Wait & Hope

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WAIT AND HOPE

or A Plucky Boy's Luck

by Horatio Alger, JR.

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Chapter I

Ben and His Aunt

Five o'clock sounded from the church clock, and straightway the streets of Milltown were filled with men, women, and children issuing from the great brick factories huddled together at one end of the town. Among these, two boys waked in company, James Watson and Ben Bradford. They were very nearly of an age, James having just passed his fifteenth birthday, and Ben having nearly attained it.

Both boys looked sober. Why, will appear from their conversation.

"It's rather hard to get out of a job just now," said James.
"Why couldn't the superintendent discharge somebody else?"

"I suppose it's all right," said Ben. "We were taken on last, and we haven't as much claim to remain as those that have been in the mill longer."

"I don't believe there was any need of discharging anybody," complained James.

James.

"You know business is very dull," said Ben, who was more considerate, "and I hear they have been losing money."

"Oh, well, they can stand it," said James.

"So can you," said Ben. "Your father is pretty well off, and you won't suffer."

"Oh, I shall have enough to eat, and so on; but I shan't have any spending money, and I can't get a new suit, as I expected to this fall."

"I wish that was all I had to fear," said Ben; "but you know how it is with me. I don't see how Aunt Jane is going to get along without my earnings."

"Oh, you'll get along somehow," said James carelessly, for he did not care enough about other people's prospects to discuss them.

"Yes, I guess so," said Ben, more cheerfully. "There's no use in worrying. Wait and Hope—that's my motto."

"You have to wait a thundering long time sometimes," said James. "Well, good night. Come round and see me to-morrow. You'll have plenty of time."

"I don't know about that. I must look up something to do."

"I shan't. I am going to wait till the superintendent takes me on again. There's one comfort. I can lie abed as long as I want to. I won't be tied to the factory bell."

The house which James entered was a good-sized two-story house, with an ample yard, and a garden behind it. His father kept a dry-goods store in Milltown, and was generally considered well-to-do. James entered the mill, not because he was obliged to, but because he wanted to have a supply of

money in his pocket. His father allowed him to retain all of his wages, requiring him only to purchase his own clothes. As he was paid five dollars a week, James was able to clothe himself with half his income, and reserve the rest for spending-money. He was very fond of amusements, and there was no circus, concert, or other entertainment in Milltown which he did not patronize.

Ben kept on his way, till he reached the small house where his aunt lived, and which had been his own home ever since his parents died, when he was but five years of age. Two years before, Mr. Reuben Bradford, his uncle, died, and since then the family had been supported chiefly by Ben's wages in the mill. His aunt got some sewing to do, but her earnings were comparatively small.

There was one thing Ben dreaded, and that was, to tell his aunt about his loss of employment. He knew how she would take it. She was apt to be despondent, and this news would undoubtedly depress her. As for Ben, he was of a sanguine, cheerful temperament, and always ready to look at the bright side, if there was any bright side at all.

His little cousin Tony, seven years old, ran out to meet him.

"What makes you late, Ben?" he asked.

"I am not so very late, Tony," answered Ben, taking the little fellow's hand.

"Yes you are; it's half-past five o'clock, and supper's been ready quarter of an hour."

"I see how it is, Tony. You are hungry, and that has made you tired of waiting."

"No, I am not, but I wanted you to come home. It's always pleasanter when you are at home."

"I am glad you like my company. Good evening, Aunt Jane."

"Good evening, Ben. Sit right down at the table."

"Wait till I've washed my hands, aunt. I came home by Mr. Watson's, and that made me a little longer. Have you heard any news?"

Ben asked this, thinking it possible that his aunt had already heard of the discharge of some of the factory hands; but her answer satisfied him that she had not.

"Butter's a cent higher a pound," said Mrs. Bradford. "I declare, things seem to be going up all the time. Thirsty-five cents a pound! It really seems sinful to ask such a price."

"I wish that wasn't the worst of it," thought Ben.

"I'm afraid even at twenty-five cents it will be hard for us to pay for butter, if I don't get something to do soon."

"I guess I won't tell Aunt Jane till after supper," Ben decided. "After a good cup of tea, perhaps it won't make her feel so low-spirited."

So he ate his supper, chatting merrily with his little cousin all the time, just as if he had nothing on his mind. Even his aunt smiled from time to time at his nonsense, catching the contagion of his cheerfulness.

"I wish you'd split a little wood for me, Ben," said Mrs. Bradford, as our hero rose from the supper table. "I've had some ironing to do this afternoon, and that always takes off the fuel faster."

"All right, Aunt Jane," said Ben.

"I guess I'll wait till I've finished the wood before telling her," thought Ben. "It won't be any worse than now."

Tony went into the woodshed, to keep him company, and his aunt prepared to clear away the supper dishes.

She had scarcely commenced upon this when a knock was heard at the door. The visitor proved to be old Mrs. Perkins, a great-aunt of James Watson, who was an inveterate gossip. Her great delight was to carry news from one house to another.

"How do you do, Mrs. Bradford?" she began. "I was just passin' by, and thought I'd come in a minute."

"I am very glad to see you, Mrs. Perkins. Won't you have a cup of tea?"

"No thank you. The fact is, I've just took tea at my nephew Watson's. There I heard the news, and I couldn't help comin' right round and sympathizin' with you."

"Sympathizing with me! What for?" asked Mrs. Bradford, amazed. On general principles, she felt that she stood in need of sympathy, but her visitor's tone seemed to hint at something in particular.

"It ain't possible you haven't heard the news?" ejaculated Mrs. Perkins, feeling that she was indeed in luck, to have it in her power to communicate such important intelligence to one who had not heard of it.

"I hope it isn't anything about Ben," said Mrs. Bradford alarmed.

"Yes, I may say it is something about Benjamin," answered Mrs. Perkins, nodding in a tantalizing manner.

"He hasn't got into any scrape, has he? He hasn't done anything wrong, has he?" asked Aunt Jane startled.

"No, poor child!" sighed the old lady. "That's the wust on't. It ain't what he has done; it's because he won't have anything to do."

"For mercy's sakes, tell me what you mean, Mrs. Perkins."

"Hasn't Benjamin told you that he's lost his place at the factory?"

"Is this true, Mrs. Perkins?" asked Mrs. Bradford, turning pale.

"Yes, business is dull and fifty men and boys have been turned off. James Watson and your Benjamin are among them."

"Ben never told me anything about it," faltered Mrs. Bradford. "Heaven only knows what we shall do."

"Oh, I guess you'll get along someway," said Mrs. Perkins, complacently. She was not herself affected, having sufficient property to live upon. "Well, I must be going," said the old lady, anxious to reach the next neighbor, and report how poor Mrs. Bradford took it. "Don't you be too much worried. The Lord will provide."

"I am afraid we shall all starve," thought Mrs. Bradford mournfully.

She opened the shed door, and said: "Ben, is it true that you've lost your place at the mill?"

"Yes, aunt," answered Ben. "Who told you?"

"Old Mrs. Perkins. Why didn't you tell me before?"

"There's no hurry about bad news, aunt."

"I am afraid we'll all have to go to the poorhouse," said Aunt Jane, sighing.

"Perhaps we may, but we'll see what else we can do first. Wait and Hope, aunt—that's my motto."

Mrs. Bradford shook her heard mournfully.

"I don't mind it so much for myself," she said; "but I can't help thinking of you and Tony."

"Tony and I are coming out all right. There's lots of ways of making money, aunt. Just do as I do—'Wait and Hope.'"

Chapter II

Three Situations

Before going further it may be as well to explain exactly how the Bradfords were situated. To begin with, they had no rent to pay. The small house in which they lived belonged to an old bachelor uncle of Mrs. Bradford, living in Montreal, and all they were required to do was to pay the taxes, which amounted to very little, not more than twelve dollars a year. Ben had earned at the factory five dollars a week, and his aunt averaged two. To some readers it

may seem remarkable that three persons could live and clothe themselves on seven dollars a week; but Mrs. Bradford was a good manager, and had not found the problem a difficult one.

Now, however, the question promised to become more difficult. If Ben found nothing to do, the family would be reduced to two dollars a week, and to live comfortably on that small sum might well appal the most skilful financier.

Ben woke up early, and immediately began to consider the situation. His motto was "Wait and Hope"; but he knew very well that he must work while he was waiting and hoping, otherwise he would differ very little from the hopeful Micawber, who was always waiting for something to turn up.

"Aunt Jane," he said, after a frugal breakfast, over which Mrs. Bradford presided with an uncommonly long face, "how much money have you got on hand? I want to know just how we stand."

Mrs. Bradford opened her pocketbook with a sigh, and produced two one-dollar bills and thirty-seven cents in change.

"There's only that between us and starvation," she said mournfully.

"Well, that's something," said Ben cheerfully. "Isn't it, Tony?"

"It's a lot of money," said the inexperienced Tony. "I never had so much in all my life."

"There, somebody thinks you are rich, Aunt Jane," laughed Ben.

"What should the poor child know of household expenses?" said Mrs. Bradford.

"To be sure. Only we may get some money before that is used up.

They owe me at the factory for half a week—two dollars and a half. I shall get it Saturday night. We won't starve for a week, you see."

"Where are you going, Ben?" asked Tony; "won't you stay and play with me?"

"I can't, Tony. I must go out, and see if I can find something to do."

Milltown was something more than a village. In fact, it had been incorporated two years before as a city, having the requisite number of inhabitants. The main street was quite city-like, being lined with stores.

"I wonder if I can't get a change in a store," thought Ben. So he made his way to the principal street, and entered the first store he came to—a large dry-goods store.

Entering, he addressed himself to a small, thin man, with an aquiline nose, who seemed to have a keen scent for money.

"What can I do for you, young man?" he asked, taking Ben for a customer.

"Can you give me a place in your store?" asked Ben.

The small man's expression changed instantly.

"What do you know of the dry-goods trade?" he inquired.

"Nothing at present, but I could learn," answered our hero.

"Then, I'll make you an offer."

Ben brightened up.

"If you come into the store for nothing the first year, I'll give you two dollars a week the second."

"Do you take me for a man of property?" asked Ben, disgusted.

The small man replied with a shrill, creaking laugh, sounding like the grating of a rusty hinge.

"Isn't that fair?" he asked. "You didn't expect to come in as partner first thing, did you?"

"No, but I can't work for nothing."

"Then—lemme see—I'll give you fifty cents a week for the first year, and you can take it out in goods."

"No, thank you," answered Ben. "I couldn't afford it."

As he went out of the store, he heard another grating laugh, and the remark: "That's the way to bluff 'em off. I offered him a place, and he wouldn't take it."

Ben was at first indignant, but then his sense of humor got the better of his anger, and he said to himself: "Well, I've been offered a position, anyway, and that's something. Perhaps I shall have better luck at the next place."

The next place happened to be a druggist's. The druggist, a tall man, with scanty black locks, was compounding some pills behind the counter.

Ben was not bashful, and he advanced at once, and announced his business.

"Don't you want a boy?" he asked.

The druggist smiled.

"I've got three at home," he answered. "I really don't think I should like to adopt another."

"I'm not in the market for adoption," said Ben, smiling. "I want to get into some store to learn the business."

"Have you any particular fancy for the druggist's business?" asked the apothecary.

"No, sir, I can't say that I have."

"I never took much, but enough to know that I don't like it."

"Then I am afraid you wouldn't do for experiment clerk."

"What's that?"

"Oh, it his duty to try all the medicines, to make sure there are no wrong ingredients in them—poison, for instance."

"I am afraid I shouldn't like that," said Ben.

"You don't know till you've tried. Here's a pill now. Suppose you take that, and tell me how you like it."

The druggist extended to Ben a nauseous-looking pill, nearly as large as a bullet. He had made it extra large, for Ben's special case.

"No, I thank you," said Ben, with a contortion of the face; "I know I wouldn't do for experiment clerk. Don't you need any other clerk? Couldn't I learn to mix medicines?"

"Well, you see, there would be danger at first—to the customers, I mean. You might poison somebody, and then I would be liable for damages. If you will get somebody to sign a bond, forfeiting ten thousand dollars in any such case,

I might consider your application."

"I don't think I could find any such person," said Ben.

"Then I am afraid I can't employ you. You are quite sure you don't want to be experiment clerk?"

"And swallow your medicines? I guess not. Good morning."

"Good morning. If you want any pills, you will know where to come."

"I would rather go where they make 'em smaller," said Ben.

Ben and the druggist both laughed, and the former left the shop.

"That's the second situation I have been offered today," soliloquized our hero. "They were not very desirable, either one of them, to be sure, but it shows there's an opening for me somewhere."

The next was a cigar store.

"I might as well go in," thought Ben.

A little hump-backed man was behind the counter.

"Want to hire a boy?" asked Ben.

"Are you the boy?"

"Yes."

"What can you do?"

"I am willing to do anything."

The hunchback grinned.

"Then perhaps I can give you a situation. Will you work for three dollars a week?"

Ben reflected.

"That will do, with strict economy," he thought, "till the factory takes me on again."

"I'll come for a few weeks, at that rate," he said.

"But perhaps you won't like your duties," said the hunchback, grinning in a curious manner.

"What would be my duties?"

"I should paint you red, and have you stand outside the door, as an Indian," was the answer.

Ben didn't relish the joke.

"You'd better take that position yourself," he retorted. "Nobody'd know the difference."

"Get out!" roared the cigar dealer angrily.

Ben left at once.

"That's the third situation I've been offered," he said: "I'd give 'em all three for a decent one."

Chapter III

At Lovell's Grounds

On the way home Ben met James Watson.

"How are you, James?" he said. "What have you been doing this morning?"

James gaped.

"The fact is," he said, "I have only just got up and had my breakfast."

"I don't see how you can lie abed so late."

"Oh, I can do it just as easy. I guess I was born sleepy."

"You look so," retorted Bed, with a laugh.

"What have you been doing?" inquired James lazily.

"I've been about in search of a place."

"You have!" said James, with sudden interest. "Did you find any?"

"Yes, I found three."

"What!" exclaimed James, in surprise.

"I was offered three places."

"Which did you take?"

"I didn't take any; I didn't like them."

"You are too particular, Ben. Just tell me where they are; I'll accept one."

"All right!" said Ben. "I'll give you all the information you require.
The first is a dry-goods store."

"I'd like to be in a dry-goods store. What's the pay?"

"Fifty cents a week for the first year."

"Faugh!" ejaculated James, disgusted. "What's the second place?"

"Experiment clerk at the druggist's."

"Good pay?"

"I don't know."

"What are the duties?"

"To taste all the medicines, to make sure there's no poison in them. The druggist offered me a pill, to begin with, about as large as my head."

"I wouldn't take it for a hundred dollars a week. What's the third?"

"In a cigar store. The pay is three dollars a week."

"That's better than nothing. Where is it? I guess I'll take it."

"I don't think you'll like the duties," said Ben, laughing.

"I wouldn't mind selling cigars."

"That isn't what you're wanted for. You are to be painted red, and stand outside as an Indian."

"That's the worst yet. I don't wonder you didn't take any of those chances. What are you going to do this afternoon?"

"Try and find some more places."

"Leave that till tomorrow. You know there's going to be a big picnic at Lovell's Grounds, with all sorts of athletic sports. There are prizes for wrestling, jumping, and so on."

"I would like it well enough, but I can't afford to go."

"There'll be nothing to pay. Father subscribed for two tickets, so I've got a spare one. Come, will you go?"

"Yes, I will, and thank you."

"Then come round to the house as soon as you've got through dinner."

"All right! I'll come."

"I suppose you haven't found a place?" said Mrs. Bradford when Ben entered.

"Not yet."

"I don't know what's going to become of us if you don't," said Aunt Jane mournfully.

"Don't get discouraged so quick, aunt. I've only been looking round one forenoon. Besides, I've been offered a place, and declined it."

"Declined it! What could you have been thinking of?"

Ben then told his aunt of the place at the druggist's. He thought he would not mention the others.

"If you'd taken it, we might have got our medicine cheaper," said Aunt Jane, who did not comprehend a joke, and understood the offer literally.

"I should have got mine for nothing," said Ben, laughing, "and more than I wanted, too."

"What pay would you get?"

"I didn't ask. The first pill the druggist offered me was too much for me. So I respectfully declined the position."

"Pills are excellent for the constitution," said Mrs. Bradford, in a rather reproachful tone. "I never could get you to take them, Benjamin. Some day you'll lose your life, perhaps, because you are so set against them."

"I can't say I hanker after them, aunt," said Ben good humoredly. "However, you see, I might have had a place, so you mustn't get discouraged so quick."

"Will you stay at home this afternoon, Ben?" asked little Tony.

"I can't Tony; I have an engagement with James Watson. Aunt Jane, if I am late to supper, don't be frightened."

Ben found James ready and waiting. They set out at once.

Lovell's Grounds were situated a mile and a half away; they comprised several

Lovell's Grounds were situated a mile and a half away, they comprised several acres, sloping down to a pond, which was provided with pleasure boats. The grounds were frequently hired by parties from neighboring towns, having been fitted up especially for the enjoyment of a crowd. To-day they were engaged by a young people's association, and the program included, among other things, some athletic sports.

The grounds were pretty well filled when the two boys arrived. In fact, the performance had already commenced.

"You're just in time for the fun, boys," said George Herman, a mutual acquaintance, coming up to meet them.

"Why, what's up George?"

"There is to be a fat man's race of two hundred yards, for a prize of five dollars."

"Who are going to enter?"

"Tom Hayden, the landlord of the Milltown House, and Jim Morrison, the tailor. One weighs two hundred and fifty, the other two hundred and forty-three."

"Good!" laughed Ben. "That will be fun. Where do they start from?"

"There! Don't you see that chalk-mark? And there come the men."

There was a level track laid out, extending two hundred yards, which was used for such occasions, and this was one of the attractive features of Lovell's Grounds.

The two men advanced to the starting-line, each accoutered for the race. They had divested themselves of their coats, and stood in shirt-sleeves, breathing

had divested themselves of their coats, and stood in shirt sleeves, breathing hard already, in anticipation of the race. Their bulky forms appeared to great advantage, and excited considerable amusement. Tom Hayden, who was rather the heavier of the two, had encircled his waist with a leather strap, which confined it almost as closely as a young lady's waist. This was by advice of Frank Jones, a young fellow noted as a runner.

"I don't think I can stand it, Frank," said Hayden, gasping for breath.

"Oh, yes, you can, Mr. Hayden. You'll see how it will help you."

"I can hardly breathe. You've got it too tight."

Frank Jones loosened it a little, and then turned to Morrison.

"Won't you have a girdle, too, Mr. Morrison?" he asked.

"Not much. I don't want to be suffocated before I start. Have you made your will, Hayden?"

"Not yet, I will make it after I have won the prize."

"Are you ready, gentlemen?" asked Frank Jones, who officiated as starter.

"As ready as I ever expect to be," answered Hayden, trying to draw a long breath, and failing.

"Then, start at the word three. One! Two! Three!"

Amid shouts of applause, the two fat men started. It cannot be said they started like arrows from the bow, but they certainly exerted themselves uncommonly. Their faces grew red with the efforts they made, and their colossal legs hurried over the ground as fast as could reasonably be expected.

"I could beat them easily," said James Watson.

"I could beat them easily," said James Watson.

"Of course you could. Just wait till you've got as much to carry.
Look! there's Morrison down!"

It was true. Somehow one of Morrison's legs entangled with the other, and he tumbled and rolled over and over.

"Go in and win, Hayden!" shouted fifty voices to his gasping competitor.

About seventy-five yards remained to be traversed. It look as if Hayden could win the race with opposition. But he was quite out of breath. He pressed both hands on his stomach, stopped, and deliberately sat down on the track.

"Don't give it up!" yelled the crowd. "Keep on, and the prize is yours!"

"I can't," gasped Hayden, "and I wouldn't for five times the prize. I don't want it."

So the prize was not awarded, but the crowd had their fun, and the two fat competitors sat down together to rest under a tree. They did not recover from their efforts for at least an hour.

"Is there to be a boys' race?" asked Ben.

"Yes, the boys' race is next in order. You'd better enter."

"I will," said Ben. "What's the prize?"

"Five dollars."

Ben's eyes sparkled.

"If I could only win it," he thought, "it would be equal to a week's pay at the

factory."

Chapter IV

The Boys' Race

Ben felt that his chances of winning the prize were very good. Among his schoolmates he was distinguished for his superiority in all athletic sports. He could jump farther and run faster than any of the boys of his age; and this was a ground of hope. On the other hand, he could not tell how many contestants there might be. He had measured himself against the boys of his acquaintance; but there were hundreds of other boys in the city, and among them it was quite possible that there might be one who surpassed him. However, Ben was always hopeful, and determined to do his best to win.

One of the committee now came forward and announced the boys' race. The distance was to be the same, the prize five dollars, and there was a limitation of age. No boy over seventeen years of age was permitted to enter.

"Are you going to compete, James?" asked Ben.

"I guess not. I don't stand any chance against you."

"I don't know about that. I might stumble or give out."

"I should like the five dollars well enough."

"Then enter your name."

"Well, I will. I may as well try."

So Ben and James were the first to enter their names.

"Are you coming in, George?" asked Ben of George Herman.

"No; I lamed myself in jumping yesterday, and am not in condition; my brother, Frank, is going to enter. Of course he won't stand any chance, for he is too young."

The next to put down his name was Radford Kelso.

"You can't run, Radford. You're too fat," said George Cormack.

"You're as fat as I am," retorted Radford. "I stand as much chance as you."

Next came Arthur Clark and Frank Jones, both tall and long of limb, and looking as if they might be dangerous rivals. Both were strangers to Ben.

"I am afraid one of those fellows will outrun me," said Ben, aside, to James.

"They are taller, but perhaps they can't hold out as well."

"But the course is only two hundred yards," said Ben; "that is against me."

Just then the announcement was made, on behalf of the committee, that the distance would be increased to three hundred yards, and that there would be a second race of a hundred and fifty yards for boys under fourteen, the prize being two dollars and a half.

being two dollars and a half.

"Frank," said George Herman to his brother, "you had better wait and enter the second race."

"I think I will and here is Charlie. He can go in, too."

Edward Kemp, Harry Jones and George Huntingdon next entered their names for the first race. The list was about to be declared complete, when an active, well-made youth advanced, and expressed a wish to compete. He had just reached the grounds, and learned that a race was to be run. He gave his name as John Miles, from Boston.

"Who is he, George? Do you know him?" asked Ben.

"I believe he is visiting some friends in Milltown."

"He looks as if he might run."

"He is well made for running. The question is, has he had any training."

"That's going to decide the matter."

"Take your places, boys!"

At the order, the contestants, whose names have already been given, took their places in line.

John Miles glanced carelessly and rather contemptuously at his rivals.

"I'll show them how to run," he said.

"You are very kind," said Frank Jones, who stood next to him. "We never saw anybody run, you know."

"I have practiced running in a gymnasium," said Miles pompously.

"Running is the same all the world over."

"Perhaps it is; but I run on scientific principles."

Frank Jones laughed.

"You are very condescending to run with us, then."

"Oh, I go in for all the fun I can get."

"I suppose you expect to win the prize?"

"Of course I do. Who is there to prevent? You don't pretend to run, do you?"

"Well, I've always supposed I could run a little, though I have never run in a gymnasium; but there are better runners here than I. That boy"—pointing to Ben—"is said to be a good runner."

"He!" said John Miles contemptuously. "Why, I'm a head taller than he. He's a mere baby."

"Well, we shall see."

Time was called, and the signal to start was given.

The boys started almost simultaneously; Arthur Clark was fastening a girdle about his waist, and that delayed him a little. For a few rods all the boys kept pretty well together. Then three gradually drew away from the rest. These three were John Miles, Frank Jones, and Ben Bradford. Arthur Clark was just behind, but his loss at the start put him at a disadvantage.

When the race was half over, John Miles led, while fifteen feet behind Ben

When the race was half over, John Miles led, while, fifteen feet behind, Ben Bradford and Frank Jones were doing their best to overtake him. John Miles wore upon his face the complacent smile of assured victory.

At two hundred yards, Frank and Ben had partially closed the gap between themselves and John Miles. Intent though he was on his own progress, Ben had leisure to observe that Miles was beginning to lose ground. It seemed clear that he was inferior to Ben in sustained power.

"There is hope for me yet," thought Ben. "I am not in the least tired. Toward the end I will put on a spurt, and see if I can't snatch the victory from him."

"Go in and win!" exclaimed Frank Jones. "You're got more wind than I. Don't let a stranger carry off the prize."

"Not if I can help it," said Ben.

He was now but four feet behind John, and there were fifty yards to be run.

For the first time, John Miles became apprehensive. He turned his head sufficiently to see that the boy whom he had considered beneath his notice was almost at his heels.

"I can't let a baby like that beat me," he said to himself, and he tried to increase the distance by a spurt. He gained a temporary advantage, but lost more in the end, for the attempt exhausted his strength, and compelled him to slacken his speed farther on.

Twenty yards from the goal the two rivals were neck and neck.

"Now for my spurt!" said Ben to himself.

He gathered himself up, and darted forward with all the strength that was in him. He gained six feet upon his rival, which the latter tried in vain to make up

him. He gained six feet upon his rival, which the latter tried in vain to make up.

The excitement was intense. Popular sympathy was with Ben. He was known to be a Milltown boy, while John Miles was a stranger.

"Put on steam, Milltown!" shouted the crowd.

"Hurrah for Boston!" called out two personal friends of John Miles.

Ben crossed the line seven feet in advance of John, amid shouts of applause.

Frank Jones came in an easy third, and Arthur Clark ranked fourth.

"I congratulate you," said Frank to Ben, who stood, flushed and pleased, at the goal. "You've won the prize fairly."

John Miles stood by, mortified and sullen.

"Better luck next time!" said Frank Jones. "You see we know a little about running."

"I should have won easily enough if I hadn't had a sudden attack of cramp," said John grumbling.

"You didn't run as if you had the cramp."

"You say so, because you don't know how fast I can run. I didn't run at all this morning."

"That's unlucky. I wanted to see some real running."

"I should like to run the race over again," said John.

"Of course, you can't for the prize has been won."

"I don't care about the prize. I've got money enough."

"I haven't," said Ben; "I care more for the money than the victory."

"Look here!" said John. "I'll put up five dollars myself, if you'll run with me again."

"You will?" exclaimed Ben, his eyes sparkling.

"Yes, I will."

"And you won't ask me to put up anything?"

"No."

"Then I'll run if the committee will let me."

A ready permission was obtained from the committee; but it was stipulated that the younger boys should have their race first. To this both contestants readily agreed, since it would give them a chance to recover from the fatigue of the race they had just engaged in.

