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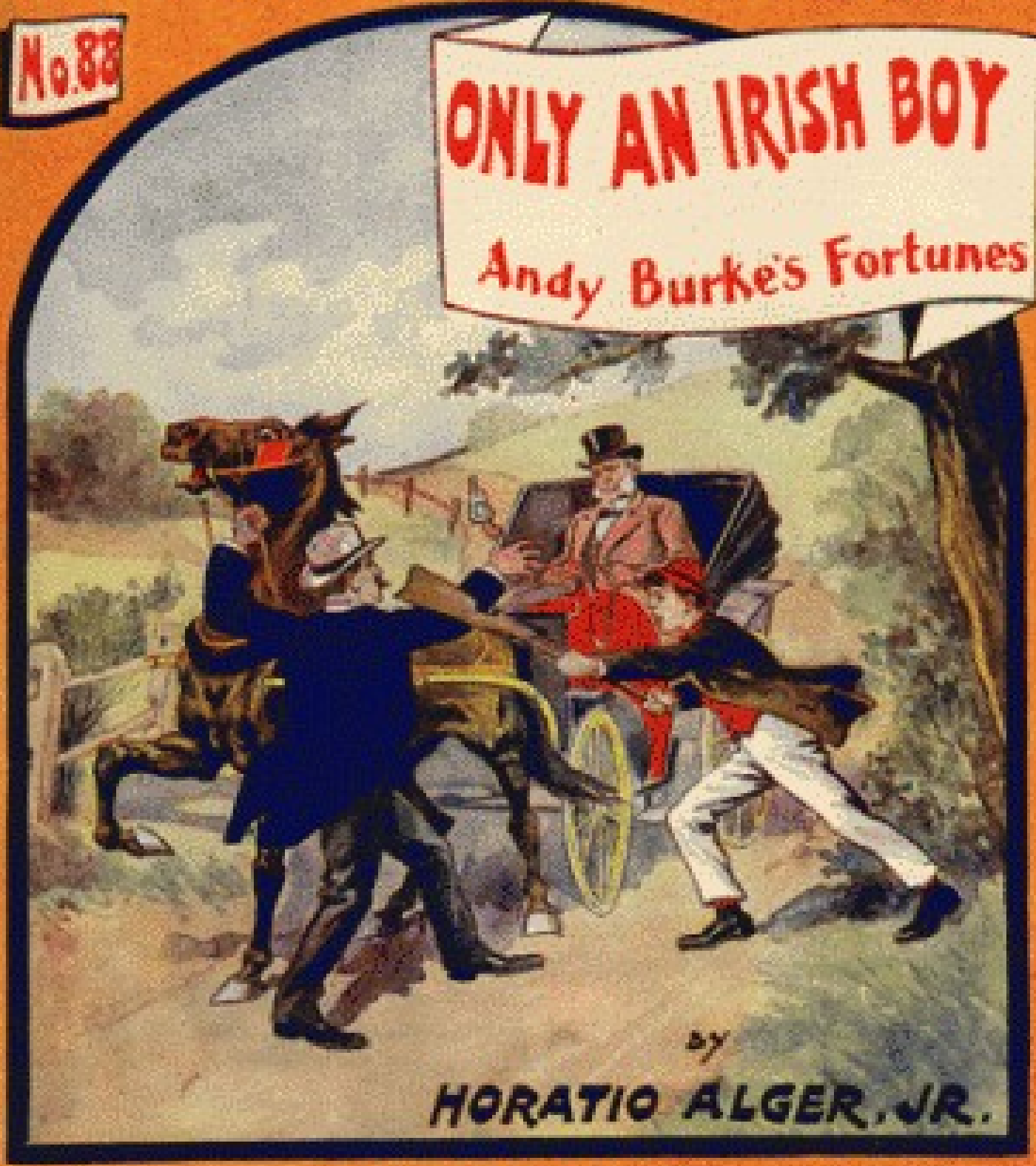
No. 88

ONLY AN IRISH BOY

Andy Burke's Fortunes



by

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

There was a sudden crash in the bushes, and Andy Burke dashed out, confronted the highwayman, and knocked the pistol from his hand.

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ONLY AN IRISH BOY

Or, Andy Burke's Fortunes

by Horatio Alger, Jr.

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ONLY AN IRISH BOY

CHAPTER I — ANDY BURKE

"John, saddle my horse, and bring him around to the door."

The speaker was a boy of fifteen, handsomely dressed, and, to judge from his air and tone, a person of considerable consequence, in his own opinion, at least. The person addressed was employed in the stable of his father, Colonel Anthony Preston, and so inferior in social condition that Master Godfrey always addressed him in imperious tones.

John looked up and answered, respectfully:

"Master Godfrey, your horse is sick of the disease, and your father left orders that he wasn't to go out on no account."

"It's my horse," said Godfrey; "I intend to take him out."

"Maybe it's yours, but your father paid for him."

"None of your impudence, John," answered Godfrey, angrily. "Am I master, or are you, I should like to know!"

"Neither, I'm thinking," said John, with a twinkle in his eye. "It's your father that's the master."

"I'm master of the horse, anyway, so saddle him at once."

"The colonel would blame me," objected John.

"If you don't, I'll report you and get you dismissed."

"I'll take the risk, Master Godfrey," said the servant, good-humoredly. "The colonel won't be so unreasonable as to send me away for obeying his own orders."

Here John was right, and Godfrey knew it, and this vexed him the more. He had an inordinate opinion of himself and his own

consequence, and felt humiliated at being disobeyed by a servant, without being able to punish him for his audacity. This feeling was increased by the presence of a third party, who was standing just outside the fence.

As this third party is our hero, I must take a separate paragraph to describe him. He was about the age of Godfrey, possibly a little shorter and stouter. He had a freckled face, full of good humor, but at the same time resolute and determined. He appeared to be one who had a will of his own, but not inclined to interfere with others, though ready to stand up for his own rights. In dress he compared very unfavorably with the young aristocrat, who was biting his lips with vexation. In fact, though he is my hero, his dress was far from heroic. He had no vest, and his coat was ragged, as well as his pants. He had on a pair of shoes two or three times too large for him. They had not been made to order, but had been given him by a gentleman of nearly double his size, and fitted him too much. He wore a straw hat, for it was summer, but the brim was semi-detached, and a part of his brown hair found its way through it.

Now Godfrey was just in the mood for picking a quarrel with somebody, and as there was no excuse for quarreling any further with John, he was rather glad to pitch into the young stranger.

"Who are you?" he demanded, in his usual imperious tone, and with a contraction of the brow.

"Only an Irish boy!" answered the other, with a droll look and a slight brogue.

"Then what business have you leaning against my fence?" again demanded Godfrey, imperiously.

"Shure, I didn't know it was your fence."

"Then you know now. Quit leaning against it."

"Why should I, now? I don't hurt it, do I?"

"No matter—I told you to go away. We don't want any beggars here."

"Shure, I don't see any," said the other boy, demurely.

"What are you but a beggar?"

"Shure, I'm a gintleman of indepindent fortune."

"You look like it," said Godfrey, disdainfully. "Where do you keep it?"

"Here!" said the Irish boy, tapping a bundle which he carried over his shoulder, wrapped in a red cotton handkerchief, with a stick thrust through beneath the knot.

"What's your name?"

"Andy Burke. What's yours?"

"I don't feel under any obligations to answer your questions," said Godfrey, haughtily.

"Don't you? Then what made you ask me?"

"That's different. You are only an Irish boy."

"And who are you?"

"I am the only son of Colonel Anthony Preston," returned Godfrey, impressively.

"Are you, now? I thought you was a royal duke, or maybe Queen Victoria's oldest boy."

"Fellow, you are becoming impertinent."

"Faith, I didn't mean it. You look so proud and gintale that it's jist a mistake I made."

"You knew that we had no dukes in America," said Godfrey, suspiciously.

"If we had, now, you'd be one of them," said Andy.

"Why? What makes you say so?"

"You're jist the picture of the Earl of Barleycorn's ildest son that I saw before I left Ireland."

Godfrey possessed so large a share of ridiculous pride that he felt pleased with the compliment, though he was not clear about its sincerity.

"Where do you live?" he asked, with a slight lowering of his tone.

"Where do I live? Shure, I don't live anywhere now, but I'm going to live in the village. My mother came here a month ago."

"Why didn't you come with her?"

"I was workin' with a farmer, but the work gave out and I came home. Maybe I'll find work here."

"I think I know where your mother lives," said John, who had heard the conversation. "She lives up the road a mile or so, in a little house with two rooms. It's where old Jake Barlow used to live."

"Thank you, sir. I guess I'll be goin', then, as my mother'll be expectin' me. Do you know if she's well?" and a look of anxiety came over the boy's honest, good-natured face.

The question was addressed to John, but of this Godfrey was not quite sure. He thought the inquiry was made of him, and his pride was touched.

"What should I know of your mother, you beggar?" he said, with a sneer. "I don't associate with such low people."

"Do you mane my mother?" said Andy, quickly, and he, too, looked angry and threatening.

"Yes, I do. What are you going to do about it?" demanded Godfrey.

"You'd better take it back," said Andy, his good-humored face now dark with passion.

"Do you think I am afraid of such a beggar as you?" sneered Godfrey. "You appear to forget that you are speaking to a gentleman."

"Shure, I didn't know it," returned Andy, hotly. "You're no gentleman if you insult my mother, and if you'll come out here for a minute I'll give you a bating."

"John," said Godfrey, angrily, "will you drive that beggar away?"

Now, John's sympathies were rather with Andy than with his young master. He had no great admiration for Godfrey, having witnessed during the year he had been in his father's employ too much of the boy's arrogance and selfishness to feel much attachment for him. Had he taken any part in the present quarrel, he would have preferred espousing the cause of the Irish boy; but that would not have been polite, and he therefore determined to preserve his neutrality.

"That ain't my business, Master Godfrey," he said. "You must fight your own battles."

"Go away from here," said Godfrey, imperiously advancing toward that part of the fence against which Andy Burke was leaning.

"Will you take back what you said agin' my mother?"

"No, I won't."

"Then you're a blackguard, if you are a rich man's son."

The blood rushed to Godfrey's face on the instant. This was a palpable insult. What! he, a rich man's son, the only son and heir of Colonel Anthony Preston, with his broad acres and ample bank account—he to be called a blackguard by a low Irish boy. His passion got the better of him, and he ran through the gate, his eyes flashing fire, bent on exterminating his impudent adversary.

CHAPTER II — A SKIRMISH

Andy Burke was not the boy to run away from an opponent of his own size and age. Neither did he propose to submit quietly to the thrashing which Godfrey designed to give him. He dropped his stick and bundle, and squared off scientifically at his aristocratic foe.

Godfrey paused an instant before him.

"I'm going to give you a thrashing," he said; "the worst thrashing you ever had."

"Are you, now?" asked Andy, undismayed. "Come on, thin; I'm ready for you."

"You're an impudent young ruffian."

"So are you."

Godfrey's aristocratic blood boiled at this retort, and he struck out at Andy, but the latter knew what was coming, and, swift as a flash, warded it off, and fetched Godfrey a blow full upon his nose, which started the blood. Now, the pain and the sight of the blood combined filled him with added fury, and he attempted to seize Andy around the waist and throw him. But here again he was foiled. The young Irish boy evaded his grasp, and, seizing him in turn, by an adroit movement of the foot, tripped him up. Godfrey fell heavily on his back.

Andy withdrew a little, and did not offer to hold him down, as Godfrey would have been sure to do under similar circumstances. "Have you got enough?" he asked.

"That wasn't fair," exclaimed Godfrey, jumping up hastily, deeply mortified because he had been worsted in the presence of John, who, sooth to say, rather enjoyed his young master's overthrow.

He rushed impetuously at Andy, but he was blinded by his own impetuosity, and his adversary, who kept cool and self-possessed, had, of course, the advantage. So the engagement terminated as before—Godfrey was stretched once more on the sidewalk. He was about to renew the assault, however, when there was an interruption. This interruption came in the form of Colonel Preston himself, who was returning from a business meeting of citizens interested in establishing a savings bank in the village.

"What's all this, Godfrey?" he called out, in a commanding tone.

Godfrey knew that when his father spoke he must obey, and he therefore desisted from the contemplated attack. He looked up at his father and said, sulkily:

"I was punishing this Irish boy for his impertinence."

John grinned a little at this way of putting it, and his father said:

"It looked very much as if he were punishing you."

"I didn't get fair hold," said Godfrey, sulkily.

"So he was impertinent, was he? What did he say?"

"He said I was no gentleman."

Andy Burke listened attentively to what was said, but didn't attempt to justify himself as yet.

"I have sometimes had suspicions of that myself," said his father, quietly.

Though Godfrey was an only son, his father was sensible enough to be fully aware of his faults. If he was indulged, it was his mother, not his father, that was in fault. Colonel Preston was a fair and just man, and had sensible views about home discipline; but he was overruled by his wife, whose character may be judged from the fact that her son closely resembled her. She was vain, haughty, and proud of putting on airs. She considered herself quite the finest lady in the village, but condescended to associate with the wives of the

minister, the doctor, and a few of the richer inhabitants, but even with them she took care to show that she regarded herself superior to them all. She was, therefore, unpopular, as was her son among his companions. However, these two stood by each other, and Mrs. Preston was sure to defend Godfrey in all he did, and complained because his father did not do the same.

"I didn't think you'd turn against me, and let a low boy insult me," complained Godfrey.

"Why do you call him low?"

"Because he's only an Irish boy."

"Some of our most distinguished men have been Irish boys or of Irish descent. I don't think you have proved your point."

"He's a beggar."

"I'm not a beggar," exclaimed Andy, speaking for the first time. "I never begged a penny in all my life."

"Look at his rags," said Godfrey, scornfully.

"You would be in rags, too, if you had to buy your own clothes. I think I should respect you very much more under the circumstances," returned his father.

"The colonel's a-givin' it to him," thought John, with a grin. "'Twon't do the young master any harm."

"What is your name?" inquired Colonel Preston, turning now to our hero, as his son seemed to have no more to say.

"Andy Burke."

"Do you live here?"

"I've just come to town, sir. My mother lives here."

"Where does she live?"

"I don't know, sir, just. He knows," pointing out John.

"I calcerlate his mother lives in old Jake Barlow's house," said John.

"Oh, the Widow Burke. Yes, I know. I believe Mrs. Preston employs her sometimes. Well, Andy, if that's your name, how is it that I catch you fighting with my son? That is not very creditable, unless you have good cause."

"He called my mother a low woman," said Andy, "and then he run up and hit me."

"Did you do that, Godfrey?"

"He was putting on too many airs. He talked as if he was my equal."

"He appears to be more than your equal in strength," said his father. "Well, was that all?"

"It was about all."

"Then I think he did perfectly right, and I hope you'll profit by the lesson you have received."

"He is a gentleman," thought Andy. "He ain't hard on a boy because he's poor."

Colonel Preston went into the house, but Godfrey lingered behind a moment. He wanted to have a parting shot at his adversary. He could fight with words, if not with blows.

"Look here!" he said, imperiously; "don't let me see you round here again."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to see you."

"Then you can look the other way," said Andy, independently.

"This is my house."

"I thought it was your father's."

"That's the same thing. You'd better stay at home with your mother."

"Thank you," said Andy; "you're very kind. May I come along the road sometimes?"

"If you do, walk on the other side."

Andy laughed. He was no longer provoked, but amused.

"Then, by the same token, you'd better not come by my mother's house," he said, good-humoredly.

"I don't want to come near your miserable shanty," said Godfrey, disdainfully.

"You may come, if you keep on the other side of the road," said Andy, slyly.

Godfrey was getting disgusted; for in the war of words, as well as of blows, his ragged opponent seemed to be getting the better of him. He turned on his heel and entered the house. He was sure of one who would sympathize with him in his dislike and contempt for Andy—this was, of course, his mother. Besides, he had another idea. He knew that Mrs. Burke had been employed by his mother, occasionally, to assist in the house. It occurred to him that it would be a fine piece of revenge to induce her to dispense hereafter with the poor woman's services. Bent on accomplishing this creditable retaliation, he left his young opponent master of the field.

"I must be goin'," said Andy, as he picked up his bundle and suspended it from his stick. "Will I find the house where my mother lives, easy?"

The question was, of course, addressed to John, who had just turned to go to the stable.

"You can't miss it," answered John. "It's a mile up the road, stands a little way back. There's a few hills of potatoes in the front yard. How long since you saw your mother?"

"It's three months."

"Does she know you are coming to-day?"

"No. I would have wrote to her, but my fingers isn't very ready with the pen."

"Nor mine either," said John. "I'd rather take a licking any time than write a letter. Come round and see us some time."

"The boy'll lick me," said Andy, laughing.

"I guess you can manage him."

Andy smiled, for it was his own conviction, also. With his bundle on his shoulder he trudged on, light of heart, for he was about to see his mother and sister, both of whom he warmly loved.

CHAPTER III — ANDY AND HIS MOTHER

The house in which the Widow Burke and her daughter lived was a very humble one. It had not been painted for many years, and the original coat had worn off, leaving it dark and time-stained. But when Mrs. Burke came to town, a short time before, it was the only dwelling she could hire that was held at a rent within her means. So she and Mary, who was now eleven years old, had moved in their scanty furniture and made it look as much like a home as possible.

Mrs. Burke had not always been as poor as now. She was the daughter of an Irish tradesman, and had received quite a good education. In due time she married a small farmer, who was considered to be in fair circumstances, but there came a bad year, and misfortunes of various kinds came together. The last and heaviest of all was fever, which prostrated her husband on a bed of sickness. Though his wife watched over him night and day with all the devotion of love, it was all of no avail. He died, and she found herself left with about a hundred pounds—after his debts were paid. She was advised to go to America with her two children, and did so. That was five years before. They had lived in various places—but the little sum she had left over, after the passage of the three was paid, had long since melted away, and she was forced to get a living as she could.

Since she had come to Crampton, leaving Andy at work for a farmer in the place where they had last lived, she had obtained what sewing she could from the families in the village, and had besides obtained a chance to help about the ironing at Colonel Preston's. Washing was too hard for her, for her strength was not great.

At the time of our introduction she was engaged in making a shirt, one of half a dozen which she had engaged to make for Dr.

Plympton, the village doctor. She had no idea that Andy was so near, having heard nothing of his having left his place, but it was of him she was speaking.

"I wish I could see Andy," she sighed, looking up from her work.

"So do I, mother."

"The sight of him would do my eyes good, he's such a lively lad, Andy is—always in good spirits."

"Shure, he's got a good heart, mother dear. It wouldn't be so lonely like if he was here."

"I would send for him if there was anything to do, Mary; but we are so poor that we must all of us stay where we can get work."

"When do you go to Colonel Preston's, mother? Is it to-morrow?"

"Yes, my dear."

"I'm always lonely when you are away."

"Perhaps you would come with me, Mary, dear. Mrs. Preston wouldn't object, I'm thinkin'."

"If Andy was at home I wouldn't feel so lonely."

While she was speaking Andy himself had crept under the window, and heard her words. He was planning a surprise, but waited for the last moment to announce himself. He waited to hear what reply his mother would say.

"I think we'll see him soon, Mary, dear."

"What makes you say so, mother?"

"I don't know. I've got a feeling in my bones that we'll soon meet. The blessed saints grant that it may be so."

"Your bones are right this time, mother," said a merry voice.

And Andy, popping up from his stooping position, showed himself at the window.

There was a simultaneous scream from Mary and her mother.

"Is it you, Andy?" exclaimed Mary.

"It isn't nobody else," said Andy, rather ungrammatically.

"Come in, Andy, my darling—come in, and tell me if you are well," said his mother, dropping the shirt on which she was at work, and rising to her feet.

"I'll be with you in a jiffy," said Andy.

And, with a light leap, he cleared the window sill, and stood in the presence of his mother and sister, who vied with each other in hugging the returned prodigal.

"You'll choke me, Sister Mary," said Andy, good-humoredly. "Maybe you think I'm your beau."

"Don't speak to her of beaux, and she only eleven years old," said his mother. "But you haven't told us why you came."

"Faith, mother, it was because the work gave out, and I thought I'd pack my trunk and come and see you and Mary. That's all."

"We are glad to see you, Andy, dear, but," continued his mother, taking a survey of her son's appearance for the first time, "you're lookin' like a beggar, with your clothes all in rags."

Andy laughed.

"Faith, it's about so, mother. There was no one to mend 'em for me, and I'm more used to the hoe than the needle."

"I will sew up some of the holes when you're gone to bed, Andy. Are you sure you're well, lad?"

"Well, mother? Jist wait till you see me atin', mother. You'll think I've got a healthy appetite."

"I never thought, Andy. The poor lad must be hungry. Mary, see what there is in the closet."

"There's nothing but some bread, mother," said Mary.

Indeed bread and potatoes were the main living of the mother and daughter, adopted because they were cheap. They seldom ventured on the extravagance of meat, and that was one reason, doubtless, for Mrs. Burke's want of strength and sometimes feeling faint and dizzy while working at her needle.

"Is there no meat in the house, Mary?"

"Not a bit, mother."

"Then go and see if there's an egg outside."

The widow kept a few hens, having a henhouse in one corner of the back yard. The eggs she usually sold, but Andy was at home now, and needed something hearty, so they must be more extravagant than usual.

Mary went out, and quickly returned with a couple of eggs.

"Here they are, mother, two of them. The black hen was settin' on them, but I drove her away, and you can hear her cackling. Shure, Andy needs them more than she does."

"Will you have them boiled or fried, Andy?" asked his mother.

"Any way, mother. I'm hungry enough to ate 'em raw. It's hungry work walkin' ten miles wid a bundle on your back, let alone the fightin'."

"Fighting!" exclaimed Mrs. Burke, pausing in drawing out the table.

"Fightin', Andy?" chimed in Mary, in chorus.

"Yes, mother," said Andy.

"And who did you fight with?" asked the widow, anxiously.

"With a boy that feels as big as a king; maybe bigger."

"What's his name?"

"I heard his father call him Godfrey."

"What, Godfrey Preston?" exclaimed Mrs. Burke in something like consternation.

"Yes, that's the name. He lives in a big house a mile up the road."

"What made you fight with him, Andy?" inquired his mother, anxiously.

"He began it."

"What could he have against you? He didn't know you."

"He thought as I only was an Irish boy he could insult me, and call me names, but I was too much for him."

"I hope you didn't hurt him?"

"I throwed him twice, mother, but then his father came up and that put a stop to the fight."

"And what did his father say?"

"He took my part, mother, when he found out how it was, and scolded his son. Shure, he's a gentleman."

