was the sort of place I was after."

"I don't think I was called upon to do that," said Grant, smiling. "Besides, he wouldn't have accepted you."

"Why not? Ain't I as smart as you, I'd like to know?" retorted Tom Calder, angrily.

"He heard us talking in the cars, and didn't like what you said."

"What did I say?"

"He doesn't approve of boys smoking cigarettes and going to bucket shops. You spoke of both."

"How did he hear?"

"He was sitting just behind us."

"Was it that old chap that was sittin' with you when I came back from the smoking car?"

"Yes."

"Just my luck," said Tom, ruefully.

"When are you goin' to work?" asked Tom, after a pause.

"Next Monday."

"Where are you going to board? We might take a room together, you know. It would be kind of social, as we both come from the same place."

It did not occur to Grant that the arrangement would suit him at all, but he did not think it necessary to say so. He only said: "I

am going to Mr. Reynolds' house, just at first."

"You don't say so! Why, he's taken a regular fancy to you."

"If he has, I hope he won't get over it."

"I suppose he lives in a handsome brownstone house uptown."

"Very likely; I've never seen the house."

"Well, some folks has luck, but I ain't one of 'em," grumbled Tom.

"Your luck is coming, I hope, Tom."

"I wish it would come pretty soon, then; I say, suppose your folks won't let you take the place?" he asked, suddenly, brightening up.

"They won't oppose it." "I thought they wanted you to go to college."

"I can't afford it. It would take too long before I could earn anything, and I ought to be helping the family."

"I'm goin' to look out for number one," said Tom, shrugging his shoulders. "That's all I can do."

Tom's mother was a hard-working woman, and had taken in washing for years. But for her the family would often have lacked for food. His father was a lazy, intemperate man, who had no pride of manhood, and cared only for himself. In this respect Tom was like him, though the son had not as yet become intemperate.

"I don't think there is any chance of my giving up the place," answered Grant. "If I do, I will mention your name."

"That's a good fellow."

Grant did not volunteer to recommend Tom, for he could not have done so with a clear conscience. This omission, however, Tom did not notice.

"Well, Tom, I must be going. Good-by, and good luck."

Grant went home with a cheerful face, and announced his good luck to his mother.

"I am glad you are going to your employer's house," she said. "I wish you could remain there permanently."

"So do I, mother; but I hope at any rate to get a comfortable boarding place. Tom Calder wants to room with me."

"I hope you won't think of it," said Mrs. Thornton, alarmed.

"Not for a moment. I wish Tom well, but I shouldn't like to be too intimate with him. And now, mother, I think I ought to write to Uncle Godfrey, and tell him what I have decided upon."

"That will be proper, Grant." Grant wrote the following letter, and mailed it at once:

"DEAR UNCLE GODFREY:

I am afraid you won't like what I have to tell you, but I think it is my duty to the family to give up the college course you so kindly offered me, in view of father's small salary and narrow means. I have been offered a place in the office of a stock broker in New York, and have accepted it. I enter upon my duties next Monday morning. I hope to come near paying my own way, and before very long to help father. I know you will be disappointed, Uncle Godfrey, and I hope you won't think I don't appreciate your kind offer, but I think it would be selfish in me to accept it.

Please do forgive me, and believe me to be

Your affectionate nephew, GRANT THORNTON."

In twenty-four hours an answer came to this letter. It ran thus:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.