Chapter V

Ben Wins Again

"I am very glad you won," said Frank Jones, in a low voice.

"Thank you; so am I," answered Ben, smiling.

"Of course I should have preferred to win myself," continued Frank candidly; "but, as I saw that it lay between you and John Miles, I sided with you."

"Do you know Miles?"

"No, but I spoke with him just as the race began. I saw that he felt sure of winning. He boasted that he had practiced running at a gymnasium in Boston."

"Then I wonder he didn't beat me."

"He would on a short race; but your wind is better."

"I am glad to win, for the sake of the money," said Ben. "I have lost my place at the factory, and my aunt depends on my earnings."

"Then I am glad for you," said Frank. "I didn't need the money myself. If I had won, I would have given it to you, knowing your circumstances."

"You are very kind," said Ben gratefully.

"You may win another five dollars. I hope you will."

"It will be rather hard on John Miles to lose two races and his money, too."

"You needn't consider that. If I judge him rightly, he has self-conceit enough to carry him through a dozen defeats. He will have some excuse ready, you may be sure. He says he lost the first race by a sudden cramp. He has not more cramp than I."

"There are little boys in line," said Ben. "I recognize Frank and Charlie Herman. Do you know the others?"

"I know nearly all. Next to Charlie Herman are Aleck Gale, Johnny Clarke, little Vanderhoef, Brooks Gulager, and Charlie Boyd. The end boy is Charlie Snedeker."

"Who will win?"

"One of the Hermans, probably."

The prediction proved correct.

Charles Herman can in first, leading his brother by a few feet.

"You ought to divide the prize with me, Charlie," said Frank. "I didn't like to beat my older brother, or I would have run ahead of you."

"You didn't seem to hold back much," said Charlie. "However, I will be generous and give you a dollar. It will be all in the family."

Proclamation was now made that a supplementary race would be run, for a prize of five dollars, offered by John Miles, the contestants being John Miles and Ben Bradford. The distance by request of Miles, was diminished to two hundred yards. John was shrewd enough to see that the shorter distance was more favorable to himself. Defeat had not diminished his good opinion of himself, not increased his respect for Ben.

"You gained the race by an accident," he said to Ben, as they stood side by side, waiting for the signal.

"Perhaps I did," replied Ben good-humoredly; "all I can say is that it was a lucky accident for me."

"Of course it was. You don't think you can run as fast as I can?"

"I can't tell yet. I will do my best."

"You will have to. I have practiced running in a Boston gymnasium."

"Then you have the advantage of me."

"Of course I have. Besides, I am taller than you."

"For all that, I mean to win your five dollars if I can."

"My money is safe enough. I don't concern myself about that."

"He has a tolerably comfortable opinion of himself," thought Ben; "I begin to want to beat him for something else than the money."

The signal was given, and the boys started.

As in the first race, John Miles soon took the lead. He was nearly three inches taller than Ben. Naturally, his legs were longer, and this was an advantage. Again he put forth all his strength at once; Ben, on the other hand, reserved his strength for the close of the contest. When the race was half over, John Miles was probably twenty feet in advance.

"Boston, will win this time," said Arthur Clark. "See how much Miles leads."

"I am not so sure of that," said George Herman. "I know Ben Bradford. He is very strong, and can hold out well. Miles is using himself up. Do you see how he is panting?"

This was true. In spite of all his training, John Miles had never been able to overcome a shortness of breath which was constitutional with him. It was

telling upon him now.

Foot by foot Ben gained upon him. It was the first race over again. Toward the finish he overtook him, and a final spurt won the race—with John Miles full ten feet behind.

"Have I won fairly?" asked our her, turning to John.

"That confounded cramp caught me again," said John sullenly. "If it hadn't been for that, you couldn't have beaten me."

"That was unlucky for you."

"I could beat you by twenty-five yards if I felt all right."

"Boasting is easy," thought Ben, but he did not say it. He felt in too good humor over his second victory.

"We may have a chance to run again some time when you are in better condition," he said cheerfully.

"Maybe so," answered John dubiously. He felt that he had had enough of running against Ben.

Ben's acquaintances gathered about him, and congratulated him over his double victory. Boys whom he did not know sought an introduction, and he found himself quite a lion.

John Miles returned to the two boys who had accompanied him, and began to apologize for his want of success.

"I was awfully unlucky," he said. "I suppose that fellow thinks, because he has beaten me twice when I had the cramp, that he is a better runner than I am.

Just see those fellows crowding around him! I suppose he will strut like a turkey-cock."

But this was doing injustice to Ben. He certainly had reason to feel pleased with his success; for it not only brought him a sum equal to two weeks' wages at the factory, but he received the congratulations of the boys so modestly that he won the good opinion of many who had hitherto been strangers to him.

"By George, Ben, you've done well," said James Watson. "I just wish I were in your place."

"I owe my good luck to you, James."

"How is that?"

"You invited me to come here. I shouldn't have come but for you."

"I am glad of it, Ben. From what you tell me, the money'll come in handy."

"Indeed it will, James."

"It would come in handy to me, too, but you need it more."

Ben was summoned before the committee of the picnic, and asked whether he preferred to take his prizes in money or in the form of a gold medal.

"In money," he said promptly.

"The medal would always remind you of your victory."

"They wouldn't receive it at a grocery store," said Ben.

"Then you are a family man?" said a member of the committee, smiling.

"Yes," said Ben; "I've got an aunt and cousin to provide for."

"Yes," said Ben; "I've got an aunt and cousin to provide for."

The money was accordingly placed in his hands. Two five-dollar greenbacks were a rich reward for his afternoon's exertions, he thought.

"I wish I could earn as much money every day," he thought.

"We would have no trouble then about getting along."

About half-past four o'clock, Ben and James left the picnic grounds, and started on their way home. They had occasion to pass the cigar store where Ben had been offered employment. The proprietor was standing at the door.

"Have you made up your mind to accept my offer?" he asked recognizing Ben.

"You don't offer enough," said Ben.

"Isn't three dollars a week enough for a boy like you?"

"Since I last saw you I've earned ten dollars," answered Ben.

"You have!" exclaimed the cigar dealer, in surprise. "I believe you are deceiving me. You don't expect me to believe a story like that."

"There is the proof," said Ben, displaying the greenbacks.

"Are you sure you haven't stolen the money?" asked the dwarf suspiciously.

"I am as sure as that you are no gentleman," retorted Ben, nettled by his tone.

The cigar dealer began to jump up and down with rage, and shook his fist violently at the two boys, who retired laughing.

Chapter VI

Mr. Dobson's Visit

It was a little after five o'clock when Ben entered his humble home. He was in excellent spirits, as may be imagined. His aunt's face, however, presented a decided contrast to his own.

"Well, Benjamin," she said, with a sigh, "I suppose you haven't found anything to do."

"No, Aunt Jane, I have been to a picnic."

"I don't see how you can have the spirits to go to a picnic when we are on the verge of starvation," said Mrs. Bradford reproachfully.

"Not so bad as that, Aunt Jane; we won't starve this week, anyway."

"Perhaps not; but I look forward to the future."

"So do I, Aunt Jane," Ben replied; "but there is this difference between us. You look forward with discouragement, while I look forward hopefully. You know my motto is, Wait and Hope!"

"You'll have plenty of waiting to do," his aunt retorted; "but there isn't much to hope for."

"Why isn't there?"

"I shouldn't think you'd need to be told. You haven't earned a cent to-day, and——"

"How do you know I haven't?" demanded Ben, smiling.

"How could you? You were going about this morning after a place, and this afternoon you have been at a picnic."

"For all that, aunt, I have earned something—more than if I had been at the factory."

Mrs. Bradford stared at Ben in astonishment.

"How much did you earn, Ben?" asked Tony.

"Haven't I done well enough to earn a dollar, Tony?"

Mrs. Bradford's face assumed a more cheerful look, for a dollar in that little household would go far.

"I don't see how you found time to earn so much, Benjamin," she said.

"Now, just suppose, aunt, that I earned two dollars," said Ben, with a merry twinkle in his eyes.

This was too much for his aunt to believe.

"If supposing would make it so, I should be very glad to suppose; but it won't."

"But it's true, aunt."

"I can't believe it, Benjamin, unless you've found the money somewhere, and then you will have to return it."

"No, I earned it, Aunt Jane, and it's mine fairly."

"I am glad to hear it, Benjamin. Is there any chance to earn any more the same way?"

"I am afraid not, Aunt Jane. However, I've done even better than I told you. I've earned ten dollars this afternoon."

"Benjamin Bradford!" said his aunt sharply. "Do you expect me to believe such a foolish story as that?"

Ben laughed, He was not surprised at his aunt's incredulity; he wouldn't have believed that morning that there was any chance of his making so much money.

"I don't know as I blame you, Aunt Jane; but if you won't believe me, perhaps you'll believe your own eyes," answered Ben, as he drew forth the two five-dollar bills from his pocket, and showed them to Mrs. Bradford.

"Are they good?" she asked suspiciously.

"As good as gold, Aunt Jane; well, not exactly as good as gold, but as good as greenbacks, anyway."

"I can't understand it at all," said Mrs. Bradford, in helpless bewilderment.

"Then I'll tell you all about it," said Ben; and he did so.

"I shall have a high opinion of my legs from this time," he concluded, "for they have earned ten dollars in quicker time than my hands can earn twenty-five

cents."

Even his aunt, in spite of her despondent mood, could not help being cheerful over such good fortune as that.

"You see, Aunt Jane, that even if I don't earn anything for the next two weeks, we shall be as well off as if I had been working at the factory all the time. So don't worry any more till that time has passed."

"You certainly have been very fortunate, Benjamin," Mrs. Bradford was forced to admit.

A copious rain is very apt to be followed by a protracted drought, and I am sorry to say that this was the case with Ben's luck. Day after day he went about Milltown, seeking for employment, and night after night he returned home disappointed and empty-handed. If it had depended only on himself, his courage would still have kept up; but his aunt's dismal forebodings affected his spirits. He did not find it quite so easy to wait and hope as he anticipated.

Three weeks passed, and Ben was painfully sensible that there was but a dollar in the house.

They had just risen from the dinner table on the day when their fortunes were at so low an ebb, when a knock was heard at the door. A man of about thirty-five, Mr. Jotham Dobson, was admitted. Mr. Dobson was a man with a brisk, business-like air.

"Won't you come in, Mr. Dobson?" asked Ben, who had answered the knock.

"Is your aunt at home?" inquired Mr. Dobson bruskly.

"Yes, sir."

"Then, I'll step in a minute, as I want to see her on business."

"What business can he possibly have?" thought Ben. "I wish his business lay with me, and that he wanted to employ me."

"Good morning, Mrs. Bradford," said Dobson rapidly. "No, thank you, I really haven't the time to sit down; I have a little business with you, that's all."

"Perhaps he wants to get me to do some sewing," thought Mrs. Bradford; but she was doomed to be disagreeably disappointed.

"Perhaps you are not aware of it," said Mr. Dobson, "but I am the city collector of taxes. I've got your tax bill made out. Let me see—here it is. Will it be convenient for you to pay it to-day?"

"How much is it?" faltered Mrs. Bradford.

"Eleven dollars and eighty cents, precisely," answered the collector.

Mrs. Bradford looked so doleful that Ben felt called upon to reply.

"We can't pay it this morning, Mr. Dobson," he said.

"Really, you had better make the effort," said Dobson. "You are aware that the tax is now due, and that one per cent a month will be added for default. That's twelve per cent, a year—pretty heavy."

"What shall we do, Benjamin?" asked his aunt, in a crushed tone.

"Wait and hope, Aunt Jane."

"My friends," said Mr. Dobson persuasively, "I really think you'd better make the effort to pay now, and so avoid the heavy interest."

"Perhaps," said Ben, "you'll tell us how to pay without money?"

"You might borrow it."

"All right! I am willing. Mr. Dobson will you be kind enough to lend us twelve dollars to meet this bill?"

Mr. Dobson's face changed. It always did when any one proposed to borrow money of him, for he was what people called a "close" man.

"I really couldn't do it," he answered. "Money's very scarce with me—particularly scarce. It's all I can do to pay my own taxes."

Ben smiled to himself, for he knew how the application would be answered.

"Then of course we can't pay at present," he said. "We've tried to borrow, and can't."

"I didn't expect you'd try to borrow of me—the tax collector," said Dobson; "even if I had the money, it would be very unprofessional of me to lend you the money."

"It would be very unprofessional of us to pay you without money," returned Ben.

"I suppose I must call again," said the collector, disappointed.

He was disappointed less for the city than for his own account, for he received a percentage on taxes collected.

"I suppose you must."

"Benjamin, this is awful," said Mrs. Bradford piteously, after Mr. Dobson had

"Benjamin, this is awful," said Mrs. Bradford piteously, after Mr. Dobson had retired. "What is going to become of us? The city will sell the house for taxes."

"They'll wait a year first, at any rate, Aunt Jane; so we won't fret about it yet. There are other things more pressing."

"If we don't get some money within a day or two, we must starve, Benjamin."

"Something may turn up this afternoon, Aunt Jane. Wait and hope!"

Ben put on his hat and went out. In spite of his cheerful answer, he felt rather sober himself.

Chapter VII

Ben Gets Employment

When Ben got out into the street, he set himself to consider where he could apply for employment. As far as he knew, he had inquired at every store in Milltown if a boy was wanted, only to be answered in the negative, sometimes kindly, other times roughly. At the factory, too, he had ascertained that there was no immediate prospect of his being taken on again.

"It's a hard case," thought Ben, "when a fellow wants to work, and needs the money, and can find no opening anywhere."

It was a hard case; but Ben was by no means the only one so situated. It may be said of him, at all events, that he deserved to succeed, for he left no stone unturned to procure employment.

"Perhaps," he thought, "I can get a small job to do somewhere. It would be better to earn a trifle than to be idle."

As this thought passed through Ben's mind, he glanced into Deacon Sawyer's yard. The deacon was a near neighbor of his mother, and was reputed rich, though he lived in an old-fashioned house, furnished in the plain manner of

forty years back. It was said that probably not fifty dollars' worth of furniture had come into the house since the deacon's marriage, two-and-forty years previous. Perhaps his tastes were plain; but the uncharitable said that he was too fond of his money to part with it.

A couple of loads of wood were just being deposited in the deacon's yard. They were brought by a tenant of his, who paid a part of his rent in that way.

When Ben saw the wood, a bright thought came to him.

"Perhaps I can get a chance to saw and split that wood," he said to himself. "The deacon doesn't keep a man, and he is too old to do it himself."

As Ben did not mean to let any chance slip, he instantly entered the yard by the gate, and, walking up to the front door, rang the bell. The bell had only been in place for a year. The deacon had been contented with the old fashioned knocker, and had reluctantly consented to the innovation of a bell, and he still spoke of it as a new-fangled nonsense.

Nancy Sawyer, an old-maid daughter of the deacon, answered the bell.

"Good morning, ma'am," said Ben politely.

"Good morning, Ben," the deacon's daughter responded. "How's your aunt to-day?"

"Pretty well, thank you."

"Will you come in?"

"I called on business," said Ben. "Don't you want that wood sawed and split?"

"Yes, I suppose it ought to be," said Nancy. "Do you want to do it?"

"Yes," said our hero. "I'm out of work and ready to do anything I can find to do."

"Are you used to sawing and splitting wood?" inquired Nancy cautiously. "We had a boy once who broke our saw, because he didn't understand how to use it."

"You needn't be afraid of my meeting with such an accident," said Ben confidently. "I saw and split all our wood at home, and have ever since I was twelve years old."

"Come in and speak to father," said Nancy; "I guess he'll be willing to hire you."

She led the way into a very plain sitting room, covered with a rag carpet, where the deacon sat in a rocking chair, reading an agricultural paper—the only one he subscribed to. His daughter, whose literary tastes were less limited, had tried to get him to subscribe for a magazine, but he declined, partly on account of the expense, and partly because of the pictures of fashionably dressed ladies, and he feared his daughter would become extravagant in dress.

Deacon Sawyer looked up as Ben entered the room.

"It's Ben Bradford, father," said Nancy, for her father's vision was impaired.

"He ain't come to borrow anything, has he, Nancy?" asked the old man.

"No, he wants you to employ him to saw and split your wood."

"Don't you know I'm a sawyer myself?" said the deacon, chuckling over a familiar joke.

Ben laughed, feeling that it was his policy to encourage what feeble glimmering of wit the deacon might indulge in.

"That's your joke, father," said Nancy. "You'll have to get the wood sawed and split, and you might as well employ Ben."

"I thought you was in the factory, Benjamin," said the old man.

"So I was, but they cut down the number of hands some weeks ago, and I had to leave among others."

"How do you make a livin', then?" inquired the deacon bluntly.

"We've got along somehow," said Ben; "but if I don't get work soon, I don't know what we shall do."

"Nancy," said the deacon, "seems to me I can saw the wood myself. It will save money."

"No, you can't father," said Nancy decidedly. "You are too old for that kind of work, and you can afford to have it done."

"You are a sensible woman, even if you are homely," thought Ben, though for obvious reasons he did not say it.

"I dunno about that, Nancy," said her father.

"Well, I do," said Nancy peremptorily.

The fact is, that she had a will of her own, and ruled the deacon in many things, but, it must be admitted, judiciously, and with an eye to his welfare.

"How much will you charge, Benjamin," the deacon asked, "for sawing and splitting the whole lot."

"How much is there of it?" asked Ben.

"Two cords."

"I don't know how much I ought to charge, Deacon Sawyer. I am willing to go ahead and do it, and leave you to pay me what you think right."

"That's right," said the deacon in a tone of satisfaction. "You may go ahead and do it, and I'll do the right thing by you."

"All right," said Ben cheerfully. "I'll go right to work."

I am obliged to say that in this agreement Ben was unbusiness-like. There are some men with whom it will answer to make such contracts, but it is generally wiser to have a definite understanding. For the lack of this, disputes often arise, and mean men will take advantage when so fair an opportunity is afforded them.

After Ben left the room, Nancy, who was sensible and practical, and by no means niggardly as her father, said to him; "You ought to have named your terms, Ben. Then you would know just what you are earning."

"I was afraid I might ask too much, and lose the job."

"Now you may get too little."

"Even if I do, I would rather be at work than be doing nothing."

"That's the right way to feel," said Nancy, approvingly. "I like to see a boy at your age industrious. As to the terms, I will try to make my father do you justice."

"Thank you, ma'am. Can you tell me where you keep the saw and ax?"

"Thank you, ma'am. Can you tell me where you keep the saw and ax?"

"You will find them in the woodshed, in the L part."

"Thank you."

"How long do you expect the job will take you?"

"I should think two or three days; but I have never undertaken such a large job of any kind before."

"Very well. I didn't speak of it because there is any hurry about it."

"You may not be in a hurry, but I am," thought Ben, "for I want the money."

Ben tackled the wood-pile vigorously. It was not a kind of work he was partial to; but he was sensible enough to know that he must accept what work came in his way without regard to his own preferences.

He had been at work about an hour when he heard his name called from the street. Looking up, he recognized James Watson.

"Is that you, Ben?" asked James, in some astonishment.

"It is supposed to be. Don't I look natural?" asked Ben, smiling.

"What are you doing?"

"Don't you see? I am sawing wood."

"You don't mean you go around from house to house sawing wood?"

"Why not?"

"I should think you would be too proud to do it."

"I am not too proud to do any honest work that will put money in my pocket. Isn't it as respectable as working in the factory?"

"Certainly not. I am willing to work in the factory, but I wouldn't go round sawing wood."

"You can afford to be proud, James, but I can't. We are almost out of money, and I must do something."

"I don't believe the deacon will give you much of anything. He hasn't the reputation of being very generous."

"I must take my chance at that."

"I am sorry for it. I wanted you to go fishing with me this afternoon."

"I should like to go, James, but business before pleasure, they say."

"Ben has not pride," thought James, as he went away, disappointed.

But he was mistaken. Ben was proud in his way, but he was not too proud to do honest work.

Chapter VIII

Deacon Sawyer's Liberality

About four o'clock on the afternoon of the third day, Ben completed his job. Not only had he sawed and split the wood, but carried it into the woodshed and piled it up neatly, all ready for use. He surveyed his work not without complacency.

"The deacon can't find fault with that job," he said to himself. "He ought to pay me a good price."

The shed opened out of the kitchen. Ben rubbed his feet carefully on the mat, knowing that housekeepers had a prejudice against mud or dust, and, ascending a couple of steps, entered the kitchen. Miss Nancy was there, superintending her "help."

"Well, Miss Nancy," said Ben, "I've finished the wood."

"Have you piled it up in the woodshed?" asked the lady.

"Yes. Won't you come and look at it?"

Nancy Sawyer stepped into the shed, and surveyed the wood approvingly.

"You've done well," she said. "And now I suppose you want your money."

"It would be convenient," admitted Ben.

"You'll have to see father about that," said Nancy.

"Can I see him now?" asked Ben, a little anxiously, for he knew that his aunt's stock of money had dwindled to ten cents.

"Yes; you may go right into the sitting room."

"Yes; you may go right into the sitting-room."

This room was connected by a door with the kitchen.

"Wait a minute," said Nancy; and she looked at Ben in rather an embarrassed way.

Ben paused with his hand on the latch, waiting to hear what Miss Nancy had to say.

"My father is very careful with his money," she said. "He may not realize how much work there has been in sawing and splitting the wood. He may not pay you what it is worth."

Ben looked serious, for he knew that he needed all he had earned.

"What shall I do if he doesn't?" he asked.

"I don't want you to dispute about it. Take what he gives you, and then come to me. I will make up what is lacking in one way or another."

"Thank you, Miss Nancy. You are very kind," said Ben.

"I don't know about that," said Nancy. "I don't pretend to be very benevolent; but I want to be just, and in my opinion that is a good deal better. Now you may go in."

Ben lifted the latch, and entered the sitting-room. He found that the deacon was not alone. A gentleman, of perhaps thirty-five, was with him.

"I hope I am not intruding," said Ben politely, "but I have finished with the wood."

Though Deacon Sawyer was a very "close" man, he was always prompt in his

payments. So much must be said to his credit. He never thought, therefore, of putting Ben off.

"I suppose you want to be paid, Benjamin?" he said.

"Yes, sir, I should like it, if convenient to you."

"Lemme see, Benjamin, how long has it taken you?"

"Two days and a half, sir."

"Not quite. It's only four o'clock now. Have you just go through?"

"Yes, sir."

"We didn't make no bargain, did we?"

"No, sir, I left it to you."

"Quite right. So you did. Now, Benjamin," continued the deacon, "I want to do the fair thing by you. Two days and a half, at twenty-five cents a day, will make sixty-two cents; or we will say sixty-three. Will that do?"

Poor Ben! He had calculated on three times that sum, at least.

"That would only be a dollar and a half a week," he said, looking very much disappointed.

"I used to work for that when I was young," said the deacon.

"At the factory I was paid five dollars a week," said Ben.

"Nobody of your age can earn as much as that," said the deacon sharply. "No wonder manufacturin' don't pay, when such wages are paid. What do you say,

Mr. Manning?" continued the deacon, appealing to the gentlemen with him.

Mr. Manning's face wore an amused smile. He lived in the city, and his ideas on the subject of money and compensation were much less contracted than the deacon's.

"Since you appeal to me," he answered. "I venture to suggest that prices have gone up a good deal since you were a boy, Deacon Sawyer, and twenty-five cents won't go as far now as it did then."

"You are right," said the deacon; "it costs a sight for groceries nowadays. Well, Benjamin, I'll pay you a little more than I meant to. Here's a dollar, and that's good pay for two days and a half."

Ben took the money, but for the life of him he couldn't thank the deacon very heartily. He had been paid at the rate of forty cents a day, which would amount to two dollars and forty cents a week, for work considerably harder than he had done at the factory.

"Good afternoon," he said briefly, and reentered the kitchen.

Nancy Sawyer scanned his face closely as he closed the door of the sitting-room. She was not surprised at his expression of disappointment.

"Well," she inquired, "what did father pay you?"

"He wanted to pay me sixty-three cents," answered Ben, with a touch of indignation in his tone. "Twenty-five cents a day."

"Of course that was much too little. What did he pay you?"

"A dollar."

"How much were you expecting to get?" asked Nancy, in a business-like tone

"How much were you expecting to get?" asked Nancy, in a business-like tone.

"I was hoping to get seventy-five cents a day. That would be less than I got at the factory."

"I think your work was worth that much myself," said the spinster.

Ben felt encouraged.

"My father is getting old. He forgets that money won't buy as much as it did in his younger days. He means to be just."

"Then I don't think he succeeds very well," thought Ben.

"I understand such things better," proceeded Miss Nancy, "and I try to make up for father's mistakes, as far as I can. Now tell me what are you meaning to do with the money you received for this job?"

"I shall give it all to Aunt Jane," answered Ben.

"You are a good boy," said Nancy approvingly. "And she will buy groceries with it, I suppose?"

"Yes, Miss Nancy. It is about all she has to depend upon."

"Just so. Now, Ben, I will tell you what I will do. Father keeps me pretty close myself, as far as money goes, but we have plenty in the house of groceries and such things as your aunt will need to have. Now, will it do just as well if I give you the balance that you have earned in that form?"

"It will do just as well, Miss Nancy, and I am very much obliged to you for your kindness."

"I am not kind, only just," said Nancy. "I don't think it honest to pay too little

for work, nor father, either, for that matter, only he doesn't always set the right value on it. Maggie, you may bring me the large covered basket in the back room up-stairs."

Maggie brought the basket at once, and Miss Nancy went with it into the storeroom, or buttery. She tied up various parcels of sugar, tea, and flour, and added two loaves of bread and a couple of pies, quite filling the basket.

"There," she said, "I guess you'll find a dollar and a half's worth of articles here. Give my love to your aunt, and tell her from me that they are not a gift, but that you have fairly earned them."

"Thank you, Miss Nancy," said Ben, overjoyed at his good luck.
"You may say you are not kind, but I am sure you are."

Miss Nance was really pleased by this recognition of her attempt to do justice.

"If it's kindness," she said, "you are very welcome. Do you find it hard to get along, Benjamin?"

"Pretty hard, since I have lost my place at the factory, Miss Nancy."

"Tell your aunt," said Miss Nancy significantly "that if she ever want to borrow any flour or groceries, to come to me."

"Thank you," said Ben gratefully, and he felt sure that Nance had a kind heart, in spite of her prim and formal demeanor.

With a glad heart, he carried home the basket, and its contents brought great relief to Mrs. Bradford, who, as she told Ben, was "most out of everything."