"Yes, Colonel Preston is a gentleman."

"And that's where he isn't like his son, I'm thinkin'."

"No. Godfrey isn't like his father. It's his mother he favors."

"Faith, and I don't call it favoring," said Andy. Is the old lady as ugly and big-feelin' as the son?"

"She's rather a hard woman, Andy. I go up to work there one day every week."

"Do you, mother?" said Andy, not wholly pleased to hear that his mother was employed by the mother of his young enemy.

"Yes, Andy."

"What is it you do?"

"I help about the ironing. To-morrow's my day for going there."

"I wish you could stay at home, and not go out to work, mother," said Andy, soberly. "You don't look strong, mother, dear. I'm afraid you're not well."

"Oh, yes, Andy, I am quite well. I shall be better, too, now that you are at home. I missed you very much. It seemed lonely without you."

"I must find out some way to earn money, mother," said Andy. "I'm young and strong, and I ought to support you."

"You can help me, Andy," said Mrs. Burke, cheerfully.

She took up the shirt and resumed her sewing.

"I'm afraid you're too steady at the work, mother," said Andy.

"I shall be ironing to-morrow. It's a change from sewing, Andy. Mary, it's time to take off the eggs."

Andy was soon partaking of the frugal meal set before him. He enjoyed it, simple as it was, and left not a particle of the egg or a crumb of the bread.

CHAPTER IV — MRS. PRESTON

Whenever Godfrey Preston had any difficulty with his father, he always went to his mother, and from her, right or wrong, he was sure to obtain sympathy. So in the present instance, failing to receive from his father that moral support to which he deemed himself entitled, on entering the house he sought out his mother.

Mrs. Preston, who was rather a spare lady, with thin lips and a sharp, hatchet-like face, was in her own room. She looked up as Godfrey entered.

"Well, Godfrey, what's the matter?" she asked, seeing on her son's face an unmistakable expression of discontent.

"Matter enough, mother. Father's always against me."

"I know it. He appears to forget that you are his son. What is it now?"

"He came up just as I was thrashing a boy down in the yard."

"What boy?"

"Nobody you know, mother. It was only an Irish boy."

"What was your reason for punishing him?" asked Mrs. Preston, adopting Godfrey's version of the affair.

"He was impudent to me. He was leaning against the fence, and I ordered him away. He was a ragged boy, with a bundle on a stick. Of course, when he wouldn't move, I went out and thrashed him."

"Was your father there?"

"He came up in the midst of it, and, instead of taking my part, he took the part of the Irish boy."

"I don't see how Mr. Preston can be so unfair," said his wife. "It is his duty to stand by his family."

"I felt ashamed to have him scold me before the impudent boy. Of course, he enjoyed it, and I suppose he will think he can be impudent to me again."

"No doubt. I will speak to your father about it. He really shouldn't be so inconsiderate. But what is that stain on your coat, Godfrey? I should think you had been down on your back on the ground."

"Oh," said Godfrey, rather embarrassed, "I happened to slip as I was wrestling with the fellow, and fell on my back. However, I was up again directly and gave it to him, I can tell you. If father hadn't stopped me I'd have laid him out," he continued, in a swaggering tone.

It will be seen that Godfrey did not always confine himself to the truth. Indeed, he found it rather hard at all times to admit either that he had been in the wrong or had been worsted. Even if his mother sometimes suspected that his accounts were a trifle distorted, she forbore to question their accuracy. Mother and son had a sort of tacit compact by which they stood by each other, and made common cause against Colonel Preston.

"Don't you know the boy? Doesn't he live in the neighborhood?" asked Mrs. Preston, after a pause.

"He's just come into the town, but I'll tell you who he is. He's the son of that woman that comes to work for you once a week."

"Mrs. Burke?"

"Yes; he told me that his name was Andy Burke."

"He ought to know his place too well to be impudent to one in your position."

"So I think."

"I shall speak to Mrs. Burke about her son's bad behavior."

"I wish you'd discharge her. That's a good way to punish the boy."

"I shouldn't object to doing that, Godfrey, but Mrs. Burke is a capital hand at ironing shirts. Yours and your father's never looked so nice as they have since she has been here."

Godfrey looked a little discontented. Being essentially mean, he thought it would be an excellent plan to strike the son through the mother.

"You might threaten her, mother, a little. Tell her to make her boy behave himself, or you'll discharge her."

"I will certainly speak to her on the subject, Godfrey."

At the table Mrs. Preston introduced the subject of Godfrey's wrongs.

"I am surprised, Mr. Preston, that you took part against Godfrey when he was rudely assaulted this morning."

"I thought Godfrey in the wrong, my dear. That was my reason."

"You generally appear to think your own son in the wrong. You are ready to take part with any stranger against him," said Mrs. Preston, in a complaining manner.

"I don't think you are quite right just there," said her husband, good-humoredly. "I must say, however, that Godfrey generally is in the wrong."

"You are very unjust to him."

"I don't mean to be. I would be glad to praise him, but he is so overbearing to those whom he considers his inferiors, that I am frequently ashamed of his manner of treating others."

"The boy has some reason to feel proud. He must maintain his position."

"What is his position?"

"I don't think you need to ask. As our son he is entitled to a degree of consideration."

"He will receive consideration enough if he deserves it, but this is a republic, and all are supposed to be on an equality."

Mrs. Preston tossed her head.

"That's well enough to say, but don't you consider yourself above a man that goes round sawing wood for a living?"

"At any rate I would treat him with courtesy. Because I am richer, and have a better education, it is no reason why I should treat him with contempt."

"Then I don't share your sentiments," said Mrs. Preston. "I am thankful that I know my position better. I mean to uphold the dignity of the family, and I hope my son will do the same."

Colonel Preston shrugged his shoulders as his wife swept from the room. He knew of old her sentiments on this subject, and he was aware that she was not likely to become a convert to his more democratic ideas.

"I am afraid she will spoil Godfrey," he thought. "The boy is getting intolerable. I am glad this Irish boy gave him a lesson. He seems a fine-spirited lad. I will help him if I can."

"Ellen," said Mrs. Preston the next morning, "when Mrs. Burke comes let me know."

"Yes, ma'am."

"She's come," announced Ellen, half an hour later.

Mrs. Preston rose from her seat and went into the laundry.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Preston," said Mrs. Burke.

"Good-morning," returned the other, stiffly. "Mrs. Burke, I hear that your son behaved very badly to my Godfrey yesterday."

"It isn't like Andy, ma'am," said the mother, quietly. "He's a good, well-behaved lad."

"Godfrey tells me that he made a brutal assault upon him, quite forgetting his superior position."

"Are you sure Master Godfrey didn't strike him first?" asked the mother.

"Even if he had, your son shouldn't have struck back."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Burke, her eyes flashing with spirit, meek as she generally was.

"Because it was improper," said Mrs. Preston, decisively.

"I don't see that, ma'am. Andy isn't the boy to stand still and be struck."

"Do I understand," said Mrs. Preston, in a freezing tone, "that you uphold your son in his atrocious conduct?"

"Yes, ma'am. I stand up for Andy, for he's a good boy, and if he struck Master Godfrey it was because he was struck first."

"That is enough," said Mrs. Preston, angrily. "I shall not require your services after to-day, Mrs. Burke."

"Just as you like, ma'am," said Mrs. Burke, with quiet pride, but she thought, with a sinking heart, of the gap which this would make in her scanty income.

CHAPTER V — A PROFITABLE JOB

After finishing her work at Colonel Preston's Mrs. Burke went home. She did not see Mrs. Preston again, for the latter sent her the money for her services by Ellen.

"Mrs. Preston says you're not to come next week," said Ellen.

"She told me so herself this morning. She is angry because I took the part of my boy against Master Godfrey."

"Godfrey's the hatefulest boy I ever see," said Ellen, whose grammar was a little defective. "He's always putting on airs."

"He struck my Andy, and Andy struck him back."

"I'm glad he did," said Ellen, emphatically. "I hope he'll do it again."

"I don't want the boys to fight. Andy's a peaceable lad; and he'll be quiet if he's let alone. But he's just like his poor father, and he won't let anybody trample on him."

"That's where he's right," said Ellen. "I'm sorry you're not coming again, Mrs. Burke."

"So am I, Ellen, for I need the money, but I'll stand by my boy."

"You iron real beautiful. I've heard Mrs. Preston say so often. She won't get nobody that'll suit her so well."

"If you hear of anybody else that wants help, Ellen, will you send them to me?"

This Ellen faithfully promised, and Mrs. Burke went home, sorry to have lost her engagement, but not sorry to have stood up for Andy, of whom she was proud.

Andy was at home when she returned. He had found enough to do at home to occupy him so far. The next day he meant to go out in search of employment. When his mother got back she found him cutting some brush which he had obtained from the neighboring woods.

"There, mother," he said, pointing to a considerable pile, "you'll have enough sticks to last you a good while."

"Thank you, Andy, dear. That'll save Mary and me a good deal of trouble."

There was nothing in her words, but something in her tone, which led Andy to ask:

"What's the matter, mother? Has anything happened?"

"I've got through working for Mrs. Preston, Andy."

"Got through? For to-day, you mean?"

"No; I'm not going to work there again."

"Why not?"

"She complained of you, Andy."

"What did she say, mother?" asked our hero, listening with attention.

"She said you ought not to have struck Godfrey."

"Did you tell her he struck me first?"

"Yes, I did."

"And what did she say, thin?"

"She said that you ought not to have struck him back."

"And what did you say, mother?"

"I said my Andy wasn't the boy to stand still and let anybody beat him."

"Good for you, mother! Bully for you! That's where you hit the nail on the head. And what did the ould lady say then?"

"She told me I needn't come there again to work."

"I'm glad you're not goin', mother. I don't want you to work for the likes of her. Let her do her own ironin', the ould spalpeen!"

In general, Andy's speech was tolerably clear of the brogue, but whenever he became a little excited, as at present, it was more marked. He was more angry at the slight to his mother than he would have been at anything, however contemptuous, said to himself. He had that chivalrous feeling of respect for his mother which every boy of his age ought to have, more especially if that mother is a widow.

"But, Andy, I'm very sorry for the money I'll lose."

"How much is it, mother?"

"Seventy-five cents."

"I'll make it up, mother."

"I know you will if you can, Andy; but work is hard to get, and the pay is small."

"You might go back and tell Mrs. Preston that I'm a dirty spalpeen, and maybe she'd take you back, mother."

"I wouldn't slander my own boy like that if she'd take me back twenty times."

"That's the way to talk, mother," said Andy, well pleased. "Don't you be afeared—we'll get along somehow. More by token, here's three dollars I brought home with me yisterday."

Andy pulled out from his pocket six silver half-dollars, and offered them to his mother.

"Where did you get them, Andy?" she asked, in surprise.

"Where did I get them? One way and another, by overwork. We won't starve while them last, will we?"

Andy's cheerful tone had its effect upon his mother.

"Perhaps you're right, Andy," she said, smiling. "At any rate we won't cry till it's time."

"To-morrow I'll go out and see if I can find work."

"Suppose you don't find it, Andy?" suggested his sister.

"Then I'll take in washing," said Andy, laughing. "It's an iligant washer I'd make, wouldn't I now?"

"Nobody'd hire you more than once, Andy."

By and by they had supper. If they had been alone they would have got along on bread and tea; but "Andy needs meat, for he's a growing boy," said his mother.

And so Mary was dispatched to the butcher's for a pound and a half of beefsteak, which made the meal considerably more attractive. Mrs. Burke felt that it was extravagant, particularly just as her income was diminished, but she couldn't bear to stint Andy. At first she was not going to eat, herself, meaning to save a part for Andy's breakfast; but our hero found her out, and declared he wouldn't eat a bit if his mother did not eat, too. So she was forced to take her share, and it did her good, for no one can keep up a decent share of strength on bread and tea alone.

The next morning Andy went out in search of work. He had no very definite idea where to go, or to whom to apply, but he concluded to put in an application anywhere he could.

He paused in front of the house of Deacon Jones, a hard-fisted old farmer, whose reputation for parsimony was well known throughout the village, but of this Andy, being a newcomer, was ignorant.

"Wouldn't you like to hire a good strong boy?" he asked, entering the yard.

The deacon looked up.

"Ever worked on a farm?"

"Yes."

"Can you milk?"

"Yes."

"Where did you work?"

"In Carver."

"What's your name?"

"Andy Burke."

"Where do you live?"

"With my mother, Mrs. Burke, a little way down the road."

"I know—the Widder Burke."

"Have you got any work for me?"

"Wait a minute, I'll see."

The deacon brought out an old scythe from the barn, and felt of the edge. There was not much danger in so doing, for it was as dull as a hoe.

"This scythe needs sharpening," he said. "Come and turn the grindstone."

"Well, here's a job, anyhow," thought Andy. "Wonder what he'll give me."

He sat down and began to turn the grindstone. The deacon bore on heavily, and this made it hard turning. His arms ached, and the

perspiration stood on his brow. It was certainly pretty hard work, but then he must be prepared for that, and after all he was earning money for his mother. Still the time did seem long. The scythe was so intolerably dull that it took a long time to make any impression upon it.

"Kinder hard turnin', ain't it?" said the deacon.

"Yes," said Andy.

"This scythe ain't been sharpened for ever so long. It's as dull as a hoe."

However, time and patience work wonders, and at length the deacon, after a careful inspection of the blade of the scythe, released Andy from his toil of an hour and a half, with the remark:

"I reckon that'll do."

He put the scythe in its place and came out.

Andy lingered respectfully for the remuneration of his labor.

"He ought to give me a quarter," he thought. But the deacon showed no disposition to pay him, and Andy became impatient.

"I guess I'll be goin'," he said.

"All right. I ain't got anything more for you to do," said the deacon.

"I'll take my pay now," said Andy, desperately.

"Pay? What for?" inquired the deacon, innocently.

"For turning the grindstone."

"You don't mean ter say you expect anything for that?" said the deacon in a tone of surprise.

"Yes I do," said Andy. "I can't work an hour and a half for nothing."

"I didn't expect to pay for such a trifle," said the old man, fumbling in his pocket.

Finally he brought out two cents, one of the kind popularly known as bung-towns, which are not generally recognized as true currency.

"There," said he in an injured tone. "I'll pay you, though I didn't think you'd charge anything for any little help like that."

Andy looked at the proffered compensation with mingled astonishment and disgust.

"Never mind," he said. "You can keep it. You need it more'n I do, I'm thinkin'!"

"Don't you want it?" asked the deacon, surprised.

"No, I don't. I'm a poor boy, but I don't work an hour and a half for two cents, one of 'em bad. I'd rather take no pay at all."

"That's a cur'us boy," said the deacon, slowly sliding the pennies back into his pocket. "I calc'late he expected more just for a little job like that. Does he think I'm made of money?"

As Andy went out of the yard, the idea dawned upon the deacon that he had saved two cents, and his face was luminous with satisfaction.

CHAPTER VI — THE TWO OLD MAIDS

"He's the meanest man I ever saw," thought Andy. "Does he think I work on nothing a year, and find myself? Divil a bit of work will I do for him agin, if I know it." But better luck was in store for Andy. Quarter of a mile farther on, in a two-story house, old-fashioned but neat, lived two maiden ladies of very uncertain age, Misses Priscilla and Sophia Grant. I am not aware that any relationship existed between them and our distinguished ex-President. Nevertheless, they were of very respectable family and connections, and of independent property, owning bank stock which brought them in an annual income of about twelve hundred dollars, in addition to the house they occupied, and half a dozen acres of land thereunto pertaining. Now, this was not a colossal fortune, but in a country place like Crampton it made them ladies of large property.

Priscilla was the elder of the two, and general manager. Sophia contented herself with being the echo of her stronger-minded sister, and was very apt to assent to her remarks, either by repeating them, or by saying: "Just so." She was a mild, inoffensive creature, but very charitable and amiable, and so little given to opposition that there was always the greatest harmony between them. They kept a gardener and out-of-door servant of all work, who cultivated the land, sawed and split their wood, ran of errands, and made himself generally useful. He had one drawback, unfortunately. He would occasionally indulge to excess in certain fiery alcoholic compounds sold at the village tavern, and, as natural consequence, get drunk. He had usually the good sense to keep out of the way while under the influence of liquor, and hitherto the good ladies had borne with and retained him in their employ.

But a crisis had arrived. That morning he had come for orders while inebriated, and in his drunken folly had actually gone so far as to call Miss Priscilla darling and offer to kiss her.

Miss Priscilla was, of course, horrified, and so expressed herself.

"Law, Sophia," she said, "I came near fainting away. The idea of his offering to kiss me."

"Just so," said Sophia.

"So presuming."

"Just so."

"Of course, I couldn't think of employing him any longer."

"Couldn't think of it."

"He might have asked to kiss me again."

"Just so."

"Or you!"

"Just so," said Sophia, in some excitement of manner.

"The neighbors would talk."

"Just so."

"So I told him that I was very sorry, but it would be necessary for him to find work somewhere else."

"But who will do our work?" inquired Sophia, with a rare, original suggestion.

"We must get somebody else."

"So we must," acquiesced Sophia, as if she had suddenly received light on a very dark subject.

"But I don't know who we can get."

"Just so."

At that moment there was a knock at the door. Priscilla answered it in person. They kept no domestic servant, only a gardener.

"I've brought the load of wood you ordered, ma'am," said the teamster. "Where shall I put it?"

"In the backyard. John—no, John has left us. I will show you, myself."

She put on a cape-bonnet and indicated the place in the yard where she wanted the wood dumped.

Then she returned to the house.

"It's very awkward that John should have acted so," she said, in a tone of annoyance. "I don't know who is to saw and split that wood."

"We couldn't do it," said Sophia, with another original suggestion.

"Of course not. That would be perfectly absurd."

"Just so."

"I don't believe there is enough wood sawed and split to last through the day."

"We must have some split."

"Of course. But I really don't know of anyone in the neighborhood that we could get."

"John."

"John has gone away. You know why."

"Perhaps he wouldn't kiss us if we told him not to," suggested Sophia.

"I am afraid you are a goose," said Priscilla, composedly.

"Just so," slipped out of Sophia's mouth from force of habit, but her sister was so used to hearing it that she took no particular notice of it on the present occasion.

It was just at this time that Andy, released from his severe and unrequited labor for Deacon Jones, came by. He saw the wood

being unloaded in the back yard, and an idea struck him.

"Maybe I can get the chance of sawin' and splittin' that wood. I'll try, anyway. I wonder who lives there?"

He immediately opened the front gate, and marching up to the front door, knocked vigorously.

"There's somebody at the door," said Sophia.

"Perhaps it's John come back," said Priscilla. "I am afraid of going to open it. He might want to kiss me again."

"I'll go," said Sophia, rising with unwonted alacrity.

"He might want to kiss you."

"I'll tell him not to."

"We'll both go," said Priscilla, decisively.

Accordingly, the two sisters, for mutual protection, both went to the door, and opened it guardedly. Their courage returned when they saw that it was only a boy.

"What do you want?" asked Priscilla.

"Just so," chimed in Sophia.

"You've got a load of wood in the back yard," commenced Andy.

"Just so," said Sophia.

"Do you want it sawed and split?"

"Just so," answered the younger sister, brightening up.

"Can you do it?" inquired Priscilla.

"Try me and see," answered Andy.

"You're not a man."

"Just so," chimed in her sister.

"Faith, and I soon will be," said Andy. "I can saw and split wood as well as any man you ever saw."

"What is your name?"

"Andy Burke."

"Are you a—Hibernian?" inquired Priscilla.

"I don't know what you mane by that same," said Andy, perplexed.

"To what nation do you belong?"

"Oh, that's what you want, ma'am. I'm only an Irish boy."

"And you say your name is Burke?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Are you related to Burke, the great orator? He was an Irishman, I believe."

"Just so," said Sophia.

"He was my great-grandfather, ma'am," answered Andy, who had never heard of the eminent orator, but thought the claim would improve his chances of obtaining the job of sawing and splitting wood.

"Your great-grandfather!" exclaimed Priscilla, in astonishment. "Really, this is most extraordinary. And you are poor?"

"If I wasn't I wouldn't be goin' round sawin' wood, ma'am."

"Just so," said Sophia.

"To think that the grandson of the great Burke should come to us for employment," said Priscilla, who was in some respects easily taken in. "I think we must hire him, Sophia."

"Just so."

"Perhaps he could take John's place altogether."

"Just so."

"I must find out whether he understands gardening."

"Just so."

Andy stood by, waiting patiently for the decision, and hoping that it might be favorable. Of course, it was wrong for him to tell a lie, but he thought his engagement depended upon it, and, although a very good boy in the main, he was not altogether perfect, as my readers are destined to find out.

CHAPTER VII — ANDY OBTAINS A PLACE

"Do you understand the care of a garden?" asked Miss Priscilla.

"Yes," answered Andy, promptly.

"Then you are used to agricultural labor?"

"I've been workin' on a farm all summer."

"Our man has just left us, and we must hire somebody else."

"Just so," chimed in Sophia.

"And if you are competent——"

"Just so."

"Try me," said Andy.

"I really think we'd better, Sophia," said Priscilla, turning to her sister.

"Just so."

"We'll try you for a week. What compensation do you require?"

"Is it wages you mane?"

Of course, Sophia was the speaker.

"How much did you give the man you had before me?" asked Andy, shrewdly.

"Twenty-five dollars a month and board."

"That'll suit me," said Andy, audaciously.

At the farmer's for whom he had been working he had received board and a dollar a week.

"But you are a boy. Men folks get more than boys."

"I'll do as much work as he did any day," said Andy, stoutly.

"I really don't know what to say. I think we'll give you five dollars the first week, and then we will decide about the future."

"Just so," said Sophia.

"I'm to eat here?" inquired Andy.

"Yes, you will make your home here. We will put you in John's room."

"When shall I begin?"

"We shall need some wood split at once."

"All right, ma'am; but it's dinner time. I'll just go home and get a bite to keep up my strength."

"You can have your dinner here. It will be ready in half an hour."

"Just so."

"All right," said Andy; "I'm agreeable."

"Do you live in the village?"

"I do now. My mother lives up the road a bit."

"Very well. Go and split some wood, and we'll call you in to dinner. You'll find the ax and the saw in the shed."

Andy found the articles referred to, and straight-way went to work. He was really a "smart boy to work," as the phrase is, and he went to work with a will. He was greatly elated at having secured so profitable a job. He meant to give satisfaction, so as to keep it. Five dollars a week and board seemed to him a magnificent income, and

compared very favorably with his wages at Farmer Belknap's, where he had been working all summer.