Chapter IX

Mr. Manning's Proposal

After supper Ben sauntered slowly up the street. It was a relief to him after his confinement during the day, and there was always a chance to find something to do. This was desirable, for now that Deacon Sawyer's woodpile was disposed of, Ben had no work engaged.

Ben sauntered along, as I have said, until he found himself in front of the Milltown Hotel.

It was the only hotel in the town, and, though not large, was able to accommodate all who had occasion to visit the town and were not otherwise provided.

"I wonder if Mr. Brockton"—this was the landlord's name—"hasn't got something for me to do," thought Ben.

As this thought occurred to him, he entered by the open door, and stepped into the office.

Mr. Brockton was not in, but, in an armchair at a window, Ben recognized Mr. Manning, the same gentleman whom he had seen two hours before at Deacon Sawyer's.

The recognition was mutual. Mr. Manning removed his cigar from his lips and

said, with a smile:

"Your name is Benjamin, isn't it?"

"Yes sir."

"Have you come to spend some of the money you received from my friend, the deacon?"

"No, sir. It is all the money I have in the world, and I must take good care of it."

"Wages don't seem to be very high in Milltown," remarked Mr. Manning pleasantly, and he smiled again.

"Not for sawing and splitting wood, sir. They pay very well in the factory.

"Were you ever employed in the factory?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you happen to lose your place?" inquired Mr. Manning searchingly.

"It was the dull times, sir. They discharged quite a number, and as I was one of the latest on, of course I was among the first to go."

"You don't complain of that, do you?"

"No, sir; but at the same time, it was unlucky for me."

"Still, it wasn't as bad as if you were a man with a family to support."

"I have a family to support, sir."

"You have?" repeated Mr. Manning, a little surprised. "You are rather young —to have a family," he added, with a smile.

Ben laughed.

"I am not married yet, if that's what you mean," he said; "but I have an aunt and cousin to take care of."

"And you find it hard work, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me about it. Here sit down next to me, and tell me how you are situated."

Mr. Manning had a sympathetic tone, which invited confidence. So Ben followed his directions, and confided to him all his perplexities.

"We got along well enough," he concluded, "as long as I kept my place at the factory. Five dollars a week went a good way with us. Besides, my aunt made about two dollars a week sewing.

"Is she making that now?"

"No, sir. Even that kind of business is getting dull. Last week she made a dollar and a quarter."

"That isn't much."

"No, sir. But every little helps."

"You are right there. We must not despise small earnings—such as you made in the deacon's employ."

"I got paid better than you think, sir," said Ben. "Miss Nancy made it up to me."

"Did she? I am glad to hear it. She is a good woman. She understands better than her father the proper price of work."

"Yes, sir. Are you any relative to Deacon Sawyer?"

"No," said Mr. Manning, "but I have had a little business transaction with the deacon. He's pretty close in money matters."

"So people say here, sir."

"But I must do him justice, and add that you can rely implicitly upon his word. Well, Ben, what are your plans?"

"Only to find work of any kind, sir."

"How happened you to come to the hotel here?"

"I thought Mr. Brockton might possibly have something for me to do."

"Sawing wood, perhaps?"

"Yes, sir; or anything else that is honest."

"You are a good industrious boy," said Mr. Manning approvingly.
"You deserve to succeed."

This approval encouraged Ben.

"Thank you, sir," he said.

"Perhaps I may some time have it in my power to help you."

"I hope you may sir. At any rate, I thank you for mentioning it."

Mr. Manning paused a moment. He appeared to be in thought. As he remained silent, Ben concluded that the interview was at an end.

He rose from his seat, and was about to bid Mr. Manning good evening, when the latter said: "Are you particularly engaged for the next hour, Ben?"

"No, sir," Ben answered, rather surprised.

"Then suppose we take a walk? I am alone here, and would like your company."

"Thank you, sir," said our hero, feeling flattered at the value set upon his society by a gentleman from New York; for he had ascertained that Mr. Manning was a member of a business firm in the great city.

They left the hotel, Mr. Manning lighting a fresh cigar.

"I won't offer you a cigar, Ben," he said, "for I don't think it well for boys of your age to smoke."

"I never smoked in my life," said Ben.

"But I presume you know some boys that do."

"Oh, yes, plenty of them."

"It is a bad thing for them, impoverishing the blood, and often checking the growth. I am glad you have not contracted the habit. Suppose we walk by your house?"

"All right, sir. You won't find it very large or elegant."

"But is it comfortable?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"What kind of woman is your aunt? You may think it an odd question, but I have my reasons for asking."

"She is an excellent woman," said Ben. "She has only one fault."

"What is that?"

"She gets discouraged too easily."

"As now, for instance?"

"Yes, sir; she predicts that we shall all be in the poor-house inside a month."

"What do you think about it?"

"My motto is, 'Wait and Hope.'"

"A very good one, but I can give you a better."

"What is that, sir?"

"Work and Hope."

"Oh, I mean that, too. There isn't much use in waiting if you don't work, too."

"I see we agree pretty well on that point."

"That is our house," said Ben, pointing out the cottage where his aunt lived.

It was small, but everything about it was neat and attractive.

It was small, but everything about it was neat and attractive.

"How many are there in your family?" asked Mr. Manning, again.

"My aunt and my little cousin, Tony."

"How old is he?"

"Seven years old."

"You wonder, perhaps, why I ask so many questions," said Mr. Manning. "I will tell you. By the death of an intimate friend I have become guardian to a little girl, about five years old. She is at present in the city, but I think she will be better off in the country. Now, do you think your aunt would take charge of such a child—for a fair price, of course? It might pay her better than sewing."

"I think she would," said Ben; "but would you be satisfied with our humble way of living?"

"I don't wish the child to live on rich food. Good bread and butter and plenty of milk are better, in my opinion, than rich meats."

"She could have as much of those as she wanted."

"And your little cousin would be company for her."

"Yes, sir; he would like it very much. He feels lonely when I am away."

"Then, as to the terms, I think I should be willing to pay seven dollars a week."

"Seven dollars a week for a little girl's board!" exclaimed Ben, astonished.

"Well, not exactly for the board alone. There will be considerable care. I could get her boarded for half that, but her father left considerable property

could get her boarded for half that, but her father left considerable property, and I prefer to pay a generous price. Do you think she will consent to take the child?"

"Yes, sir, and think herself very lucky, too. Won't you come in and speak to her about it?"

"No; you may speak to her about it, and I will call in the morning, and settle the details of the arrangement. And now, good night."

"Good night, sir.'

"What splendid luck!" thought Ben. "Aunt Jane will hardly believe it. Didn't I tell her to 'Wait and Hope'?"

And he entered the house.

Chapter X

Ben's Journey

Ben looked so cheerful and smiling that Tony asked: "Have you got work, Ben?"

"Not yet, Tony."

Mrs. Bradford shook her head rather despondently.

"We might as well go to the poorhouse first as last," she said.

"I don't think we had better go at all, Aunt Jane," said Ben.

"You can't find anything to do."

"Not yet, but I expect to some time."

"And what are we going to do till then?"

"I mean to fall back upon you, Aunt Jane. I think you will be able to keep us from starving."

"I don't know what you mean, Benjamin. I am sure I am willing to work; but last week I only earned a dollar and a quarter, and I don't feel sure of even doing that."

"I have got a plan for you, Aunt Jane."

"What is it?"

"You might take a boarder."

"Who would come to board with me?"

"Perhaps I can find you a boarder."

"Besides, any one that could pay a fair price would expect better living than we could afford."

"I don't think you will find that trouble with the boarder I have engaged for

you."

"What do you mean, Benjamin?" asked Mrs. Bradford, in surprise.

"What would you say to boarding and taking care of a little girl of five?"

"Do you know of any such little girl?"

"Yes."

"What would her friends be willing to pay?"

"Seven dollars a week."

This was about twice as much as Mrs. Bradford expected, and she looked incredulous.

"I don't believe any one would pay such a price," she said.

Upon this Ben gave his aunt full particulars, and her usually sober face brightened up at the prospect of thus maintaining their home.

"I can hardly believe it," she said. "This Mr. Manning must be very liberal.

"The money doesn't come from him. He says the little girl has property, and can afford to pay well. He is coming round to-morrow morning to learn whether you will take her."

"Won't you take her, mother?" pleaded Tony.

"I shall be very glad of the chance," said Mrs. Bradford. "It will make us very comfortable."

"Still, Aunt Jane, if you would really prefer going to the poorhouse," said Ben,

his eyes twinkling, "I will go round and see if you can get in."

"Never mind, Benjamin," said his aunt cheerfully. "I prefer to keep out of that place as long as I can."

"Would you like to have a little girl to play with, Tony?" asked Ben.

"It'll be bully," said Tony.

"Where did you learn that word, Tony?" inquired his mother, shocked.

"It isn't swearing, is it, mother?"

"No, but it is not refined."

"I'm too young to be refined, mother."

"But where did you learn it, Tony?"

Ben smiled. "Tony don't want to expose me, Aunt Jane," he said. "I suppose he learned it of me. It isn't a bad word."

"I never used it," said Mrs. Bradford primly.

"No, I should think not," said Ben, laughing. "I can't image you calling anything bully. It isn't a lady's word. You know, aunt, boys can't always use go-to-meetin' words. They want to be free and easy sometimes."

Here the discussion was dropped, and the evening was passed cheerfully.

The next morning Mr. Manning called. Admitted into the little cottage, he glanced quickly about him, and was pleased to find that, though the furniture was plain, there was evidences of neatness. Mrs. Bradford, too, in spite of her tendency to low spirits, impressed him favorable, as likely to be kind and

judicious. But perhaps what influenced him as much as anything was the presence of Tony, for he held that a child companion would be very desirable for his young ward. He repeated the offer of seven dollars a week.

"I am afraid it will hardly be worth that, Mr. Manning, though it will be very welcome to us," said Mrs. Bradford.

"I prefer to pay liberally, since the property left to my young charge is ample. Besides, she will be more or less care. I shall have to trouble you to provide the little girl with suitable attire, charging, of course, all outlays to me."

"I shall be very glad to do so, Mr. Manning. When do you wish the child to come?"

"As soon as possible."

"Will you bring her yourself?"

"There will be some difficulty about that," answered Mr. Manning hesitatingly. "I can't leave my business."

"Where is she, may I ask?"

"In New York."

"Can't I go for her?" asked Ben eagerly.

"Why, Benjamin," expostulated his aunt, "you have never traveled.
I wouldn't trust you by yourself, much less with the care of a child."

Mr. Manning smiled, but Ben was annoyed.

"Why, Aunt Jane, you must think me a baby," he said. "I guess I can take care of myself."

"I wouldn't dare to go to New York myself alone," said his aunt.

"Oh, that's different," said Ben. "You're a woman, and of course you couldn't take care of yourself."

"And you are a man, I suppose?" said Mr. Manning, amused.

"I shall be some time, and Aunt Jane never will," returned Ben.

"I think, Mrs. Bradford," said Mr. Manning, "that your nephew is right in that. Seriously, I am inclined to favor the plan."

"Do you really think Benjamin can be trusted, Mr. Manning?"

"I really do."

"He has never been away from home."

"I think he has plenty of self-reliance, and will quickly learn what little is needed about traveling. I am willing to trust him."

"Thank you, sir," said Ben, much gratified, feeling a high respect for Mr. Manning's judgment.

"Can you get him ready to go with me by the twelve-o'clock train?" asked Mr. Manning.

"Twelve o'clock!" ejaculated Mrs. Bradford, startled. "Why, it's nine now."

"Well, aunt, can't I change my clothes in three hours?" asked Ben impatiently.

"But to go on such a journey! It seems so sudden."

"I don't think there will be any trouble in getting ready," said Mr. Manning, to whom the journey to New York seemed like a mere trifle, though it was nearly six hundred miles away. "Of course," he continued, "I shall pay his expenses. And"—and here he hesitated a little, from motives of delicacy—"allow me to pay two weeks' board in advance. You may have occasion to use the money."

"Thank you, sir," said Mrs. Bradford gratefully.

It did, indeed, relieve her from anxious embarrassment, for her purse was very low; and if Ben were gone any length of time, she would have been in a dilemma.

"I think we have settled all that is needful," said Mr. Manning, rising to go. "If anything else occurs to me, I will either tell Ben or write to you. Good morning, Mrs. Bradford."

"Good morning, sir."

Turning to Ben, Mr. Manning said:

"Ben, let me see you at the hotel as early as half-past eleven."

"I'll be on hand, sir," said Ben. "I'll get there earlier, if you say so."

"Just as you like. When you come, call for me."

"Yes, sir."

"It doesn't seem as if you were going away, Ben," said Tony.

"I can't hardly realize it myself, Tony."

"It's a great responsibility, Benjamin," said his aunt, beginning to look serious.

"Suppose the cars run off the track."

"I guess they won't, Aunt Jane."

"I was reading of an accident out West only yesterday."

"I am not going out West, Aunt Jane. I guess I'll reach New York right side up with care."

"What an expression, Benjamin!"

Ben laughed.

"Only boys' talk, aunty. It means all right."

"Don't you go on the steamboat, too, Benjamin?"

"I guess so."

"The boiler may explode."

"If everybody thought that, nobody would travel, Aunt Jane. It doesn't happen once in a thousand times."

At last Ben got ready.

He was very much excited, but his excitement was of a pleasurable kind. One his way to the hotel, he met James Watson.

"Where ware you going, all dressed up, Ben?"

"Going to New York," answered Ben proudly.

"You're only foolin'!"

"No, I'm not. I'm going to New York by the twelve-o'clock train."

"What for?" asked James astonished.

"To escort a lady home," answered Ben. "She wants an able-bodied escort, that's used to traveling."

James was very much surprised, and also a little incredulous, but he was finally convinced that Benn was in earnest.

"I wish I were in your shoes," he said enviously. "There's nothing I'd like better than going to New York. You're a lucky boy!"

Ben quite agreed with him.

Chapter XI

In New York

Of the journey to New York I do not purpose to speak. Ben enjoyed it extremely, for it gave him his first view of the great world. As he whirled by town after town and city after city, and reflected how small, after all, was the distance on the map between Milltown and New York, he got a new idea of the size of the world.

the size of the world.

"What are you thinking about, Ben?" asked Mr. Manning, observing that our hero looked thoughtful.

"I was thinking how large the world is, sir."

"Didn't you ever think of that before?"

"No, sir; I have always lived in Milltown. I don't think I was ever ten miles from home before."

"Then your ideas were necessarily contracted. One advantage of travel is, that it broadens our views, not only as regards distance, but also of men and things."

Ben assented, though he did not fully understand his companion's statement.

From time to time Ben asked questions of Mr. Manning; but after a while that gentlemen met a friend on the cars, and Ben was left pretty much to himself.

They did not reach New York till midnight.

"I will take you to my boarding-house to-night, Ben," said his companion. "Tomorrow we will talk over our plans."

A hansom conveyed them to a house in an up-town street, where Mr. Manning boarded. Of course Ben could not at that hour see much of the great city which he was visiting for the first time. Besides, he was quite fatigued, and felt more like closing his eyes in sleep than using them.

Mr. Manning's rooms were very comfortable, and even luxurious.
Ben slept soundly till his companion waked him up.

"Come, Ben, it's eight o'clock, and the breakfast bell is ringing. Haven't you had sleep enough?"

The sun was shining bright in at the window, and the noise of carriages could be heard in the street beneath.

Ben looked about him in momentary bewilderment.

"Don't you know where you are?" asked Mr. Manning smiling.

"Yes, I am in New York," said Ben, his face brightening up.

"I'll be dressed in less than no time," he exclaimed, leaping out of bed, and setting to work energetically.

"If you keep your promise I certainly can't complain," said Mr. Manning.

"Shall we be late to breakfast?" asked Ben, with some anxiety.

"There will be others later. So you feel hungry, do you?"

"Uncommonly hungry," said Ben. "I guess it's travelling that gives me an appetite. What a nice place you live in, Mr. Manning! It's very handy having water come out of pipes. How do they do it?"

"I'll explain to you some time, when we are not in such a hurry."

"All right, sir."

Ben was soon dressed, and went down to breakfast with his new patron. There was quite a difference between the appearance of the table at this fashionable boarding house and their plain breakfast table at home; but Ben was one who easily adapted himself to new circumstances, and did not display any greenness.

"Now, Ben," said Mr. Manning, as they rose from the table, "I suppose you are not in a very great hurry to go home."

"No, sir."

"You would like to see a little of the city?"

"Yes, sir, very much."

"I think day after to-morrow will be early enough to go back. You write a line to your aunt, so that she need not feel anxious."

"Thank you, sir. Where is the little girl?"

"She is temporarily staying at the house of a married sister of mine. My sister is rather an invalid, or she might keep her permanently. I shall not have time to go round and introduce you to-day, for my business will occupy me closely."

"Where shall I go, sir?" asked Ben.

"Wherever you like. You can wander round the city, and see whatever pleases you. Only be back a little before six o'clock, for that is our dinner hour."

"Dinner at six!" repeated Ben astonished, for he had always been accustomed to dine at twelve. "When do you take supper?"

"We don't sup at all, that is, not regularly. In the middle of the day we take lunch. You can go into some restaurant, and buy lunch."

"Yes, sir."

"Oh, by the by, have you got any money?" asked Mr. Manning.

"A little," answered Ben.

"How much?"

Ben produced thirty-seven cents in change.

"That is rather short allowance," said Mr. Manning. "Here take this."
He handed him a two-dollar bill.

"I don't need so much, Mr. Manning," said Ben.

But two dollars were not so much in the eyes of his patron, as in his.

"I dare say you can find a use for it," he said smiling.

"Thank you, sir."

"Well, good morning; or perhaps it will be as well for you to accompany me as far as Broadway. There I shall take a car, and you can saunter along as you please."

A brief walk brought them to Broadway, and then they separated.

Ben wandered down Broadway, amused at the sight until he same to Twenty-third Street, where he stopped. Ben look at it with admiration. He had never seen such structures, nor dreamed of their existence.

"New York's a splendid city!" he said to himself.

As he was looking about him, some one addressed him:

"What are you looking at Johnny?"

"My name isn't Johnny," answered Ben, turning toward the boy who had accosted him.

The boy puffed out his cheeks and whistled.

"When did you come from the country?" he asked.

"Why are you so anxious to know?" inquired Ben, who saw that the other was making game of him, and was not overwell pleased.

"Why, you see, Barnum has offered twenty-five cents for a country greenhorn, and I guess you'll do," said the boy, with his tongue in his cheek.

Ben was irritated at first, but he concluded to take it as a joke.

"I am not for sale at that price," he said, adding good humoredly, "I am green, I suppose. This is my first visit to the city. Can you tell me the name of that building?"

"That's the Imperial Hotel. Have you got a cigarette to spare?"

"No," said Ben; "I don't smoke."

"Then you ain't civilized," said the boy. "I've smoked for five years."

"You have!" exclaimed Ben, amazed. "Why, you don't look any older than I am."

"I'm sixteen."

"And I'm not quite fifteen."

Ben noticed that the boy had none of the youthful bloom which mantled his own cheeks. He was already paying the penalty of his early use of tobacco.

"You're a big boy of your age," said the city boy.

Ben thought that the other was small for his age, but he did not say so.

"Look here, Johnny," said the New York boy.

"My name is Ben."

"What's the odds? Well, Ben, if you'll give me a quarter. I'll go round and show you some of the sights; what do you say?"

Ben hesitated. It seemed to him a little extravagant. At the same time his curiosity was aroused, and he finally agreed to the proposal. When he returned to his home in the country, he felt that he should like to be able to tell his companions something of the city he had visited.

"Give me five cents in advance," said the newly engaged guide.

"What for?" asked Ben, cautiously.

"I want to get some cigarettes."

Ben complied with his request.

The boy darted into a small cigar store, and soon emerged with a cigarette in his mouth at which he puffed with evident pleasure.

"Won't you try one?" he asked.

"I guess not," said Ben.

"Come along, then. You ask any questions about what you see, and I'll answer."

"What's that field? It's a common, isn't it?" asked Ben pointing to a park after they walked down Broadway for a few blocks.

"Oh, that's Madison Park; but we've got a good deal bigger park than that up-town. Central Park—that's the name of it."

"Is it far off?"

"About two miles. Do you want to go there?"

"No, I'd rather see the streets, and the nice buildings. I can see plenty of fields at home."

"Are you going to stay long in the city?" asked, Tom, for this Ben learned was the name of his companion.

"Only a day or two. I want to see as much as I can while I am here."

They walked down Broadway, Tom pointing out the prominent buildings, and answering the numerous questions asked by Ben. On the whole, he proved to be a very good investment in the way of a guide, being well-informed on the subjects about which Ben inquired.

When they reached the Astor House, Tom said: "I guess you've got a quarter's worth out of me. If you want me any longer you must give me another quarter."

"I can't afford it," said Ben, "I guess I can get round by myself now."

So Tom left him with scant ceremony, and Ben sat down on a bench in City Hall Park to rest.

Chapter XII

An Adventure

Presently a young man, rather showily dressed, sat down beside Ben. He glanced sharply at our hero, but did not immediately address him. Finally he said: "Fine day, my young friend."

"Yes, sir, very fine," returned Ben politely.

"I suppose you live in the city?"

"No, sir, I am here only on a visit," said Ben, rather flattered by the supposition.

"I don't look so green, after all," he thought.

"So am I," said the other, "I live in Philadelphia."

"I am from the country," said Ben.

"Indeed! You have lived in the city some time, have you not?"

"No, sir."

"I am surprised to hear it. You have the appearance of a city boy."

Ben was not inaccessible to flattery. It was not surprising that he regarded the young man from Philadelphia with favor.

"Have you dined?" inquired the stranger.

"Not yet," said Ben. "I don't know where to find a restaurant."

"Say no more about it, my young friend. I shall be glad to have you dine with me. I know a good place, quite near by."

"You are very kind," said Ben, "considering that I am a stranger."

"I have a young cousin who resembles you very closely. I suppose that is why I cannot regard you as a stranger. By the way, what is your name?"

"Ben Bradford."

"Singular coincidence! My cousin is named Benjamin. My name is John Smithson. Well, Ben, if you will allow me the familiarity, suppose we go to dinner."

"Thank you, Mr. Smithson."

Ben followed his new acquaintance to a moderately-priced restaurant in Fulton Street. It was the first time he had ever been to an eating-house, and looked with interest at the numerous tables.

Smithson and he took seats at a small table opposite each other, and the former began to inspect the bill of fare.

"I hope you have a good appetite, my young friend," he said, "so that you may do justice to my hospitality."

"City people seem to be very kind," thought Ben. "No one in Milltown would pay me such attention."

Finally he made his selection, and so did Smithson.

At the end of half-an-hour the dinner was concluded.

Smithson looked at the checks.

"Sixty cents and seventy-five cents," he said; "that makes a dollar and thirty-five cents."

"Yes, sir."

"I have go to step out a minute," said Smithson. "Oblige me by paying at the desk out of this bill."

As he spoke he handed Ben a five-dollar bill.

"But," said Ben, "there will be nearly four dollars left."

"Meet me an hour hence at the place where we were seated, and hand me the balance of the money."

"But," said Ben, "I might miss you. Haven't you better pay yourself, as you go out?"

"I am in a great hurry, to meet an engagement," said Smithson.

"Suppose I shouldn't meet you. Suppose I should keep the money."

"No fear. You look honest. Well, meet me in an hour;" and he hurried out of the restaurant, saying, with a nod to the cashier: "The boy will pay."

Here was another compliment. Ben thought. A perfect stranger had trusted

Here was another compliment, Ben thought. A perfect stranger had trusted him with three dollars and sixty-five cents, which he might readily make off with.

"I am glad I look honest," thought Ben. "I seem to be treated very well."

Two minutes later he went up to the cashier's desk, and, laying down the two checks, extended the five-dollar bill. The cashier was about to make change when his attention seemed to be drawn to the bill. He held it up, and scrutinized it very closely, considerably to Ben's surprise.

"Young man," said he suspiciously, "where did you get this bill?"

"From the man that came in with me," answered Ben.

"Are you aware that this is a bad bill?" asked the cashier sharply.

"A bad bill?" exclaimed Ben, in genuine surprise. "No, I had no idea of it."

"Who is this man who gave it to you? Do you know him?"

"He said his name was Smithson, from Philadelphia. I never saw him before this morning."

"What were you to do with the change I gave you back? Did he tell you to keep it?"

"No, sir. I was to meet him in the park in an hour and give it to him."

"He has been making a catspaw of you."

"I don't understand," said Ben.

"Knowing the bill to be bad, he did not venture to offer it himself, as it would

make him liable to arrest."

"Arrest!" exclaimed Ben, in dismay.

"Yes. One who knowingly offers a counterfeit bill is liable to arrest and imprisonment."

"I hope you don't think I knew anything about it," said Ben alarmed.

"No; you look too honest to be a confederate of a scoundrel."

"He ought to be ashamed of himself to impose upon me," said Ben indignantly. "What shall I do?"

"Have you any other money?"

Ben produced a two-dollar bill.

"I will take pay out of this for your share of the dinner, and with your help I propose to arrest your companion."

The cashier briefly explained his plan. A policeman was summoned, and Ben was instructed to meet Smithson at the time appointed, and tender him the change.

He did so.

Smithson looked up eagerly as Ben approached.

"Have you got the change?" he asked.

"Yes," said Ben.

"Give it to me."

Ben drew fro his vest-pocket three dollars and sixty-five cents, with which he had been provided, and tendered them to the young man, who eagerly took them.

"Much obliged," said Smithson, looking elated at the supposed success of his plan.

Just then, a quiet-looking man, a detective in citizen's clothes, stepped up and laid his hand on the swindler's arm.

"Mr. Smithson, I want you."

"What for?" inquired Smithson, turning pale.

"For passing a counterfeit bill."

"I have passed no counterfeit," faltered Smithson.

"You employed this boy to do it for you."

"There's some mistake," said Smithson stammering. "You can't prove anything."

"With this boy's help we can. Don't trouble yourself to invent excuses. You have been suspected for some time."

"The boy lies," said Smithson fiercely.

"If he does it will be found out. Come along with me."

Much against his will, Smithson walked arm-in-arm with the detective. Ben was notified to be in attendance at court the next morning, at ten o'clock, to testify against his new friend.

"I am more of a greenhorn than I thought," Ben said to himself. "Who would have thought such a polite young man was a counterfeiter!"

About four o'clock Ben went up-town to Mr. Manning's boarding-house, and remained there till the merchant arrived.

Chapter XIII

A Curious Old Lady

The next morning Mr. Manning introduced Ben to his temporary ward, a bright, attractive little girl, who seemed to take an instant fancy to our hero.

"Is he my brother?" she inquired of Mr. Manning.