"It's lucky I came here," he said to himself, as he plied the saw energetically; "but what queer old ladies they are, especially the one that's always sayin' 'just so.' If I'd tell her I'd got fifty-seven grandchildren I'll bet she'd say, 'Just so.'"

Miss Sophia was looking out of the back window to see how their new "man" worked. Occasionally Priscilla, as she was setting the table, glanced out of the window in passing.

"He takes hold as if he knew how," she observed.

"Just so," responded her sister.

"I think he works faster than John."

"Just so."

"It's very strange that he should be the great-grandson of the great Burke."

"Just so."

"And that he should be sawing wood for us, too."

"Just so."

"I think we must be kind to him, sister."

"Just so. He won't try to kiss you, Priscilla," said Sophia, with a sudden thought.

"You are a goose, sister," said Priscilla.

"Just so," assented the other, from force of habit.

In due time dinner was ready, and Andy was summoned from the woodpile. He was in nowise sorry for the summons. He had a hearty appetite at all times, and just now it was increased by his unrequited

labor in turning the grindstone for Deacon Jones, as well as by the half-hour he had spent at his new task.

The Misses Grant did their own work, as I have before observed. They were excellent cooks, and the dinner now upon the table, though plain, was very savory and inviting. Andy's eyes fairly danced with satisfaction as they rested on the roast beef and vegetables, which emitted an odor of a highly satisfactory character. At the farmer's where he had last worked, the table had been plentifully supplied, but the cooking was very rudimentary.

"Sit down, Andrew," said Miss Priscilla. "I think that is your name."

"They call me 'Andy,' ma'am."

"That means Andrew. Shall I give you some meat?"

"Thank you, ma'am."

"Will you have it rare or well done?"

"Well done, ma'am. I have it rare enough, anyhow."

"Sophia, Andrew has made a joke," said Priscilla, with a decorous smile.

"Just so, Priscilla," and Sophia smiled also.

"I suppose your family has been reduced to poverty, Andrew, or you would not be seeking employment of this character?"

"True for you, ma'am," said Andy, with his mouth full.

"How was your family property lost?"

"Faith, ma'am, by speculation," said Andy, hazarding a guess.

"That is very sad. Sophia, we must never speculate."

"Just so, Priscilla."

"Or we might lose all our money."

"And have to saw wood for a living," said Sophia, with another brilliant idea.

Andy was so amused at the picture thus suggested that he came near choking, but recovered himself, after a violent attack of coughing.

"I am afraid, Sophia, we should scarcely make a living in that way," said Priscilla, with a smile.

"Just so," acquiesced her sister.

"How long have you been in this country, Andrew?"

"Six years, ma'am."

Andy kept at work industriously. His appetite proved to be quite equal to the emergency, but his evident enjoyment of the dinner only gratified the ladies, who, though eccentric, were kind-hearted, and not in the least mean.

"What will I do, ma'am?" asked our hero.

"You may go on sawing wood."

So Andy resumed work, and worked faithfully during the afternoon. By this time there was a large pile of wood ready for the stove.

At half-past four Miss Priscilla appeared at the door.

"Andrew," she said.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do you feel tired?"

"A little, ma'am."

"Does your mother know where you are?"

"No, ma'am."

"Would you like to go home and tell her?"

"Yes, ma'am, I would."

"You can go now or after supper, as you prefer."

"Then I'll go now."

"But remember, we want you to come back and sleep here. We do not feel safe without a man in the house."

Andy felt rather flattered at being referred to as a man.

"I'll be back any time you name, ma'am," he said.

"Then be here at nine o'clock."

"Very well, ma'am."

Andy put on his coat and hurried home. He wanted to tell his mother and Mary the good news about his engagement at such unexpected good wages.

Mrs. Burke looked up inquiringly as he entered the house.

"Where have you been, Andy?" she asked. "I thought I had lost you."

"You don't lose me so easy, mother. Shure, I've been at work."

"At work?"

"Yes—I've got a place."

"What, already? You are lucky, Andy."

"You'll think so, mother. How much do you think I get besides board, mind?"

"A dollar a week?"

"What do you say to three dollars?"

"You're a lucky boy, Andy. I'm glad for you."

"What do you say to five dollars a week, mother?" asked Andy, in exultation.

"You're jokin' now, Andy," said his sister. "I don't believe you've got a place at all."

"I have, thin, and it's five dollars a week I'm to get. Ask the ould maids I'm workin' for."

"The Miss Grants?"

"I expect so. They're mighty queer old ladies. One of 'm is always sayin' 'just so.'"

"That is Miss Sophia Grant."

"Just so," said Andy, mimicking her.

"You mustn't do that, Andy. Then it's them you're workin' for?"

"Yes, and they're mighty kind. I'm goin' back to sleep there to-night. They want a man to purtect them."

Mary laughed.

"Do you call yourself a man, Andy? What could you do if a burglar tried to get in?"

"I'd give him what Paddy did the drum," said Andy.

"Supper is ready," announced his mother.

It was a cheerful meal. Andy had done much better than his mother expected, and it seemed likely that they would get along in spite of her being discharged by Mrs. Preston.

CHAPTER VIII — THE MIDNIGHT ALARM

"It's time for me to be goin' back," said Andy, as the clock indicated twenty minutes to nine.

"I wish you could sleep at home, Andy," said his mother.

"They want me to purtect them," said our hero, with a little importance. "I'll pack my clothes in a handkerchief."

"I've got a little carpetbag," said his mother. "That looks more respectable. When you have earned enough money, you must have a new suit of clothes."

"How much will they cost, mother?"

"I think we can get a cheap suit for fifteen or twenty dollars. When you have got the money, we will call on the tailor and see."

"Shure, I'll feel like a gentleman with a suit like that."

"Mary, go and get the carpetbag. I've packed Andy's clothes all ready for him."

Mary soon reappeared with the carpetbag, and Andy set out on his return.

Presently, as the clock struck nine, he knocked at the door of the Misses Grant. The elder opened the door for him.

"You are punctual, Andrew," she said, approvingly.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Are those your clothes?" pointing to the bag he carried.

"What few I've got, ma'am. I'm goin' to buy some more when I've got money enough."

"That is right. We want you to look respectable."

"Just so," remarked Sophia, who felt that it was time for her to speak.

Then a brilliant idea seized her.

"If he was a girl, we could give him some of our dresses."

"But he isn't," said matter-of-fact Priscilla.

"Or if we were men," continued Sophia, with another brilliant idea.

"But we are not."

"Just so," assented her sister, now brought to the end of her suggestions.

By this time Andy was in the house, holding his cap in one hand, and his carpetbag in the other.

"Do you feel tired?" asked Priscilla.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Then, perhaps you would like to go to bed?"

"I would, if it's just the same to you, ma'am."

"Very well, follow me, and I will show you your room. Sophia, perhaps you had better come, too."

They went up the front stairs. The house proper had two rooms on the lower floor, and the two chambers over them. But there was, besides, an extension behind, used as a kitchen, and over this was the room which had been used by John, the former servant.

"This is your room, Andrew," said Miss Priscilla. "Sophia, will you lift the latch?"

The door being opened, revealed a small chamber, with the ceiling partly sloping. There were two windows. It was very plainly furnished, but looked very comfortable. Andy glanced about him with a look of satisfaction. It was considerably more attractive than the bed in the attic which he had occupied at the house of the farmer for whom he had last worked.

"We've put the feather bed at the bottom, as it's summer," said Miss Priscilla.

"All right, ma'am."

"There's one thing you've forgotten, Priscilla," suggested Sophia.

"What is that?"

"The gun."

"Oh, yes. I am glad you reminded me of it. Andrew, can you fire off a gun?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Andrew, glibly.

He had never done it, but he had seen a gun fired, and always wanted to make a trial himself.

"As you are the only menfolks in the house, we should expect you to fire at any robbers that tried to enter the house."

"Do you expect any, ma'am?" asked Andy, eagerly.

"No; but some might come. Of course, we cannot fire guns—it would be improper, as we are ladies."

"Just so," interrupted Sophia.

"So we shall leave that to you. Do you think you would dare to?"

"Would I dare, is it?" asked Andy. "Shure, I'd be glad of the chance."

"I see you are brave. I'll show you the gun now."

She went to the closet in the corner of the room, and pointed out a big, unwieldy musket to Andy. It was in the corner.

"Is it loaded, ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes; it has been loaded for a year or more. John never had occasion to use it, and I hope you won't. If any robber should come," added the kind-hearted spinster, "perhaps you had better only shoot him in the arm, and not kill him."

"Just as you say, ma'am."

"I believe that is all I have to say. Sophia, shall we go to our own room?"

"Just so."

So the two maidens withdrew, and Andy was left to his own reflections. He undressed himself quickly, and deposited himself in the bed, which proved to be very comfortable.

He went to bed, but there was one thing that prevented his going to sleep. This was the gun. He had never even had one in his hand, and now there was one at his absolute disposal. It made him feel a sense of his importance to feel that, upon him, young as he was, devolved the duty of defending the house and its occupants from burglary.

"And why not? Shure, I'm 'most a man," reflected Andy. "I can shoot off a gun as well as anybody. I wonder will robbers come to-night!" thought Andy.

He rather wished they would, so that he might have an excuse for firing the gun. However, of this there seemed very little chance, for had not Miss Priscilla said that it had been loaded for more than a year, and during all that time John had never had occasion to use it? This seemed rather discouraging.

"I wonder would they let me go out gunning with it?" thought Andy.

Somehow or other, he could not get his mind off the gun, and, after a lapse of an hour, he was as wide awake as ever.

Meanwhile, Priscilla and Sophia were both asleep, not being interested in the gun.

Finally it occurred to Andy that he would get up and look at the gun. He wanted to make sure that he understood how to fire it. It was important that he should do so, he reasoned to himself, for might not a burglar come that very night? Then, suppose he was unable to fire the gun, and in consequence of his ignorance, both he and the two ladies should be murdered in their beds. Of course, this was not to be thought of, so Andy got out of bed, and, finding a match, lit the candle and put it on the bureau, or chest of drawers, as they called it in the country.

Then he stepped softly to the closet and took out the gun.

"Murder! how heavy it is!" thought Andy. "I didn't think it was half as heavy. There must be a pound of bullets inside. Now," he said to himself, "suppose a big thafe was to poke his dirty head in at the winder and say, 'Give me all your money, or I'll break your head'—I'd put up with the gun and point at him this way."

Here Andy brought the gun into position with some difficulty and put his finger near the trigger.

"And I'd say," continued Andy, rehearsing his part, "'Jump down, you thafe, or I'll put a bullet through your head.'"

At that unlucky moment his finger accidentally pulled the trigger, and instantly there was a tremendous report, the noise being increased by the shattering of the window panes by the bullet.

Probably the charge was too heavy, for the gun "kicked," and Andy, to his astonishment, found himself lying flat on his back on the floor, with the gun lying beside him.

"Oh, murder!" ejaculated the bewildered boy, "is it dead I am? Shure, the divil's in the gun. What will the ould wimmen say? They'll

think it's bloody burglars gettin' into the house. Shure, I'll slip on my pants, for they'll be coming to see what's happened."

He picked himself up, and slipped on his pants. He had scarcely got them on when the trembling voice of Miss Priscilla was heard at the door.

CHAPTER IX — WHAT FOLLOWED

The report of the gun, as may be supposed, had aroused both the ladies from their sleep.

"Did you hear it?" ejaculated Miss Priscilla, clutching her sister by the arm.

"Just so," muttered Sophia, in bewilderment. "It's the gun."

"Burglars!" exclaimed Sophia, in alarm.

"I am afraid so. What shall we do?"

"Run away," suggested Sophia.

"No, we must not leave the boy to be murdered."

"Perhaps he has shot them?" said Sophia, with a gleam of hope.

"At any rate, it is our duty to go and see what has happened."

"I'm afraid," whimpered Sophia, covering up her head.

"Then you can stay here," said the more courageous Priscilla. "I will go."

"And leave me alone?"

"I must."

"I'll go too, then," said Sophia, her teeth chattering with fear.

So they crept out of bed, and throwing shawls over their shoulders, advanced into the entry, trembling with excitement and fear.

"If we should find Andy weltering in his gore?" suggested Priscilla.

"Don't say such horrid things, or I shall scream," said her sister.

Then came the tremulous knock mentioned at the close of the last chapter.

Andy opened the door in person, and met the gaze of the two Miss Grants, Sophia almost ready to drop with fright.

"Do you see any gore, Priscilla?" she asked, tremulously.

"Are you hurt, Andrew?" asked the elder sister.

"No, ma'am."

"Did you fire the gun?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"What made you? Did any burglars try to get in?"

"Not exactly, ma'am," said Andy; "but I thought there might be some."

"Did you see any?"

"Not exactly," said Andy, a little embarrassed; "but I heard a noise."

"Just so," said Sophia.

"Why didn't you wait till they appeared at the window, Andrew?"

"Because, ma'am, they would fire at me first. I wanted to scare 'em away."

"Perhaps you were right. You don't see any traces of them outside, do you?"

"You can look for yourself, ma'am."

The two ladies went to the window, which as already explained, had suffered from the discharge, and peered out timidly, but, of course, saw no burglars.

"Are you sure there were any burglars, Andrew?" asked Priscilla.

"No, ma'am, I couldn't swear to it."

"Well, no harm has been done."

"Except breakin' the winder, ma'am."

"Never mind; we will have that mended to-morrow."

"Were you afraid, Andrew?" asked Miss Sophia.

"Not a bit," answered Andy, valiantly. "I ain't afraid of burglars, as long as I have a gun. I'm a match for 'em."

"How brave he is!" exclaimed the timid lady. "We might have been killed in our beds. I'm glad we hired him, Priscilla."

"As there is nothing more to do, we had better go to bed."

"Just so."

"That's a bully way to get out of a scrape," said Andy to himself, as the ladies filed out of his chamber. "I expected they'd scold me. Plague take the old gun—it kicks as bad as a mule. Oh, Andy, you're a lucky boy to get off so well."

The next day Andy obtained permission to take out the gun in the afternoon when his chores were done.

"I want to get used to it, ma'am," he said. "It kicked last night."

"Dear me, did it?" asked Sophia. "I didn't know guns kicked. What do they kick with? They haven't got any legs."

Andy explained as well as he could what he meant by the gun's kicking, and said it was because it had not been used for a good while, and needed to be taken out.

"It needs exercise, just like horses, ma'am," he said.

"That is singular, Andrew," said Priscilla.

"Just so," observed her sister.

"It's a fact, ma'am," said Andy. "It gets skittish, just like horses—but if I take it out sometimes, it'll be all right."

"Very well, you may take it, only be careful."

"Oh, I'll be careful, ma'am," said Andy, with alacrity.

"Now, I'll have some fun," he said to himself.

He found a supply of powder and some shot in the closet, and proceeded to appropriate them.

"Come back in time for supper, Andrew," said Miss Priscilla.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm always on hand at meal times," answered our hero.

"That's because he's hungry," said Sophia, brilliantly.

"You're right, ma'am," said Andy; "my stomach always tells me when it's supper time."

"It's as good as a watch," said Priscilla, smiling.

"And a good deal cheaper," observed Sophia, with another brilliant idea.

Andy started up the road with his gun over his shoulder. It was his intention after going a little distance to strike into the fields, and make for some woods not far away, where he thought there would be a good chance for birds or squirrels. He hadn't gone many steps before he encountered Godfrey Preston, his antagonist of three days previous.

Now, Godfrey hadn't seen or heard anything of Andy since that day. He had learned from his mother with great satisfaction that she had discharged Mrs. Burke from her employment, as this, he imagined, would trouble Andy. But of Andy himself he knew nothing, and was not aware that he had already secured a place. When he saw our hero coming along, his curiosity led him to stop and find out,

if he could, where he was going with the gun he carried on his shoulder, and where he obtained it. So he looked intently at Andy, waiting for him to speak, but Andy preferred to leave that to him.

"Whose gun is that?" asked Godfrey, in the tone of one who was entitled to ask the question.

"Shure, it belongs to the owner," said Andy, with a smile.

"Of course, I know that," said Godfrey, impatiently. "I'm not quite a fool."

"Not quite," repeated Andy, emphasizing the last word in a way which made Godfrey color.

"What do you mean?" he said.

"What do I mane? It was only your words I repeated."

"Then, don't trouble yourself to repeat them—do you hear?"

"Thank you; I won't."

"You didn't tell me whose gun that is."

"No, I didn't."

"Very likely you stole it," said Godfrey, provoked.

"Maybe you'll go and tell the owner."

"How can I when you haven't told me whose it is?"

"No more I did," said Andy with apparent innocence.

"Where are you going with it?"

"Goin' out shootin'."

"So I supposed."

"Did you, now? Then what made you ask?" returned Andy.

"You are an impudent fellow," said Godfrey, provoked.

"I never am impudent to gentlemen," said Andy, pointedly.

"Do you mean to say that I am not a gentleman?" demanded the other, angrily.

"Suit yourself," said Andy, coolly.

"You're only an Irish boy."

"Shure, I knew that before. Why can't you tell me some news? I'm an Irish boy and I'm proud of the same. I'll never go back on ould Ireland."

"The Irish are a low set."

"Are they now? Maybe you never heard of Burke, the great orator."

"What of him?"

"Shure, he was an Irishman; and isn't my name Andy Burke, and wasn't he my great-grandfather?"

"He must be proud of his great-grandson," said Godfrey, sarcastically.

"I never axed him, but no doubt you're right. But it's time I was goin', or I shan't get any birds. Would you like to come with me?"

"No, I am particular about the company I keep."

"I'm not, or I wouldn't have invited you," said Andy, who was rather quicker witted than his opponent.

"I should like to know where he got that gun," said Godfrey to himself, following with his eyes the retreating figure of our hero. "I am sure that isn't his gun. Ten to one he stole it from somebody."

But Godfrey's curiosity was not destined to be gratified that afternoon, as it might have been if he had seen Andy turning into the yard of the Misses Grant two hours afterward. He had not shot anything, but he had got used to firing the gun, and was not likely to

be caught again in any such adventure as that recorded in the last chapter.

CHAPTER X — ANDY'S DEBUT AT SCHOOL

The first of September came, and with it came the opening of the fall schools. On the first day, when Andy, at work in the yard, saw the boys and the girls go by with their books, he felt a longing to go, too. He knew very well that his education had been very much neglected, and that he knew less of books than a boy of his age ought to do.

"I wish I could go to school this term," he said to himself; "but it's no use wishin'. Mother needs my wages, and I must keep on workin'."

The same thought had come to the Misses Grant. Andy had been in their employ now for six weeks, and by his unfailing good humor and readiness to oblige, had won their favor. They felt interested in his progress, and, at the same moment that the thought referred to passed though Andy's mind, Miss Priscilla said to her sister:

"The fall school begins to-day. There's Godfrey Preston just passed with some books under his arm."

"Just so."

"I suppose Andrew would like to be going to school with other boys of his age."

"Just so."

"Don't you think we could spare him to go half the day?"

"Just so," said Sophia, with alacrity.

"There isn't so much work to do now as there was in the summer, and he could do his chores early in the morning. He could go to school in the forenoon and work in the afternoon."

"Just so, Priscilla. Shall we give him less wages?"

"No, I think not. He needs the money to give his mother."

"Call him in and tell him," suggested Sophia.

"It will do at dinner time."

"Just so."

When the dinner was over, and Andy rose from the table, Miss Priscilla introduced the subject.

"Are you a good scholar, Andrew?"

"I'm a mighty poor one, ma'am."

"Did you ever study much?"

"No, ma'am, I've had to work ever since I was so high," indicating a point about two feet from the ground.

"Dear me," said Sophia, "you must have been very small."

"Yes, ma'am, I was very small of my size."

"I've been thinking, Andrew, that perhaps we could spare you half the day, so that you could go to school in the forenoon—you could learn something in three hours—should you like it?"

"Would I like it, ma'am? Wouldn't I, though? I don't want to grow up a poor, ignorant crathur, hardly able to read and write."

"Then you can go to school to-morrow, and ask the teacher if he will take you for half the day. You can get up early, and get your chores done before school."

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I can do that easy."

"I think we have some schoolbooks in the house. Some years ago we had a nephew stay with us, and go to school. I think his books are still in the closet."

"Thank you, ma'am. It'll save me buyin', and I haven't got any money to spare."

"We shall give you the same wages, Andrew, though you will work less."

"Thank you, ma'am. You're very kind."

"Try to improve your time in school, as becomes the great-grandson of such a distinguished orator."

"I'll try, ma'am," said Andy, looking a little queer at this allusion to the great Edmund Burke. In fact, he was ashamed of having deceived the kind old ladies, but didn't like now to own up to the deception lest they should lose confidence in him. But he determined hereafter to speak the truth, and not resort to deception.

The next morning, at twenty minutes of nine, Andy left the house provided with books, and joyfully took his way to the schoolhouse, which was a quarter of a mile distant. As he ascended the small hill on which it stood, he attracted the attention of a group of boys who had already arrived. Among them was his old adversary, Godfrey Preston.

"Is that Irish boy coming to school?" he said in a tone of disgust.

"What? Andy Burke? I hope so," said Charles Fleming, "he's a good fellow."

"He's only an Irish boy," said Godfrey, with a sneer.

"And I am only an American boy," said Charles, good-humoredly.

"You can associate with him if you want to; I shan't," said Godfrey.

"That's where I agree with you, Godfrey," said Ben Travers, who made himself rather a toady of Godfrey's.

Andy had now come up, so that Charles Fleming did not reply, but called out, cordially:

"Are you coming to school, Andy?"

"Yes," said Andy.

"I'm glad of it."

"Thank you," said Andy. "What's the matter with them fellows," as Godfrey and Bill Travers walked off haughtily, tossing their heads.

Charles Fleming laughed.

"They don't think we are good enough for their company," he said.

"I'm not anxious for it," said Andy. "I like yours better."

"I didn't think you could get away from work to come to school. Are you working for Miss Grant now?"

"Yes, but she lets me come to school half the day. She's a bully ould lady."

"Well, half a loaf's better than no bread. Will you sit with me? I've got no one at my desk. Say yes."

"It's just what I'd like, Charlie, but maybe Godfrey Preston wants to sit with me. I wouldn't like to disappoint him," said Andy, with sly humor.

"Sit with me till he invites you, then."

"That'll be a long day."