"He is going to be your brother, if you like," was the smiling reply.

"I am glad of it," said the little girl, putting her hand confidingly in Ben's.

Ben was not much used to girls, never having had a sister, but it occurred to him that he should find it very pleasant to have Emma in the house.

"Are you willing to leave the city and go home with your new brother?" asked Mr. Manning.

"Yes," said Emma promptly. "When are we going?"

"This afternoon. You will sail on a big boat, and then ride on the cars. Shall you like that?"

"Ever so much," said Emma, clapping her hands. "You will take care of me, won't you?" appealing to Ben.

"Oh, yes, I'll take care of you," said Ben manfully.

"I think you had better go to Boston on the Fall River line," said Mr. Manning. "That will give you nearly all night on the boat, and you can have a comfortable night's rest. Indeed, I think you may as well remain on board till the half-past-six train starts. That will get you into Boston about nine o'clock, in time for a late breakfast. What time can you go to Milltown?"

"There is a train at half-past ten."

"That will answer very well. Now, if you will come down-town with me, I will engage passage for you."

Ben accompanied Mr. Manning to the office of the steamers, and passage tickets were obtained and paid for.

At four o'clock, Ben and his young charge were seated in the showy cabin of the immense Sound steamer which plies between New York and Fall River.

As the two were chatting, an old lady, evidently from the country, looked attentively at them. She was old and wrinkled, and, from time to time, took a pinch of snuff from a large snuff-box which she took from the pocket of her dress.

"What is your name, little gal?" she inquired at last.

"Emma," answered the child,

"Come and kiss me," said the old lady.

Emma surveyed the old lady critically, and answered bluntly, "I don't want to."

"Come and kiss me, and I'll give you the first cent I find on the currant bushes," said the old lady coaxingly.

"I don't want to," answered Emma again.

"Why don't you want to?" asked the old lady, with a wintery smile.

"'Cause you're old and ugly, and put snuff up your nose." answered Emma, who had not yet learned that the truth is not to be spoken at all times.

The old lady gasped with wrath and amazement.

"Well, I never did!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, you did," said Emma, understanding her to say that she never took snuff. "I saw you do it a minute ago."

"You are a bad, wicked little gal!" said the old lady, in high displeasure. "You're spoiled child."

"No, I ain't," said Emma, angry in turn. "Don't you let her call me names," she added, speaking to Ben.

Ben found it difficult not to laugh at the old lady's discomfiture; but he felt called upon to apologize for his young charge.

"I hope you'll excuse her, ma'am," he said. "She's only a little girl."

"How old is she?" asked the old lady abruptly.

"Five years old."

"Then she'd orter know better than to sass her elders," said the old lady snappishly. "She's badly brung up. Is she your sister?"

"No, ma'am."

"Is she any kin to you?"

"No; I'm her guardian."

The old lady adjusted her spectacles, and surveyed Ben from head to foot in a scrutinizing manner.

"Sho!" said she. "Why, you're a child yourself!"

"I'm fifteen," returned Ben, with dignity.

"You don't mean to say you have the care of the little gal?"

"At present I have."

"Ain't nobody else travelin' with you?"

"No, ma'am."

"Where are you goin?"

"To Milltown."

"Where's that?"

"In Massachusetts."

"Is she goin' to board with your folks?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I'd like to have charge of her for a month. I'd make a different gal of her."

"I wouldn't go with you," said Emma.

"If you was bad, I'd whip you so you couldn't stand," said the old lady, her eyes snapping. "I've got a granddarter about as big as you; but she wouldn't dare to sass me the way you have."

"I'm glad you ain't my grandmother," said Emma. "I don't want a dirty grandmother like you."

"You mustn't talk so, Emma," said Ben, thinking it time to interfere.

"Talkin' won't do no good. She ought to be whipped," said the old lady, shaking her head and scowling at Emma.

"Don't you want to go on deck and see the steamer start?" asked Ben, as the only means of putting a stop to the irrepressible conflict between the old lady and his charge.

"Oh, yes; let us go up."

So they went on deck, where Emma was not a little interested at the varied sights that met her eye.

"Did you ever see such an ugly old woman, Ben?" asked Emma, when they had reached the top of the stairs.

"Hush, Emma! You must be more particular about what you say. You shouldn't have said anything about her taking snuff."

"But she does take it," insisted the little girl. "I saw her put it up her nose."

"But she does take it," insisted the little girl. "I saw her put it up her nose."

"That is nothing to us. She has a right to take it if she wants to."

"But she wanted me to kiss her. You wouldn't want to kiss her, Ben, would you?"

"No, I don't think I should," answered Ben, with an involuntary grimace. "You were right in refusing that."

Soon after the boat started they went down to the supper-room and got some supper. Mr. Manning having supplied Ben with sufficient funds to travel in a liberal manner. Just opposite them at the table sat the old lady, who shook her head frowningly at the free-spoken young lady. Ben was amused in watching her.

"I say, you, sir," she said, addressing the waiter, "bring me some tea and toast, and be quick about it, for I ain't had anything to eat since breakfast, and feel kinder gone, at the stomach.

"Please write your order, ma'am, on this paper," said the waiter.

"What's the use of writin it? Can't you remember?"

"Yes, but the bill has to be footed up at the desk."

"Well, I can't write it, for I ain't got my specs about me."

"Madam, I shall be happy to write for you," said Ben politely.

"I'm obleeged to you. I wish you would," she said.

"What shall I put down?"

"How much is a cup of tea?"

"How much is a cup of tea?"

"Ten cents."

"It's awful high. It don't cost 'em more'n three cents."

"Shall I put it down?"

"Yes, I must have it. How much do they charge for toast?"

"Dry toast—ten cents."

"That's awful high, too. Why, you can git ten slices off a five-cent loaf, and they only bring you two or three. It costs a sight to travel."

"Cream toast—twenty cents," said Ben mischievously.

"What is the world comin' to?" exclaimed the old lady. "Twenty cents for cream toast! Like as not, it's skim-milk. Well, I guess you may put down dry toast."

"Shall I put down anything else?" asked Ben.

"How much do they charge for beefsteak?" inquired the old lady.

"Fifty cents."

"It's wicked shame!" she exclaimed indignantly. "They're a set of robbers, and I've a good mind to tell 'em so. You, sir"—to the waiter who came up at that moment—"what do you mean by askin' such shameful prices for your vittles?"

"I haven't anything to do with the prices, ma'am."

"I need some meat," said the old lady sternly, "but I won't buy any. I won't encourage you in your shameful swindlin'. I'll bear up as well as I can till I get

encourage you in your shameful swindlin'. I'll bear up as well as I can till I get home, though like as not I shall be faint."

The waiter took the written order, and brought the old lady's tea and toast. Ben ordered some steak, and, finding that more was brought than he needed, offered a piece to the old lady.

"Shan't I rob you?" asked the old lady, looking at the meat covetously.

"Not at all, ma'am. I've taken all I want."

"Then I don't keer if I do take a piece. I feel kinder faint, and meat goes to the right spot; but I wasn't going to pay any of their shameful prices."

The old lady ate the meat with evident relish, and an expression satisfaction, which arose partly from the reflection that she was gratifying her appetite without expense. She even regarded Emma with a softened expression, saying: "I forgive you, little gal, for what you said to me. You don't know no better. You must try to behave like the boy that's with you. He's a real polite boy."

"So he is," said Emma. "I like him ever so much."

Luckily she added nothing to kindle the old lady's resentment, and they rose from the table on good terms.

Chapter XIV

Chapter XIV

Prof. Crane, The Phrenologist

After supper Ben and his young charge took their seats in the main salon. The passengers were grouped about the tables, many of them reading the New York evening papers. Among them Ben observed a tall man, wearing a full beard, and attired in a suit of rather rusty black, who presently sat down beside him. From his appearance Ben fancied that he might be a clergyman or a missionary.

"My young friend," said the stranger at length, "are you traveling to Boston?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ahem! Do you live in Boston?"

"No, sir; I live in Milltown, a manufacturing town."

"Did you ever have your head examined?"

Ben stared at the questioner in surprise.

"What should I have my head examined for?" he asked.

"I see you don't understand me," said the gentlemen of clerical appearance. "I am a phrenologist."

"Oh, yes, I understand," said Ben.

"I lecture on phrenology and examine heads, describing the character and prominent traits of my subjects on phrenological principles. For instance, I can

prominent traits of my subjects on phrenological principles. For instance, I can readily tell by the help of my science your leading tendencies, and in what career you would be most likely to meet with success."

"I would like to know that myself," said Ben, becoming interested.

"My terms for an ordinary examination are twenty-five cents. For a written description I charge a dollar."

"If I had plenty of money," said Ben, "I wouldn't mind getting a written description."

"A dollar spent that way may save you hundreds of dollars, nay, perhaps thousands," said the phrenologist insinuatingly.

Ben shook his head.

"I haven't any money to spare," he said. "I have some money, but it was given to me to pay traveling expenses."

"Surely you can spare twenty-five cents," said the phrenologist. "You can remember what I say and write it down yourself afterward."

"So, I can," said Ben. "I guess I can afford a quarter; but where can we go?"

"Stay here," said Prof. Crane, for this was his self-chosen designation. "It will probably bring me other customers."

"I don't know," said Ben, looking about him doubtfully. "I don't think I should like to have all these people hear about me."

"You need not be afraid. You have a very good heard. Besides, it is no more public than at my lectures."

"All right then!"

"Move your chair forward a little. There, that is right."

Prof. Crane arose, and assumed the attitude of a speaker.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he commenced, after clearing his throat.

The gentlemen in the saloon looked up from their newspapers in some surprise at this unexpected interruption.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am Prof. Crane, the phrenologist. I trust you will pardon the interruption if I publically examine the head of this young man, and describe his character as indicated by his phrenological development."

"Go on," said a stout gentlemen opposite. "It will help to pass the time."

"Thank you, sir. I trust that what I may say will not only help to pass the time, but lead you to reflect seriously upon the great importance of this science, and its claims upon your attention."

All eyes were turned upon Ben, who bore the ordeal very well.

"This lad has an excellent head. All the organs are well balanced, none being in great excess. His temperament is nervous-sanguine. Hope predominates with him. He will not be easily discouraged, but when he has an object in view he will pursue it perseveringly to the end. He is not quarrelsome, but will not allow himself to be trodden upon. He has plenty of courage. He is not bashful, but respectful to his elders and superiors. He is conscientious, and more likely to do right than wrong. Of course he might yield to temptation, but it would have to be a powerful one. He has a fondness for pets, and will be kind to younger children. He will find no pleasure in ill-treating or tyrannizing over them He has not much invention, and would make a poor machinist, but is

likely to succeed in general business. He will probably be steady and reliable, and faithful to the interests of his employer."

This was the substance of Prof. Crane's description of our hero. Ben listened with satisfaction, feeling that it was a very good character indeed. He was sorry that some business man could not hear it, as it might lead him to offer him employment.

When the examination was over, Ben tendered the professor twenty-five cents in payment.

"Now," said the professor, looking around him, "is there any other lady or gentleman whose head I can examine, for the small sum of twenty-five cents? My usual terms are fifty cents, but as I am traveling, and this is out of office hours, I don't mind reducing the price for this occasion."

Among those present was a rustic couple, who appeared to be on a wedding trip. The bridegroom was dressed in a full suit of blue cloth, the coat being decorated with brass buttons, while the bride was resplendent in a dress brilliant in color and with large figures.

"Sally," said the young husband, "I want you to have your head examined. It only costs a quarter."

"Oh, Jonathan, how can I before all them folks?" said Sally bashfully. "Suppose he should say something bad about me."

"If he does, I'll bu'st his head," said Jonathan. "He can't say nothin' but what's good about you, Sally.

"All right, Jonathan, just as you say."

"My wife will have her head examined," said Jonathan, with a proud glance at his radiant bride.

his radiant bride.

"Please sit here, madam," said the professor. "Now I will trouble you to remove your bonnet."

"Don't tumble up my hair," said Sally solicitously.

"That will not be necessary," said Prof. Crane. "This lady has a very harmonious head."

"What's that?" inquired Sally, in a low voice, of Jonathan, who stood at her side.

"Something good, I reckon," whispered her husband.

"She has those sweet domestic virtues which fit the possessor to adorn the family circle and lend a luster to the home."

"How nice he talks!" murmured Sally, in a tone of gratification.

"Yes, Sally, he's smart," said Jonathan, "and can read you like a book."

"This lady has a great taste for music. She would be like to excel as a musician. Am I right, sir?"

"I guess you are," said Jonathan. "You'd ought to hear her sing in the choir to hum. She's got a powerful voice, Sally has. She can almost raise the rafters of the old meetin'-house."

"You see, ladies and gentlemen, that the husband of the lady confirms what I say of her. Phrenology never errs. A phrenologist is never mistaken in character. Nature has stamped her impress upon each one of us, and declares unmistakably what we are."

"Go ahead, professor," said Jonathan impatiently.

"The lady has a taste for strong and decided colors. What is showy attracts her admiration."

"That's so!" commented Jonathan.

"She has a good deal of firmness, and likes to have her own way; as most of use do," added the professor. "Still she would yield to strong persuasion."

It will be unnecessary to go farther in the examination which proved quite satisfactory to the young couple, and a source of amusement to the rest of the passengers.

Jonathan next submitted himself to the professor's skill, and was highly delighted in being told that he was fitted to shine in public life, and might hereafter become a member of Congress.

"I guess the folks at home will think more of me when they hear that," he remarked to Sally. "The professor has given us good characters."

"So he has. Do you think it's all true, Jonathan?"

"Of course it is. It's a wonderful science, Sally. I didn't know I had so many bumps."

"Nor I. I can't feel 'em myself."

"That's because you're not used to it. It takes the professor to do it."

Other subjects were forthcoming, and the professor cleared three dollars during the evening. He understood human nature well enough to flatter all, without absolutely contradicting the science of which he claimed to be the exponent.

exponent.

Chapter XV

An Old Convert to Phrenology

About eleven o'clock the steamer stopped. A dense fog had sprung up, which made it perilous to proceed. Ben, who was a novice in traveling, got up to see what was the matter. He was on his way back to the stateroom, when he encountered a strange figure. The old lady was wandering about in dishabille, looking thoroughly alarmed.

Recognizing Ben, she clutched his arm.

"What has happened?" she asked, in a hollow voice, "Is the ship sinkin'?"

"No, ma'am," answered Ben. "We have only stopped on account of the fog."

"Something may run into us," exclaimed the old lady. "Oh, dear!
I wish I had never left home."

"You'd better go back to bed," said Ben soothingly. "There's no danger."

"No, I won't," said the old woman resolutely. "I'm not going to be drowned in my bed. I'll stay here till mornin'."

And she plumped down into an armchair, where she looked like an image of despair.

"Hadn't you better put on something more?" suggested Ben.
"You may get cold."

"I'll put on my shawl and bunnit," said the old lady. "I can't sleep a wink. We shall be shipwrecked; I know we shall."

Whether the old lady kept her word, or not, Ben did not know. When he entered the saloon the next morning she was already up and dressed, looking haggard from want of sleep. Ben ascertained that the boat had started again about five o'clock, and would probably reach Fall River five or six hours late. This would make it necessary to take breakfast on board.

He imparted the news to the old lady.

"It's a shame," she said indignantly. "They did it a purpose to make us spend more money. I expected to eat breakfast at my son's house in Boston."

"We shall not probably reach Boston till noon, I hear."

"Then suppose I'll have to buy somethin' to stay my stomach. It's a shame. It costs a sight to travel."

"So it does," acquiesced Ben.

"They'd oughter give us our breakfast."

"I'm afraid they won't see it in that light."

The old lady went down to breakfast, and grudgingly paid out twenty cents more for tea and toast. She was in hopes Ben would get some meat and offer

her a portion; but he, too, felt the necessity of being economical, and ordered something less expensive.

Prof. Crane attempted to renew his phrenological examinations, but could only obtain two subjects.

"Shan't I examine your head?' he asked insinuatingly of the old lady.

"No, you shan't," she answered tartly. "I don't want you pawing over me."

"Don't you want me to describe your character?"

"No, I don't. Like as not, you'd slander me."

"Oh, no, ma'am; I should only indicate, by an examination of your bumps, your various tendencies and proclivities."

"I don't believe I've got any bumps."

"Oh, yes, you have. We all have them. I shall only ask you twenty-five cents for an examination."

"I won't give it," said the old lady, resolutely clutching her purse, as if she feared a violent effort to dispossess her of it. "I can't afford it."

"It is a very small sum to pay for the knowledge of yourself."

"I guess I know myself better than you do," said the old lady, nodding her head vigorously. Then, yielding to an impulse of curiosity: "Say, mister, is it a pretty good business, examinin' heads?"

"It ought to be," answered the professor, "if the world were thoroughly alive to the importance of the noble science of phrenology."

"I don't see what use it is."

"Let me tell you, then, ma'am. You have doubtless employed servants that proved unworthy of your confidence."

The old lady assented.

"Now if you had employed a phrenologist to examine a servant's head before engaging her, he would have told you at once whether she was likely to prove honest and faithful, or the reverse."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the old lady, beginning to be impressed. "Well, that would be something, I declare. Now, there's Mirandy Jones, used to work for me—I'm almost certain she stole one of my best caps."

"To wear herself?" asked Ben demurely.

"No, she wanted it for her grandmother. I'm almost sure I saw it on the old woman's head at the sewin' circle one afternoon. Then, again, there was Susan Thompson. She was the laziest, sleepiest gal I ever see. Why, one day I went into the kitchen, and what do you think? There she stood, in the middle of the floor, leanin' her head over her broom fast asleep."

"In both these cases phrenology would have enabled you to understand their deficiencies, and saved you from hiring them."

Here a gentlemen whispered to Prof. Crane: "Offer to examine the old woman's head for nothing. I will see you are paid."

The professor was not slow in taking the hint.

"Madam," said he, "as my time just now isn't particularly valuable, I don't mind examining your head for nothing."

"Will you?" said the old lady. "Well, you're very polite and oblegin'. You may, if you want to."

Prof. Crane understood that a joke was intended, and shaped his remarks accordingly.

"This lady," he commenced, "is distinguished for her amiable disposition." Here there was a smile visible on several faces, which, luckily, the old lady didn't see. "At the same time, she is always ready to stand up for her rights, and will not submit to be imposed upon."

"You're right there, mister," interjected the old lady, "as my son-in-law will testify. He tried to put upon me; but I soon let him know that I knew what was right, and meant to have it.

"My subject has a good taste for music, and would have been a superior performer if her talent had been cultivated. But her practical views would hardly have permitted her to spend much time in what is merely ornamental. She is a good housekeeper, and I may venture to remark that she understands cooking thoroughly."

The old lady—so potent is flattery—really began to look amiable.

"I wish old Miss Smith could hear you," she interrupted. "She's a vain, conceited critter, and purtends she can cook better than I can. If I couldn't make better pies that she had the last time the sewin' circle met at her house, I'd give up cookin', that's all."

"You see, gentlemen and ladies," said the professor, looking about him gravely, "how correct are the inductions of science. All that I have said thus far has been confirmed by my subject, who surely ought to know whether I am correct or not."

"This lady," he proceeded, "is fitted to shine in society. Her social sphere may have been limited by circumstances; but had her lot been cast in the shining circles of fashion, her natural grace and refinement would have enabled her to embellish any position to which she might have been called."

The contrast between the old lady's appearance and the words of Prof. Crane was so ludicrous that Ben and several others with difficulty, kept their countenances. But the old lady listened with great complacency.

"I wish my granddarter would hear you," she said. "She's a pert little thing, that thinks she knows more than her grandmother. I've often told my darter she ought to be more strict with her; but it don't do no good."

"It's the way with the young, madam. They cannot appreciate the sterling qualities of their elders."

When the examination was concluded, the old lady expressed her faith in phrenology.

"I never did believe in't before," she admitted, "but the man described me just as if he know'd me all my life. Railly, it's wonderful."

Prof. Crane got his money, and with it the favor of the old lady to whom he had given such a first-class character. Her only regret was that her friends at home could not have heard him.

About one o'clock in the afternoon the long journey was at an end, and Ben and his young charge descended from the train in the South Terminal, in Boston.

Chapter XVI

Ben's Loss

It has already been mentioned that there was a train to Milltown at half-past ten in the morning. Of course Ben was too late for this. He ascertained, however, that there was another train at five o'clock, and this he resolved to take.

"Where are we going, Ben?" asked Emma, as they stepped out of the station.

"Don't you feel hungry, Emma?"

"Yes."

'Then we will go and have some dinner, first of all."

This proposal was satisfactory to the little girl, who took Ben's hand and walked up toward Washington Street with him.

On School Street they found an eating-house which did not appear too high in price, and Ben led Emma in.

They seated themselves at a table, and ordered dinner. Just opposite sat a pleasant-looking man, of middle age. He was fond of children, and his attention was drawn to little Emma.

"Is that your sister?" he inquired of Ben.

"No, sir," answered Ben.

"No relation?"

"No, sir; she is from New York. She is going to board with my aunt."

"Does your aunt live in Boston?"

"No, sir; in Milltown."

"Has the young lady come into the city on a shopping excursion?" inquired the new acquaintance, smiling.

"No, sir; she is just on her way from New York. I went to fetch her."

"You are a young guardian."

"Rather, sir; but there was no one else to go for her."

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"Are you attending school?"

"No, sir; I should be glad to do so; but my aunt is not in good circumstances, and I have to work. I have been employed in the mills, but they discharged some of their hands lately, and I was among them."

"How would you like to come to Boston to work?"

"Very much."

"I may some time have a vacancy for you. I am a wholesale stationer on State Street. Give me your address, and if I have any opening I will write to you."

"Thank you, sir," said Ben; "I should like very much to work here."

Ben took the stranger's card, from which he learned that his name was Otis Johnson, and that he dealt in stationery, blank books, diaries, and a similar line of goods.

"This may lead to something," thought Ben. "I should enjoy living in Boston. There is a good deal more going on here than in Milltown."

It was about quarter of two when Ben and Emma rose from the table.

"What are we going to do now?" asked Emma.

Ben considered.

"The train doesn't start till five," he said. "We won't go to the station yet, for we should get tired of waiting. We will walk about, and look into the shop windows, unless you are tired."

"I am not tired. I should like it," said Emma.

Presently they came to the old State House. Ben's attentions was attracted by a Charleston car. He knew that Bunker Hill Monument was in Charleston, and it struck him that it would be a good opportunity to go and see it.

"Does this car go to Bunker Hill Monument?" he inquired.

"Yes," said the conductor. "It goes within two minutes' walk of it."

"How long does it take to go there?"

"Twenty minutes."

Ben reflected that the train did not start till five o'clock, and that there would be plenty of time for the excursion. He did not know when he would have another chance, and resolved to avail himself of this.

He helped Emma to board the car, and got on himself.

"I like to ride in electric cars, Ben," said Emma.

"So do I, Emma. Do you know what we are going to see?"

"What is it?"

"A great stone monument, five times as high as a house."

"What is a monument?"

Ben explained to her.

"Does anybody live in it?" asked the little girl.

"No, I don't think it would be a very pleasant place to live in."

"What did they build it for, then?"

Ben explained that a great battle had been fought on the hill where the monument stood.

"Do they fight any battles there now, Ben?" asked Emma, in some apprehension.

"Why? Are you afraid of getting killed?"

"Yes."

"There is no danger. It is over a hundred years since there was any fighting there."

Just then the car stopped, and a new passenger got on and sat down just opposite Ben and his young charge. Ben did not take special notice of her, and was surprised to hear a familiar voice.

"I declare, if it ain't the little gal,"

Looking up, he recognized the old lady, his fellow passenger.

"How do you do, ma'am?" he said.

"Putty well. Where be you goin'?"

"Over to Bunker Hill."

"I'm goin' to Charleston, myself. My son is away with his wife, and I'm goin' over to stay with my niece till he comes back. How do you do, little gal?"

"Pretty well," said Emma.

"You don't know me, do you?"

It was an unfortunate question.

"Yes, I do. You're the lady that takes snuff," said Emma.

Some of the passengers tittered, and the old lady turned red in the face.

"Well, I never did!" she exclaimed, in mortification. "You're a bad-behaved

little gal."

"She didn't mean to offend you, ma'am," said Ben. "She's very young."

"She's old enough to behave. Children didn't use to sass their elders like they do now. If one of my children was to behave so, I'd shut 'em up in a dark closet for twenty-four hours, with only dry bread to eat."

The old lady shook her head vigorously, and glared at Emma over the top of her spectacles. It was just as well, perhaps, that Emma was absorbed in looking out of the window, and did not listen to what the old lady was saying. Being a high-spirited and free-spoken young woman, she would have been likely to reply, and that would have made matters worse.

The ride was not a long one, for but a narrow bridge separates Boston proper from the historic town of Charleston.

"You get out here," said the conductor. "Go up that street to the monument."

Ben could see the great stone pillar standing up against the sky in plain sight, and he ascended the hilly street toward it.

"That is the monument, Emma," he said.

"It looks like a big chimney," said Emma; "only chimneys are made of brick."

"It would take a big house to need such a chimney as that," said Ben.

They reached the top of the hill, and stood beside the monument, which looked immensely tall, now that they were close to it.

"This is where Warren fell," said Ben, repeating to himself a piece of information which he had heard.

"Did he fall?" inquired Emma.

"Oh, no; he was killed in the battle here."

"Are you going to ascend the monument?" asked a gentleman who had come up the hill another way.

"I didn't know you could," said Ben.

"There is a spiral staircase inside. Most visitors ascend it. There is a splendid view from the top."

"I should think there would be."

"Will you go? I think of going, and would like your company."

"No, I guess not," said Ben. "It would be too much for Emma. She is only a little girl, and could not stand the fatigue."

"I wouldn't dare to go up so high, Ben," said Emma timidly.

Here a well-dressed lady, who had heard the discussion said: "If you would like to go up, young man, I will take care of the little girl till you come down. Will you stay with me, my dear?"

She smiled pleasantly, and Emma's confidence was won.

"Yes, Ben, I will stay with her," she said; "only don't be gone too long."

Ben hesitated. He wanted to go up, and was not sure when he would have another opportunity. He could see no reason to doubt that Emma would be entirely safe under the care of the stranger.

"I don't like to give you so much trouble," said Ben.

"It will be no trouble," said the lady politely. "I am fond of children."

It was twenty-five minutes before Ben descended. He looked for Emma, and his heart gave a great bound of dismay.

Neither Emma nor the lady was to be seen.

Chapter XVII

The Strange Captor

This was what had happened.

When Ben was fairly on his way up the monument, the lady addressed Emma.

"My dear," she said, "are you fond of candy?"