They went into the schoolhouse, and Andy deposited his books in the desk next to Charlie Fleming's. He couldn't have wished for a better or more agreeable companion. Charlie was the son of Dr. Fleming, the village physician, and was a general favorite in the town on account of his sunny, attractive manner. But, with all his affability, he was independent and resolute, if need be. He was one of the leaders of the school. Godfrey aspired also to be a leader, and was to some extent on account of his father's wealth and high standing, for, as we have seen, Colonel Preston was not like his son. Still, it is doubtful whether anyone was much attached to Godfrey. He was too selfish in disposition, and offensively consequential in manner, to

inspire devoted friendship. Ben Travers, however, flattered him, and followed him about, simply because he was the son of a rich man. Such cases occur sometimes among American schoolboys, but generally they are too democratic and sensible to attach importance to social distinctions in the schoolroom, or in the playground.

When the teacher—a certain Ebenezer Stone, a man of thirty or upward—entered, Andy went up to him and asked permission to attend school a part of the time. As there had been such cases in former terms, no objection was offered by the teacher, and Andy went back to his seat, a regularly admitted member of the school.

It was found necessary to put him in a low class to begin with. He was naturally bright, but, as we know, his opportunities of learning had been very limited, and he could not be expected to know much. But Andy was old enough now to understand the worth of knowledge, and he devoted himself so earnestly to study that in the course of three weeks he was promoted to a higher class. This, however, is anticipating.

When recess came, the scholars poured out upon the playround. Charles Fleming and Godfrey Preston happened to pass out side by side.

"I see you've taken that Irish boy to sit with you," he said.

"You mean Andy Burke? Yes, I invited him to be my desk-fellow."

"I congratulate you on your high-toned and aristocratic associate," observed Godfrey, sarcastically.

"Thank you. I am glad to have him with me."

"I wouldn't condescend to take him into my seat."

"Nor do I. There isn't any condescension about it."

"He works for a living."

"So does my father, and so does yours. Are you going to cut your father's acquaintance for that reason?"

"My father could live without work."

"He doesn't choose to, and that's where he shows his good sense."

"It's a different kind of work from sawing and splitting wood, and such low labor."

"It strikes me, Godfrey, that you ought to have been born somewhere else than in America. In this country labor is considered honorable. You ought to be living under a monarchy."

"I don't believe in associating with inferiors."

"I don't look upon Andy Burke as my inferior," said Charlie. "He is poor, to be sure, but he is a good fellow, and helps support his mother and sister, as I would do in his place."

"Charlie Fleming," was heard from the playground, "come and choose up for baseball."

Without waiting for an answer, Charlie ran to the field alongside the schoolhouse, where the game was to take place.

CHAPTER XI — A GAME OF BALL

"Come here," said Conrad Fletcher; "come here, Charlie, and choose up for a game. We must make haste, or recess will be over."

"All right, Conrad."

The first choice devolved upon Conrad. He chose Ephraim Pinkham, noted as a catcher.

"I take Elmer Rhodes," said Charlie.

"John Parker," said Conrad.

"Henry Strauss."

"Godfrey Preston," was Conrad's next choice.

"Can you play, Andy?" asked Charlie.

"Yes," said Andy.

"Then, I take you."

"I've a good mind to resign," said Godfrey, in a low voice, to Ben Travers. "I don't fancy playing with that Irish boy."

However, he was too fond of playing to give up his place, notwithstanding his antipathy to Andy.

Charlie Fleming's side went in first, and Charlie himself went to the bat. The pitcher was Godfrey. He was really a fair pitcher, and considered himself very superior. Charlie finally succeeded in hitting the ball, but rather feebly, and narrowly escaped losing his first base. He saved it, however.

Next at the bat was Elmer Rhodes. He hit one or two fouls, but not a fair ball. Finally he was put out on three strikes; meanwhile,

however, Charlie Fleming got round to third base. Henry Strauss succeeded in striking the ball, but it was caught by center field, rapidly sent to first base, before Henry could reach it, then thrown to the catcher in time to prevent Charlie Fleming from getting in. He ran half-way to home base, but seeing his danger, ran back to third base. Next Andy took the bat.

"Knock me in, Andy," called out Charlie Fleming.

"All right" said Andy, quietly.

"Not if I can prevent it," said Godfrey to himself, and he determined by sending poor balls, to get our hero out on three strikes. The first ball, therefore, he sent about six feet to the right of the batter. Andy stood in position, but, of course, was far too wise to attempt hitting any such ball. The next ball went several feet above his head. Of this, too, he took no notice. The third would have hit him if he had not dodged.

"Why don't you knock at the balls?" asked Godfrey.

"I will, when you give better ones," said Andy, coolly.

"I don't believe you know how to bat," said Godfrey, with a sneer.

"I don't believe you know how to pitch," returned Andy.

"How's that?" sending another ball whizzing by his left ear.

"I want them waist-high," said Andy. "My waist is about two feet lower than my ears."

Godfrey now resolved to put in a ball waist-high, but so swiftly that Andy could not hit it; but he had never seen Andy play. Our hero had a wonderfully quick eye and steady hand, and struck the ball with such force to left field, that not only Charlie Fleming got in, without difficulty, but Andy himself made a home run.

"That's a splendid hit," exclaimed Charlie, with enthusiasm. "I didn't think you could play so well."

"I've played before to-day," said Andy, composedly. "I told you I would get you in, and I meant what I said."

Godfrey looked chagrined at the result. He meant to demonstrate that Andy was no player, but had only contributed to his brilliant success; for, had he not sent in so swift a ball, the knock would not have been so forcible.

As there were but six on a side, two outs were considered all out.

"Who will catch?" asked Charlie Fleming; "I want to pitch."

"I will," said Andy.

"All right! If you can catch as you can bat, we'll cut down their score."

Andy soon showed that he was no novice at catching. He rarely let a ball pass him. When Godfrey's turn came to bat, one was already out, and Andy determined to put Godfrey out if it was a possible thing. One strike had been called, when Godfrey struck a foul which was almost impossible to catch. But now Andy ran, made a bound into the air, and caught it—a very brilliant piece of play, by which Godfrey and his side were put out. The boys on both sides applauded, for it was a piece of brilliant fielding which not one of them was capable of. That is, all applauded but Godfrey. He threw down his bat spitefully, and said to Fleming:

"You didn't give me good balls."

"I gave you much better than you gave Andy," said Charlie.

"That's so!" chimed in two other boys.

"I won't play any more," said Godfrey.

Just then the bell rang, so that the game was brought to a close. Andy received the compliments of the boys on his brilliant playing. He received them modestly, and admitted that he probably couldn't make such a catch again. It was very disagreeable to Godfrey to hear Andy praised. He was rather proud of his ball-playing, and he

saw that Andy was altogether his superior, at any rate in the opinion of the boys. However, he ingeniously contrived to mingle a compliment with a sneer.

"You're more used to baseball than to books," he said.

"True for you," said Andy.

"You're a head taller than any of the boys in your class."

"I know that," said Andy. "I haven't been to school as much as you."

"I should be ashamed if I didn't know more."

"So you ought," said Andy, "for you've been to school all your life. I hope to know more soon."

"Anyway, you can play ball," said Charlie Fleming.

"I'd rather be a good scholar."

"I'll help you, if you want any help."

"Thank you, Charlie."

They had now entered the schoolroom, and Andy took up his book and studied hard. He was determined to rise to a higher class as soon as possible, for it was not agreeable to him to reflect that he was the oldest and largest boy in his present class.

"Very well," said the teacher, when his recitation was over. "If you continue to recite in this way, you will soon be promoted."

"I'll do my best, sir," said Andy, who listened to these words with pleasure.

"I wish you were coming in the afternoon, too, Andy," said his friend, Charlie Fleming, as they walked home together.

"So do I, Charlie, but I must work for my mother."

"That's right, Andy; I'd do the same in your place. I haven't such foolish ideas about work as Godfrey Preston."

"He ain't very fond of me," said Andy, laughing.

"No; nor of anybody else. He only likes Godfrey Preston."

"We got into a fight the first day I ever saw him."

"What was it about?"

"He called my mother names, and hit me. So I knocked him flat."

"You served him right. He's disgustingly conceited. Nobody likes him."

"Ben Travers goes around with him all the time."

"Ben likes him because he is rich. If he should lose his property, you'd see how soon he would leave him. That isn't a friend worth having."

"I've got one consolation," said Andy, laughing; "nobody likes me for my money."

"But someone likes you for yourself, Andy," said Charlie.

"Who?"

"Myself, to be sure."

"And I like you as much, Charlie," said Andy, warmly. "You're ten times as good a fellow as Godfrey."

"I hope so," said Charlie. "That isn't saying very much, Andy."

So the friendship was cemented, nor did it end there. Charlie spoke of Andy's good qualities at home, and some time afterward Andy was surprised by an invitation to spend the evening at Dr. Fleming's. He felt a little bashful, but finally went—nor was he at all sorry for so doing. The whole family was a delightful one, and Andy was welcomed as a warm friend of Charlie's, and, in the pleasant

atmosphere of the doctor's fireside, he quite forgot that there was one who looked down upon him as an inferior being.

Dr. Fleming had himself been a poor boy. By a lucky chance—or Providence, rather—he had been put in the way of obtaining an education, and he was not disposed now, in his prosperity, to forget his days of early struggle.

Andy found that, in spite of the three hours taken up at school, he was able to do all that was required of him by the Misses Grant. They were glad to hear of his success at school, and continued to pay him five dollars a week for his services. This money he regularly carried to his mother, after paying for the new clothes, of which he stood so much in need.

CHAPTER XII — A LITTLE DIFFICULTY

It has already been said that Godfrey Preston was a conceited and arrogant boy. He had a very high idea of his own importance, and expected that others would acknowledge it; but he was not altogether successful. He would like to have had Andy Burke look up to him as a member of a superior class, and in that case might have condescended to patronize him, as a chieftain might in the case of a humble retainer. But Andy didn't want to be patronized by Godfrey. He never showed by his manner that he felt beneath him socially, and this greatly vexed Godfrey.

"His mother used to iron at our house," he said to Ben Travers one day; "but my mother discharged her. I don't see why the boys treat him as an equal. I won't, for my part."

"Of course, he isn't your equal," said the subservient Ben. "That's a good joke."

"He acts as if he was," said Godfrey, discontentedly.

"It's only his impudence."

"You are right," said Godfrey, rather liking this explanation. "He is one of the most impudent boys I know. I wish my father would send me to a fashionable school, where I shouldn't meet such fellows. That's the worst of these public schools—you meet all sorts of persons in them."

"Of course you do."

"I suppose this Burke will be a hod-carrier, or something of that kind, when he is a man."

"While you are a member of Congress."

"Very likely," said Godfrey, loftily; "and he will claim that he was an old schoolmate of mine. It is disgusting."

"Of course it is. However, we needn't notice him."

"I don't mean to."

But in the course of the next week there was an occurrence which compelled Godfrey to "notice" his detested schoolfellow.

Among the scholars was a very pleasant boy of twelve, named Alfred Parker. He was the son of a poor widow, and was universally liked for his amiable and obliging disposition. One morning, before school, he was engaged in some game which required him to run. He accidentally ran against Godfrey, who was just coming up the hill, with considerable force. Now, it was very evident that it was wholly unintentional; but Godfrey was greatly incensed.

"What do you mean by that, you little scamp?" he exclaimed, furiously.

"Excuse me, Godfrey; I didn't mean to run into you."

"That don't go down."

"Indeed, I didn't. I didn't see you."

"I can't help it. You ought to have been more careful. Take that, to make you more careful."

As he said this, he seized him by the collar, and, tripping him, laid him flat on his back.

"For shame, Godfrey!" said another boy standing by; but as it was a small boy, Godfrey only answered:

"If you say that again, I'll serve you the same way."

Alfred tried to get up, but Godfrey put his knee on his breast.

"Let me up, Godfrey," said Alfred, piteously. "I can't breathe. You hurt me."

"I'll teach you to run into me," said the bully.

"I didn't mean to."

"I want to make sure of your not doing it again."

"Do let me up," said Alfred.

In return, Godfrey only pressed more heavily, and the little fellow began to cry. But help was near at hand. Andy Burke happened to come up the hill just then, and saw what was going on. He had a natural chivalry that prompted him always to take the weaker side. But besides this, he liked Alfred for his good qualities, and disliked Godfrey for his bad ones. He did not hesitate a moment, therefore, but ran up, and, seizing Godfrey by the collar with a powerful grasp, jerked him on his back in the twinkling of an eye. Then, completely turning the tables, he put his knee on Godfrey's breast, and said:

"Now, you know how it is yourself. How do you like it?"

"Let me up," demanded Godfrey, furiously.

"That's what Alfred asked you to do," said Andy, coolly. "Why didn't you do it?"

"Because I didn't choose," answered the prostrate boy, almost foaming at the mouth with rage and humiliation.

"Then I don't choose to let you up."

"You shall suffer for this," said Godfrey, struggling, but in vain.

"Not from your hands. Oh, you needn't try so hard to get up. I can hold you here all day if I choose."

"You're a low Irish boy!"

"You're lower than I am just now," said Andy.

"Let me up."

"Why didn't you let Alfred up?"

"He ran against me."

"Did he mean to?"

"No, I didn't, Andy," said Alfred, who was standing near. "I told Godfrey so, but he threw me over, and pressed on my breast so hard that it hurt me."

"In this way," said Andy, increasing the pressure on his prostrate enemy.

Godfrey renewed his struggles, but in vain.

"Please let him up now, Andy," said Alfred, generously.

"If he'll promise not to touch you any more, I will."

"I won't promise," said Godfrey. "I won't promise anything to a low beggar."

"Then you must feel the low beggar's knee," said Andy.

"You wouldn't have got me down if I had been looking. You got the advantage of me."

"Did I? Well, then, I'll give you a chance."

Andy rose to his feet, and Godfrey, relieved from the pressure, arose, too. No sooner was he up than he flew like an enraged tiger at our hero, but Andy was quite his equal in strength, and, being cool, had the advantage.

The result was that in a few seconds he found himself once more on his back.

"You see," said Andy, "it isn't safe for you to attack me. I won't keep you down any longer, but if you touch Alfred again, I'll give you something worse."

Godfrey arose from the ground, and shook his fist at Andy.

"I'll make you remember this," he said.

"I want you to remember it yourself," said Andy.

Godfrey didn't answer, but made his way to the schoolroom, sullenly.

"Thank you, Andy," said Alfred, gratefully, "for saving me from Godfrey. He hurt me a good deal."

"He's a brute," said Andy, warmly. "Don't be afraid of him, Alfred, but come and tell me if he touches you again. I'll give him something he won't like."

"You must be very strong, Andy," said the little boy, admiringly. "You knocked him over just as easy."

Andy laughed.

"Did you ever know an Irish boy that couldn't fight?" he asked. "I'm better with my fists than with my brains, Alfred."

"That's because you never went to school much. You're getting on fast, Andy."

"I'm tryin', Alfred," he said. "It's a shame for a big boy like me not to know as much as a little boy like you."

"You'll soon get ahead of me, Andy."

Meanwhile Godfrey had taken his place in school, feeling far from comfortable. He was outraged by the thought that Andy, whom he regarded as so much beneath him, should have had the audacity to throw him down, and put his knees on his breast. It made him grind his teeth when he thought of it. What should he do about it? He wanted to be revenged in some way, and he meant to be.

Finally he decided to report Andy to the teacher, and, if possible, induce him to punish him.

"The teacher knows that my father's a man of influence," he said to himself. "He will believe me before that ragamuffin. If he don't, I'll try to get him turned away."

When, therefore, the bell rang for recess, and the rest of the scholars hurried to the playground, Godfrey lingered behind. He waited till all the boys were gone, and then went up to the teacher.

"Well, Godfrey, what is it?" asked the master.

"Mr. Stone, I want to make a complaint against Andrew Burke," said Godfrey.

"What has he done?"

"He is a brute," said Godfrey, in an excited manner. "He dared to come up behind my back before school began, and knock me down. Then he put his knee on my chest, and wouldn't let me up."

"What made him do it?"

"He knows I don't like him, and am not willing to associate with him."

"Was that all the reason?" asked the teacher, keenly.

"I suppose so," said Godfrey.

"I was not aware that Andy Burke was quarrelsome," said the teacher. "He behaves well in school."

"Because he knows he must."

"Very well; I will inquire into the matter after recess."

Godfrey went back to his seat, triumphant. He didn't doubt that his enemy would be severely punished.

CHAPTER XIII — GODFREY'S REBELLION

Having made his complaint, Godfrey waited impatiently for the recess to close, in order that he might see retribution fall upon the head of Andy. He had not long to wait. Meanwhile, however, he was missed in the playground.

"Where's Godfrey?" asked one of the boys.

"He don't want to come out. He got a licking from Andy Burke."

"I ain't much sorry. It'll cure him of some of his airs."

"I don't know about that. It comes natural to him to put on airs."

"If anybody has insulted Godfrey," remarked Ben Travers, his toady, "he had better look out for himself."

"Do you hear that, Andy? Ben Travers says you must look out for yourself."

"Who's goin' to punish me?" asked Andy. "If it's Ben, let him come on."

But Ben showed no disposition to "come on." He could talk and threaten, but when words were to be succeeded by blows he never was on hand. In fact he was a coward, and ought to have kept quiet, but it is just that class that are usually most noisy.

Andy had no idea that Godfrey would complain to the teacher in a matter where he was so clearly in the wrong, nor would he if he had not relied upon his father's position to carry him through.

"Mr. Stone is a poor man," he thought, "and he won't dare to take the part of a low Irish boy against the only son and heir of Colonel

Preston. He knows on which side his bread is buttered, and he won't be such a fool as to offend my father."

While he said this he knew that it was very doubtful whether his father would espouse his cause, but then Mr. Stone would probably suppose he would, which would answer the same purpose on the present occasion.

When Andy re-entered the schoolroom with the rest of the boys at the termination of recess, he saw Godfrey in his seat. The latter darted at him a glance of malicious triumph.

When the noise of entering was over, Mr. Stone said:

"Andrew Burke, come forward!"

Considerably surprised, Andy came forward, and looked up with a modest self-possession into the teacher's face.

"A complaint has been entered against you, Andrew," Mr. Stone began.

"What is it, sir?" asked Andy.

"You are charged by Godfrey Preston with violently assaulting and throwing him down, just before school commenced. Is this true?"

"Yes, sir," answered Andy, promptly.

"You are charged with kneeling down upon him, and preventing his getting up."

"That is true," said Andy, quite composedly.

"I am surprised that you should have acted in this manner," said Mr. Stone. "I did not think you quarrelsome or a bully."

"I hope I am not," said Andy. "Did Godfrey tell you why I knocked him over?"

"He said it was because he would not associate with you."

Andy laughed.

"I hope you'll excuse my laughing, sir," he said, respectfully; "but I'd rather associate with any of the boys than with Godfrey. I like him least of all."

"Then, that is the reason you attacked him, is it?"

"No, sir."

"Then, what was it?"

"If you don't mind, sir, I'd like to have you ask Alfred Parker."

"Alfred Parker," called out the teacher, "come forward."

Alfred obeyed.

"Do you know why Andrew attacked Godfrey Preston?"

"Yes, sir; it was on my account."

"On your account! Explain."

"This morning, before school, I was playing with another boy, and accidentally ran into Godfrey. He got mad, and threw me over violently. Then he pressed his knee on my breast till I could hardly breathe. I begged him to let me up, but he would not, though he knew that it was only an accident. While I was lying on the ground, Andy Burke came up. He no sooner saw me than he ran up, and threw Godfrey off, and got on him in the same manner, and I think he served him right."

As he uttered these last words, Godfrey scowled ominously, but Andy's face brightened up. He was glad that Alfred was brave enough to speak up for him.

"This alters the case considerably," said the teacher. "Is there any other boy who witnessed the affair, and can substantiate what has been said? If so, let him raise his hand."

Herman Reynolds raised his hand.

"Well, Herman, what do you know about it? Were you present?"

"Yes, sir, I was. It was just as Alfred said it was."

"What have you to say, Godfrey?" asked Mr. Stone, sternly.

"I don't mean to be insulted by an Irish boy," said Godfrey, haughtily.

"Remember where you are, sir, and speak in a more becoming manner. Did you attack Alfred Parker, as he says?"

"He had no business to run into me."

"Answer my question."

"Yes, I did."

"And did you kneel on his breast?"

"Yes."

"Oblige me by saying, 'Yes, sir.'"

"Yes, sir," said Godfrey, reluctantly.

"Why do you complain, then, of being treated in a similar manner by Andrew?"

"He has no business to touch me."

"If he had not interfered when he saw you maltreating his young schoolfellow, I should have been ashamed of him," said the teacher.

This so far chimed in with the sentiment of the boys that they almost involuntarily applauded; and one boy, arising, exclaimed:

"Three cheers for the teacher!"

The three cheers were given with a will, and, though they were, strictly speaking, out of order, Mr. Stone was a sensible man, and the only notice he took of it was to say:

"Thank you, boys. I am glad to find that you agree with me on this point, and that your sympathies are with the weak and oppressed. Godfrey Preston, your complaint is dismissed. I advise you to cease acting the part of a bully, or you may get another similar lesson. Andrew, when you exert your strength, I hope it will always be in as just a cause. You may take your seat, and you also, Alfred."

The boys would have applauded again, but Mr. Stone said, waving his hand:

"Once is enough, boys. Time is precious, and we must now go on with our lessons. First class in arithmetic."

Godfrey had been equally surprised and angry at the turn that affairs had taken. He was boiling with indignation, and nervously moved about in his seat. After a slight pause, having apparently taken his determination, he took his cap, and walked toward the door.

Mr. Stone's attention was drawn to him.

"Where are you going, Godfrey?" he demanded, quickly.

"Home," said Godfrey.

"You will wait till the end of school."

"I would rather not, sir."

"It makes no difference what you would rather do, or rather not do. Are you sick?"

"No, sir."

"Then you have no good cause for leaving, and I shall not permit you to do so."

"I have been insulted, sir, and I don't wish to stay."

"By whom?" demanded the teacher, sharply.

Godfrey would like to have said, "By you," but he saw the teacher's keen eye fixed upon him, and he didn't dare to do it. He hesitated.

"By whom?" repeated Mr. Stone.

"By Andrew Burke."

"That is no good reason for your leaving school, or would not be, if it were true, but it is not. He has only meted out to you the same punishment you undertook to inflict upon a smaller boy. Take your seat."

"My father will take me away from school," said Godfrey, angrily.

"We shall none of us mourn for your absence. Take your seat."

This last remark of the teacher still further incensed Godfrey, and led him temporarily to forget himself. Though he had been bidden to take his seat, he resolved to leave the schoolroom, and made a rush for the door. But Mr. Stone was there before him. He seized Godfrey by the collar and dragged him, shaking him as he proceeded, to his seat, on which he placed him with some emphasis.