"Ever so much," said Emma.

"Suppose we go to a candy store and get some?"

"But I don't want to leave Ben," said the little girl.

"Oh, we will be back before he returns," said the lady. "Will you come?"

"If you are certain sure you will be back in time."

"Oh, yes, my dear."

The lady's manner was so kind that Emma felt entire confidence in her promise.

"Yes, I will go."

They walked down the hill in a different direction from that which they had come up. This brought them to a street on which were some shops. The lady entered one, leading Emma by the hand.

"Give us one half-pound of assorted candy," she said.

The girl behind the counter weighed out the candy and handed it to her.

They left the shop.

"Now are we going back to Ben?" asked Emma.

"I have sent word to him to come to my house and take supper, my dear child. Come with me, and you will see him soon."

How should Emma know that this was not true? She was a little girl, with no experience of the world, accustomed to put confidence in those she met, and the lady was very kind in her manner.

"Is your home far off?" she asked.

"No, it is quite near."

This proved to be true.

The lady turned up a street lined with neat dwellings and rang the bell.

A servant answered the bell.

"Is it you, mum?" she said.

"Yes, Jane."

Jan looked inquiringly at the little girl, and was on the point of asking who she was; but she knew her mistress was peculiar and said nothing.

"This little girl will stay to tea," said the lady. "Put on an extra plate."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And isn't Ben coming, too?" asked Emma, noting the omission.

"Yes, Jan, you may put on two extra plates."

Emma followed her new acquaintance up-stairs, and was led into a neat bedchamber. The lady entered it, bade Emma enter, locked the door, and then, sinking on the floor before the astonished child, exclaimed with evident emotion: "Have I found you at last, my dear, dear child?"

Emma was startled at the lady's tone, and for the fist time felt alarmed.

"I ain't your child," she said. "What makes you call me so?"

"Are you not my dear little Mary?" said the lady.

"No, my name isn't Mary. My name is Emma."

"Did they change your name, my dear child? Was it not enough to take you away from me, without changing your name?"

"I don't know what you mean," said Emma, ore and more alarmed. "I want to go back to Ben."

"Would you leave your mother, my child?"

"You are not my mother. Let me go."

Emma ran to the door, but it was locked, and the key was in the lady's pocket.

"I cannot let you go, my dear child. You have been away from me too long already. I have been very lonely without you."

Her tone was still kind—it had never varied—but Emma was thoroughly frightened.

"Let me go!" she began to cry. "I want to go to Ben."

The lady looked at her in mingled grief and wonder.

"Can a child turn from her own mother to a stranger?" she said musingly. "She forgets that she is my little Mary. She no longer loves me."

"My name is Emma," said the little girl. "Why did you take me away from Ben?"

Help was at hand, though it came from a stranger.

A knock was heard at the door, and the lady rose and opened it. The newcomer was a little younger than the lady already mentioned, but bore such a resemblance to her as to indicate that she was her sister. She looked at

surprise at Emma.

"Where did you get this child, Clara?" she asked.

"It is my little Mary. Don't you see that it is?"

"You are mistaken, Clara. Your little Mary is in heaven."

"She has come back again. This is she. Don't you see that it is she?" asked the lady called Clara earnestly.

"My poor sister," said the younger lady compassionately, "you are mistaken. This is not your little Mary. Where did you find her? To whom does she belong?"

Emma had listened to this conversation with interest, feeling that it concerned her. She answered the question herself.

"I belong to Ben," she said.

"Where is Ben?" asked the younger lady.

"He is at the big stone chimney. He was going up to the top. He left me with her."

"You mean the monument, don't you, my dear child?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Is this true, Clara?"

"Yes," the elder sister admitted.

The younger lady looked perplexed.

"You did wrong, Clara, to take the little girl from her brother. He will feel very anxious about her.

"She said she would buy me some candy," said Emma.

"Could I see my child, and not claim her?" said Clara.

"I am not your child. What makes her say I am her child?"

"My dear," said the younger lady gently, "my poor sister lost her little girl not long since. She has not been well since. When she saw you to-day she thought you were her little Mary."

"I want to go back to Ben. What will Ben say?"

"Certainly, you must go back to your brother. Come, my child, we will try to find him."

Emma went down-stairs with her new friend. Clara did not attempt to hinder her, but seated herself with an air of dependency in an armchair, and buried her face in her hands.

"I am afraid Ben has gone away," said Emma.

"It is very perplexing," said the young lady to herself. "We will go out and try to find your brother. If we cannot, you can tell me where your home is and I will take you there."

"I don't know exactly where it is," said Emma; "I have never been there. I came from New York. I am going to board with Ben's aunt."

"And you don't know where she lives? You don't know the name of the town."

town."

Emma shook her head.

"My poor sister has done great mischief," said the young lady gravely. "I must do my best to remedy it."

They went out into the street together.

Meanwhile, Ben, in great trouble of mind, remained in the neighborhood of the monument for ten minutes or more.

"Perhaps the lady has taken Emma on a little walk," he thought. "Perhaps she thought I wouldn't be down so soon."

Ben felt that it was very inconsiderate, but he would not at first believe that there was anything really wrong. But when ten minutes has passed he became alarmed, and began to blame himself.

"Aunt was right," he thought. "I wasn't fit to be trusted with the care of a little girl. What shall I say to Mr. Manning? What shall I do?"

He looked about him in despairing bewilderment. Streets radiated from the monument in several different directions. Which should he take? If he took any, there was not more than one chance in four that it would prove the right one.

He was still standing there when the gentleman who had gone up with him descended.

"Where is the little girl?" he asked.

Ben explained his trouble.

"Don't be alarmed, my boy," said the gentleman, in a tone of sympathy; "I will help you. Sooner or later we shall hear of the child."

"What shall I do?" asked Ben.

"It is possible the child may be brought back. I will remain here to receive her if she comes, and you may go and search for her. Come back in about half-an-hour."

Ben started on his quest, and with feverish haste he explored street after street, but in vain. With sad heart he retraced his steps to the monument. What was his joy to find Emma returned, and in charge of the gentleman he had left behind and another lady.

An explanation was given, to which Ben paid little attention, such was his joy at the recovery of his young charge.

"What time is it, sir?" he inquired of his companion.

"Five minutes to five."

"Then we are too late for the train," exclaimed Ben, in dismay.

Chapter XVIII

The Envelope

"What train?" asked the gentleman.

"The five-o'clock train to Milltown."

"Is that the last train?"

"Yes, sir."

"You will have to wait till to-morrow. Will it make much difference?"

Ben blushed.

"I shall have to stay at a hotel," he said uncomfortably, "and I don't think I have money enough. I did not expect to have that expense."

"I can relieve you on that score," said the gentleman. "I live in Charleston, not far away. You shall stay at my house to-night, and go home by the morning train. There is a morning train, isn't there?"

"Yes, sir, at half-past ten."

"You will accept my invitation?"

"Yes, sir, and thank you," said Ben gratefully. "I don't know what I should have done if you had not invited me."

"I am glad to have the opportunity of doing you a kindness. I want to send you away with a good impression of Charleston."

It was a handsome house to which Ben was led by his new friend. His wife received the two children with unaffected kindness, and soon made them feel at home. During the evening Mr. Somerby, for this was his name, drew out of

Ben the particulars of his history and present position. Ben seemed so frank and manly that he was quite pleased with him.

Mr. Somerby was not in business, unless he may be called a capitalist. He was the possessor of a large fortune, and the care of his property required a considerable share of his time. When Ben was ready to go the next morning, Mr. Somerby put an envelope into his hand.

"Don't open this till you get home," he said.

"No, sir."

"Now, good-by, and good luck to you."

"Thank you, sir."

Meanwhile Mrs. Bradford at home was feeling anxious. Old Mrs. Perkins had dropped in to make a call, and her conversation wasn't reassuring.

"Hasn't Ben got back?" she asked.

"Not yet."

"There's a great risk in sendin' a boy so fur," said the old lady.

"Do you think so?" asked Mrs. Bradford uneasily.

"To be sure I do. He's too young."

"That's what I thought; but Ben was very sure he could get along."

"Boys is allus confident," said Mrs. Perkins, whose knowledge of grammar was not very profound; "but I never knew one that you could rely on."

"Benjamin is a good boy."

"Yes, he's a good boy as boys go; but don't you trust him too fur. When did you expect him back?"

"I expected him last night."

"And he didn't come? Just as I thought."

Mrs. Perkins nodded her head vigorously, and looked unutterably wise.

"Maybe the cars is gone off the track," said the old lady.

"Oh, don't say such things, Mrs. Perkins," said Mrs. Bradford uneasily.

"I didn't say they had, but we're havin' a dreffle number of accidents nowadays."

"Ben is all right," said Tony, thinking he ought to defend his cousin. "He said when he went away, he'd come home right side up with care."

"Little boys should be seen and not heard," said Mrs. Perkins.

"'Always be prepared for the worst.' That's my motto."

"And my motto is 'Wait and Hope!'" said a familiar voice outside the door.

"It's Ben!" exclaimed Tony joyfully.

The door was thrown open and there stood Ben, with little Emma's hand in his.

"Aunt Jane," he said, "here's little Emma, come to live with you."

"My dear, I am very glad to see you," said Mrs. Bradford.

Emma looked in her gentle face, and liked her at once.

"Will you be my aunt, too?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear."

"Tony, come here and be introduced," said Ben.

Tony was bashful at first, but it was not very long before he and Emma were merrily playing together.

"So you're railly back, Benjamin?" said old Mrs. Perkins, rather disappointed.

"Yes, ma'am. How's James?"

"Loafin' round, as usual," said his affectionate relative. "Boys are so shiftless."

"They may be," admitted Ben good-naturedly, "but they get hungry sometimes. Aunt Jane, is there anything to eat in the house?"

"I will set the table at once," said his aunt. "The little girl must be hungry, too."

"You're undertakin' a great responsibility, Mrs. Bradford," said Mrs. Perkins. "The little girl will be a great care to you."

"I don't look upon it in that light," said Mrs. Bradford. "I am glad to have her here."

"Humph! You will talk different a month from now. But I must be goin'."

After dinner Ben bethought himself of the envelope which Mr. Somerby had given him.

He opened it, when a bank-note dropped to the floor. Picking it up, he saw, to his amazement, that it was a fifty-dollar bill. With sparkling eyes he read the letter, or rather these few lines which were penciled on a half-sheet of note paper:

"I have been interested in your story, and beg your acceptance of the enclosed as a slight help and encouragement. Should you ever need advice or assistance, I shall be glad to have you call upon me." "Frederic Somerby"

"What do you think of that, Aunt Jane?" said Ben in a tone of exultation. "Hasn't my motto worked pretty well, after all? Isn't it better to 'Wait and Hope' than to give up and get discouraged?"

"Yes, Ben, I begin to think you are right."

"We are better off than when I was at work in the factory."

"Yes, Ben; we can get along very comfortably."

"I have been thinking, aunt, that while business continues dull I will go to school. This money I will put in a savings-bank, and we shall have it to fall back upon if we need it."

This plan met with Mrs. Bradford's approval, and was carried out by Ben. When he returned from the savings-bank, with his book in his hand, he felt like a capitalist. In fact, he was so cheerful that his aunt caught the infection, and looked brighter than she had for years.

"It is pleasant to have money in the bank," she said to old Mrs. Perkins.

"Like as not the bank will break," said the old lady.

"I see an account last week of a savin's-bank that failed. I wouldn't trust any

"I see an account last week of a savings-bank that failed. I wouldn't trust any of 'em."

"Mrs. Perkins," said Ben, with mock gravity, "I heard last week of a man who died in his bed. I'd never go to bed if I were you."

"It aint' well to joke," said the old lady. "Always be prepared for the worst."

"That isn't my motto," said Ben. "As long as I live I mean to 'Wait and Hope'!"

Chapter XIX

The Prize for Scholarship

The annual examination of the grammar schools in Milltown came about the middle of June, just before summer vacation. It the First Ward School two prizes had been offered by the principal to the scholars who stood highest on the rank-lists.

Speculation was rife as to the probable result; but the choice was finally narrowed down to two boys.

One of these was Ben Bradford, now sixteen years of age. The other was Samuel Archer, son of the superintendent of the Milton Mills. There is an old saying, "Like father, like son." Mr. Archer was purse-proud and consequential, and felt that he was entitled to deference on the score of his wealth and prominence.

"Sam," said he, two days before the examination, "what are your chances of obtaining the prize?"

"I think I ought to have it, father," answered Sam.

"That is, you think you will be entitled to it?"

"Yes sir."

"Then you will get it, as a matter of course."

"I don't know that."

"Don't you think the prize will be adjudged fairly?"

"The principal thinks a great deal of Ben Bradford."

"Is he your chief competitor?"

"He is the only boy I am afraid of."

"Who is he?"

"He is a poor boy—used to work in the mills."

"He is the nephew of the Widow Bradford?"

"Yes; he lives in a small house about the size of a bandbox. I expect they are as poor as poverty. Ben wears coarse clothes. I don't believe he has a new suit a year."

"And you have too many. I believe your bill for clothes exceeds mine."

"Oh, father, you want your son to dress well. People know you are a rich man and they expect it."

"Humph! it may be carried too far," said Mr. Archer, who had just paid a

"Humph! it may be carried too far," said Mr. Archer, who had just paid a large tailor's bill for Sam.

"And you say the principal favors him?"

"Yes, everybody can see it."

"It is rather strange he should favor a penniless boy," said Mr. Archer, himself a worshiper of wealth. "The man don't know on which side his bread is buttered."

"So I think. He ought to consider that you are a man of consequence here."

"I rather think I have some influence in Milltown," said Mr. Archer, with vulgar complacency; "I fancy I could oust Mr. Taylor from his position if I caught him indulging in favoritism. But you may be mistaken, Sam."

Mr. Archer looked thoughtful.

Finally he said: "I think it will be well to pay some attention to Mr. Taylor. It may turn the scale. When you go to school to-morrow I will send by you an invitation to Mr. Taylor to dine with us. We'll give him a good dinner and get him good-natured."

So when Sam went to school in the morning he bore a note from his father, containing a dinner invitation.

"Say to your father that I will accept his invitation with pleasure," said the principal.

It was the first time he had received such a mark of attention from Mr. Archer, and, being a shrewd man, he understood at once what it signified.

"He's coming, father," announced Sam, on his return home.

"Did he seem gratified by the invitation?"

"I couldn't tell exactly. He said he would accept with pleasure."

"No doubt, he feels the attention," said Mr. Archer pompously. "He knows I am a man of prominence and influence, and the invitation will give him social status."

Mr. Archer would have been offended if he had been told that the principal was more highly respected in town than himself, in spite of his wealth and fine house.

When the principal sat down to Mr. Archer's dinner table, he partook of a dinner richer and more varied than his modest salary enabled him to indulge in at home. Nevertheless, he had more than once been as well entertained by others, and rather annoyed Mr. Archer by not appearing to appreciate the superiority of the dinner.

"Confound the man! He takes it as coolly as if he were accustomed to dine as sumptuously every day," thought Archer.

"I hope you are enjoying dinner, Mr. Taylor," he said.

"Very much, thank you."

"I rather plume myself on my cook. I venture to say that I pay five dollars a month more than any other person in Milltown. But I must have a good dinner. I am very particular on that score."

"Have you a good cook, Mr. Taylor?" asked Mrs. Archer condescendingly.

"Why, the fact is, that we keep but one servant."

"I suppose your salary will not permit you to keep more than one servant."

"You are right, madam."

"Really, Mr. Taylor, I think your salary ought to be increased," said Mr. Archer graciously. "The laborer is worthy of his hire, eh? I must see if I can't induce the town to vote you an increased compensation."

"Thank you," said the principal quietly. "A larger salary would, of course, be acceptable, but I doubt whether the town will feel like voting it."

"Rest easy," said Mr. Archer pompously. "I think I can bring it about."

"Oh, by the by," continued the rich man, "Samuel tells me that you have offered two scholarship prizes."

"Yes, sir—to the two scholars who pass the best examination."

"How does my boy stand in the matter?"

"He is one of the most prominent competitors."

"I am very glad to hear it—very glad. Sam, you must do your best to-morrow. It would gratify me very much if you should succeed. I am ambitious for my son, Mr. Taylor, and I don't mind admitting it."

"Your ambition is a very natural one," said the principal. "Sam's scholarship is excellent and his record is very satisfactory."

"Thank you, Mr. Taylor. Your assurance is deeply gratifying to Mrs. Archer and myself. It will be the happiest day of our lives if Sam succeeds in the approaching competition."

"He has a very fair chance of success, sir."

"I think I've fixed things," said Mr. Archer complacently, after the principal had taken his leave. "The prize is as good as yours, Sam."

Chapter XX

Before the Battle

Ben's term at school had already extended to eight months. Our hero was thorough in whatever he did, and, having an excellent natural capacity, easily took high rank as a scholar.

"Do you expect to win the prize, Ben?" asked his friend, James Watson.

"I hope to win it," said Ben.

"So does Sam Archer."

"I suppose it lies between us two, unless you step in and carry it off," added Ben, smiling, for he knew that James, who was low in rank, was not at all sensitive on the subject.

"Make yourself easy, Ben; I won't interfere with you. You are my friend, you know, and for your sake I will answer a few questions wrong."

"You always were considerate, James. You have relieved my mind of a load of anxiety."

"Don't mention it, Ben. I shan't feel the sacrifice."

"You are a good fellow, at any rate, James, and that is more than I can say for Sam Archer."

"He thinks an awful lot of himself."

"He can't forget that his father is superintendent of the mill."

"By the way, Ben, what are you intending to do in vacation."

"I shall try to get employment in the mill again. I have been idle nearly a year now."

now."

"Your aunt has been getting along very well."

"Yes; thanks to the seven dollars a week received for Emma's board. But I don't like to feel that she is supporting the family. I think it is high time for me to be at work."

"Ben, I've been thinking of something."

"Out with it, James."

"Sam Archer will be very much disappointed if you take the prize over him."

"He doesn't love me overmuch now."

"I am afraid he will prejudice his father against you, so as to induce him to refuse you employment in the mill."

"Do you think he would be as mean as that?"

"Do I think so? I know it. Sam Archer is mean enough for anything."

"He has just as good a chance as I have."

"He told one of the boys you were Mr. Taylor's pet. He will say the prize was give to you on account of favoritism."

"Will anybody believe it?"

"No one except Sam's special friends. I think Mr. Taylor does like you. That reminds me, where do you think Mr. Taylor is to-night?"

"I don't know, I am sure."

"He is dining at Mr. Archer's."

"That's something new, isn't it?"

"Mr. Archer is trying to curry favor with the principal for Sam."

"Then he doesn't know him very well. Mr. Taylor will decide justly, at any rate."

"Do you want very much to go back to the mill, Ben?"

"Yes."

"Then the best thing you can do is to let Sam beat you. That will make him good-natured and you will probably get a place."

"I shan't resign the prize. I shall do my best to obtain it. If that loses me employment in the mill, I will go in search of employment elsewhere."

"I like your pluck, Ben."

"I am willing to wait and I expect to win in the end."

"Well, good luck to you, Ben. My supper is ready, and I must go home."

The more Ben thought it over, the more he felt that James was probably correct in his prediction as to the effect of his success.

"I am determined to beat Sam," he said to himself. The next morning he entered the schoolroom cool and confident, while Sam, though rather nervous, seemed almost equally confident.

"Mr. Taylor won't go back on me," he reflected, "after dining at our house; especially after father has promised to get him a higher salary."

especially after father has promised to get him a higher salary.

The examination lasted all the session. It was partly oral and partly written.

"Boys," said the principal, "I shall devote the evening to the examination of your papers. To-morrow morning my decision will be made known."

"I wish it were over," thought Sam. "I think he'll give me the prize, but I should like to be sure of it."

Chapter XXI

Ben Wins at School

Every boy was in his seat the next morning at the opening of school. Though the choice lay between two only, there was a general interest felt in the result of the competition. Ben was the favorite, though Sam had a few followers—generally sycophantic boys who had a respect for wealth, or had favors to ask of him.

"Boys," said the principal, "I sat up till twelve o'clock last evening, examining your papers. I have not only ascertained who are entitled to the two prizes, but I have made a list of the ten highest scholars, with their percentages. I am glad to say that many of you have done well, and I regret that I have not more prizes to bestow. I will now announce the names of the prize boys."

"First prize—Benjamin Bradford."
"Second prize—Sam Archer."

The boys applauded noisily.

"Bradford's percentage," continued the principal, "is ninety-nine and eight-tenths; Archer's, ninety-seven and nine-tenths. Both are very high and I heartily congratulate both young gentlemen upon their brilliant success. Bradford, you may come up to the desk."

Mr. Taylor placed in his hands a neat edition of Longfellow's poems.

"Thank you, sir," said Ben.

The boys again applauded.

"Archer, you may come up," said the principal.

Sam rose slowly, and with a discontented look shuffled up to the desk. An edition of Tennyson's poems was handed to him. He received them without a word of thanks and hurried back to his seat.

There was no applause in his case.

This was the last day of school, and the session lasted but an hour and a half. At half-past ten the boys poured out of the schoolhouse with noisy demonstrations of joy.

"I congratulate you, old fellow," said James Watson to Ben. "You've done splendidly."

"Thank you, James."

"So do I, and I," exclaimed one and another.

Ben received all these congratulations modestly.

"Go and congratulate Sam, boys," he said.

"A good scholar, but a mean boy," said James. "However, here goes."

"I congratulate you on your prize, Sam," he said offering his hand.

Sam did not appear to see the hand.

"A second prize isn't worth having," he said discontentedly. "Of course it was all I had a chance for. Bradford is the teacher's favorite."

"Do you mean to say Ben don't deserve the first prize?"

"He was sure to get it, anyhow."

"That's mean in you to speak so, Sam."

"It's what I think, at any rate."

"Well, Sam," said his father, as he entered his presence, "how is it?"

"Just as I expected, father. Old Taylor gave the first prize to his favorite, Ben Bradford."

"After all the attention I have paid that man, it is positively outrageous to defraud you of your rights."

"You won't have his salary increased now, will you, father?"

"I'll do what I can to have the man discharged."

"There's a favor I want to ask of you, father."

"What is it, my son?"

"I hear that Ben Bradford is going to seek employment in the mill, now that school is over; I hope you'll refuse to take him on."

"I will. His prize will cost him dear."

"Would you have given him employment if I had beaten him for the prize?"

"Yes; business has revived, and we have decided to take on some extra hands, giving preference to those who have formerly been in our employ."

"Then I will be revenged, at any rate," said Sam.

Chapter XXII

Sam's Revenge

Now that vacation had fairly commenced, Ben thought he had better make application for employment at the mills. It was generally understood that business had improved and that new hands were to be taken on.

On the morning succeeding the award of prizes, Ben presented himself at the office of the superintendent.

After awhile the great man arrived. He nodded patronizingly to the applicants for employment. He saw Ben in the number and his small soul was rejoiced, for he meant to humiliate him.

He summoned one and another to a conference, engaging such as were old hands.

Ben began to look hopeful. He, too, had experience.

At last Mr. Archer beckoned to him to approach.

"What do you wish?" he demanded.

"I should like employment at the mills," said Ben.

"Have you been in my employ before?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Archer opened a thick folio volume which lay upon the desk, and appeared to be looking for something, which he found at last.

"I can't employ you," he said coldly.

"Why not, sir?"

"Because your record is not good."

Ben's eyes flashed with proper indignation.

"I don't understand, sir," he said, in a dignified tone.

"It strikes me that my language is plain."

"What complaints were made of me? I should like to know in what respect I failed to do my duty."

"Probably you know as well as I can tell you," said the superintendent. "At any rate, I have no time to waste in examining into the matter. I prefer to take a boy who has nothing against him. Next."

Ben left the office, smarting not so much at the failure to obtain employment, as at the unfounded charges trumped up against him.

Just outside the office he met Sam Archer.

"Good morning, Bradford," said Sam, eyeing our hero curiously. "Are you going to work in the mill?"

"No," said Ben shortly.

"Perhaps old Taylor will give you employment."

"No doubt he would if he had occasion to employ any one. Mr. Taylor is a gentleman."

"Do you mean to say father isn't a gentleman?"

"You can draw your own conclusions."

Ben was not quite an angel, though he was a manly boy, and he felt pugnacious.

"I've a great mind to knock you down," said Sam.

"You may have the mind, but you haven't got the strength to do it," said Ben.

"I won't dirty my hands with touching you."

"That's prudent, at any rate," retorted Ben.

"You'd better go home and read your prize."

"That's good advice, though it comes from a bad source," returned Ben. "It isn't needed, however, for I have been reading it. I can quote two lines—

> "'Be not like dumb, driven cattle,
> Be like heroes in the strife.'"

"What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that you will find it hard to drive me."

"Perhaps so, but I've done one thing," boasted Sam.

"What's that?"

"I told father not to take you if you applied; and that's why you are going away with a flea in your ear."

"I am not surprised to hear this," he answered. "Indeed, I am very glad to hear it."

"You are glad to hear it?" repeated Sam, puzzled.

"Yes."

"I don't understand why you should be."

"I suppose not. I am glad you know just why I was refused."

"Well, I hope you are satisfied."

"I am entirely so."

"I wonder what the fellow means," thought Sam.

Chapter XXIII

The Decoy Letter

Sam knew that Ben was anxious to obtain a situation. It occurred to him that it would be a splendid joke to write to Ben, in the name of some Boston firm, offering him a situation. Ben would go up to the city, of course, only to find that he had been "sold."

Of course, it would not do for Sam to write the letter himself, since his writing was well known to Ben. Again, the letter must be posted in Boston. However, where there is a will there is a way. Sam was acquainted with a boy who lived in Boston—Frank Ferguson—and to him he wrote, enclosing the draft of a letter, which he requested Frank to copy and mail to Ben. "It is only a practical joke," Sam explained in his letter, "in return for one Ben has played on me." But for this explanation, Frank who was an honorable boy, would not have lent himself to this scheme. As it was, it struck him only as a piece of fun

have lent himself to this scheme. As it was, it struck him only as a piece of fun, and he followed Sam's instructions.

A few days later, Ben, in going to the post-office, received a letter directed to himself. It read thus:

"BENJAMIN BRADFORD: We are in want of a boy in our store. You can have the place if you wish. It will be necessary for you to report for duty next Monday.

"Yours, in haste,
"JONES & PORTER"

Ben had heard of Jones & Porter. They were well-known booksellers and publishers. A position with them was certainly desirable.

"But how could they have heard of me," thought Ben.

He was not vain enough to suppose that his name was well known in Boston, yet here was an important firm that had offered him employment. Again, the manner in which the letter ended struck him as rather singular. It didn't occur to Ben to doubt its genuineness.