"That is the way I treat rebels," he said. "You forget yourself, Preston. The next time you make up your mind to resist my commands, count in advance on a much severer lesson."

Godfrey was pale with passion, and his hands twitched convulsively. He only wished he had Mr. Stone in his power for five minutes. He would treat him worse than he did Alfred Parker. But a boy in a passion is not a very pleasant spectacle. It is enough to say that Godfrey was compelled to stay in school for the remainder of the forenoon. As soon as he could get away, he ran home, determined to enlist his mother in his cause.

CHAPTER XIV — MR. STONE IS CALLED TO ACCOUNT

At home Godfrey gave a highly colored narrative of the outrageous manner in which he had been abused, for so he chose to represent it. He gave this account to his mother, for his father was not at home. Indeed, he was absent for a day or two in a distant city.

Mrs. Preston was indignant.

"It is an outrage, Godfrey," she said, compressing her thin lips. "How did Mr. Stone dare to treat you in this way?"

"I was surprised, myself," said Godfrey.

"Had he no more respect for your father's prominent position?"

"It looks as if he didn't."

"He is evidently unfit to keep the school. I shall try to persuade your father to have him turned away."

"I wish he might be," said Godfrey. "It would teach him to treat me with proper respect. Anybody would think that Irish boy was the son of the most important man in town."

Both Godfrey and his mother appeared to take it for granted that a teacher should treat his pupils according to their social position. This is certainly very far from proper, as all my youthful readers will, I hope, agree.

"I don't want to go back to school this afternoon, mother," said Godfrey.

"I don't wonder," said his mother. "I will tell you what I will do. I will send a letter to Mr. Stone by you, asking him to call here this

evening. I will then take occasion to express my opinion of his conduct."

"That's good, mother," said Godfrey, joyfully.

He knew that his mother had a sharp tongue, and he longed to hear his mother "give it" to the teacher whom he hated.

"Then, you think I had better go to school this afternoon?"

"Yes, with the note. If Mr. Stone does not apologize, you need not go to-morrow. I will go upstairs and write it at once."

The note was quickly written, and, putting it carefully in his inside pocket, Godfrey went to school. As he entered the schoolroom he stepped up to the desk and handed the note to Mr. Stone.

"Here is a note from my mother," he said, superciliously.

"Very well," said the teacher, taking it gravely.

As it was not quite time to summon the pupils, he opened it at once.

This was what he read:

"MR. STONE: Sir—My son Godfrey informs me that you have treated him in a very unjust manner, for which I find it impossible to account. I shall be glad if you can find time to call at my house this evening, in order that I may hear from your lips an explanation of the occurrence. Yours, in haste,

"Lucinda Preston."

"Preston," said Mr. Stone, after reading this note, "you may say to your mother that I will call this evening."

He did not appear in the least disturbed by the contents of the note he had received from the richest and—in her own eyes—the most important lady in the village. In fact, he had a large share of self-respect and independence, and was not likely to submit to browbeating from anyone. He tried to be just in his treatment of the scholars under his charge, and if he ever failed, it was from misunderstanding or ignorance, not from design. In the present

instance he felt that he had done right, and resolved to maintain the justice of his conduct.

Nothing of importance occurred in the afternoon. Godfrey was very quiet and orderly. He felt that he could afford to wait. With malicious joy, he looked forward to the scolding Mr. Stone was to get from his mother.

"He won't dare to talk to her," he said to himself. "I hope she'll make him apologize to me. He ought to do it before the school."

Evidently Godfrey had a very inadequate idea of the teacher's pluck, if he thought such a thing possible.

School was dismissed, and Godfrey went home. He dropped a hint to Ben Travers, that his mother was going "to haul Mr. Stone over the coals," as he expressed it.

"Are you going to be there?" asked Ben, when Godfrey had finished.

"Yes," said Godfrey. "It'll be my turn then."

"Perhaps Mr. Stone will have something to say," said Ben, doubtfully.

"He won't dare to," said Godfrey, confidently. "He knows my father could get him kicked out of school."

"He's rather spunky, the master is," said Ben, who, toady as he was, understood the character of Mr. Stone considerably better than Godfrey did.

"I'll tell you all about it to-morrow morning," said Godfrey.

"All right."

"I expect he'll apologize to me for what he did."

"Maybe he will," answered Ben, but he thought it highly improbable.

"Did you give my note to Mr. Stone?" asked his mother.

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He said he'd come around."

"How did he appear?"

"He looked a little nervous," said Godfrey, speaking not according to facts, but according to his wishes.

"I thought so," said Mrs. Preston, with a look of satisfaction. "He will find that he has made a mistake in treating you so outrageously."

"Give it to him right and left, mother," said Godfrey, with more force than elegance.

"You might express yourself more properly, my son," said Mrs. Preston. "I shall endeavor to impress upon his mind the impropriety of his conduct."

At half-past seven, Mr. Stone rang the bell at Mrs. Preston's door, and was ushered in without delay.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Preston," he said, bowing. "Your son brought me a note this afternoon, requesting me to call. I have complied with your request."

"Be seated, Mr. Stone," said the lady frigidly, not offering her hand.

"Thank you," said the teacher, with equal ceremony, and did as invited.

"I suppose you can guess the object of my request," said Mrs. Preston.

"I think you stated it in your note."

"I desire an explanation of the manner in which you treated my son this forenoon, Mr. Stone."

"Pardon me, madam; your son is in the room."

"Well, sir?"

"I decline discussing the matter before him."

"I cannot understand why you should object to his presence."

"I am his teacher, and he is subject to my authority. You apparently desire to find fault with the manner in which I have exercised that authority. It is improper that the discussion upon this point should take place before him."

"May I stay in the room, mother?" asked Godfrey, who was alarmed lest he should miss the spectacle of Mr. Stone's humiliation.

"I really don't see why not," returned his mother.

"Madam," said Mr. Stone, rising, "I will bid you good-evening."

"What, sir; before we have spoken on the subject?"

"I distinctly decline to speak before your son, for the reasons already given."

"This is very singular, sir. However, I will humor your whims. Godfrey, you may leave the room."

"Can't I stay?"

"I am compelled to send you out."

Godfrey went out, though with a very ill grace.

"Now, madam," said the teacher, "I have no objection to telling you that I first reprimanded your son for brutal treatment of a younger schoolmate, and then forcibly carried him back to his seat, when he endeavored to leave the schoolroom without my permission."

It was Mrs. Preston's turn to be surprised. She had expected to overawe the teacher, and instead of that found him firmly and independently defending his course.

"Mr. Stone," she said, "my son tells me that you praised an Irish boy in your school for a violent and brutal assault which he made upon him."

"I did not praise him for that. I praised him for promptly interfering to prevent Godfrey from abusing a boy smaller and younger than himself."

"Godfrey had good cause for punishing the boy you refer to. He acted in self-defense."

"He has doubtless misrepresented the affair to you, madam, as he did to me."

"You take this Andrew Burke's word against his?"

"I form my judgment upon the testimony of an eyewitness, and from what I know of your son's character."

"From your own statement, this low Irish boy——"

"To whom do you refer, madam?"

"To the Irish boy."

"I have yet to learn that he is low."

"Do you mean to compare him with my son?"

"In wealth, no. Otherwise, you mustn't blame me for saying that I hold him entirely equal in respectability, and in some important points his superior."

"Really, sir, your language is most extraordinary."

At this moment there was an interruption. Godfrey had been listening at the keyhole, but finding that difficult, had opened the door slightly, but in his interest managed to stumble against it. The door flew open, and he fell forward upon his knees on the carpet of the sitting-room.

CHAPTER XV — MRS. PRESTON'S DISCOMFITURE

Godfrey rose to his feet, red with mortification. His mother looked disconcerted. Mr. Stone said nothing, but glanced significantly from Godfrey to Mrs. Preston.

"What is the matter, Godfrey?" she asked, rather sharply.

"It was an accident," said Godfrey, rather sheepishly.

"You can go out and shut the door, and take care not to let such an accident happen again. For some unknown reason, Mr. Stone prefers that you should not be present, and, therefore, you must go."

For once, Godfrey found nothing to say, but withdrew in silence.

"You appear to have formed a prejudice against Godfrey, Mr. Stone," said Mrs. Preston.

"I may have formed an unfavorable judgment of him on some points," said the teacher. "I judge of him by his conduct."

"To say that Andrew Burke is his superior is insulting to him and his family, as well as ludicrous."

"I beg pardon, Mrs. Preston, but I must dissent from both your statements. Andrew Burke possesses some excellent qualities in which Godfrey is deficient."

"He is a poor working boy."

"He is none the worse for that."

"He should remember his position, and treat my son with proper respect."

"I venture to say that Godfrey will receive all the respect to which he is entitled. May I ask if you expect him to be treated with deference, because his father is richer than those of the other boys?"

"It seems to me only proper."

"Do you expect me to treat him any better on that account?"

"I think my son's social position should command respect."

"Then, Mrs. Preston, I entirely disagree with you," said Mr. Stone, firmly. "As a teacher, I have nothing whatever to do with the social position of the children who come to me as pupils. From me a poor boy will receive the same instruction, and the same treatment precisely as the son of rich parents. If he behaves as he should, he will always find in me a friend, as well as a teacher. Your son Godfrey shall have no just complaint to make of my treatment. I will give him credit for good conduct and faithful study, but no more than to Andrew Burke, or to any other pupil under the same circumstances."

"Mr. Stone, I am surprised at your singular style of talking. You wish to do away with all social distinctions."

"I certainly do, madam, in my schoolroom, at least. There must be social differences, I am aware. We cannot all be equally rich or honored, but whatever may be the world's rule, I mean to maintain strict impartiality in my schoolroom."

"Will you require Andy Burke to apologize to Godfrey?"

"Why should I?"

"For his violent assault upon him."

"Certainly not. He was justified in his conduct."

"If my son was doing wrong, the Irish boy, instead of interfering, should have waited till you came, and then reported the matter to you."

"And, meanwhile, stood by and seen Alfred Parker inhumanly treated?"

"I presume the matter has been greatly exaggerated."

"I do not, madam."

"Do I understand that you decline to make reparation to my son?"

"Reparation for what?"

"For the manner in which he has been treated."

"I must have talked to little purpose, if I have not made it clear that your son has only received his deserts. Of course, he is entitled to no reparation, as you term it."

"Then, Mr. Stone," said Mrs. Preston, her thin lips compressed with indignation, "since Godfrey cannot meet with fair treatment, I shall be compelled to withdraw him from your school."

"That must be as you please, madam," said the teacher, quite unmoved by the threatened withdrawal of his richest pupil.

"I shall report to Colonel Preston your treatment of his son."

"I have no objection, madam."

"You are pursuing a very unwise course in alienating your wealthiest patrons."

"I have no patrons, madam," said Mr. Stone, proudly. "I return faithful service for the moderate wages I receive, and the obligation, if there is any, is on the part of those whose children I instruct."

"Really," thought Mrs. Preston, "this man is very independent for a poor teacher."

She resolved upon another shot, not in the best of taste.

"You must not be surprised, Mr. Stone," she said, "if the school trustees refuse to employ you again."

"You mistake me utterly," said the teacher, with dignity, "if you suppose that any such threat or consideration will make me swerve from my duty. However, though I did not propose to mention it, I will state that this is the last term I shall teach in this village. I have been engaged at double the salary in a neighboring city."

Mrs. Preston was disappointed to hear this. It was certainly vexatious that the man who had treated her son with so little consideration, who had actually taken the part of a working boy against him, should be promoted to a better situation. She had thought to make him feel that he was in her power, but she now saw that her anticipations were not to be realized.

As she did not speak, Mr. Stone considered the interview closed, and rose.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Preston," he said.

"Good-evening, sir," she responded, coldly.

He bowed and withdrew.

When Godfrey, who was not far off, though he had not thought it best to play the part of eavesdropper again, heard the door close, he hurried into the room.

"Well, mother, what did he say?" he inquired, eagerly.

"He obstinately refused to make any reparation to you."

"Did you tell him what you thought of his treatment of me?" said Godfrey, rather surprised that his mother's remonstrance had produced no greater effect.

"Yes, I expressed my opinion very plainly. I must say that he's a very impudent man. The idea of a poor teacher putting on such airs!" continued Mrs. Preston, tossing her head.

"What did he say?"

"That that Irish boy was superior to you."

"I'd like to knock him over," said Godfrey, wrathfully.

Mrs. Preston was a lady, and it is not to be supposed that she should join in her son's wish. Still, it did not occur to her that she should mourn very much if Mr. Stone met with a reverse. She would like to see his pride humbled, not reflecting that her own was greater and less justifiable.

"You ought to have told him that he would lose his school," said Godfrey. "That would have frightened him, for he is a poor man, and depends on the money he gets for teaching."

"He is not going to teach here after this term."

"Good! Did he tell you that?"

"Yes."

"He is afraid of me, after all."

"You are mistaken, Godfrey. He is offered considerably higher pay in another place."

Godfrey's countenance fell. It was as disagreeable to him as to his mother to learn that Mr. Stone was to be promoted in his profession.

"Shall I have to go to school again, mother?" he asked, after a pause.

"No," said Mrs. Preston, with energy. "Upon that I have determined. While Mr. Stone is teacher, you shall not go back. I will take care to let it be known in the neighborhood why I keep you at home. I hope the next teacher will be a man who understands the respect due to social position. I don't care to have you put on an equality with such boys as Andrew Burke. He is no fit associate for you."

"That is what I think, mother," said Godfrey. "The low beggar! I'd like to come up with him. Perhaps, I shall have a chance some day."

When Colonel Preston returned home, the whole story was told to him; but, colored though it was, he guessed how matters actually stood, and was far from becoming his son's partisan. He privately went to Mr. Stone and obtained his version of the affair.

"You did right, Mr. Stone," he said, at the end. "If my son chooses to act the bully, he must take the consequences. Mrs. Preston does not look upon it in the same light, and insists upon my taking Godfrey from school. For the sake of peace, I must do so, but you must not construe it as showing any disapproval on my part of your course in the matter."

"Thank you, Colonel Preston," said the teacher, warmly. "I can only regret Mrs. Preston's displeasure. Your approval I highly value, and it will encourage me in the path of duty."

CHAPTER XVI — THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT

Godfrey didn't return to school at all. He fancied that it would be more aristocratic to go to a boarding school, and, his mother concurring in this view, he was entered as a scholar at the Melville Academy, situated in Melville, twelve miles distant. Once a fortnight he came home to spend the Sunday. On these occasions he flourished about with a tiny cane, and put on more airs than ever. No one missed him much, outside of his own family. Andy found the school considerably more agreeable after his departure.

We will now suppose twelve months to have passed. During this time Andy has grown considerably, and is now quite a stout boy. He has improved also in education. The Misses Grant, taking a kind interest in his progress, managed to spare him half the day in succeeding terms, so that he continued to attend school. Knowing that he had but three hours to learn, when the others had six, he was all the more diligent, and was quite up to the average standard for boys of his age. The fact is, Andy was an observing boy, and he realized that education was essential to success in life. Mr. Stone, before going away, talked with him on this subject and gave him some advice, which Andy determined to follow.

As may be inferred from what I have said, Andy was still working for the Misses Grant. He had grown accustomed to their ways, and succeeded in giving them perfect satisfaction, and accomplished quite as much work as John, his predecessor, though the latter was a man.

As Christmas approached, Miss Priscilla said one day to her sister:

"Don't you think, Sophia, it would be well to give Andrew a Christmas present?"

"Just so," returned Sophia, approvingly.

"He has been very faithful and obliging all the time he has been with us."

"Just so."

"I have been thinking what would be a good thing to give him."

"A pair of spectacles," suggested Sophia, rather absent-mindedly.

"Sophia, you are a goose."

"Just so," acquiesced her sister, meekly.

"Such a gift would be very inappropriate."

"Just so."

"A pair of boots," was the next suggestion.

"That would be better. Boots would be very useful, but I think it would be well to give him something that would contribute to his amusement. Of course, we must consult his taste, and not out own. We are not boys."

"Just so," said Sophia, promptly. "And he is not a lady," she added, enlarging upon the idea.

"Of course not. Now, the question is, what do boys like?"

"Just so," said Sophia, but this admission did not throw much light upon the character of the present to be bought.

Just then Andy himself helped them to a decision. He entered, cap in hand, and said:

"If you can spare me, Miss Grant, I would like to go skating on the pond."

"Have you a pair of skates, Andrew?"

"No, ma'am," said Andy; "but one of the boys will lend me a pair."

"Yes, Andrew; you can go, if you will be home early."

"Yes, ma'am—thank you."

As he went out, Miss Priscilla said:

"I have it."

"What?" asked Sophia, alarmed.

"I mean that I have found out what to give to Andrew."

"What is it?"

"A pair of skates."

"Just so," said Sophia. "He will like them."

"So I think. Suppose we go to the store while he is away, and buy him a pair."

"Won't he need to try them on?" asked her sister.

"No," said Priscilla. "They don't need to fit as exactly as boots."

So the two sisters made their way to the village store, and asked to look at their stock of skates.

"Are you going to skate, Miss Priscilla?" asked the shopkeeper, jocosely.

"No; they are for Sophia," answered Priscilla, who could joke occasionally.

"Oh, Priscilla," answered the matter-of-fact Sophia, "you didn't tell me about that. I am sure I could not skate. You said they were for Andrew."

"Sophia, you are a goose."

"Just so."

"It was only a joke."

"Just so."

The ladies, who never did things by halves, selected the best pair in the store, and paid for them. When Andy had returned from skating, Priscilla said: "How did you like the skating, Andrew?"

"It was bully," said Andrew, enthusiastically.

"Whose skates did you borrow?"

"Alfred Parker's. They were too small for me, but I made them do."

"I should suppose you would like to have a pair of your own."

"So I should, but I can't afford to buy a pair, just yet.

"I'll tell you what I want to do, and maybe you'll help me about buyin' it."

"What is it, Andrew?"

"You know Christmas is comin', ma'am, and I want to buy my mother a nice dress for a Christmas present—not a calico one, but a thick one for winter."

"Alpaca or de laine?"

"I expect so; I don't know the name of what I want, but you do. How much would it cost?"

"I think you could get a good de laine for fifty cents a yard. I saw some at the store this afternoon."

"And about how many yards would be wanted, ma'am?"

"About twelve, I should think."

"Then it would be six dollars."

"Just so," said Sophia, who thought it about time she took part in the conversation.

"I've got the money, ma'am, and I'll give it to you, if you and Miss Sophia will be kind enough to buy it for me."

"To be sure we will, Andrew," said Priscilla, kindly. "I am glad you are such a good son."

"Just so, Andrew."

"You see," said Andy, "mother won't buy anything for herself. She always wants to buy things for Mary and me. She wants us to be well-dressed, but she goes with the same old clothes. So I want her to have a new dress."

"You want her to have it at Christmas, then?"

"Yes, ma'am, if it won't be too much trouble."

"That is in two days. To-morrow, Sophia and I will buy the dress."

"Thank you. Here's the money," and Andy counted out six dollars in bills, of which Miss Priscilla took charge.

The next day they fulfilled their commission, and purchased a fine dress pattern at the village store. It cost rather more than siX — dollars, but this they paid out of their own pockets, and did not report to Andy. Just after supper, as he was about to go home to spend Christmas Eve, they placed the bundle in his hands.

"Isn't it beautiful!" he exclaimed, with delight. "Won't mother be glad to get it?"

"She'll think she has a good son, Andrew."

"Shure, I ought to be good to her, for she's a jewel of a mother."

"That is right, Andrew. I always like to hear a boy speak well of his mother. It is a great pleasure to a mother to have a good son."

"Shure, ma'am," said Andy, with more kindness of heart than discretion, "I hope you'll have one yourself."

"Just so," said Sophia, with the forced habit upon her.

"Sophia, you are a goose!" said Priscilla, blushing a little.

"Just so, Priscilla."

"We are too old to marry, Andrew," said Priscilla; "but we thank you for your wish."

"Shure, ma'am, you are only in the prime of life."

"Just so," said Sophia, brightening up.

"I shall be sixty next spring. That can hardly be in the prime of life."

"I was readin' of a lady that got married at seventy-nine, ma'am."

"Just so," said Sophia, eagerly.

Miss Priscilla did not care to pursue the subject.

"We have thought of you," she continued, "and, as you have been very obliging, we have bought you a Christmas present. Here it is."

Andy no sooner saw the skates than his face brightened up with the most evident satisfaction.

"It's just what I wanted," he said, joyfully. "They're regular beauties! I'm ever so much obliged to you."

"Sophia wanted to get you a pair of spectacles, but I thought these would suit you better."

Andy went off into a fit of laughter at the idea, in which both the ladies joined him. Then, after thanking them again, he hurried home, hardly knowing which gave him greater pleasure, his own present, or his mother's.

I will not stop to describe Andy's Christmas, for this is only a retrospect, but carry my reader forward to the next September, when

Andy met with an adventure, which eventually had a considerable effect upon his fortunes.

CHAPTER XVII — INTRODUCES AN ADVENTURER

Colonel Preston, as I have already said, was a rich man. He owned no real estate in the town of Crampton, except the house in which he lived. His property was chiefly in stocks of different kinds. Included in these was a considerable amount of stock in a woolen manufacturing establishment, situated in Melville, some twelve miles distant. Dividends upon these were paid semi-annually, on the first of April and October. It was the custom of Colonel Preston at these dates to drive over to Melville, receive his dividends, and then drive back again.

Now, unfortunately for the welfare of the community, there are some persons who, unwilling to make a living by honest industry, prefer to possess themselves unlawfully of means to maintain their unprofitable lives. Among them was a certain black-whiskered individual, who, finding himself too well known in New York, had sought the country, ready for any stroke of business which might offer in his particular line. Chance led his steps to Melville, where he put up at the village inn. He began at once to institute inquiries, the answers to which might serve his purpose, and to avert suspicion, casually mentioned that he was a capitalist, and thought of settling down in the town. As he was well dressed, and had a plausible manner, this statement was not doubted.

Among other things, he made inquiries in regard to the manufactory, what dividends it paid, and when. Expressing himself desirous of purchasing some stock, he inquired the names of the principal owners of the stock. First among them was mentioned Colonel Preston.

"Perhaps he might sell some stocks," suggested the landlord.

"Where can I see him?" asked James Fairfax, for this was the name assumed by the adventurer.

"You can see him here," answered the landlord, "in a day or two. He will be here the first of the month to receive his dividends."

"Will he stop with you?"

"Probably. He generally dines with me when he comes over."

"Will you introduce me?"

"With pleasure."

Mr. Fairfax appeared to hear this with satisfaction, and said that he would make Colonel Preston an offer for a part of his stock.

"Most of my property is invested in real estate in New York," he said; "but I should like to have some manufacturing stock; and, from what you tell me, I think favorably of the Melville Mills."

"We should be glad to have you settle down among us," said the landlord.

"I shall probably do so," said Fairfax. "I am very much pleased with your town and people."

In due time Colonel Preston drove over. As usual, he put up at the hotel.

"Colonel," said the landlord, "there's a gentleman stopping with me who desires an introduction to you."

"Indeed! What is his name?"

"James Fairfax."

"Is he from this neighborhood?"

"No; from the city of New York."

"I shall be happy to make his acquaintance," said the colonel, courteously; "but it must be after I return from the mills. I shall be

there a couple of hours, probably. We are to have a directorial meeting."

"I will tell him."

Colonel Preston attended the directors' meeting, and also collected his dividend, amounting to eight hundred dollars. These, in eight one-hundred-dollar bills, he put in his pocketbook, and returned to the hotel for dinner.

"Dinner is not quite ready, colonel," said the landlord. "It will be ready in fifteen minutes."

"Where is the gentleman who wished to be introduced to me?" asked Colonel Preston, who thought it would save time to be introduced now.

"I will speak to him."

He went directly to a dark-complexioned man with black whiskers, and eyes that were rather sinister in appearance. The eyes oftenest betray the real character of a man, where all other signs fail. But Colonel Preston was not a keen observer, nor was he skilled in physiognomy, and, judging of Mr. Fairfax by his manner merely, was rather pleased with him.

"You will pardon my obtruding myself upon you, Colonel Preston," said the stranger, with great ease of manner.

"I am happy to make your acquaintance, sir."

"I am a stranger in this neighborhood. The city of New York is my home. I have been led here by the recommendations of friends who knew that I desired to locate myself in the country."

"How do you like Melville?"

"Very much—so much, that I may settle down here. But, Colonel Preston, I am a man of business, and if I am to be here, I want some local interest—some stake in the town itself."

"Quite natural, sir."

"You are a business man yourself, and will understand me. Now, to come to the point, I find you have a manufactory here—a woolen manufactory, which I am given to understand is prosperous and profitable."

"You are correctly informed, Mr. Fairfax. It is paying twelve per cent. dividends, and has done so for several years."

"That is excellent. It is a better rate than I get for most of my city investments."

"I also have city investments—bank stocks, and horse-railroad stocks, but, as you say, my mill stock pays me better than the majority of these."

"You are a large owner of the mill stock; are you not, Colonel Preston?"

"Yes, sir; the largest, I believe."

"So I am informed. Would you be willing to part with any of it?"

"I have never thought of doing so. I am afraid I could not replace it with any other that would be satisfactory."

"I don't blame you, of course, but it occurred to me that, having a considerable amount, you might be willing to sell."

"I generally hold on to good stock when I get possession of it. Indeed, I would buy more, if there were any in the market."

"He must have surplus funds," thought the adventurer. "I must see if I can't manage to get some into my possession."

Here the landlord appeared, and announced that dinner was ready.

"You dine here, then?" said Fairfax.

"Yes; it will take me two hours to reach home, so I am obliged to dine here."

"We shall dine together, it seems. I am glad of it, as at present I happen to be the only permanent guest at the hotel. May I ask where you live?"

"In Crampton."

"I have heard favorably of it, and have been intending to come over and see the place, but the fact is, I am used only to the city, and your country roads are so blind, that I have been afraid of losing my way."

"Won't you ride over with me this afternoon, Mr. Fairfax? I can't bring you back, but you are quite welcome to a seat in my chaise one way."

The eyes of the adventurer sparkled at the invitation. Colonel Preston had fallen into the trap he had laid for him, but he thought it best not to accept too eagerly.

"You are certainly very kind, Colonel Preston," he answered, with affected hesitation, "but I am afraid I shall be troubling you too much."

"No trouble whatever," said Colonel Preston, heartily. "It is a lonely ride, and I shall be glad of a companion."

"A lonely ride, is it?" thought Fairfax. "All the better for my purpose. It shall not be my fault if I do not come back with my pockets well lined. The dividends you have just collected will be better in my pockets than in yours."

This was what he thought, but he said:

"Then I will accept with pleasure. I suppose I can easily engage someone to bring me back to Melville?"

"Oh, yes; we have a livery stable, where you can easily obtain a horse and driver."

The dinner proceeded, and Fairfax made himself unusually social and agreeable, so that Colonel Preston congratulated himself on the prospect of beguiling the loneliness of the way in such pleasant company. Fairfax spoke of stocks with such apparent knowledge that the colonel imagined him to be a gentleman of large property. It is not surprising that he was deceived, for the adventurer really understood the subject of which he spoke, having been for several years a clerk in a broker's counting-room in Wall Street. The loss of his situation was occasioned by his abstraction of some securities, part of which he had disposed of before he was detected. He was, in consequence, tried and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. At the end of this period he was released, with no further taste for an honest life, and had since allied himself to the class who thrive by preying upon the community.

This was the man whom Colonel Preston proposed to take as his companion on his otherwise lonely ride home.

CHAPTER XVIII — RIDING WITH A HIGHWAYMAN

"Get into the chaise, Mr. Fairfax," said Colonel Preston.

"Thank you," said the adventurer, and accepted the invitation.

"Now we are off," said the colonel, as he took the reins, and touched the horse lightly with the whip.

"Is the road a pleasant one?" inquired Fairfax.

"The latter part is rather lonely. For a mile it runs through the woods—still, on a summer day, that is rather pleasant than otherwise. In the evening, it is not so agreeable."

"No, I suppose not," said Fairfax, rather absently.

Colonel Preston would have been startled could he have read the thoughts that were passing through the mind of his companion. Could he have known his sinister designs, he would scarcely have sat at his side, chatting so easily and indifferently.

"I will postpone my plan till we get to that part of the road he speaks of," thought Fairfax. "It would not do for me to be interrupted."

"I suppose it is quite safe traveling anywhere on the road," remarked the adventurer.

"Oh, yes," said Colonel Preston, with a laugh. "Thieves and highway robbers do not pay us the compliment of visiting our neighborhood. They keep in the large cities, or in places that will better reward their efforts."

"Precisely," said Fairfax; "I am glad to hear it, for I carry a considerable amount of money about me."

"So do I, to-day. This is the day for payment of mill dividends, and as I have occasion to use the money, I did not deposit it."

"Good," said Fairfax, to himself. "That is what I wanted to find out."

Aloud he said:

"Oh, well, there are two of us, so it would be a bold highwayman that would venture to attack us. Do you carry a pistol?"

"Not I," said Colonel Preston. "I don't like the idea of carrying firearms about with me. They might go off by mistake. I was reading in a daily paper, recently, of a case where a man accidentally shot his son with the pistol he was in the habit of carrying about with him."

"There is that disadvantage, to be sure," said Fairfax. "So, he has no pistol. He is quite in my power," he said to himself. "It's a good thing to know."

"By the way," he asked, merely to keep up the conversation, "are you a family man, Colonel Preston?"

"Yes, sir; I have a wife, and a son of fifteen."

"You have the advantage of me in that respect. I have always been devoted to business, and have had no time for matrimony."

"Time enough yet, Mr. Fairfax."

"Oh, yes, I suppose so."

"If you are going to settle down in our neighborhood, I can introduce you to some of our marriageable young ladies," said Colonel Preston, pleasantly.

"Thank you," said Fairfax; in the same tone. "I may avail myself of your offer."

"Won't you take supper at my home this evening?" said the colonel, hospitably. "I shall be glad to introduce Mrs. Preston. My son is at boarding school, so I shall not be able to let you see him."

"Have you but one child, then?"

"But one. His absence leaves us alone."

Godfrey's absence would have been lamented more by his father, had his character and disposition been different. But he was so arrogant and overbearing in his manners, and so selfish, that his father hoped that association with other boys would cure him in part of these objectionable traits. At home, he was so much indulged by his mother, who could see no fault in him, as long as he did not oppose her, that there was little chance of amendment.

So they rode on, conversing on various topics, but their conversation was not of sufficient importance for me to report. At length they entered on a portion of the road lined on either side by a natural forest. Fairfax looked about him.

"I suppose, Colonel Preston, these are the woods you referred to?"

"Yes, sir."

"How far do they extend?"

"About a mile."

They had traversed about half a mile, when Fairfax said:

"If you don't object, Colonel Preston, I will step out a moment. There's a tree with a peculiar leaf. I would like to examine it nearer to."

"Certainly, Mr. Fairfax," said the colonel, though he wondered what tree it could be, for he saw no tree of an unusual character.

The chaise stopped and Fairfax jumped off. But he seemed to have forgotten the object of dismounting. Instead of examining the

foliage of a tree, he stepped to the horse's head, and seized him by the bridle.

"What are you going to do, Mr. Fairfax?" asked Colonel Preston, in surprise.

By this time Fairfax had withdrawn a pistol from his inside pocket, and deliberately pointed it at his companion.

"Good heavens! Mr. Fairfax, what do you mean?"

"Colonel Preston," said the adventurer, "I want all the money you have about you. I know you have a considerable sum, for you have yourself acknowledged it."

"Why," exclaimed Colonel Preston, startled, "this is highway robbery."

"Precisely!" said Fairfax, bowing mockingly. "You have had the honor of riding with a highwayman. Will you be good enough to give me the money at once? I am in haste."

"Surely, this is a joke, Mr. Fairfax. I have heard of such practical jokes before. You are testing my courage. I am not in the least frightened. Jump in the chaise again, and we will proceed."

"That's a very kind way of putting it," said Fairfax, coolly; "but not correct. I am no counterfeit, but the genuine article. Fairfax is not my name. I won't tell you what it is, for it might be inconvenient."

No man can look with equanimity upon the prospect of losing money, and Colonel Preston may be excused for not wishing to part with his eight hundred dollars. But how could he escape? He had no pistol, and Fairfax held the horse's bridle in a strong grasp. If he could only parley with him till some carriage should come up, he might save his money. It seemed the only way, and he resolved to try it.

"Mr. Fairfax," he said, "if you are really what you represent, I hope you will consider the natural end of such a career. Turn, I entreat you, to a more honest course of life."

"That may come some time," said Fairfax; "but at present my necessities are too great. Oblige me by producing your pocketbook."

"I will give you one hundred dollars, and keep the matter a secret from all. That will be better than to expose yourself to the penalty of the law."

"Colonel Preston, a hundred dollars will not satisfy me. You have eight hundred dollars with you, and I shall not leave this spot till it is transferred to my possession."

"If I refuse?"

"You will subject me to the unpleasant alternative of blowing your brains out," said the other, coolly.

"You surely would not be guilty of such a crime, Mr. Fairfax?" said Colonel Preston, with a shudder.

"I would rather not. I have no desire to take your life, but I must have that money. If you prefer to keep your money, you will compel me to the act. You'll gain nothing, for in that case I shall take both—your life first, and your money afterward."

"And this is the man with whom I dined, and with whom, a few moments since, I was conversing freely!" thought Colonel Preston.

The adventurer became impatient.

"Colonel Preston," he said, abruptly, "produce that money instantly, or I will fire."

There was no alternative. With reluctant hand the colonel drew out his pocketbook, and was about to hand it with its contents to the highwayman, when there was a sudden crash in the bushes behind Fairfax, his pistol was dashed from his hand, and our young hero, Andy Burke, with resolute face, stood with his gun leveled at him. All happened so quickly that both Colonel Preston and Fairfax were taken by surprise, and the latter, still retaining his hold upon the bridle, stared at the young hero, who had so intrepidly come between him and his intended victim.

With an oath he stopped, and was about to pick up the pistol which had fallen from his hands, but was arrested by the quick, decisive tones of Andy:

"Let that pistol alone! If you pick it up, I will shoot you on the spot."

CHAPTER XIX — BAFFLED A ROBBER

Fairfax paused at Andy's threat. He was only a boy, it is true, but he looked cool and resolute, and the gun, which was pointed at him, looked positively dangerous. But was he to be thwarted in the very moment of his triumph, by a boy? He could not endure it.

"Young man," he said, "this is dangerous business for you. If you don't make yourself scarce, you won't be likely to return at all."

"I'll take the risk," said Andy, coolly.

"Confound him! I thought he'd be frightened," said Fairfax to himself.

"I don't want to kill you," he said, with a further attempt to intimidate Andy.

"I don't mean to let you," said our hero, quietly.

"You are no match for me."

"With a gun I am."

"I don't believe it is loaded."

"If you try to pick up that pistol, I'll convince you; by the powers, I will," said Andy, energetically.

"What is to prevent my taking away the gun from you?"

"Faith," returned Andy, quaintly, "you'll take the powder and ball first, I'm thinkin'."

Fairfax thought so, too, and that was one reason why he concluded not to try it.

It was certainly a provoking position for him.

There lay the pistol on the ground, just at his feet; yet, if he tried to pick it up, the boy would put a bullet through him. It was furthermore provoking to reflect that, had he not stopped to parley with Colonel Preston, he might have secured the money, which he so much desired, before Andy had come up. There was one other resource. He had tried bullying, and without success. He would try cajoling and temptation.

"Look here, boy," he said, "I am a desperate man. I would as leave murder you as not."

"Thank you," said Andy. "But I'd rather not have it done."

"I don't want to hurt you, as I said before, but you mustn't interfere with me."

"Then you mustn't interfere with the colonel."

"I must have the money in his pocketbook."

"Must you? Maybe, I'll have something to say, to that."

"He has eight hundred dollars with him."

"Did he tell you?"

"No matter; I know. If you won't interfere with me, I'll give you two hundred of it."

"Thank you for nothing, then," said Andy, independently. "I'm only a poor Irish boy, but I ain't a thafe, and never mane to be."

"Bravo, Andy!" said Colonel Preston, who had awaited with a little anxiety the result of the offer.

Fairfax stooped suddenly, but before he could get hold of the pistol, Andy struck him on the head with the gun-barrel, causing him to roll over, while, in a quick and adroit movement, he himself got hold of the pistol before Fairfax had recovered from the crack on his head.

"Now," said Andy, triumphantly, with the gun over his shoulder, and presenting the pistol, "lave here mighty quick, or I'll shoot ye."

"Give me back the pistol, then," said the discomfited ruffian.

"I guess not," said Andy.

"It's my property."

"I don't know that. Maybe you took it from some thraveler."

"Give it to me, and I'll go off peaceably."

"I won't take no robber's word," said Andy. "Are you goin'?"

"Give me the pistol. Fire it off, if you like."

"That you may load it again. You don't catch a weasel asleep," answered Andy, shrewdly. "I've a great mind to make you march into the village, and give you up to the perlice."

This suggestion was by no means pleasant for the highwayman, particularly as he reflected that Andy had shown himself a resolute boy, and doubly armed as he now was, it was quite within his power to carry out his threat.

"Don't fire after me," he said.

"I never attack an inimy in the rare," said Andy, who always indulged in the brogue more than usual under exciting circumstances.

I make this explanation, as the reader may have noticed a difference in his dialect at different times.

"We shall meet again, boy!" said Fairfax, menacingly, turning at the distance of a few feet.

"Thank you, sir. You needn't thrubble yourself," said Andy, "I ain't anxious to mate you."

"When we do meet, you'll know it," said the other.

"Maybe I will. Go along wid ye!" said Andy, pointing the pistol at him.

"Don't shoot," said Fairfax, hastily, and he quickened his pace to get out of the way of a dangerous companion.

Andy laughed as the highwayman disappeared in the distance.

"I thought he wouldn't wait long," he said.

"Andy," said Colonel Preston, warmly, "you have behaved like a hero."

"I'm only an Irish boy," said Andy, laughing. "Shure, they don't make heroes of such as I."

"I don't care whether you are Irish or Dutch. You are a hero for all that."

"Shure, sir, it's lucky I was round whin that spalpeen wanted to rob you."

"How did you happen to be out with a gun this afternoon?"

"I got my work all done, and Miss Grant said I might go out shootin' if I wanted. Shure, I didn't expect it 'ud been robbers I would be afther shootin'."

"You came up just in the nick of time. Weren't you afraid?"

"I didn't stop to think of that when I saw that big blackguard p'intin' his pistol at you. I thought I'd have a hand in it myself."

"Jump into the chaise, Andy, and ride home with me."

"What, wid the gun?"

"To be sure. We won't leave the gun. That has done us too good service already to-day."

"I've made something out of it, anyway," said Andy, displaying the pistol, which was silver-mounted, and altogether a very pretty

weapon. "It's a regular beauty," he said, with admiration.

"It will be better in your hands than in the real owner's," said Colonel Preston.

By this time Andy was in the chaise, rapidly nearing the village.

"If you hadn't come up just as you did, Andy, I should have been poorer by eight hundred dollars."

"That's a big pile of money," said Andy, who, as we know, was not in the habit of having large sums of money in his own possession.

"It is considerably more than I would like to lose," said Colonel Preston, to whom it was of less importance than to Andy.

"I wonder will I ever have so much money?" thought Andy.

"Now, I'll tell you what I think it only right to do, Andy," pursued the colonel.

Andy listened attentively.

"I am going to make you a present of some money, as an acknowledgment of the service you have done me."

"I don't want anything, Colonel Preston," said Andy. "I didn't help you for the money."

"I know you didn't, my lad," said the colonel, "but I mean to give it to you all the same."

He took out his pocketbook, but Andy made one more remonstrance.

"I don't think I ought to take it, sir, thankin' you all the same."

"Then I will give you one hundred dollars for your mother. You can't refuse it for her."

Andy's eyes danced with delight. He knew how much good this money would do his mother, and relieve her from the necessity of

working so hard as she was now compelled to do.

"Thank you, sir," he said. "It'll make my mother's heart glad, and save her from the hard work."

"Here is the money, Andy," said the colonel, handing his young companion a roll of bills.

Again Andy poured out warm protestations of gratitude for the munificent gift, with which Colonel Preston was well pleased.

"I believe you are a good boy, Andy," he said. "It is a good sign when a boy thinks so much of his mother."

"I'd be ashamed not to, sir," said Andy.

They soon reached the village. Andy got down at the Misses Grant's gate, and was soon astonishing the simple ladies by a narrative of his encounter with the highwayman.

"Do you think he'll come here?" asked Sophia, in alarm. "If he should come when Andy was away——"

"You could fire the gun yourself, Sophia."

"I should be frightened to death."

"Then he couldn't kill you afterward."

"Just so," answered Sophia, a little bewildered.

"Were you shot, Andrew?" she asked, a minute afterward.

"If I was, I didn't feel it," said Andy, jocosely.

Andy's heroic achievement made him still more valued by the Misses Grant, and they rejoiced in the handsome gift he had received from the colonel, and readily gave him permission to carry it to his mother after supper.

CHAPTER XX — HOW THE NEWS WAS RECEIVED

It is always pleasant to carry good news, and Andy hastened with joyful feet to his mother's humble dwelling.

"Why, Andy, you're out of breath. What's happened?" asked Mrs. Burke.

"I was afraid of bein' robbed," said Andy.

"The robber wouldn't get much that would steal from you, Andy."

"I don't know that, mother. I ain't so poor as you think. Look there, now!"

Here he displayed the roll of bills. There were twenty fives, which made quite a thick roll.

"Where did you get so much, Andy?" asked his sister Mary.

"How much is it?" asked his mother.

"A hundred dollars," answered Andy, proudly.

"A hundred dollars!" repeated his mother, with apprehension. "Oh, Andy, I hope you haven't been stealing?"

"Did you ever know me to stale, mother?" said Andy.

"No, but I thought you might be tempted. Whose money is it?"

"It's yours, mother."

"Mine!" exclaimed Mrs. Burke, in astonishment. "You're joking now, Andy."

"No, I'm not. It's yours."

"Where did it come from, then?"

"Colonel Preston sent it to you as a present."

"I am afraid you are not tellin' me the truth, Andy," said his mother, doubtfully. "Why should he send me so much money?"

"Listen, and I'll tell you, mother, and you'll see it's the truth I've been tellin'."

Thereupon he told the story of his adventure with the highwayman and how he had saved Colonel Preston from being robbed.

His mother listened with pride, for though Andy spoke modestly, she could see that he had acted in a brave and manly way, and it made her proud of him.

"So the colonel," Andy concluded, "wanted to give me a hundred dollars, but I didn't like to take it myself. But when he said he would give it to you, I couldn't say anything ag'inst that. So here it is, mother, and I hope you'll spend some of it on yourself."

"I don't feel as if it belonged to me, Andy. It was you that he meant it for."

"Keep it, mother, and it'll do to use when we nade it."

"I don't like to keep so much money in the house, Andy. We might be robbed."

"You can put part of it in the savings bank, mother."

This course was adopted, and Andy himself carried eighty dollars, and deposited it in a savings bank in Melville, a few days afterward.

Meanwhile Colonel Preston told the story of Andy's prowess, at home. But Mrs. Preston was prejudiced against Andy, and listened coldly.

"It seems to me, Colonel Preston," she said, "you are making altogether too much of that Irish boy. He puts on enough airs to make one sick already."

"I never observed it, my dear," said the colonel, mildly.

"Everyone else does. He thought himself on a level with our Godfrey."

"He is Godfrey's superior in some respects."

"Oh, well, if you are going to exalt him above your own flesh and blood, I won't stay and listen to you."

"You disturb yourself unnecessarily, my dear. I have no intention of adopting him in place of my son. But he has done me a great service this after-noon, and displayed a coolness and courage very unusual in a boy of his age. But for him, I should be eight hundred dollars poorer."

"Oh, well, you can give him fifty cents, and he will be well paid for his services, as you call them."

"Fifty cents!" repeated her husband.

"Well, a dollar, if you like."

"I have given him a hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars!" almost screamed Mrs. Preston, who was a very mean woman. "Are you insane?"

"Not that I am aware of, my dear."

"It is perfectly preposterous to give such a sum to such a boy."

"I ought to say that I gave it to him for his mother. He was not willing to accept it for himself."

"That's a likely story," said Mrs. Preston, incredulously. "He only wants to make a favorable impression upon you—perhaps to get more out of you."

"You misjudge him, my dear."

"I know he is an artful, intriguing young rascal. You give him a hundred dollars, yet you refused to give Godfrey ten dollars last week."

"For a very good reason. He has a liberal allowance, and must keep within it. He did not need the money he asked for."

"Yet you lavish a hundred dollars on this boy."

"I felt justified in doing so. Which was better, to give him that sum, or to lose eight hundred?"

"I don't like the boy, and I never shall. I suppose he will be strutting around, boasting of his great achievement. If he had a gun it was nothing to do."