As he was walking back, he met James Watson.

"What's the news, Ben?" asked James.

"I am offered a place in Boston," answered Ben.

"You don't say so! What sort of place is it?"

"It is a place in a bookstore. There is the letter."

James read it.

"How did they happen to write to you."

"I don't know, I am sure."

"Can't you think of any way in which they could have heard of you?"

"There is only one way I can think of. There was a gentleman in Charleston who was quite kind to me when I was there last year. He promised to be of service to me if I ever needed it. He may have mentioned my name to Jones & Porter.

"Very likely," said James. "You are in luck."

"I wish I knew what wages they are willing to pay," said Ben. "If it's only five dollars a week, it won't more than pay my board, and I don't like to call upon Aunt Jane to pay for my clothes."

"You will take the place, won't you, at any rate?"

"Oh, yes. Perhaps I can get a chance to earn something by extra work, and so pay for my clothes."

"Well, I wish you good luck, Ben. If you hear of a place for me, let me know."

"I will, James. I should like your company."

Ben went home and showed the letter to his aunt.

"You see, aunt, I am provided for," said Ben.

Old Mrs. Perkins was present and hazarded a cheerful observation.

"I wouldn't trust a boy of mine in the city, Mrs. Bradford," she said; "it's the

ruination of 'em most always. Like or not, Ben will get dissipated, and take to drinkin', and have the delirious triangles."

Mrs. Bradford was easily alarmed.

"Do you think you'd better go, Ben?" she asked doubtfully. "You're so young."

"I can't afford to wait till I'm an old man, Aunt Jane," he said; "and I don't mean to have the 'delirous triangles,' if I can help it. You wouldn't keep me at home till I'm eighty, like Mrs. Perkins———-"

"I'm only sixty-two," exclaimed the old lady indignantly. "What do you mean by calling me eighty?"

"I didn't know you were sensitive about your age."

"I ain't," snarled the old lady; "I own up to sixty-two, but you needn't call me twenty years older."

Mrs. Perkins was really seventy-two and looked her age; but she fondly hoped to deceive the public.

"Do you really think you had better go to Boston, Ben?" said his aunt, after the departure of the visitor.

"Yes, Aunt Jane. There's no chance for me in Milltown, as you know very well. Mr. Archer's prejudiced against me, and won't take me into the mill."

"I shall miss you very much, Ben."

"I'll write you once every week."

"How much will you get?"

"I don't know. If it's too little, I will live as closely as I can. I shall be learning the business, you know, and, of course, I shall get my salary raised when I deserve it."

Ben had a strong, positive nature, and he convinced his aunt that he ought to accept the offer of Jones & Porter. Mrs. Bradford set about putting his clothes in order.

Sam Archer awaited with interest the result of his joke. Seeing Ben the next day, he stopped him.

"Where are you bound, Ben?" he asked.

"I am going to buy some underclothes," he said.

"Have you got a place?"

"Yes, I expect so."

Sam wanted to laugh, but concealed his emotions.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"It isn't in you father's mill," retorted Ben.

"No, I suppose not. Is it in town?"

"It is in Boston!" said Ben, in a tone of satisfaction.

Sam laughed involuntarily.

"What are you laughing at?" inquired Ben angrily.

"Excuse me," said Sam. "I was thinking how green you would be at first in a

city place. I will call and see you when I go to the city."

"I don't like to be impolite; but as you prevented my getting a place here, I don't look upon you as a friend, and I only care to receive calls from my friends."

"How proud we are just because we have got a place in Boston!" said Sam mockingly, and he laughed again.

"I thought he would be disappointed to hear of my success," thought Ben. "He is rather a queer boy."

"Isn't it jolly?" said Sam to himself. "Won't he be mad when he finds it all a sell?"

Chapter XXIV

Ben Arrives in Boston

Ben set out for Boston on Monday morning in very good spirits. His aunt shed a few tears at parting. She was apt to take depressing views of the future, and said; "I hope you'll prosper, Ben," in a tone which implied that she did not think there was more than one chance in ten of his success. But Ben understood his aunt, and did not allow her presentiments to weigh with him. His motto was still, "Wait and Hope."

His motto was still, "Wait and Hope."

Ben found himself seated beside a young man of pleasant appearance, who was attracted by our hero's frank and manly look.

"I suppose you are going to Boston," he said.

"Yes," answered Ben readily.

"Have you got a place there?"

"I am going to have," said Ben cheerfully.

"Do you mind telling where?"

"Oh, no," said Ben; "I am going to the store of Jones & Porter."

"Indeed! There are very prominent business men."

"I suppose they are," said Ben.

"Do you know them personally?"

"I don't know them at all. I think some friend of mine must have mentioned me to them."

"It's rather singular that I shouldn't know anything about your engagement," said the young man.

"Why should you?" inquired Ben, in natural surprise.

"The fact is, I am Mr. Porter's nephew, and am a salesman in the establishment," said the young man. He drew from his pocket a business card, bearing the name.

Ben was rather disturbed, and he thought: "Can there be anything wrong?"

He said aloud: "I don't see how there can be any mistake. I received a letter from Jones & Porter last week, offering me the place."

Ben took the letter from his pocket and handed it to the young man.

The latter ran his eye over it hastily. He examined the signature and the address, and said quietly "I don't think this letter came from our store."

Ben felt as if the earth had opened before him.

"I don't understand it," he said, his face very red. "If the letter isn't genuine, who could have written it?"

"It seems written in a schoolboy hand," said young Porter. "Isn't it possible that some one may be playing a practical joke on you?"

"It wouldn't be much of a joke to me," said Ben.

"I should call it a mean trick myself," said Porter; "but can't you think of any one who may have written it?"

"I'll bet it's Sam Archer."

"And who is Sam Archer?"

"He is the meanest boy in Milltown," said Ben.

"He is the meanest boy in Milltown," said Ben.

"Doesn't he like you? Isn't he one of your friends?"

"No, he does all he can to injure me. But"—here Ben examined the letter a second time—"this isn't his handwriting."

"That proves nothing. He probably sent it to some confederate in Boston to copy and mail to you."

"Don't you think there is any chance of its being genuine?" asked Ben.

"The chance is very slight; but it is well, of course, to make sure. I have been away to pass Sunday, and shall go to the store at once on my arrival. You can go with me. I will introduce you to my uncle."

"If it is a trick," said Ben uncomfortably, "I shall be in an awkward fix."

"Whether it is a trick or not, you can count on my friendship," said young Porter kindly.

"Thank you," said Ben gratefully.

About an hour later Ben and his new friend entered the large and handsome bookstore of Jones & Porter.

Young Porter, as he walked through the store, received the greetings of his fellow clerks.

"Have you adopted a boy?" asked one facetiously.

"Yes," said Porter, smiling. "Where is my uncle?"

"He is in the back office."

"All right! Come along, Ben."

Henry Porter kept on his way till he reached the back part of the store, where a good-sized office was partitioned off. Mr. Porter was writing at a desk.

"Good morning, uncle," said Ben's companion.

"Good morning, Henry. Have a good time?"

"Excellent, uncle. Let me introduce to your favorite notice Master Benjamin Bradford, of Milltown."

Mr. Porter did not consider it beneath his dignity to be polite even to a boy.

"I am glad to see you, my young friend," he said, rising and offering his hand to Ben. "Are you on a visit to the city?"

Poor Ben! His heart sank within him. Evidently Mr. Porter would not ask such a question of a boy whom he had engaged to work for him.

The young man saw his embarrassment and answered for him.

"That's rather an odd question to ask you new clerk, uncle," he said.

"My new clerk, Henry? I don't understand you."

"Ben, show your letter."

"That is a forgery," said the uncle rather indignantly.

Poor Ben! Manly as he was, he felt ready to cry.

"I am sorry," he said faltering.

"Have you any idea who wrote it?" asked Mr. Porter.

"Yes," answered Ben. "It's Sam Archer."

"In fun?"

"No, in spite. He is always glad to injure me."

"What can be his motive?"

Ben explained his relations with Sam.

"Do you need the position?" asked Mr. Porter.

"Yes, sir, I am poor, and can ill afford the money I have spent in coming to Boston. Sam knows this, and it is mean for him, a rich boy, to fool me so."

Mr. Porter was a kind-hearted man. More than once he had kept on a clerk whom he did not need.

"Go into the store a minute, my boy," he said, "while I speak with my nephew."

Of course Ben obeyed.

"What do you think of this boy, Henry?"

"I think very favorably of him. He seems honest and straightforward, and I think he is smart."

"I like his looks myself; I wish we had a vacancy."

"We shall have very soon."

"To whom do you refer?"

"Frank Robinson is going to leave at the beginning of next month. His father thinks it will be better for him to go to school a year or two longer."

"So you would recommend hiring this boy?"

"Yes, sir; I have so good an opinion of him that I am quite willing to guarantee him. If you will take him on immediately, I will myself pay his wages till the end of the month, when Robinson leaves."

"Bravo, Henry! That shows a kind heart. I won't accept that, but will give you leave to help him outside as much as you please."

Chapter XXV

Sam Gives Himself Away

Ben was looking with interest at a row of new books when he was summoned into the private office.

"My young friend," said Mr. Porter, senior, "we are not responsible for the letter that brought you here."

"No, sir," said Ben. "I am sorry to have troubled you. I'll go home this

afternoon."

He looked sober enough, poor Ben, for it would not be pleasant facing his aunt and friends in Milltown, and explaining matters. Even the "licking" which he determined to give Sam Archer, if he should prove the author of the decoy letter, would be a poor satisfaction.

"You may as well stay," said Mr. Porter. "My nephew thinks we can find a place for you in the store."

"Will you really take me?" asked Ben.

"We will try you. My nephew thinks you will suit us."

"Thank you, sir," said Ben warmly.

"Your friend, who wrote the letter, will be rather disappointed, eh?" said young Porter, smiling.

"Yes," said Ben, who could smile now. "I should like to see him when he learns that his malicious letter has procured me a situation.

"What do we pay you Robinson?"

"Six dollars a week."

"Then Benjamin shall have the same. He has no knowledge of the business, to be sure——"

"I will have soon," said Ben confidently.

"That's right, my lad. Make yourself useful to us, and you won't have cause to regret it."

He was set to work dusting books, and young Porter went to his own desk; he was chief bookkeeper.

"When the store closes," he said, "come to me. I shall take you to my room to-night."

In the evening, at his friend's room, Ben wrote the following letter to his friend, James Watson:

"Boston, July 18, 19—.

"Dear James: Though I have been only a few hours in Boston I have a good deal to tell you. You remember my showing you the letter from Jones & Porter, which induced me to come to the city. Well, it was a hoax. It didn't come from the firm at all. Somebody wanted to play a trick on me, and wrote it. I have no doubt Sam Archer was at the bottom of it. You know what a mean fellow he is, and that he would like nothing better than to injure me. But I am glad to say that he has not succeeded. By great good luck I got acquainted with Mr. Porter's nephew on board the train. I showed him the letter, which he pronounced probably a forgery. But he took me to the store —he is head bookkeeper—and introduced me to his uncle. It seems that there will be a vacancy at the beginning of next month, and as I was on the ground, they engaged me. So Sam's mean trick has been the means of obtaining me a position. He will be provoked enough when he hears it. Now I will tell you what I want you to do. Don't say a word about the letter being a hoax. Merely tell the boys that I have got the place I expected. If Sam wrote the letter he will certainly betray himself. Keep mum, and lead him on. Then let me know what you find out. I will write again soon.

"Your affectionate friend,
"Ben Bradford."

"It's a mean trick, and just like Sam," ejaculated James when he read Ben's letter. "I'll follow Ben's instructions. Sam will be coming round making inquiries pretty soon. I'll manage him."

James was right in his supposition. Sam eagerly awaited the upshot of his trick. He concluded that Ben would come back Monday night depressed and humiliated, and he was on the street near Ben's house when the afternoon train got in, ready to feast his eyes on his rival's unhappiness. But he waited in vain.

The next morning, about ten o'clock, he met James Watson on the street. James had received the letter from Ben the evening previous.

"How are you, James?" said Sam.

"I'm all right," said James rather coolly.

"Have you heard from Ben Bradford?"

"I heard last night."

"What does he say?' asked Sam eagerly.

"He hadn't been in his situation long enough to tell how he should like it," answered James.

"Is he in a situation?" demanded Sam in surprise.

"What do you think he went to Boston for?"

"Where is he working?" asked Sam incredulously.

"He is with Jones & Porter, of course. Didn't you know they sent for him?"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Sam.

"I am on the track," thought James.

"I don't know what you mean," said he quietly. "Jones & Porter sent for Ben, and he is in their employ."

"I'll bet you a dollar Ben Bradford will be back here within a week," said Sam, in a ton of great confidence. "I don't believe Jones & Porter ever wrote him a letter."

"I saw the letter."

"Suppose you did; it might have been a hoax."

"Then whoever wrote it did Ben a good turn, for he has got a place at Jones & Porter's."

"I don't believe it," said Sam uneasily.

"Ben writes me that he is there."

"Will you let me see the letter?"

"No, I won't."

"That convinces me that it's all a humbug."

"You think the letter a hoax?"

"Yes, I do."

"What reason have you for thinking so?"

"I decline to state."

I decline to state."

"Who do you think wrote it?"

"How should I know?"

"As you know so much, I don't mind telling you that you are right. The letter was a hoax."

Sam laughed heartily.

"I thought so," he said.

"And I know who wrote it."

Sam didn't laugh now.

"Who?" he asked uncomfortably.

"You did it."

"What do you mean?" blustered Sam.

"Exactly what I say. Otherwise you would have had no reason to suspect the genuineness of it."

"Does Ben Bradford charge me with it? Just wait till I see him."

"That will be some time unless you go to Boston. Jones & Porter happened to have a vacancy, and Ben stepped into it. Your letter got him a place."

"I don't believe it," said Sam faintly.

"It's true, and it's lucky for you. If Ben had been obliged to come home he

would have given you the worst licking you ever had."

Chapter XXVI

Ben Finds a Boarding-Place

Henry Porter had a fine suite of rooms in the Back Bay District of Boston. Ben spent the night with him.

"You've got a nice home," said our hero.

"Yes," said the bookkeeper. "My rooms alone cost me fifteen dollars a week."

"Without board?" ejaculated Ben.

"Yes," said the young man, smiling.

"Why, that is almost eight hundred dollars a year."

"Quite correct. I see you think me extravagant."

"I was wondering how you could afford it."

"Your surprise is natural. If I only depended on my salary, I certainly should not hire such expensive apartments. But a good aunt left me twenty thousand

dollars, two years since, and this being well invested yields me about fourteen hundred dollars a year."

"I wonder you don't go into business."

"I have thought of it, but doubt whether I should manage a business of my own judiciously. If not, I should run the risk of losing all my money. I like keeping books for my uncle, and he pays me a good salary. With this and the income from my property I can live as well as I wish without incurring any risk at all."

"I don't know but that is best," said Ben.

"Now let me speak of your own plans, Ben. Your income is six dollars a week."

"Yes, sir."

"You must regulate your expenses accordingly."

"I want to do so, Mr. Porter. How much board shall I have to pay?" asked Ben anxiously.

"I cannot tell without inquiring. There is a boarding-house on Warren Avenue, kept by a worthy lady of my acquaintance. How much do you fell able to pay?"

"I should like to have enough over to buy my clothes."

"We will see if we can manage it Get your hat and we will go to the boarding-house now."

It was a three-story brick house, such as is common in Boston. It was unusually neat for a boarding-house of medium grade, Mrs. Draper being an

excellent housekeeper, with a horror of dirt.

"How do you do, Mr. Porter?" was the landlady's greeting. Mr. Porter had once boarded with her.

"Very well, thank you, Mrs. Draper. How is business? Pretty full, eh?"

"Yes, sir; I've only got one small room vacant."

"May we see it?"

"It won't suit you, Mr. Porter."

"It may suit my young friend here."

"A relative of yours?" inquired Mrs. Draper.

"No, but he is a young friend in whom I feel an interest."

"I shall be very glad if the room suits him, then."

Mrs. Draper led the way up-stairs to the vacant room. It was small, but neatly carpeted, and provided all that was needful in a chamber.

"How much do you like it, Ben?" asked the bookkeeper.

"Very much," said Ben, in a tone of satisfaction.

Mr. Porter walked to the other end of the room and discussed terms with Mrs. Draper in a low tone.

"What is your price for this room with board?"

"I have generally got six dollars a week."

"I want you to let my young friend have it for four."

"I really couldn't do it, Mr. Porter. You have no idea how much I have to pay at the market for meat and vegetables. Then my landlord won't reduce my rent."

"You don't understand me, Mrs. Draper," said the bookkeeper. "You are to charge him only four dollars; but I propose to make up the difference."

"That is, of course, satisfactory."

"One thing more. My young friend is not to know about this arrangement. He is to suppose that four dollars a week is payment in full."

"There is only one objection to that, Mr. Porter. If my other boarders suppose that is all he pays, they will make a fuss, and want their rate of board reduced."

"Then he shall be cautioned to keep the price he pays secret. Ben!"

Ben walked over to where they were standing.

"Mrs. Draper agrees to take you at the very low price of four dollars a week for room and board."

Ben looked delighted.

"Then I shall have money enough from my wages to pay all my expenses without calling on Aunt Jane."

"Yes, if you are economical. As this price is extremely low, you are not to mention to any of the other boarders how much you pay."

"I will be sure to remember it," said Ben.

"I will be sure to remember it," said Ben.

As they were leaving the house Mr. Porter said: "Don't suppose, Ben, that I am anxious to get rid of you. I had half a mind to keep you with me a week or two. But one thing deterred me. You are a poor boy, and have your own way to make in the world. You can't for years afford to live as I am doing. If I accustomed you to living expensively it would be harder for you to accommodate yourself to your means."

"I understand you, Mr. Porter, and thank you. I consider you a true friend," said Ben earnestly.

"I see you are a sensible boy, Ben. You are right in looking upon me as a friend. I hope you will come and call upon me often."

"Thank you, sir. I shall consider it a privilege to do so. And I hope you will give me any advice that you think will benefit me."

"I will, Ben, and I will begin now. We have a large public library in Boston, of which we are very proud. I advise you to draw books from it."

"I shall be glad to," said Ben eagerly.

"Come round, and I will show it to you."

Together they entered the handsome building on Copley Square. Ben, who had never seen a large library, or, indeed, any library containing over a thousand books, was amazed at what he saw.

"I didn't suppose there was any library in the world so large," he said.

"Here is the newspaper and magazine room. You can come in here any evening. It will be much better than to spend your time where many boys and young men do—in billiard and drinking saloons."

young men do — in billiard and drinking saloons.

"I shall enjoy living in Boston very much."

"I think you will. While a large city has more temptations than a small town, it also has more opportunities for improvement. I hope, Ben, you will start right, and prepare the way for a useful manhood."

"Thank you, Mr. Porter. I mean to try."

The next day Ben took formal possession of his room in the boarding-house on Warren Avenue. He found a pleasant class of boarders there and a good table. Though not luxurious, it was better than he had been used to at home, and he felt himself fortunately placed.

Chapter XXVII

Sam Attempts Strategy

The more Sam Archer thought of the effect of his letter upon Ben's fortunes the more he felt provoked.

"I wish I hadn't sent him to Jones & Porter," thought he. "I hope he won't suit them."

When a fortnight had passed Sam managed to meet James Watson.

"Have you heard from Ben Bradford lately?"

"Yes," said James.

"What does he write?"

"That he likes his place very much. The bookkeeper is very kind to him, and assists him with advice. Then he likes being in a bookstore."

Sam was not overjoyed at the news.

"How kind you are to take such an interest in Ben!"

"I don't take an interest in him," returned Sam.

"Then what makes you ask after him so particularly?"

"I expected he'd be discharged by this time."

"What made you think so?"

"He didn't give satisfaction at the mill. He was discharged."

"So was I."

"But not for the same reasons," said Sam. "It was because times were dull."

"I rather think Ben's work was satisfactory enough, but you influenced your father against him."

"How much pay does he get?" inquired Sam.

"More than he received at the mill."

"I wonder whether all this is true," considered Sam. "James Watson is Ben's friend and he may represent things better than they are."

An excellent plan suggested itself to Sam. He would ask his father's permission to go to Boston and pass a day or two with his friend, Frank Ferguson. This would allow him to drop into Jones & Porter's store and judge for himself how Ben was situated.

Sam had no trouble about obtaining permission.

On reaching the city he decided to call at the store before going to his friend's residence.

Ben was dusting books, when a glance toward the door revealed the entrance of Sam. The latter had cherished a faint hope that James had deceived him, and that Ben was really not employed.

"How shall I receive him?" Ben asked himself.

He decided to treat him coolly, but not to quarrel.

"Good morning, Bradford," said Sam.

"Good morning, Archer," was the return greeting.

Sam didn't quite like this familiarity.

"How do you like working here?"

"Very much," answered Ben. "Much better than in the mill," he added significantly.

"I shouldn't think they'd have taken a green country boy," suggested

"I shouldn't think they'd have taken a green country boy," suggested Sam pleasantly.

"Perhaps they wouldn't if a friend hadn't written for me," said Ben with a meaning glance at Sam.

"How much pay do you get?"

"I would rather not say."

"Because it is so small," said Sam, with a sneer.

"On the contrary, I look upon it as liberal. I am doing better than if I had remained at Milltown."

This was bad news for Sam.

"I am really obliged to the person who wrote the letter which secured me the position," Ben added.

"It isn't much of a business to dust books."

"I sell books sometimes," said Ben, smiling. "Can I show you something this morning."

"No, I don't want anything. Where do you live?"

"I board on Warren Avenue."

"In a cheap boarding-house?"

"There are some very nice people who board there."

Sam came to a sudden decision. Would it be possible to induce Ben to give up his place, and enter the mill again? He could be discharged after awhile

up his place, and enter the mill again? He could be discharged after awhile, and cast adrift. It was rather foolish to suppose that Ben would snap at such a bait, but he decided to try it.

"I think you would be better off in the mill," he said.

"You could board at home, and help your aunt. You would soon be promoted, too."

"I thought you didn't want me to enter the mill," exclaimed Ben, amazed. "Your father told me that my record was not good;" and Ben looked indignant.

"Father was feeling out of sorts," said Sam smoothly.

"He will take you on if you'll come back."

"What does the fellow mean?" thought Ben.

It didn't take him long to guess. If he should return to the mill he would be once more in Sam's power.

"You really think your father would employ me?"

"Yes, he would if I asked him to."

"I would thank you, Sam Archer, if I thought your offer was a friendly one."

"What makes you think that it isn't."

"The feeling which I have reason to think you entertain for me, and your conduct in the past."

"You are too suspicious, Ben."

"If I find I am, I will apologize to you. It would be foolish for me to give up so good a position in order to accept a poor one, which is not all permanent."

"Well, Bradford, I must bid you good morning. Just write to me if you decide to accept."

"If I decide to accept I will."

"He's getting very impudent," said Sam to himself, "If I could only get him into the mill I could fix him. We'd let him stay two or three weeks, and then ship him. But he won't do it. Stay, I think of a way."

What the way was may be conjectured from a letter which Ben received three days later from his Aunt Jane:

"My Dear Nephew: I am feeling almost heart-broken. It is reported by one who saw you lately that you are looking very dissipated. I was afraid the temptations of the city were too much for you. You are too young to go away from home. I won't blame you too much, for I feel that you are weak rather than wicked. But I shall not feel comfortable till you are at home again. Don't hesitate to give up your place. I am assured that they will take you on again at the mill, and it will be much better for you to be at home with us, till you are older, and better able to resist temptation.

"Your anxious aunt,
"Jane Bradford"

Ben read this letter in amazed indignation.

"Sam is at the bottom of this," he concluded. "It is he that has reported that I look dissipated. He wants to deprive me of my place, and get me into the mill, where I shall be in his power. I can't forgive him for frightening my poor aunt. If I were at home, I should certainly punish him as he deserves."

if I were at home, I should certainly punish him as he deserves.

Ben took the letter to his friend, the bookkeeper.

"What do you think of that?" he asked.

"This letter was written at an enemy's instigation."

"You are right, Mr. Porter."

Then Ben told his friend of Sam's call.

"Will you do me a favor, Mr. Porter?" he asked.

"Certainly I will, Ben."

"Then, will you write to my aunt, and assure her that my habits are good, and that her informant has willfully lied? It will relieve her anxiety."

"With pleasure."

The next day Mrs. Bradford received a letter, very enthusiastic in its tone, which completely exonerated our hero from the charges brought against him.

"Your nephew," it concluded, "bids fair to become one of our best clerks. He is polite, faithful, and continually trying to improve. You need have no apprehension about him. It would be very foolish for him to resign his situation."

Chapter XXVIII

Sam Praises Ben

The same mail that carried the bookkeeper's letter to Mrs. Bradford also carried a letter from Ben to Sam Archer. It ran thus:

"Sam Archer: You might be in better business than telling lies about me to my aunt. If you think I look dissipated your eyes deceive you, and I advise you to wear glasses the next time you come to Boston. If you choose to come to the store, it is none of my business; but you need not take the trouble in order to see me.

I quite understand your anxiety to get me back into the mill. There was a time when I should have been glad of a place there; but now I have a place that suits me better, and don't care to change.
"Benjamin Bradford"

When Sam received this letter, he looked and felt provoked. Somehow or other Ben was always getting the better of him. He wanted to injure him, but there seemed no way. Suddenly it occurred to Sam that he might prejudice Jones & Porter against our hero.

He sat down at once and wrote them an anonymous letter, of which this is a copy:

"Messrs. Jones & Porter: I hear that you have taken into your employment a boy named Benjamin Bradford from this town. You probably are not aware that he has a very bad reputation here. He was employed in the mill for a time, but was discharged because he was idle and lazy. He keeps bad company

but was discharged because he was idle and lazy. He keeps bad company, and none of the respectable boys here cared to associate with him. I don't like to see an honorable firm imposed upon, and that is why I warn you of the character of your new clerk, though I have no personal interest in the matter.

"A Friend"

The next day Ben was summoned to the countingroom.

"Ben," said Mr. Porter, "have you any enemy in Milltown?"

"Yes, sir."

"We have just received a letter warning us against you, as unworthy of our confidence."

Mr. Porter smiled, or Ben might have felt uncomfortable.

"May I see the letter?" he asked.

The letter was placed in his hands.

"It is Sam Archer's handwriting," he said, looking up. "I hope, sir, you won't let it prejudice you against me."

"I would not allow myself to be influenced by an anonymous letter.
It is a stab in the dark."