"I suspect Godfrey would hardly have ventured upon it," said the colonel, smiling.

"Oh, of course, Godfrey is vastly inferior to the Irish boy!" remarked Mrs. Preston, ironically. "You admire the family so much that I suppose if I were taken away, you would marry his mother and establish her in my place."

"If you have any such apprehensions, my dear, your best course is to outlive her. That will effectually prevent my marrying her, and I pledge you my word that, while you are alive, I shall not think of eloping with her."

"It is very well to jest about it," said Mrs. Preston, tossing her head.

"I am precisely of your opinion, my dear. As you observe, that is precisely what I am doing."

So the interview terminated. It was very provoking to Mrs. Preston that her husband should have given away a hundred dollars to Andy Burke's mother, but the thing was done, and could not be undone. However, she wrote an account of the affair to Godfrey, who, she knew, would sympathize fully with her view of the case. I give some extracts from her letter:

"Your father seems perfectly infatuated with that low Irish boy. Of course, I allude to Andy Burke. He has gone so far as to give him a hundred dollars. Yesterday, in riding home from Melville, with eight hundred dollars in his pocketbook, he says he was stopped by a highwayman, who demanded his money or his life. Very singularly, Andy came up just in the nick of time with a gun, and made a great show of interfering, and finally drove the man away, as your father reports. He is full of praise of Andy, and, as I said, gave him a hundred dollars, when two or three would have been quite enough, even had the rescue been real. But of this I have my doubts. It is very strange that the boy should have been on the spot just at the right time, still more strange that a full-grown man should have been frightened away by a boy of fifteen. In fact, I think it is what they call a 'put-up job.' I think the robber and Andy were confederates, and that the whole thing was cut and dried, that the man should make the attack, and Andy should appear and frighten him away, for the sake of a reward which I dare say the two have shared together. This is what I think about the matter. I haven't said so to your father, because he is so infatuated with the Irish boy that it would only make him angry, but I have no doubt that you will agree with me. [It may be said here that Godfrey eagerly adopted his mother's view, and was equally provoked at his father's liberality to his young enemy.] Your father says he won't give you the ten dollars you asked for. He can lavish a hundred dollars on Andy, but he has no money to give his own son. But sooner or later that boy will be come up with—sooner or later he will show himself in his true colors, and your father will be obliged to confess that he has been deceived. It puts me out of patience when I think of him.

"We shall expect you home on Friday afternoon of next week, as usual."

Andy was quite unconscious of the large space which he occupied in the thoughts of Mrs. Preston and Godfrey, and of the extent to which he troubled them. He went on, trying to do his duty, and succeeding fully in satisfying the Misses Grant, who had come to feel a strong interest in his welfare.

Three weeks later, Sophia Grant, who had been to the village store on an errand, returned home, looking greatly alarmed.

"What is the matter, Sophia?" asked her sister. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"Just so, Priscilla," she said; "no, I don't mean that, but we may all be ghosts in a short time."

"What do you mean?"

"Smallpox is in town!"

"Who's got it?"

"Colonel Preston; and his wife won't stay in the house. She is packing up to go off, and I expect the poor man'll die all by himself, unless somebody goes and takes care of him, and then it'll spread, and we'll all die of it."

This was certainly startling intelligence. Andy pitied the colonel, who had always treated him well. It occurred to him that his mother had passed through an attack of smallpox in her youth, and could take care of the colonel without danger. He resolved to consult her about it at once.

CHAPTER XXI — A MODEL WIFE

Colonel Preston, returning from a trip to Boston, in which, probably, he had been unconsciously exposed to the terrible disease referred to, was taken sick, and his wife, wholly unsuspicious of her husband's malady, sent for the doctor.

The latter examined his patient and, on leaving the sick-chamber, beckoned Mrs. Preston to follow him.

"What is the matter with him, doctor?" asked Mrs. Preston. The physician looked grave.

"I regret to say, Mrs. Preston, that he has the smallpox."

"The smallpox!" almost shrieked Mrs. Preston. "Oh! what will become of me?"

Dr. Townley was rather disgusted to find her first thought was about herself, not about her stricken husband.

"It's catching, isn't it, doctor?" she asked, in great agitation.

"I am sorry to say that it is, madam."

"Do you think I will take it?"

"I cannot take it upon myself to say."

"And I was in the same room with him," wailed Mrs. Preston, "and never knew the awful danger! Oh, I wouldn't have the smallpox for this world! If I didn't die, I should be all marked up for life."

"You haven't much beauty to spoil," thought the doctor; but this thought he prudently kept to himself.

"I must leave the house at once. I will go to my brother's house till he has recovered," said Mrs. Preston, in agitation.

"What!" exclaimed the doctor, in surprise, "and leave your husband alone!"

"I can't take care of him—you must see that I can't," said Mrs. Preston, fretfully. "I can't expose my life without doing him any good."

"I expose myself every time I visit him," said the doctor. "I never had the smallpox. Have you been vaccinated?"

"Yes, I believe so—I'm sure I don't know. But people sometimes take the smallpox even after they have been vaccinated. I should be so frightened that I could do no good."

"Then," said the doctor, gravely, "you have decided to leave your husband?"

"Yes, doctor, I must. It is my duty—to my boy," answered Mrs. Preston, catching at this excuse with eagerness. "I must live for him, you know. Of course, if I could do any good, it would be different. But what would Godfrey do if both his father and mother should die?"

She looked up into his face, hoping that he would express approval of her intentions; but the doctor was too honest for this. In truth, he was disgusted with the woman's selfishness, and would like to have said so; but this politeness forbade. At any rate, he was not going to be trapped into any approval of her selfish and cowardly determination.

"What do you wish to be done, Mrs. Preston?" he asked. "Of course, your husband must be taken care of."

"Hire a nurse, doctor. A nurse will do much more good than I could. She will know just what to do. Most of them have had the smallpox. It is really much better for my husband that it should be so. Of course, you can pay high wages—anything she asks," added Mrs. Preston, whose great fear made her, for once in her life, liberal.

"I suppose that will be the best thing to do. You wish me, then, to engage a nurse?"

"Yes, doctor, if you will be so kind."

"When do you go away?"

"At once. I shall pack up my clothes immediately. On the whole, I think I will go to the town where Godfrey is at school, and board there for the present. I must see him, and prevent him from coming home."

"You will go into your husband's chamber and bid him good-by?"

"No; I cannot think of it. It would only be useless exposure."

"What will he think?"

"Explain it to him, doctor. Tell him that I hope he will get well very soon, and that I feel it my duty to go away now on Godfrey's account. I am sure he will see that it is my duty."

"I wonder what excuse she would have if she had no son for a pretext?" thought the doctor.

"Well," he said, "I will do as you request."

"See that he has the best of care. Get him two nurses, if you think best. Don't spare expense."

"What extraordinary liberality in Mrs. Preston," thought the physician.

He went back into the chamber of his patient.

"Doctor," said Colonel Preston, "you didn't tell me what was the matter with me. Am I seriously sick?"

"I am sorry to say that you are."

"Dangerously?"

"Not necessarily. You have the smallpox."

"Have I?" said the patient, thoughtfully.

"It's an awkward thing to tell him that his wife is going to leave him," the doctor said to himself. "However, it must be done."

"Have you told my wife, doctor?"

"I just told her."

"What does she say?"

"She is very much startled, and (now for it), thinks, under the circumstances, she ought not to run the risk of taking care of you on account of Godfrey."

"Perhaps she is right," said Colonel Preston, slowly.

He was not surprised to hear it, but it gave him a pang, nevertheless.

"She wants me to engage a nurse for you."

"Yes, that will be necessary."

There was a pause.

"When is she going?" he asked, a little later.

"As soon as possible. She is going to board near the school where Godfrey is placed."

"Shall I see her?"

"She thinks it best not to risk coming into the chamber, lest she should carry the infection to Godfrey."

"I suppose that is only prudent," returned the sick man, but in his heart he wished that his wife had shown less prudence, and a little more feeling for him.

"Have you thought of any nurse?" he asked.

"I have thought of the widow Burke."

"She might not dare to come."

"She has had the disease. I know this from a few slight marks still left on her face. Of course, you would be willing to pay a liberal

price?"

"Any price," said Colonel Preston, energetically. "It is a service which, I assure you, I shall not soon forget."

"I must see her at once, for your wife will leave directly."

"Pray, do so," said Colonel Preston. "Tell my wife," he said, after a pause, "that I hope soon to have recovered, so that it may be safe for her to come back."

There was a subdued bitterness in his voice, which the doctor detected, and did not wonder at. He gave the message, as requested.

"I am sure I hope so, Dr. Townley," said Mrs. Preston. "I shall be tortured with anxiety. I hope you will write me daily how my poor husband is getting along?"

"Perhaps the paper might carry the infection," said the doctor, testing the real extent of her solicitude.

"I didn't think of that," answered Mrs. Preston, hastily. "On the whole, you needn't write, then. It might communicate the disease to Godfrey."

"She finds Godfrey very useful," the doctor thought.

"I will bear my anxiety as I can," she continued. "Have you thought of anyone for a nurse?"

"I have thought of Mrs. Burke."

"She is poor, and will come if you offer her a good price. Try to get her."

"I think she will come. I must go at once, for your husband needs immediate attention."

"Get her to come at once, Dr. Townley! Oh, do! My husband may want something, and I can't go into the room. My duty to my dear,

only son will not permit me. I hope Mr. Preston understands my motives in going away?"

"I presume he does," said the doctor, rather equivocally.

"Tell him how great a sacrifice it is for me to leave his bedside. It is a terrible trial for me, but my duty to my son makes it imperative."

The doctor bowed.

He drove at once to the humble dwelling of Mrs. Burke.

His errand was briefly explained.

"Can you come?" he asked. "I am authorized to offer you ten dollars a week for the time you spend there."

"I would come in a minute, doctor, but what shall I do with Mary?"

"She shall stay at my house. I will gladly take charge of her."

"You are very kind, doctor. I wouldn't want to expose her, but I don't mind myself. I don't think I am in danger, for I've had the smallpoX — already."

"Can you be ready in five minutes? Tell Mary to pack up her things, and go to my house at once. We'll take good care of her."

In less than an hour Mrs. Burke was installed at the bedside of the sick man as his nurse. As she entered the house, Mrs. Preston left it, bound for the railway depot.

"I'm so glad you're here," she said, greeting the widow Burke with unwonted cordiality. "I am sure you will take the best care of my husband. I have told the doctor to pay you whatever you ask."

"I'll do my best, Mrs. Preston, but not for the money," answered Mrs. Burke. "Your husband shall get well, if good care can cure him."

"I've no doubt of it; but the carriage is here, and I must go. Tell my husband how sorry I am to leave him."

So Mrs. Preston went away, leaving a stranger to fulfill her own duties at the bedside of her husband.

Thus it happened that, when Andy came home, he found his mother already gone, and his sister on the point of starting for the doctor's house. His idea had already been carried out.

CHAPTER XXII — COLONEL PRESTON'S RECOVERY

Four weeks afterward, we will introduce the reader into the bedchamber of Colonel Preston. His sickness has been severe. At times recovery was doubtful, but Mrs. Burke has proved a careful and devoted nurse, intelligent and faithful enough to carry out the directions of the physician.

"How do you feel this morning, Colonel Preston?" asked the doctor, who had just entered the chamber.

"Better, doctor. I feel quite an appetite."

"You are looking better—decidedly better. The disease has spent its force, and retreated from the field."

"It is to you that the credit belongs, Dr. Townley."

"Only in part. The greater share belongs to your faithful nurse, Mrs. Burke."

"I shall not soon forget my obligations to her," said the sick man, significantly.

"Now, Colonel Preston," said Mrs. Burke, "you are making too much of what little I have done."

"That is impossible, Mrs. Burke. It is to your good nursing and the doctor's skill that I owe my life, and I hardly know to which the most."

"To the doctor, sir. I only followed out his directions."

"At the expense of your own health. You show the effects of your long-continued care."

"It won't take long to pick up," said Mrs. Burke, cheerfully.

"Is the danger of contagion over, doctor?" asked the patient.

"Quite so."

"Then, would it not be well to write to Mrs. Preston? Not that I mean to give up my good nurse just yet; that is, if she is willing to stay."

"I will stay as long as you need me, sir."

"That is well; but Mrs. Preston may wish to return, now that there's no further danger."

"I will write to her at once."

"Thank you."

The following letter was dispatched to Mrs. Preston:

"MRS. PRESTON:—
"Dear Madam: It gives me great pleasure to inform you that your husband is so far recovered that there is no danger now of infection. You can return with safety, and he will, doubtless, be glad to see you. He has been very ill, indeed—in danger of his life; but, thanks to the devotion of Mrs. Burke, who has proved an admirable nurse, he is now on the high road to recovery. Yours respectfully,
"John Townley."

"I think that will bring her," said the doctor.

But he reckoned without his host.

The next day he received the following letter, on scented paper:

"MY DEAR DOCTOR TOWNLEY: You cannot think how rejoiced I am to receive the tidings of my husband's convalescence. I have been so tortured with anxiety during the last four weeks! You cannot think how wretchedly anxious I have been. I could not have endured to stay away from his bedside but that my duty imperatively required it. I have lost flesh, and my anxiety has worn upon me. Now, how gladly will I resume my place at the bedside of my husband, restored by your skill. I am glad the nurse has proved faithful. It was a good chance for her, for she shall be liberally paid, and no doubt the money will be welcome. But don't you think it might be more prudent for me to defer my return until next week? It will be safer, I think, and I owe it to my boy to be very careful. You know, the contagion may still exist. It is hard for me to remain longer away, when I would fain fly to the bedside of Mr.

Preston, but I feel that it is best. Say to him, with my love, that he may expect me next week. Accept my thanks for your attention to him. I shall never forget it; and believe me to be, my dear doctor, your obliged

"Lucinda Preston."

Dr. Townley threw down this letter with deep disgust.

"Was ever any woman more disgustingly selfish?" he exclaimed. "Her husband might have died, so far as she was concerned."

Of course, he had to show this letter to Colonel Preston.

The latter read it, with grave face, and the doctor thought he heard a sigh.

"My wife is very prudent," he said, with a touch of bitterness in his voice.

"She will be here next week," said the doctor, having nothing else to answer.

"I think she will run no risk then," said the sick man, cynically.

But Mrs. Preston did not return in a week. It was a full week and a half before she arrived at her own house.

The doctor was just coming out of the front door.

"How is my husband?" she asked.

"Not far from well. He is still weak, of course."

"And are you sure," she said, anxiously, "that there is no danger of infection?"

"Not the slightest, madam," said Dr. Townley, coldly.

"I am so glad I can see him once more. You cannot imagine," she exclaimed, clasping her hands, "how much I have suffered in my suspense!"

The doctor remained cool and unmoved. He didn't feel that he could respond fittingly, being absolutely incredulous.

Mrs. Preston saw it, and was nettled. She knew that she was a hypocrite, but did not like to have the doctor, by his silence, imply his own conviction of it.

"Mine has been a hard position," she continued.

"Your husband has not had an easy time," said the doctor, significantly.

"But he has had good care—Mrs. Burke was a good nurse?"

"Admirable."

"She must be paid well."

"I offered her ten dollars a week."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Preston, doubtfully, in whose eyes five dollars would have been liberal compensation. "It has been a good chance for her."

"It is far from adequate," said the doctor, disgusted. "Money cannot pay for such service as hers, not to speak of the risk she ran, for cases have been known of persons being twice attacked by the disease."

"You don't think my husband will have a relapse?" asked Mrs. Preston, with fresh alarm.

"Not if he has the same care for a short time longer."

"He shall have it. She must stay. Of course her duties are lighter now, and six dollars a week for the remainder of the time will be enough—don't you think so?"

"No, I don't," said the doctor, bluntly; "and, moreover, I am quite sure your husband will not consent to reducing the wages of one whose faithful care has saved his life."

"Oh, well, you know best," said Mrs. Preston, slowly. "I am quite willing that she should be well paid."

Mrs. Preston went upstairs, and entered her husband's chamber.

"Oh, my dear husband!" she exclaimed, theatrically, hurrying across the room, with affected emotion. "I am so glad to find you so much better!"

"I am glad to see you back, Lucinda," said Colonel Preston; but he spoke coldly, and without the slightest affectation of sentimental joy. "I have passed through a good deal since you left me."

"And so have I!" exclaimed his wife. "Oh, how my heart has been rent with anxiety, as I thought of you lying sick, while duty kept me from your side."

"Is Godfrey well?" asked her husband, taking no notice of her last speech.

"Yes, poor boy! He sends his love, and is so anxious to see you."

"Let him come next Friday afternoon," said the sick man, who doubted this statement, yet wanted to believe it true.

"He shall. I will write to him at once."

So Mrs. Preston resumed her place in the house; but from that time there was a something she could not understand in her husband's manner. He was graver than formerly, and sometimes she saw him watching her intently, and, after a little, turn away, with a sigh.

He had found her out in all her intense selfishness and want of feeling, and he could never again regard her as formerly, even though she tried hard at times, by a show of affection, to cover up her heartless neglect.

CHAPTER XXIII — MRS. BURKE HAS GOOD FORTUNE

Mrs. Burke remained a week longer to nurse Colonel Preston. At the end of this time Mr. Preston thought he was well enough to dispense with a nurse, and accordingly she prepared to take leave.

"I shall always remember your kind service, Mrs. Burke," said the colonel, warmly.

"It was only my duty, sir," said the widow, modestly.

"Not all would have done their duty so faithfully."

"I am glad to see you well again," said the widow.

"Not more than I am to get well, I assure you," said he. "Whenever you are in any trouble, come to me."

With these words, he placed in her hands an envelope, which, as she understood, contained the compensation for her services. She thanked him, and took her departure.

Mrs. Preston was curious to know how much her husband paid the nurse, and asked the question.

"A hundred dollars," he replied.

"A hundred dollars!" she repeated, in a tone which implied disapproval. "I thought she agreed to come for ten dollars a week."

"So she did."

"She has not been here ten weeks; only about six."

"That is true, but she has richly earned all I gave her."

"Ten dollars a week I consider very handsome remuneration to one in her position in life," said Mrs. Preston, pointedly.

"Lucinda, but for her attention I probably should not have lived through this sickness. Do you think a hundred dollars so much to pay for your husband's life?"

"You exaggerate the value of her services," said his wife.

"Dr. Townley says the same thing that I do."

"You are both infatuated with that woman," said Mrs. Preston, impatiently.

"We only do her justice."

"Oh, well, have it your own way. But I should have only paid her what I agreed to. It is a great windfall for her."

"She deserves it."

Mrs. Preston said no more at this time, for she found her husband too "infatuated," as she termed it, to agree with her. She did, however, open the subject to Godfrey when he came home, and he adopted her view of the case.

"She and her low son are trying to get all they can out of father," he said. "It's just like them."

"I wish I could make your father see it," said Mrs. Preston, "but he seems prepossessed in her favor."

"If he can give a hundred dollars to her, he can give me a little extra money; I'm going to ask him."

So he did the same evening.

"Will you give me ten dollars, father?" he asked.

"What for?"

"Oh, for various things. I need it."

"I give you an allowance of three dollars a week."

"I have a good many expenses."

"That will meet all your reasonable expenses. I was far from having as much money as that when I was of your age."

"I don't see why you won't give me the money," said Godfrey, discontentedly.

"I don't think you need it."

"You are generous enough to others."

"To whom do you refer?"

"You give plenty of money to that Irish boy and his mother."

"They have both rendered me great services. The boy saved me from being robbed. The mother, in all probability, saved me from falling a victim to smallpox. But that has nothing to do with your affairs. It is scarcely proper for a boy like you to criticise his father's way of disposing of his money."

"I confess I think Godfrey is right in commenting upon your extraordinary liberality to the Burkes," observed Mrs. Preston.

"Lucinda," said her husband, gravely, "when my own wife deserted my sick bed, leaving me to wrestle alone with a terrible and dangerous disease, I was fortunate enough to find in Mrs. Burke a devoted nurse. The money I have paid her is no adequate compensation, nor is it all that I intend to do for her."

There was a part of this speech that startled Mrs. Preston. Never before had her husband complained of her desertion of him in his sickness, and she hoped that he had been imposed upon by the excuse which she gave of saving herself for Godfrey. Now she saw that in this she had not been altogether successful, and she regretted having referred to Mrs. Burke, and so brought this reproach upon herself. She felt it necessary to say something in extenuation.

"It was because I wanted to live for Godfrey," she said, with a flushed face. "Nothing but that would have taken me away from you at such a time. It was a great trial to me," she continued, putting up her handkerchief to eyes that were perfectly dry.

"We will say no more about it," said Colonel Preston, gravely. "I shall not refer to it, unless you undervalue my obligations to Mrs. Burke."

Mrs. Preston thought it best not to reply, but on one thing that her husband had said, she commented to Godfrey.

"Your father speaks of giving more money to Mrs. Burke. I suppose we shall not know anything about it if he does."

"Perhaps he will leave her some money in his will," said Godfrey.

"Very likely. If he does, there is such a thing as contesting a will—that is, if he gives her much."

Mrs. Preston was right. Her husband did intend to give his devoted nurse something in his will, but of that more anon. There was one thing which he did at once, and that was to buy the cottage which Mrs. Burke occupied, from the heir, a non-resident. Mrs. Burke didn't learn this until she went to pay her rent to the storekeeper, who had acted as agent for the owner.

"I have nothing to do with the house any longer, Mrs. Burke," he said.

"Then who shall I pay rent to?" said Mrs. Burke.

"To Colonel Preston, who has recently bought the house."

Mrs. Burke, therefore, called at the house of the colonel.

Mr. and Mrs. Preston were sitting together when the servant announced that she wished to speak to him.

"You seem to have a good deal of business with Mrs. Burke," said his wife, in a very unpleasant tone.

"None that I care to conceal," he said, smiling. "Show Mrs. Burke in here, Jane," he continued, addressing the servant.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Burke," he said, pleasantly.

"Good-morning," said Mrs. Preston, coldly.

"Good-morning, sir, I'm glad to see you looking so much better."

"Oh, yes, I am feeling pretty well now."

"I didn't find out till just now, Colonel Preston, that you were my landlord."

Here Mrs. Preston pricked up her ears, for it was news to her also, as her husband had not mentioned his recent purchase.

"Yes, I thought I would buy the house, as it was in the market."

"I have come to pay my rent. I have been in the habit of paying fifteen dollars a quarter."

"I won't be a hard landlord," said Colonel Preston. "You are welcome to live in the house, if it suits you, free of all rent."