"I want to show you how inconsistent Sam is," said Ben. "He was here a few days ago, and urged me to give up my place here, and take one in the mill."

"That is rather strange, if he is your enemy."

"No, sir; he don't like it because I have a good place here. If I should go into

"No, sir, he don't like it because I have a good place here. If I should go into the mill I should probably be discharged in a week or two, and cast adrift."

"Are any boys as malicious as that?"

"Not many, sir, I hope; but Sam is an exception."

"I sympathize with you in your persecution, Ben; but I can assure you that no anonymous letters will change my opinion of you. If this enemy sends another letter, I shall feel tempted to increase your wages."

"Then I hope he'll write again," said Ben, laughing.

"If we continue satisfied with you, we shall probably advance you on the first of January."

"Thank you, sir," said Ben warmly. "May I answer this letter, sir?"

"You may say that we have shown it to you, and that we despise such malicious attempts to injure."

The next day Sam received a letter from Ben, which concluded:

"If you write another similar letter to my employers, you will be doing me quite a service. It will probably cause them to raise my salary. As I owe my place to you, you now have it in your power to increase the obligation. How bad you must feel, Sam, at your inability to do me harm! I can't say I exactly sympathize with you, but I certainly pity you for harboring such malice in your heart. I don't know how to express my gratitude for all of your kindness. If ever you want a situation in Boston let me know. There is a peanut woman on the Common who wants a smart, active salesman.

"Ben Bradford"

Sam was stung by the cool indifference and contempt which appeared in this letter. Ben did not take the trouble to be angry. He evidently despised his enmity, and defied him. Sam felt that he hated Ben worse.

"What's that letter you are scowling over, Sam?" asked James Watson.

"It's a letter from a miserable puppy," hissed Sam.

"Is it? Do you correspond with miserable puppies?"

"I can't help their writing to me. If you want to know who it is, it's your friend, Ben Bradford."

"How long have you corresponded?" asked James.

"I wouldn't lower myself by writing to him," said Sam wrathfully. "I'll show you what I think of his letter."

As he spoke, he tore the letter to pieces.

"You're a strange boy, Sam," said James.

"Why am I?"

"Haven't you been working hard to get Ben back to Milltown?"

"I wish he'd come back."

"And yet you can't bear the sight of him."

"I hate him worse than any fellow I know."

"Come, now, Sam, just listen to a little advice. If you had always treated Ben

right you would like him as well as I do. Why should you cherish malice against him? He has good qualities, and so have you, if you'd only give 'em a chance to show themselves."

"That's all gammon," said Sam impatiently.

"What, about your having good qualities?"

"About my ever liking Ben Bradford. Before I'd make a friend of him, I would go without friends."

"You may think differently some time."

On the first of January Ben wrote to his aunt:

"My Dear Aunt: Congratulate me on my good luck. Mr. Porter, this morning, called me into the countingroom, and informed me that henceforth my wages would be eight dollars a week—two dollars more that I have been receiving. I owe this partly to my good luck. I am a favorite of the bookkeeper, who is Mr. Porter's nephew; otherwise, if I had been advanced at all, it would have been only one dollar a week. Don't you think it would have been rather foolish if I had come back and gone into the mill, as you wished me to?"

"After all, I think Ben did right to stay," said Aunt Jane, when she read the letter.

"I wish he'd come home," said Tony. "Then he could play with me."

Chapter XXIX

The Cunard Steamer

Early one morning a gentleman came into Jones & Porter's bookstore, and selected some books, which he paid for. There were eighteen in all.

"Where shall we send them, sir?"

"Can you send them to the Cunard steamer at East Boston? I sail for Europe today."

"Certainly, sir. When does the steamer start?"

"At twelve o'clock. Don't fail to have them there on time, as I shall be greatly disappointed to miss them."

When the gentleman had left the store, Ben was summoned.

"Ben, do you know the Cunard Wharf in East Boston?" asked the bookkeeper.

"I can easily find it."

"Here is a package of books to be carried there."

"All right, sir," said Ben.

"They are for Mr. James Parker. If you don't find him leave them with the steward."

So Ben took the package, and made his way toward the East Boston Ferry.

On board the boat he look around him, thinking it possible that he might recognize some one of his fellow passengers. Considerably to his surprise he noticed Mr. Archer, superintendent of the factory at Milltown, whom he had not seen since the latter declined to take him on again at the mill.

"I wonder what brings Mr. Archer here?"

His surprise, however, was only momentary. There was nothing strange in the superintendent's having business at East Boston. Ben noticed, however, that Mr. Archer wore a traveling-suit, and carried a knapsack.

Ben would have liked to inquire if Squire Archer had seen his aunt lately, if they had been on friendly terms; but he was very doubtful how his advance would be received, and remained where he was.

The boat touched the pier and the passengers disembarked. Ben was two or three rods behind the squire. Our hero inquired the way to the steamer, and had no difficulty about obtaining the necessary information. To his additional surprise Squire Archer crossed the gangway only a little in advance of Ben.

"What can be the squire's business here?" thought Ben, in surprise.

Ben halted on deck, and looked around for some officer to whom he could

entrust the package. At this moment Squire Archer turned and saw Ben for the first time. He started and changed color, as Ben could see. For an instant he looked irresolute. Then he approached Ben, and said roughly: "What brings you here?"

"I am here on business," answered Ben.

"On business! What business?"

"I have a package of books for one of the passengers."

"Oh, I see," said the mill superintendent, seeming to be relieved.
"You are working in a bookstore."

"Yes, sir."

"What firm is it?"

"Jones & Porter."

"Oh, yes, I know. I have often been in their store. How do you like your place?"

Squire Archer's tone was quite genial and friendly, though there was an uneasy expression on his face.

"Very well, sir."

"If you ever get out of a place, come to me."

"I thought you said my record was not good."

"So I did," said the superintendent; "but I was mistaken. I was thinking of another boy at the time."

"I am glad to hear it, sir," he answered. "I felt disturbed about it at the time."

"Of course. I believe you and Sam had a little difference."

"Yes, sir; but I don't think I was to blame."

"I don't care to inquire into that. You and Sam will laugh over it when you become a little older."

Squire Archer had never seemed so kind and pleasant. Ben began to think he had misjudged him.

"I would like to be friends with Sam," he said. "I shall be ready to meet him half-way."

"I will tell him so to-night," said the superintendent.

"By the way, I suppose you are rather surprised to see me here. You didn't think I was going to Europe?"

"No, sir, I didn't think that. I suppose you couldn't be spared at the mill."

"Quite true, my boy. I can't be spared for so long. I wish I could. I have long wanted to make a European tour; but I am tied down at home by business. However, that doesn't explain why I am here."

"Don't tell me, sir, unless you like. It is none of my business."

"To be sure. In fact, there is a little secret about it; but I don't mind telling you."

Ben felt more and more surprised. Was this the proud Squire Archer, who carried his head so high?

"If there is a secret about it, perhaps you had better not tell me," said Ben.

"Oh, I am quite willing to tell you; but you must not say anything about it till after the steamer has sailed. The fact is, a man, who owes the mill a large sum of money, it is suspected has taken passage on board this steamer, with the intention of going to Europe and evading the payment of his debt. I can't tell you his name, as that might interfere with my plans. I am here to intercept him, and prevent his departure."

"I hope you will succeed, Squire Archer," said Ben.

"Thank you, Ben. You see, therefore, that it is essential for me to keep my presence here secret till the steamer sails. I will go down-stairs now and watch."

Ben delivered his parcel, left the steamer, and did not mention that he had met any one whom he knew. He felt bound to respect Squire Archer's secret.

In the afternoon he was walking up Washington Street with the bookkeeper, when the latter bought the Evening Transcript. He glanced at the first page and then turned to Ben.

"Do you know Archer living in Milltown?"

"Certainly; he is the superintendent of the mill there."

"Well, here is a paragraph about him. It seems he has left the town, with fifty thousand dollars belonging to the corporation. His flight has made a great sensation. The police are on his track, and it is thought that he will be arrested and brought back."

"I saw Squire Archer this morning, on the Cunard steamer. He told me not to mention having seen him till after the steamer had started."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed young Porter.

"Yes; he said he was looking out for a man who owed money to the mill, whom he suspected of taking secret passage for Europe."

Chapter XXX

Sam Is Improved By Adversity

Mr. Archer's flight made a great commotion in Milltown. No one entertained a suspicion of his integrity. He had been appropriating the funds of the corporation to his own use, being treasurer as well as superintendent. When exposure was inevitable he fled.

To Sam and his mother, it was a great blow, not only on account of the disgrace, but also because it involved poverty and a narrow style of living. To persons of their pretensions this was heavy to bear. They were not altogether penniless. Mrs. Archer had property of her own, to the amount of four thousand dollars, which was unimpaired. But, even at a liberal rate of interest, this would not support them. Sam remained in the house, dispirited and resentful against the father who had brought this upon him, till he got tired of

confinement and walked out. He hoped to meet no one whom he knew, but at the corner of the street he fell in with James Watson.

"He is one of Ben Bradford's friends. He will rejoice at what has happened," thought Sam. But James stopped him, and said in a friendly tone: "Are you out for a walk, Sam? Let us walk together?"

"I didn't know as you'd care to walk with me."

"You don't think I rejoice over your misfortune?"

"I didn't know but you might. You are a friend of Ben Bradford."

"He will be very sorry. He won't think of any little difference there has been between you."

"I don't believe that," said Sam, shaking his head.

"You will, as soon as you see him. You mustn't lose courage, Sam. I know it's bad for you, but——"

"I don't know what's going to become of us," said Sam despondently. "We shall be poor."

"That isn't the worst thing that can happen to you."

"Father has treated us very badly."

"He has done wrong; but he is your father. Remember, Sam, I am your friend, and if I can do anything for you I will."

"Thank you, James," he said. "You are a good fellow—much better than I thought. I supposed you would be glad I was down in the world."

Same was to be still more surprised. The next day he received the following letter from Ben Bradford:

"Dear Sam: I am very sorry to hear of your misfortune. Of course, no one can blame you or your mother. I believe I was the last acquaintance to see your father before he left Boston. I had occasion to go on board the Cunard steamer which sailed on Wednesday. On the dock I met your father, and had a little conversation with him. He did not tell me that he was going to Europe; but he was in a traveling-dress and, no doubt, he was.

"What has happened will, no doubt, make some difference in your plans. If you wish to get a situation in Boston, I may be able to help you to one. At the beginning of next month there will be an opening for a boy in an establishment on Milk Street. The wages will not exceed five dollars a week; but it would be difficult for a beginner to do better. If you wish, I will try to get this place for you. At any rate, I hope you will regard me as a friend who wishes you well. The little quarrel there has been between us is not worth remembering.

"Your sincere friend,
"Benjamin Bradford."

To say that Sam was surprised to receive this cordial letter from a boy whom he had so persistently tried to injure will hardly express his feelings. He was overwhelmed with astonishment, mingled with shame.

"Ben is a great deal better than I am," he was forced to admit. "I don't deserve such a kindness from him."

He showed Ben's letter to his mother.

"I think I had better ask Ben to get me the place. We must not be too proud."

"We have no right to be proud now. We shall have scarcely enough to

support us in the humblest manner."

"My wages will help. I shall get five dollars a week. That will be two hundred and sixty dollars a year."

Even Mrs. Archer was surprised at the change in Sam.

"Do you think you will be willing to work?"

"Of course I shall; that is, if I can work in Boston. I don't want to stay here."

"Nor I," said Mrs. Archer.

"Suppose we both go to Boston, then."

"I am afraid our income won't be sufficient."

"For two or three years you can spend some of your principal, mother. By that time I shall be getting higher wages, and it may not be necessary."

"I didn't expect that you would take it so, Sam."

Ben received the following answer to his letter.

"Dear Ben: I thank you for your kind letter. I feel very much ashamed of the way I have treated you in the past. I didn't know what a good fellow you were. I am afraid I shouldn't have behaved as well in your place. As to your offer, I accept it thankfully. I shall be very glad to get the place you speak of. Mother and I intend to move to Boston, as it is no longer agreeable to stay here. Do you know of any boarding-house where the prices are reasonable, for we cannot afford to pay high rates? If you do, please find out on what terms we can be accommodated, and let me know."

Ben was pleased

Ben was pleased.

"Sam has improved," he thought.

By the first of the month Sam and his mother were established in a boarding-house on Warren Avenue and Sam had entered upon his duties in Milk Street.

Chapter XXXI

Clouds in the Sky

Ben felt that he and his aunt were fortunately situated. From the time when his salary was raised he had laid aside two dollars a week, which he deposited in the savings-bank on School Street. His aunt, having no rent to pay, easily got along on her income from work and from the liberal board paid for little Emma.

"I am getting on," thought Ben, complacently regarding his bank book, at the end of three months. "I am worth twenty-six dollars already."

Little Emma, his aunt's boarder, was a child of pleasant disposition, and had given little trouble to Mrs. Bradford. Her health, too, had been excellent, until all at once she became pale and thin. Mrs. Bradford felt it her duty to report this to Mr. Manning, the child's guardian. By his direction, a skillful physician was consulted, who gave it as his opinion that the best thing for the child

would be a sea voyage. This was communicated to Mr. Manning.

"Fortunately," he responded, "my sister starts in a fortnight for Europe. She will be absent six months. I have prevailed upon her to take charge of Emma."

Mrs. Bradford was glad that the little girl would have a chance to recover her former health and bloom; but she felt her loss doubly, on account of her society, and on account of the loss of income which her absence would involve. It was not until after Emma had actually gone that she felt the full force of the last consideration. So the poor woman wrote a doleful letter to Ben, in which she predicted that Tony and herself must soon go to the poorhouse.

When this letter reached Ben his duty was set plainly before him. From his regular income he could spare two dollars a week, and, taking two dollars weekly from his reserve fund, he would be enabled to allow his aunt four dollars a week, which, added to her own earnings, would maintain her and Tony in comfort.

"My dear aunt," he wrote, "don't talk of going to the poorhouse just yet. You forget that you have a rich nephew in Boston, who is unwilling that any of his relations should live at public expense unless they get into public office. I don't suppose there is any chance of your getting elected member of Congress. As it is, I shall send you every week four, dollars, which I hope will provide you with your usual comfort. I can keep up this allowance for twenty weeks, and that will carry you nearly to the time when Emma will return to you; then all will be right again."

Ben began to save a dollar more. He wanted to prepare for the time when his little fund would be exhausted. If by that time he had twelve dollars more, he would be able to continue to his aunt her regular allowance, till the six months were at an end. The thought that he had arranged matters so satisfactory made Ben quite cheerful. He realized the advantage of the habit of saving. He was

encouraged also by some help which he received from the bookkeeper.

"Ben," said he, "do you spend all your salary?"

"Yes, Mr. Porter, I am obliged to."

"I should think you could save something out of eight dollars a week, as only four goes for board."

"So I could, but I have to help my aunt."

"I thought she was provided for," said Mr. Porter.

"Doesn't she get seven dollars a week for boarding a little girl?"

"She did; but the little girl is now in Europe."

"I suppose you cannot send much to your aunt."

"I send her four dollars a week."

"Four dollars a week!" exclaimed the young man, in surprise. "Why, that allows you nothing after paying your board."

The Ben told his friend about his savings.

"Doesn't it seem hard to have your earnings used up in this way?" asked the bookkeeper.

"No," answered Ben cheerfully.

"You are an excellent boy, Ben. You have done just the right thing.
I am glad you are so unselfish."

"I am afraid I am selfish as the majority of boys; but I am not mean enough to let my aunt and little cousin suffer."

"I believe you consider me a friend of yours, Ben."

"I consider you one of the best friends I have, Mr. Porter," said Ben warmly.

"Then you must allow me a friend's privilege."

As he said this he drew from his pocketbook a twenty-dollar bill, and put it into Ben's hands.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Porter; but ought I to accept so much?"

"Certainly. Remember that my means are considerable, and that I have no one dependent upon me."

Ben felt that his companion derived pleasure from his gift, and he did not see why he should make any further objections. He added the twenty dollars to his savings-book fund, and said to himself: "There will be no trouble now in tiding over the six months."

But it is said misfortunes never come singly. The very next day his aunt received a lawyer's letter, which plunged her into the deepest despondency.

Chapter XXXII

The Blow Falls

This is the material portion of Mrs. Bradford's letter to Ben:

"Dear Benjamin: The blow has fallen at last. I felt that our prosperity was not lasting, though I never could make you believe it. I have always expected the worst, and it has come. Benjamin, we are ruined; I shall end my days in the poorhouse after all. If you want an explanation, read the letter which I enclose."

The letter enclosed was from Solomon Brief, attorney, of Montreal, informing Mrs. Bradford that, as executor of the estate of the late Matthew Baldwin, of Montreal, he begged to remind her that for five years she had failed to pay the rent on a tenement owned by the deceased, and which he now found it to be his duty to demand. At sixty dollars per year, without interest, this would now amount to three hundred dollars, which he hoped Mrs. Bradford would see the propriety of paying at once.

Mrs. Bradford continued:

I don't know whether they will put me in jail or not; but you know that I cannot pay this money, and couldn't if I had five years to do it in. What will become of us all I don't know. 'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.'

"Your sorrowful aunt,
"Jane Bradford.

"P.S.—I am sure your Uncle Matthew never intended that I should pay the rent. He once wrote me a letter to that effect, but I can't find it."

Even Ben, hopeful as he was, looked sober after reading this letter. He went to his friend, the bookkeeper.

"Have you ever seen your uncle, Ben?" he inquired.

"No, sir."

"What was his reputation?"

"He was considered wealthy."

"It is a pity you could not visit Montreal, and make some inquiries," said the bookkeeper thoughtfully.

"Of course I can't do that."

"Then, first of all, write to this lawyer, and inquire the particulars of Mr. Baldwin's death; and next, how his property is left. Then make him acquainted with the terms on which your aunt has occupied her house."

This advice seemed reasonable, and Ben adopted it.

As Ben left the store at six o'clock, one evening, he brushed by an old man with a bent figure and apparently feeble. He stumbled and would have fallen had not Ben sprung forward and held him up.

"Thank you, my boy," he said, in a tremulous voice.

"You seem feeble," said Ben compassionately.

"Yes, I am not strong."

"If you wish it I will accompany you to your house; you might fall again."

"What is your name?"

"Benjamin Bradford."

"Where do you board?" asked the old man abruptly.

"At No.—Warren Avenue."

"I want to find a comfortable boarding-house. Do you think I could get in there?"

"Yes, sir; I know Mrs. Draper has a vacant room."

"Is she reasonable in her charges?"

"If she were not I could not afford to board there."

"I've a great mind to go there," said the old man.

"I wonder if he has money enough to pay his board regularly," thought Ben.

Just then a grandson of Mrs. Draper's, Charlie Hunting, a boy rather younger than Ben, came up.

"How are you, Ben?" he said.

"All right, Charlie. Do you know if your grandmother has let the bedroom on the second floor?"

"Yes, I know she hasn't."

"Would you like to go and see it, sir?" asked Ben.

"Yes," said the old man. "Is it far?"

"About half a mile; but we can take the cars."

"No, I can walk, if you will walk slow enough for me. I am not so young as I was."

"Certainly, sir. Charlie, if you are going home, just tell your grandmother that this gentleman is coming to look at her room. You needn't wait for me."

"All right, Ben."

"You are very kind to an old man; what did you say your name was?"

"Ben Bradford."

"Have you parents living?"

"No, sir, only an aunt and cousin."

"Are they well off?"

"Not very, sir. They got along very comfortably till lately, but now something has happened which makes me feel anxious. But I won't trouble you with it, sir."

"Tell me about it; I would like to hear it."

"For five years my aunt has occupied a small house, rent free. It belonged to her uncle. She has just got a letter saying that her uncle is dead, and demanding payment of rent for the last five years."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"I have written to the lawyer, telling him on what terms my aunt occupied her house—that is, rent free, on condition that she paid the taxes regularly."

house—that is, rent free, on condition that she paid the taxes regularly.

"What was the uncle's name? I am a little acquainted in Montreal. Perhaps I may have heard it."

"His name was Matthew Baldwin."

"I have heard of him. He was a miserly old man."

"I don't know about that," said Ben.

"It seems to me you ought to look after the matter. Why don't you go to Montreal?"

"I can't spare the time or money," answered Ben. "Besides, we should certainly have heard of it if any property had been coming to us. I have written to the lawyer, and expect to hear something soon."

When they reached the boarding-house on Warren Avenue the old man appeared pleased with the vacant room. He haggled a little about the terms, but finally agreed to take it at the price set by Mrs. Draper. He gave his name as Marcus Benton, and too immediate possession.

Chapter XXXIII

Ben Receives a Commission

In due time a letter came from Montreal. It was brief and not overcourteous. From it Ben learned that Mr. Baldwin had been dead for three weeks, and that all his property was left to a young man who claimed to be a distant relative. The name of the heir was John Tremlett. The letter concluded: "I can find nothing in the papers of the deceased confirming your statement that your aunt was allowed to occupy her house rent free. If you hold any proof of your assertions, you may forward it. Otherwise Mr. Tremlett will insist upon his claim."

This letter reached Ben on a Friday. It naturally caused him anxiety. He obtained permission to go to Milltown Saturday afternoon and spend Sunday. He desired himself to institute a search for the letter of which his aunt had spoken.

His aunt received him in tearful despondency.

"Oh, what shall we do, Benjamin?" said the widow.

"First, we must search for that letter of Uncle Matthew's."

"I know I'm to blame, Benjamin. I have brought ruin upon you and my poor, innocent Tony."

"You haven't ruined me, so you need not trouble yourself about that. Even if the letter cannot be found, I guess we shall live through it."

They hunted high and low; but the letter was not to be found. Ben was a good deal disappointed, but did not venture to say so, not wishing to increase his aunt's despondency. On Monday morning he went back to Boston, and told the bookkeeper.

"It seems quite desirable that you should go to Montreal, Ben," said young Porter.

"Of course that is out of the question, Mr. Porter."

"No; I think it can be managed."

Ben looked, as he felt, not a little surprised.

"It is some time," explained the bookkeeper, "since we sent an agent to Montreal. We have been thinking of sending some one up there, stopping at the principal towns on the way. You are rather young, but if I recommend you I presume my uncle will let you go."

Of course Mr. Porter, senior, had to be consulted. Though not a little doubtful about the expediency of sending so young a representative of the house, he finally gave his consent, which was communicated to Ben.

Ben was summoned to the countingroom, and received his instructions, with a sum of money for expenses. At three o'clock in the afternoon he was dismissed, though he was not to start till the next morning.

Old Mr. Benton's door was open when Ben returned.

"What brings you home so soon?" he inquired.

"I am going to Montreal," said Ben.

"Come in and tell me about it."

The old man, clad in a ragged dressing-gown, was sitting in a rocking-chair by the fire. The day was not cold, but his blood was thin, and he felt the need of some artificial heat. He was smoking a common clay pipe.

"Isn't this sudden—your going to Montreal?" asked Mr. Benton.

"Yes, sir; I think young Mr. Porter has made business there in order to give a chance to go?"

"What do you mean to do?"

"I shall attend first to the business of the firm, and then call on this lawyer, Mr. Brief."

"It is well thought of, and, Benjamin, try to get a chance to see the new heir, Mr. Tremlett, and find out what use he is making of his property."

"Yes, sir, I will."

"Have you money enough to pay your expenses, Benjamin?" asked the old man, rather hesitatingly.

"Oh, yes, sir; the firm provides for that."

"To be sure. Of course they ought to do it," said Mr. Benton, appearing to feel relieved.

"How long do you expect to be gone, Benjamin?"

"I don't know, sir; I am to stop in Burlington and one or two other places. I may be gone ten days."

"I shall feel lonely without you, Benjamin."

"I am glad you value my society so much."

"I am a lonely man, Benjamin; I have never had many friends, and I have outlived nearly all of those."

"You ought to have married, Mr. Benton; then you would have children and grandchildren to comfort you in your old age."

"I wish I had, Benjamin; but it is too late now."

"It is never too late to mend, Mr. Benton," said Ben. "Men older than you have married."

"Then they were fools," said Mr. Benton bluntly.

"Suppose you should be sick, sir?"

"I would hire a nurse. I am not rich, but I have enough to provide for the few years I have remaining."

"I must ask you to excuse me now, sir," said Ben. "I must buy a few things which I shall need."

Ben wrote briefly to his aunt, to let her know that he was about to start for Montreal. Mrs. Bradford was not a little discomposed.

"It's tempting Providence to send a child like Benjamin to a foreign country," she remarked to Mrs. Perkins, who had dropped in for a neighborly chat.

"Do you know how far it is, Mrs. Perkins?"

"About a thousand miles," answered her visitor, whose ideas about geography were rather misty.

"Suppose Ben should lose his way."

"Like as not he will," observed Mrs. Perkins.

"I shan't sleep a wink till Ben gets back. They ought to have sent somebody with him."

"Ben can get along," said Tony, who had implicit confidence in his big cousin. "He won't get lost."

"What does a child like you know about it?" said Mrs. Perkins rebukingly. "You shouldn't put in your oar when your mother and me are talking."

Chapter XXXIV

Solomon Brief

On his arrival in Montreal, Ben ascertained where Mr. Brief's office was, but deferred going to see him. He felt very properly that he ought to attend to the business of his employers first, and then, when he could do so without detriment to their interests look after his own. He was very anxious to succeed. He knew very well that Jones & Porter had serious doubts about the expediency of sending so young a representative to Montreal.

In calling upon different booksellers he exerted himself to the utmost. Though but sixteen, his address was pleasing, his manner self-possessed and he was courteous and gentlemanly, so that he won favorable regards of those with whom he had business relations. The result was that he received quite a

number of orders, which he at once sent forward by mail.

Thus three days were spent. On the morning of the fourth, he called at the office of Solomon Brief.

"What do you want, boy?" asked a clerk.

"I want to see Mr. Brief."

"His time is too valuable to be taken up by boys."

"If I had a clerk like you I would soon get rid of him."

"You would, hey?" blustered the young man, advancing threateningly.

Ben didn't budge and the clerk stopped short.

"Did you say you came on business?" he inquired.

"That I will tell Mr. Brief," said Ben firmly.

"You are from the States, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"That accounts for your impudence."

"I should know you were not from the States."

"Why?"

"Because you are so uncivil."

"Look here, young fellow, you'd better clear out, if you don't want to get

kicked out."

"Who is to do the kicking?"

"I am."

"I wouldn't advise you to try it."

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't be prudent."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the clerk sarcastically.

"Once more," said Ben. "I request you to announce me to Mr. Brief. He is executor of Mr. Baldwin's estate, I believe."

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me that was your business?"

"I couldn't see that it mattered to you."

At this moment the inner door opened, and a tall man, with reddish hair and mutton-chop whiskers of the same hue, made his appearance.

"What's this Frederic? Who is this boy?"

"I wish to see you on business connected with Mr. Baldwin's estate sir," said Ben; "but this young man appears to have an objection to the interview."

"Why don't you bring him in?"

"I didn't suppose he had any business with you."

"Who constituted you a judge of that, sir? Hereafter leave me to decide. Boy, come in."

Mr. Brief threw himself into an office chair.

"Well, who are you?" he asked.

"My name is Benjamin Bradford."

"Well?"

"You wrote a letter to my aunt, Mrs. Jane Bradford, of Milltown, Massachusetts, not long since."

"Exactly. Do you represent her?"

"I do."

"Very well. Did you bring the three hundred dollars which she owes to the estate of my client?"

"No, sir."

"What then?"

"I came to repeat what I have written you, that my aunt was authorized to occupy the house rent-free."

"It was hardly worth while to come so far to say that," said Mr. Brief, with a sneer.

"I am here in Montreal on other business, and have taken the opportunity to see you about my own."

"Indeed! Then you are a business man?"

"I represent the firm of Jones & Porter, publishers."

"Humph! Can't they get any one but a boy to represent them?"

"That, sir, is their business," he answered emphatically. "I have not chosen to inquire whether my uncle could not have found a better lawyer to act as executor."

"You are impudent, young man!" exclaimed Solomon Brief, his face being as red for the moment as his hair.

"We have neither of us been overcivil," said Ben. "Suppose we come back to business."

"Come now, you're a cool one."

"Perhaps I am. I have always understood that coolness is desirable in business. May I inquire of what disease my uncle died?"

"It would serve you right if I declined to answer your questions after your impudence to me. However, I will overlook it this time. Your uncle committed suicide."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Ben, who was quite unprepared for this announcement. "How did he do it?"

"He drowned himself."

"What could possibly have driven him to it?"

"Of that we are ignorant. He left a letter at his lodgings, directing me to open

and carry out the provisions of his will, which he had deposited with me."

"May I ask what were the provisions of his will?"

"You seem to be curious."

"I have a right to be. My aunt and myself are among his nearest relations, if not the nearest. We had a right to suppose that we might be remembered in his will."

"You were not."

"You can understand that we wish, at all events, to know the contents of the will. We should have been apprised of his death sooner."

As a lawyer Mr. Brief understood that Ben was in the right, and he produced a copy of the will.

The will was brief. The entire estate of the deceased was left to John Tremlett with this provision, that for the first year only the income should be paid to him; afterward he was to come into full possession.

"It seems regular," said Ben.

"Of course it is regular. I helped him make the will."

"Who is Mr. Tremlett? I never heard of him."

"A second or third cousin. He was a sort of adopted son of Mr. Baldwin."

Just here the inner door opened by the clerk, who announced, "Mr. Tremlett, sir."

Chapter XXXV

John Tremlett

John Tremlett was a dark-complexioned young man, rather above the middle height. He was by no means handsome; but plain faces are often attractive, and this young man's was not. His eyes were bloodshot, and even Ben's inexperienced glance could detect the marks of dissipation. He was expensively dressed and looked like one who made a business of spending money.

"How are you, Brief?" he said carelessly, throwing himself into a chair.

"In better condition than you are, I judge from your looks, Mr. Tremlett," responded the lawyer.

"I hope so. I feel awfully seedy," said Tremlett.

"Your own fault. You shouldn't keep such late hours."

"Oh, bother that, Brief! I must have a good time."

"You don't look as if you were enjoying your mode of life."

"Oh, I shall be all right when I get over my headache. Is this a client of yours?" glancing at Ben.

"He's a relation of yours, according to his own account," said Mr. Brief.

"Is he?" inquired Tremlett languidly. "Can't say I ever saw him before."

"Mr. Baldwin was my great-uncle," said Ben. "That is, he was an uncle of my aunt, Mrs. Jane Bradford."

"Indeed! Were you expecting a share of the property?" asked Tremlett suspiciously.

"I thought Mr. Baldwin might remember his niece."

"He hasn't, though."

"So I find by the will."

"Sorry for you; but, of course, Mr. Baldwin had a right to dispose of his property as he saw fit."

"I don't deny his right."

"Then you are not intending to dispute the will," said Tremlett, relieved.

"I never dreamed of doing it. I came about a house which my aunt has been occupying rent-free."

"What is it, Brief? Do I know about it?"

"It's a small house in Milltown, Massachusetts, which belongs to your uncle's estate. I found that Mrs. Bradford has paid no rent for it during the last five years, and accordingly sent her an invitation to pay up arrears."

"Has she done it?"

"No, sir," said Ben. "Mr. Baldwin permitted her to occupy the house rent-free."

"That is your assertion," said the lawyer.

"It is true," returned Ben quickly.

"Show it to me in writing, and that will end all dispute."

"I hope yet to do it, but thus far we have been unable to find Uncle Matthew's letter."

"That's all fair," said Tremlett. If the letter can't be found, the money must be paid.

"My aunt is utterly unable to pay it. She is poor."

"That is no excuse in law, my young friend," said Mr. Brief. "She must borrow the money then."

"Where?" asked Ben.

"That is not our lookout. As you are in business, perhaps you will advance the necessary sum."

"If I were able, and were satisfied of the justice of the claim, I would do so," answered Ben. "But I don't believe that Uncle Matthew intended that my aunt should be distressed by such a demand. Why should he have let the rent run on for five years if he expected her to pay it?"

"Can't say, I'm sure."

"How much is due?" asked Tremlett.

"Three hundred dollars," said Brief.

"Look here, young fellow," said Tremett, "Perhaps you and I can settle it. If you will pay me two hundred dollars cash down I will give you a receipt for the whole."

"Mr. Tremlett," said Mr. Brief stiffly, "you appear to forget that I am settling this estate. You have no authority to make such an offer."

"Wasn't the property left to me, I should like to know?" demanded Tremlett, blustering.

"Yes."

"Then why am I not authorized to make the offer, tell me that?"

"According to Mr. Baldwin's will you can only receive the income for the first twelve months."

"That's deuced hard on a fellow," said Tremlett.

"On the other hand, I think it is a prudent precaution."

"The old man was a tight-fisted old curmudgeon. He only wanted to annoy me."

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders, and Ben broke out indignantly, "I wouldn't speak in that way of a man who had left me all his fortune."

"Mind your own business, boy," retorted John Tremlett sharply. "Do you think I am going to stand your impudence?"

"I think it is just as well you have waited till after Uncle Matthew's death

"I think it is just as well you have waited till after Uncle Matthew's death before speaking of him in that way."

"Don't let up on the boy! Make him pay every cent of the debt, Brief!" exclaimed John Tremlett angrily.

"Of course we shall follow up the matter, Mr. Tremlett."

"Have him arrested if he doesn't pay, Brief."

Ben smiled.

"You seem to forget, Mr. Tremlett, that I am not your debtor. The claim is against my aunt."

"Is that so, Brief?"

"The boy is right."

"I am sorry for it. I should like to hold him responsible."

"No doubt, Mr. Tremlett," said Ben; "but we can't always have our wishes granted."

"Leave the matter in my hands," said the lawyer. "I will do what is best."

"By the way, Brief," said John Tremlett, "I mustn't forget my errand. I want some money."

"Some money? I gave you two hundred dollars last week."

"Well, it's gone, and I want some more."

"Mr. Tremlett," said the lawyer gravely, "are you aware how much money you have spent during the last four weeks?"

have spent during the last four weeks?"

"No, I have kept no account."

"Well I have. You have drawn eight hundred dollars."

"It costs something to see life."

"Perhaps so! but I cannot permit you to exceed your income—during the first year, at least. Thus far you have spent twice as much as you were entitled to draw."

Ben listened attentively. He had no idea of the extent of his uncle's property. If it yielded four hundred dollars a month, as he inferred, it must amount to nearly, if not quite, a hundred thousand dollars. And this young man was not content with that. Our hero could not help wondering at his unreasonableness.

"I don't see how I can economize," muttered Tremlett.

"What was your income before Mr. Baldwin's death, Mr. Tremlett?" inquired Mr. Brief.

"I starved on eight hundred dollars a year."

"Then it seems to me you aught to live comfortably now on five thousand."

"My circumstances are changed."

"At this rate you'll run through the property in ten years."

"Oh, I'll pull up after awhile," said the heir carelessly. "So just give me a couple of hundreds, old fellow!"

"I will hand you a hundred," said Mr. Brief reluctantly. "Hereafter you must keep within your allowance."

keep within your allowance."

"You're getting to be as miserly as the old man," said Tremlett.
"What's your name, boy?"

"My name is Benjamin Bradford."

"I suppose we are cousins, or something of that sort. Come out and take a drink."

"No, thank you. I never drink."

"You don't? What a prig you must be! Good-bye, Brief."

The heir left the office, and Mr. Brief turned to Ben.

"What do you think of your uncle's heir?" he inquired.

"I think he is going to ruin rapidly," answered Ben.

"You are right. The grub has become a butterfly, and the sober clerk has developed into a gay spendthrift. He was your uncle's clerk and distant relative. It would make the old man turn in his coffin if he knew how quickly his money is likely to melt away."

"Can't you check him?" asked Ben.

"For twelve months I can. After that I am powerless. I wish he were more like you."

"Thank you," said Ben, surprised at the compliment.

"My bark is worse that my bite," said the lawyer. "About this claim against your aunt I will do what I can for you, but try to find the letter you refer to. The sum is a small one."

The sum is a small one."

"It is large to us."

"Just so; but my client would squander it in a week. Let me hear from you after you have returned and instituted a further search."

"Thank you, sir, I will write."

Ben left the office, judging Mr. Brief more favorably than at first.
With John Tremlett, he was disgusted.

Chapter XXXVI

A Surprising Discovery

"I suppose I have done all I can," said Ben to himself. "There will be no object in remaining in Montreal any longer."

He immediately purchased a ticket, and took the next train homeward. He arrived in Boston at mid-day.

He went at once to the store, and was cordially welcomed by the bookkeeper.

"I am glad to see you, Ben," said the young man. "My uncle is well pleased with the orders you have sent home."

"Then he is satisfied with me?"

"I leave him to tell you that. You can go at once into the countingroom."

Ben reported himself as directed.

"Welcome back, Ben," said the old gentleman. "Have you just arrived?"

"I reached the station twenty minuets ago, sir."

"And came directly to the store; I like that. How do you like drumming?"

"It requires patience, sir; but I like it. I hope you are satisfied with me."

"You have exceeded my anticipations. To be candid with you,
I doubted the expedience of sending so young a representative."

"I know that, sir, and it made me work harder."

"I should have no hesitation in sending you again. In fact, I shall probably send you next month to New York and Philadelphia."

"I should like that very much, sir," said Ben, his eyes sparkling.
"I shall try to satisfy you."

"I think you will," said his employer kindly. "I never doubted your fidelity. Now I feel assured of your capacity and tact. Have you any orders not yet reported?"

"Two or three small ones, sir."

"Give them to me."

This done, Mr. Porter dismissed Ben for the day. "You need not report for work till to-morrow morning."

Ben was glad to go to his boarding-house. On arriving there he received another cordial greeting, this time from Mr. Benton. The old gentleman seemed really delighted to see him, and eager to learn what he had accomplished. Ben began to speak of the orders he had received; but Mr. Benton interrupted him.

"I don't mean that," he said. "I want to hear about your own affairs. Did you see Mr. Brief the lawyer?"

"Yes, sir."

"How did you like him?"

"Not at all, at first, but better before we parted."

"How was that?" asked Mr. Benton, showing some curiosity.

At first he insisted strongly on the claim the estate has against my aunt; but after awhile he said he should not press the matter at present, and recommended us to look for Uncle Matthew's letter.

"You have searched for it, have you not?" asked Mr. Benton.

"Yes, sir; but so far without success. Still I haven't given up all hope of finding it. My motto is, 'Wait and Hope.'"

"I think it will all come out right," said the old man. "Did you see John Tremlett?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell me about him," said the old man eagerly. "Ho does he look?"

"He looks like a fast young man," answered Ben. "I did not like him at all."

"Do you think he is spending money fast?"

"I know he is. How much money do you think he has drawn in a month?"

"Two hundred dollars?" suggested Mr. Benton.

"He had drawn eight hundred and spent it all, for he came into the office to ask for more."

"The young scoundrel!" exclaimed Marcus Benton, with an excitement which Ben could not understand. "Why he is making ducks and drakes of my old friend's fortune."

"Did you know Uncle Matthew?" asked Ben quickly.

"Yes," answered the old man. "I told you so, didn't I?"

"No, sir, you never told me that. Do you know John Tremlett?"

"Yes, I have seen him. He was a sober, steady young man apparently, who ingratiated himself with Mr. Baldwin, whom he deceived as to his real character."

"What relation was he to Uncle Matthew?"

"Very distant, but he seemed near, having been in his employ for several years. He collected rents and attended to other necessary matters."

"If he was ever sober and steady, he has changed a good deal."

"Did Mr. Brief give him the money he asked for?"

"Not all he wanted. He gave him one hundred dollars, and reminded him that he was only at liberty to pay over to him the income of the estate—that is, for the first twelve months."

"Quite right!" murmured Mr. Benton.

"He lectured him upon his extravagance and fast life, and warned him that he must check himself."

"He did right."

"What I dislike most about this John Tremlett was the way in which he spoke of Uncle Matthew," said Ben.

"How did he speak of him?" demanded Marcus Benton quickly.

"As a tight-fisted old curmudgeon."

"He did—the young viper!" exclaimed the old man indignantly. "Spoke so of the man who left him his fortune!"

"Yes, sir. I couldn't help telling him I thought it not very becoming to speak in that way of his benefactor; and he told me to mind my own business."

"I wouldn't have believed John Tremlett would act so," said Mr. Benton slowly; "I trusted him so, and always treated him kindly."

"You trusted him!" repeated Ben, astonished.

"My boy," said Mr. Benton, "the time has come for me to throw off the mask.

I am not Marcus Benton, as you suppose. I am Matthew Baldwin."

"But I thought Mr. Baldwin was dead—committed suicide," exclaimed Ben, in wild amazement.

"The world thinks so; but the world is mistaken. I will tell you the whole story. I found myself getting old. In all probability I had but a few years to live. By industry and economy I had accumulated a fortune, which I must leave behind me. I was anxious that it should not be squandered. I selected John Tremlett as my heir. So far as I knew he was devoted to my interests, and he seemed steady in his habits. But it occurred to me to try him. Accordingly I sent a letter to my lawyer, Solomon Brief, who had my will in his possession, announcing my intention to commit suicide, and directing him to open the will and carry out the provisions. Then I left Montreal secretly, staying a short time in northern Vermont. Later I came on to Boston and managed to throw myself in your way. Not knowing me, you treated me with kindness and consideration. I became interested in you, and regretted that I had made no provision for you and your aunt. Through you I have learned how unwisely I disposed of my fortune. Thank Heaven it is not too late to remedy that.

"This seems like a romance, Mr. Benton—I mean, Uncle Matthew."

"Yes; call me uncle. I like to feel that I have somebody to live for."

"Come out to Milltown with me, Uncle Matthew. Aunt Jane will be delighted to see you," said Ben.

"I have work to do first," said the old man firmly. "I must go to Montreal, and you must go with me."

"I am not sure that Jones & Porter will allow me."

"Then throw up your situation. You shall lose nothing by it."

"Then throw up your situation. You shall lose nothing by it.

"When do you wish to start?"

"To-night," said Mr. Baldwin resolutely.

"Then I must go to the store, at once, and give notice of my absence."

Ben lost no time in going to the store. He explained matters fully, and obtained a week's leave of absence. Then he bought tickets for his uncle and himself, and they set out on their long journey.

Chapter XXXVII

The Dead Alive

Mr. Brief was considerably surprised when Ben entered his office.

"I thought you had gone back to Boston," he said.

"I have been back to Boston, Mr. Brief, and returned to Montreal on business."

"Didn't you finish up your business here?"

"I thought so, sir; but I was mistaken."

"I am afraid you are not a very good manager. It looks to me like waste of time. What can I do for you?"

"A gentleman came with me, who thinks he would like to have you attend to a little business for him."

"Certainly," responded the lawyer bruskly. "I shall be happy to wait on him. Where is he staying?"

"At the Windsor."

"And you recommended me? I am much obliged to you. What is the gentleman's name?"

"Marcus Benton."

"Can't say I ever heard of him Is he from Boston?"

"He comes from Boston," answered Ben evasively.

In the hope of securing a profitable client, Mr. Brief lost no time in seeking the hotel.

"Remain here a moment," said Ben, as they entered the office, "and I will let Mr. Benton know you are here."

"Certainly," said the lawyer complacently.

In five minutes Ben reappeared.

"Follow me, if you please, Mr. Brief," he said. "By the way, Mr. Benton says he knows you."

"Mr. Benton knows me! It is strange I can't recall him," said Mr. Brief, trying to recollect.

"I think you will remember when you see him."

"Possibly; but I have no recollection on any gentleman of that name."

Ben and his uncle—to give him a name not strictly warranted by facts—occupied two rooms adjoining.

Ben ushered the lawyer into his own room, saying, "Mr. Brief, you must prepare for a surprise."

When, however, the so-called Marcus Benton entered the room, Mr. Brief sprang to his feet in great amazement.

"Can I believe my eyes?" he ejaculated.

"I think you can, Mr. Brief," said the old gentleman quietly,

"You are Matthew Baldwin."

"Precisely."

"And you are not dead?"

"Do I look as if I were?" asked Mr. Baldwin, smiling.

"What does it all mean?" asked Mr. Brief, bewildered.

"It means that I wished to try John Tremlett. I wished to ascertain whether he were worthy to inherit my fortune. What is your opinion?"

"My opinion," said the lawyer, "is that he would run through the property in five years. I am disgusted with him."

"How does he spend his money?" inquired Mr. Baldwin.

"In every kind of extravagance and every form of dissipation. At the rate he is going on, it is a question, in my mind, whether he or the property would last longer."

"I got that idea from my young friend here, who, by the way, knew of me only as Marcus Benton when he came first to see you."

"Of course you will resume possession of the property, Mr. Baldwin?"

"Such is my intention."

"I can give it back into your hands entire, with the exception of nine hundred dollars drawn by Tremlett, and your funeral expenses."

"My funeral expense!" exclaimed Mr. Baldwin, in surprise.

"Yes; a body was found in the St. Lawrence, which was supposed to be yours. It was buried with proper ceremony."

The old man smiled, but there was a certain sadness in the smile.

"It is, perhaps, only anticipating things a little," he said. "The expenses shall be allowed."

"Of course you wish Mr. Tremlett to be informed without delay."

"Yes."

"He is to come to my office in an hour."

"Can you let me witness the interview?"

"Yes, sir. You can conceal yourself in the inner room, and I will see him in the outer office, with the door ajar."

An hour later John Tremlett swaggered into Mr. Brief's office.

"Brief," said he, "I must have some money."

"Have you used up the hundred dollars I gave you four days since?"

"Every cent."

"I am afraid you squandered it."

"That is my business, Brief."

"You remember the warning I gave you at that time?"

"Come, Brief, you can't expect to keep me in leading-strings. I am seeing life, and of course I must pay for it."

"A pretty round sum, too."

"Oh, well, I am making up for lost time. Old Baldwin kept me so close that I had to live like a hermit for years. He starved me on eight hundred dollars a year—the stingy old file!"

"Apparently you want to live at the rate of ten thousand dollars a year now, Mr. Tremlett."

"Well, I can afford it for a year or two."

"You seem to forget that your income for the first year is not quite five thousand."

"Then my creditors must wait, I am going to have my fling."

"It would make Mr. Baldwin turn in his coffin if he were to know how you are wasting his substance."

"Very likely it would," said Tremlett, laughing heartily; "but there's one comfort, he can't come back to trouble us."

"Don't be too sure of that, John Tremlett," said a voice which struck terror to Tremlett's heart, and Mathew Baldwin walked out of the inner office.

The young man's face turned as pale as ashes, and his knees knocked together in his fright.

"Is it—you—Mr. Baldwin?" he ejaculated.

"Yes, it is I—your benefactor, the stingy old file, as you so gratefully call me," answered the old man sternly.

"Then—you—are—not dead!"

"Not at present. How long I may live I cannot say, but long enough, I hope, to do an act of justice."

"I am very sorry," stammered Tremlett. "Forgive me, sir."

"I may forgive you, because nothing has happened that cannot be remedied; but I shall never again trust you."

"Won't you take me back into your service, sir?" entreated John Tremlett desperately.

"Never!" said Mr. Baldwin emphatically.

"What will become of me?" ejaculated the miserable young man, shedding maudlin tears. "I am penniless."

"I will not wholly cast you off. I will authorize Mr. Brief to pay you eight hundred dollars during the next year, in monthly installments. I hope you will turn over a new leaf."

"I will, sir; I will indeed," said Tremlett; but Mr. Baldwin, knowing his past hypocrisy, did not put much faith in his penitence.

"I hope so, for your own sake," he said briefly. "You can go now, sir. At the end of a month you can come back, and Mr. Brief will pay you your monthly allowance."

"How can I live till then?" asked Tremlett. "Can't he pay it sooner? I have but a dollar left."

"Sell some of your jewelry, that diamond ring, for instance. It will maintain you till the money is payable."

John Tremlett left the office crestfallen, and cursing his foolish prodigality, which had lost him a fine fortune.

"What are your plans, Mr. Baldwin?" asked the lawyer. "Shall you remain in Montreal?"

"No, Mr. Brief; there is nothing to keep me here now. I shall make my home in the States. This boy I have tested and found to be true gold. He will not deceive me as John Tremlett has. With him and his aunt I propose to make my home for the little time I have left."

"A very fine boy!" said Mr. Brief, regarding Ben in quite a different light now that he was indirectly acknowledged to be a rich man's heir.

"I shall leave you to manage my property here, Mr. Brief, for the present at least. You will transmit the income to me as it accrues."

"You shall not repent your confidence, sir," said the lawyer. "How soon do you leave the city?"

"To-morrow. Will that suit you, Ben?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle Matthew."

"He is a lucky boy," thought Mr. Brief, as the two went out. "His future is provided for."

Chapter XXXVIII

Conclusion

"Ben," said Mr. Baldwin, "let us talk over your plans. Do you wish to remain at the store, or would you like to get a better education?"

"I would get a better education if I could afford it, sir."

"You can afford it on an income of a thousand dollars a year."

"A thousand dollars a year!" exclaimed Ben.

"That is the income I shall allow you. Out of this you will be expected to pay all of your expenses."

"How can I thank you, sir? Would you object to my giving Aunt Jane a part of the money?"

"Yes, I shall object."

Ben's countenance fell.

"But, Uncle Matthew," he said, "I don't like to live in luxury, while Aunt Jane is straitened."

"Your feelings do you credit, my boy; but I mean to take care of your Aunt Jane myself. She is my niece, and you—I am not sure whether you are related to me at all, but I want you to call me Uncle Matthew all the same."

"I shall like to, sir. No uncle could be kinder."

"That is well," said the old gentleman. "You know, Ben, I have no one else to care for. Now, do you think your Aunt Jane will be willing to move to Boston?"

"I am sure she will like it."

"Then I shall hire or buy a comfortable house, install her as mistress, require you to live with me while you are attending school, and tyrannize over you all."

There was a bright smile on the old man's face. He was looking forward to the new life with anticipations of a happiness and comfort which had long been strangers to him.

"How happy we shall all be, Uncle Matthew! Even Aunt Jane will forget to look on the dark side."

"I hope so, Ben. I think we can be happy together."

"There is one thing I forgot to tell you," he said later. "I shall expect you to pay your board out of your income, you know. If you fail to make regular

payments, we shall have to bundle you out."

"I will remember," said Ben, smiling.

By arrangement Ben went up to Milltown alone to tell his aunt the news. He entered the little house with a sober face.

"I see you bring bad news, Benjamin," said Mrs. Bradford mournfully.

"You will have to leave the house, Aunt Jane."

"And go to the poorhouse! I knew it would turn out that way," and Mrs. Bradford put her handkerchief to her eyes.

"What's the matter?" asked Tony.

"My poor child," said his mother, "we are going to the poorhouse."

"Is that so, Ben?" asked Tony soberly.

Ben shouted with laughter. He could not hold back the truth.

"Aunt Jane," he said, "you always will anticipate the worst. Why don't you wait and hope?"

"What is the use, Benjamin?"

"Because it makes us happier, and often brings good fortune. Aunt Jane, you see before you a rich man."

"You're only a boy," said Tony. "You ain't a man at all."

"My income is a thousand dollars a year!"

"Is it possible, Benjamin?" ejaculated Mrs. Bradford, in amazement.

"It is more than that; it's true. You are coming to Boston to live, and I am going to board with you."

"The boy's crazy!" exclaimed Mrs. Bradford.

"Then there is a method in my madness, Aunt Jane. But I won't keep you in suspense any longer. Uncle Matthew isn't dead at all. He's taken a fancy to me, and is going to allow me an income of a thousand dollars a year. He will take care of you and Tony, too. He is going to hire or buy a house in Boston, and we are all going to live together. What do you say to that? Will you go, or do you prefer to go to the poorhouse?"

Mrs. Bradford made up her mind at once to go to Boston. No one had ever seen her so cheerful as she was for the remainder of the day.

Not to dwell upon details, in less than a month the little family was installed in a comfortable house in Boston. Tony had commenced attending school near-by, and Ben had been admitted to the Latin School, where he began to prepare for college in earnest. Porter & Jones were sorry to lose him, but agreed that he had chosen wisely in abandoning business for a school.

Ben is now an undergraduate at Harvard College, with a high rank for scholarship. He has not decided upon his future course; but it is possible that his uncle may purchase an interest for him, at graduation, in the firm where he served as a boy.

I cannot close without recording, with satisfaction, the great improvement that has taken place in Sam Archer. Always a bright and smart boy, in adversity he has gotten rid of his disagreeable traits and developed a business capacity which promises well for his future success. Ben has done him many favors, and the two are excellent friends. Of Mr. Archer nothing has been heard. It is

and the two are excellent friends. Of Mr. Archer nothing has been heard. It is rumored that he is living in an obscure town in France, on the proceeds of his defalcation. Sam promises to redeem the name which his father has sullied.

Uncle Matthew is several years older than when we first met him, but happiness has had the effect of making him look younger. He probably has several years of life yet before him. He is attached to his niece and Tony, who is now a bright schoolboy of twelve; but his chief attachment is to Ben, whose college career he follows with pride and satisfaction.

THE END

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