"This is too much kindness," said Mrs. Burke, quite overwhelmed by the unexpected liberality.

Mrs. Preston thought so, too, but could not well say anything.

"There's been kindness on both sides, Mrs. Burke. Put up your money, I don't want it, but I have no doubt you will find use for it. Buy yourself a new dress."

"Thank you, Colonel Preston. You are very generous, and I am very grateful," said the widow.

"I have something to be grateful for also, Mrs. Burke. If you want any repairs, just let me know, and they shall be attended to."

"Thank you, sir, but the house is very comfortable."

She soon took her leave.

"When did you buy that house, Colonel Preston?" asked his wife.

"A month since."

"You didn't say anything about it to me."

"Nor to anyone else, except those with whom I did the business."

Mrs. Preston would like to have said more, but she did not think it expedient, remembering what she had brought upon herself before.

CHAPTER XXIV — ANDY'S JOURNEY

Toward the first of April of the succeeding year, Miss Sophia Grant took a severe cold, not serious, indeed, but such as to make it prudent for her to remain indoors. This occasioned a little derangement of her sister's plans; for both sisters were in the habit, about the first of April and of October, of taking a journey to Boston—partly for a change, and partly because at these times certain banks in which they owned stock declared dividends, which they took the opportunity to collect. But this spring it seemed doubtful if they could go. Yet they wanted the money—a part of it, at least.

"Send Andrew," suggested Miss Sophia, after her sister had stated the difficulty.

In general Miss Priscilla did not approve Sophia's suggestions, but this struck her more favorably.

"I don't know but we might," she said, slowly. "He is a boy to be trusted."

"Just so."

"And I think he is a smart boy."

"Just so."

"He can take care of himself. You remember how he saved Colonel Preston from the robber?"

"Just so."

"Then, on the other hand, he has never been to Boston."

"He could ask."

"I don't suppose there would be any particular difficulty. I could give him all the necessary directions."

"Just so."

"I'll propose it to him."

So, after supper, as Andy was going out into the woodshed for an armful of wood, Miss Priscilla stopped him.

"Were you ever in Boston, Andy?" asked she.

"No, ma'am."

"I wish you had been."

"Why, ma'am?"

"Because I should like to send you there on some business."

"I'll go, ma'am," said Andy, eagerly.

Like most boys of his age, no proposition could have been more agreeable.

"Do you think you could find your way there, and around the city?"

"No fear of that, ma'am," said Andy, confidently.

"We generally go ourselves, as you know, but my sister is sick, and I don't like to leave her."

"Of course not, ma'am," said Andy, quite approving any plan that opened the way for a journey to him.

"We own bank stock, and on the first of April they pay us dividends. Now, if we send you, do you think you can get to the bank, get the money, and bring it back safe?"

"I'll do it for you, ma'am," said Andy.

"Well, I'll think of it between now and next week. If we send you at all, you must start next Monday."

"I'll go any day, ma'am," said Andy, "any day you name."

Miss Priscilla finally decided to send Andrew, but cautioned him against saying anything about it, except to his own family.

On Monday morning, just before the morning train was to start, Andrew appeared on the platform of the modest village depot with a small carpetbag in his hand, lent him by the Misses Grant.

"Give me a ticket to Boston," said he to the station master.

Godfrey Preston, who was about to return to his boarding school, had just purchased a ticket, and overheard this. He didn't much care to speak to Andy, but his curiosity overcame his pride.

"Are you going to Boston?" he asked.

"Yes," said Andy.

"What are you going for?"

"Important business."

"Has Miss Grant turned you off?"

"She didn't say anything about it this morning. Why, do you want to take my place?"

"Do you think I'd stoop to be a hired boy?" said Godfrey, haughtily.

"You wouldn't need to stoop," said Andy; "you ain't any too tall."

Godfrey winced at this. He was not tall of his age, and he wanted to be. Andy had been growing faster than he, and was now, though scarcely as old, quite two inches taller.

"It makes no difference about being tall," he rejoined. "I am a gentleman, and don't have to work for a living like you do."

"What are you going to be when you grow up?"

"A lawyer."

"Then won't you work for money?"

"Of course."

"Then you'll be a hired man, and work for a living."

"That's very different. When are you coming back?"

"When I've finished my business."

"How soon will that be?"

"I can't tell yet."

"Humph! I shouldn't wonder if you were running away."

"Don't you tell anybody," said Andy, in a bantering tone.

"Where did you get the money to pay for your ticket?"

"What would you give to know?"

"You are impudent," said Godfrey, his cheek flushing.

"So are your questions," said Andy.

"I dare say you stole it."

"Look here, Godfrey Preston," said Andy, roused to indignation by this insinuation, "you'd better not say that again, if you know what's best for yourself."

He advanced a step with a threatening look, and Godfrey instinctively receded.

"That comes of my speaking to my inferior," he said.

"You can't do that."

"What do you mean?"

"I don't know anybody that's inferior to you."

Godfrey turned on his heel wrathfully, muttering something about a "low beggar," which Andy, not hearing, did not resent.

The whistle of the locomotive was heard, and the cars came along.

With high anticipation of pleasure, Andy got aboard. He had before him a journey of close upon a hundred miles, and he wished it had been longer. He had never been much of a traveler, and the scenes which were to greet his eyes were all novel. He had heard a good deal of Boston also, and he wanted to see it.

Besides the money which Miss Grant had given him to defray his expenses, he had with him ten dollars of his own. Since his mother had received the two donations from Colonel Preston she made Andy keep half his wages for his own use. These were now seven dollars a week, so he kept three and a half, and of this sum was able to lay up about half. So he had a supply of money in his trunk, of which he had taken with him ten dollars.

"Maybe I'll see something I want to buy in the city," he said to himself.

I don't mean to dwell upon the journey. There is nothing very exciting in a railway trip, even of a hundred miles, nowadays, unless, indeed, the cars run off the track, or over the embankment, and then it is altogether too exciting to be agreeable. For the sake of my young hero, whom I really begin to like, though he was "only an Irish boy," I am glad to say that nothing of that sort took place; but in good time—about the time when the clock on the Old South steeple indicated noon—Andy's train drove into the Boston & Maine Railway depot, fronting on Haymarket Square.

"Inquire your way to Washington Street."

That was the first direction that Andy had received from Miss Priscilla, and that was what our hero did first.

The question was addressed to a very civil young man, who politely gave Andy the necessary directions. So, in a short time, he

reached Washington Street by way of Court Street.

The next thing was to inquire the way to the Merchants' Bank, that being the one in which the ladies owned the largest amount of stock.

"Where is the Merchants' Bank?" asked Andy of a boy, whose blacking-box denoted his occupation.

"I'll show you, mister," said the boy. "Come along." His young guide, instead of taking him to the bank, took him to the side door of the court-house, and said:

"Go in there."

It was a massive stone building, and Andy, not suspecting that he was being fooled, went in. Wandering at random, he found his way into a room, where a trial was going on. That opened his eyes.

"He cheated me," thought Andy. "Maybe I'll get even with him."

He retraced his steps, and again found himself in the street. His fraudulent young guide, with a grin on a face not over clean, was awaiting his appearance.

CHAPTER XXV — THE MERCHANT FROM PORTLAND

"Look here, young chap," said Andy, "what made you tell me that was the Merchants' Bank?"

"Isn't it?" asked the bootblack, with a grin.

"It's the bank where you'll be wanted some time. Shouldn't wonder if they'd make a mistake and lock you up instead of your money."

"Have you got any money in the Merchants' Bank?" asked the other.

"I'm goin' to see if they won't give me some. If you hadn't cheated me, maybe I'd have invited you to dine with me at my hotel."

"Where are you stoppin'?" asked the street boy, not quite knowing how much of Andy's story to believe.

"At the most fashionable hotel."

"Parker's?"

"You're good at guessin'. Perhaps you'd like to dine there?"

"I don't know as they'd let me in," said the boy, doubtfully; "but I'll show you where there's a nice eatin' house, where they don't charge half so much."

"'Twouldn't be fashionable enough for me. I shall have to dine alone. See what comes of tryin' to fool your grandfather."

Andy went on, leaving the boy in doubt whether his jest had really lost him a dinner.

Andy didn't go to the Parker House, however. His expenses were to be paid by the Misses Grant, and he felt that it wouldn't be right to be extravagant at their expense.

"I shall come across an eatin' house presently," he said to himself.

Not far off he found one with the bill of fare exposed outside, with the prices. Andy examined it, and found that it was not an expensive place. He really felt hungry after his morning's ride, and determined, before he attended to his business, to get dinner. He accordingly entered, and seated himself at one of the tables. A waiter came up and awaited his commands.

"What'll you have?" he asked.

"Bring me a plate of roast beef, and a cup of coffee," said Andy, "and be quick about it, for I haven't eaten anything for three weeks."

"Then I don't think one plate will be enough for you," said the waiter, laughing.

"It'll do to begin on," said Andy.

The order was quickly filled, and Andy set to work energetically.

It is strange how we run across acquaintances when we least expect it. Andy had no idea that he knew anybody in the eating house, and therefore didn't look around, feeling no special interest in the company. Yet there was one present who recognized him as soon as he entered, and watched him with strong interest. The interest was not friendly, however, as might be inferred from the scowl with which he surveyed him. This will not be a matter of surprise to the reader when I say that the observer was no other than Fairfax, whose attempt to rob Colonel Preston had been defeated by Andy.

He recognized the boy at once, both from his appearance and his voice, and deep feelings of resentment ran in his breast. To be foiled was disagreeable enough, but to be foiled by a boy was most humiliating, and he had vowed revenge, if ever an opportunity

occurred. For this reason he felt exultant when he saw his enemy walking into the eating house.

"I'll follow him," he said to himself, "and it'll go hard if I don't get even with him for that trick he played on me."

But how did it happen that Andy did not recognize Fairfax?

For two reasons: First, because the adventurer was sitting behind him, and our hero faced the front of the room. Next, had he seen him, it was doubtful if he would have recognized a man whom he was far from expecting to see. For Fairfax was skilled in disguises, and no longer was the black-whiskered individual that we formerly knew him. From motives of prudence, he had shaved off his black hair and whiskers, and now appeared in a red wig, and whiskers of the same hue. If any of my readers would like to know how effectual this disguise is, let them try it, and I will guarantee that they won't know themselves when they come to look at their likeness in the mirror.

After disposing of what he had ordered, Andy also ordered a plate of apple dumpling, which he ate with great satisfaction.

"I wouldn't mind eatin' here every day," he thought. "Maybe I'll be in business here some day myself, and then I'll come here and dine."

Fairfax was through with his dinner, but waited till Andy arose. He then arose and followed him to the desk, where both paid at the same time. He was careless of recognition, for he felt confident in his disguise.

"Now," thought Andy, "I must go to the bank."

But he didn't know where the bank was. So, when he got into the street, he asked a gentleman whom he met: "Sir, can you direct me to the Merchants' Bank?"

"It is in State Street," said the gentleman. "I am going past it, so if you will come along with me, I will show you."

"Thank you, sir," said our hero, politely.

"Merchants' Bank!" said Fairfax to himself, beginning to feel interested. "I wonder what he's going there for? Perhaps I can raise a little money, besides having my revenge."

He had an added inducement now in following our hero.

When Andy went into the bank, Fairfax followed him. He was in the room when Andy received the dividends, and, with sparkling eyes, he saw that it was, a thick roll of bills, representing, no doubt, a considerable sum of money.

"That money must be mine," he said to himself. "It can't be the boy's. He must have been sent by some other person. The loss will get him into trouble. Very likely he will be considered a thief. That would just suit me."

Andy was careful, however. He put the money into a pocketbook, or, rather, wallet, with which he had been supplied by the Misses Grant, put it in his inside pocket, and then buttoned his coat up tight. He was determined not to lose anything by carelessness.

But this was not his last business visit. There was another bank in the same street where it was necessary for him to call and receive dividends. Again Fairfax followed him, and again he saw Andy receive a considerable sum of money.

"There's fat pickings here," thought Fairfax. "Now, I must manage, in some way, to relieve him of that money. There's altogether too much for a youngster like him. Shouldn't wonder if the money belonged to that man I tried to rob. If so, all the better."

In this conjecture, as we know, Fairfax was mistaken. However, it made comparatively little difference to him whose money it was, as long as there was a chance of his getting it into his possession. The fact was, that his finances were not in a very flourishing condition just at present. He could have done better to follow some honest and respectable business, and avoid all the dishonest shifts and infractions of law to which he was compelled to resort, but he had started wrong, and it was difficult to persuade him that even now it would have been much better for him to amend his life and ways. In

this state of affairs he thought it a great piece of good luck that he should have fallen in with a boy in charge of a large sum of money, whom, from his youth and inexperience, he would have less trouble in robbing than an older person.

Andy had already decided how he would spend the afternoon. He had heard a good deal about the Boston Museum, its large collection of curiosities, and the plays that were performed there. One of the pleasantest anticipations he had was of a visit to this place, the paradise of country people. Now that his business was concluded, he determined to go there at once. But first he must inquire the way.

Turning around, he saw Fairfax without recognizing him.

"Can you direct me to the Boston Museum?" he asked.

"Certainly, with pleasure," said Fairfax, with alacrity. "In fact, I am going there myself. I suppose you are going to the afternoon performance?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you ever been there?"

"No; but I have heard a good deal about it. I don't live in the city."

"Nor do I," said Fairfax. "I am a merchant of Portland, Maine. I have come to the city to buy my winter stock of goods. As I only come twice a year, I generally try to enjoy myself a little while I am here. Do you stay in the city overnight?"

"Yes," said Andy.

"So do I. Here is the Museum."

They had reached the Museum, which, as some of my readers are aware, is situated in Tremont Street.

"We go up these stairs," said Fairfax. "If you don't object, we will take seats together."

"I shall be glad to have company," said Andy, politely.

Reserved seats adjoining were furnished, and the adventurer and his intended victim entered the Museum.

CHAPTER XXVI — SPINNING THE WEB

There was a short interval before the play commenced. This Andy improved by examining the large stock of curiosities which have been gathered from all parts of the world for the gratification of visitors. Fairfax kept at his side, and spoke freely of all they saw. There was something about him which seemed to Andy strangely familiar. Was it in his features, or in his voice? He could not tell. The red whig and whiskers misled him. Andy finally set it down as a mere chance resemblance to someone whom he had met formerly, and dismissed it from his mind.

At length the increasing crowds pouring into the lecture-room reminded them that the play was about to begin.

"Shall we go in and take our seats?" said Fairfax.

Andy assented, and they were speedily in their seats.

I do not propose to speak of the play. It was a novelty to Andy to see a dramatic representation, and he thoroughly enjoyed it. Fairfax was more accustomed to such things, but pretended to be equally interested, feeling that in this way he could ingratiate himself better into Andy's confidence.

At last it was over, and they went out of the building.

"How did you like it?" asked Fairfax.

"Tiptop," said Andy, promptly. "Don't you think so?"

"Capital," answered Fairfax, with simulated delight. "I am glad I had company. I don't enjoy anything half as well alone. By the way, where do you pass the night?"

"At some hotel—I don't know which."

"Suppose you go to the Adams House. I've got to stop overnight somewhere, and it might be pleasanter going in company."

"Where is the Adams House?"

"On Washington Street, not very far off—ten or fifteen minutes' walk."

"If it's a good place, I'm willing."

"It is an excellent hotel, and moderate in price. We might go up there now, and engage a room, and then spend the evening where we like."

"Very well," said Andy.

They soon reached the Adams House—a neat, unpretending hotel—and entered. They walked up to the desk, and Fairfax spoke to the clerk.

"Can you give us a room?"

"Certainly. Enter your names."

"Shall we room together?" asked Fairfax, calmly.

Now Andy, though he had had no objection to going to the theater with his present companion, did not care to take a room with a stranger, of whom he knew nothing. He might be a very respectable man, but somehow, Andy did not know why, there was something in his manner which inspired a little repulsion. Besides, he remembered that he had considerable money with him, and that consideration alone rendered it imprudent for him to put himself in the power of a companion. So he said, a little awkwardly:

"I think we'd better take separate rooms."

"Very well," said Fairfax, in a tone of indifference, though he really felt very much disappointed. "I thought it might have been a little more sociable to be together."

Andy did not take the hint, except so far as to say:

"We can take rooms alongside of each other."

"I can give you adjoining rooms, if you desire," said the clerk.

Fairfax here entered his name in the hotel register as "Nathaniel Marvin, Portland, Maine," while Andy put down his real address. His companion's was, of course, fictitious. He did not venture to give the name of Fairfax, as that might be recognized by Andy as that of the highwayman, with whose little plans he had interfered.

A servant was called, and they went up to their rooms, which, as the clerk had promised, were found to be adjoining. They were precisely alike.

"Very comfortable, Mr. Burke," said Fairfax, in a tone of apparent satisfaction. "I think we shall have a comfortable night."

"I guess so," said Andy.

"Are you going to stay here now?"

"No; I'm going to wash my face, and then take a walk around. I want to see something of the city."

"I think I'll lie down awhile; I feel tired. Perhaps we shall meet later. If not, I shall see you in the morning."

"All right," said Andy.

In a few minutes he went out.

CHAPTER XXVII — THE DROP GAME

Fairfax had an object in remaining behind. He wanted to see if there was any way for him to get into Andy's room during the night, that he might rob him in his sleep. To his great satisfaction, he found that there was a door between the two rooms, for the accommodation of persons in the same party, who wished to be in adjoining apartments. It was, however, locked, but Fairfax was not unprepared for such an emergency. He took a bunch of keys from his pocket, and tried them, one after another, in the lock. There was one that would very nearly fit. For this again, Fairfax was prepared. He took from the same pocket a file, and began patiently to file away the key till it should fit. He tried it several times before he found that it fitted. But at last success crowned his efforts. The door opened.

His eyes danced with exultation, as he saw this.

"I might as well be in the same room," he said, to himself. "Now, you young rascal, I shall take your money, and be revenged upon you at the same time."

He carefully locked the door, and then, feeling that he had done all that was necessary to do at present, went downstairs, and took supper. Andy was out, and did not see him.

Meanwhile, our young hero was out seeing the sights. He walked up Washington Street, and at Boylston Street turned and reached Tremont Street, when he saw the Common before him. It looked pleasant, and Andy crossed the street, and entered. He walked wherever fancy led, and then found himself, after a while, in a comparatively secluded part. Here he met with an adventure, which I must describe.

Rather a shabby-looking individual in front of him suddenly stooped and picked up a pocketbook, which appeared to be well

filled with money. He looked up, and met Andy's eyes fixed upon it. This was what he wanted.

"Here's a pocketbook," he said. "Somebody must have dropped it."

Andy was interested.

"It seems to have considerable money in it," said the finder.

"Open it, and see," said Andy.

"I hain't time. I have got to leave the city by the next train. I mean, I haven't time to advertise it, and get the reward which the owner will be sure to offer. Are you going to stay in the city long?"

"I'm going out to-morrow."

"I must go. I wish I knew what to do."

He seemed to be plunged into anxious thought.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said, as if a bright idea had suddenly struck him. "You take the pocketbook, and advertise it. If the owner is found, he will give you a reward. If not, the whole will belong to you."

"All right," said Andy. "Hand it over."

"Of course," said the other, "I shall expect something myself, as I was the one to find it."

"I'll give you half."

"But I shall be out of the city. I'll tell you what give me ten dollars, and I'll make it over to you."

"That's rather steep," said Andy.

"Heft it. There must be a lot of money inside."

"I'm afraid the reward might be less than ten dollars," said Andy.

"Well, I'm in a great hurry—give me five."

It is possible that Andy, who was not acquainted with the "drop game," might have agreed to this, but a policeman hove in sight, and the shabby individual scuttled away without further ceremony, leaving Andy a little surprised, with the pocketbook in his hand.

"What's he in such a hurry for?" thought our hero.

He opened the pocketbook, and a light flashed upon him, as he perceived that there was no money inside, but was stuffed with rolls of paper.

"He wanted to swindle me," thought Andy. "It's lucky I didn't pay him five dollars. Anyway, I'll keep it. The pocketbook is worth something."

He put it in his pocket, without taking the trouble to remove the contents.

CHAPTER XXVIII — THE GUEST OF TWO HOTELS

Andy wandered about till nine o'clock, determined to see as much of the city as possible in the limited time which he had at his disposal; but at last he became tired, and returned to the hotel. Fairfax was seated in the reading-room. He looked up as Andy entered.

"Have you been looking around the city?" he asked.

"Yes," said Andy; "I wanted to improve my time."

"I suppose, as this is your first visit, you see a good deal that is new?"

"It's all new," said Andy. "I feel tired, walking around so much."

"No doubt. Are you going to bed now?"

"I guess I'll turn in."

"I shan't go up quite yet. I have been staying here quietly, and I don't feel tired. I shall go up in the course of an hour or two."

"Good-night, then," said Andy.

"Good-night. I hope you'll sleep sound," said Fairfax, who was certainly entirely sincere in this wish, as the success of his plans depended on the soundness of our hero's repose.

Andy went upstairs, and lighted the gas in his bedroom. He noticed the door communicating with the next one, and tried it, but found it to be locked.

"That's all right," said Andy. "Nobody can get in that way."

He locked the principal door, and bolted it, also, which seemed to make him perfectly secure.

"Now," thought he, after undressing, "where shall I put the money?"

This was an important question, as he had between five hundred and a thousand dollars belonging to the Misses Grant, of which it was his duty to take even more care than if it belonged to himself.

"I guess I'll put it under the bolster," he reflected, "covering it up with the sheet. Nobody can get in, that I can see, but it is best to be careful."

In emptying his pockets, he came across the pocketbook, with its sham contents, of which mention has already been made.

"I'll leave that in my pocket," he said to himself, with a smile. "I'm not afraid of losing that. By the powers, it wouldn't be much of a prize to the man that took it; I'm sure of that."

He laid his clothes on a chair, in the middle of the room, and jumped into bed, when he soon sank into a deep sleep.

Meanwhile, Fairfax remained below in the reading-room. He was not at all sleepy, as he had told Andy, and his mind was full of the scheme of robbery, which appeared so promising. He was glad Andy had retired so early, as he would be asleep sooner, and this would make things favorable for his entering his young companion's chamber. It was his intention, after he had secured the "plunder"—to adopt a Western phrase—to come downstairs and leave the hotel, not to return, as otherwise, as soon as Andy should discover his loss, the door between the two rooms would, naturally, point to him as the thief.

He didn't go up to his room till half-past ten. This was an hour and a half later than Andy retired, and would give him a chance to get fast asleep.

"He must be asleep now," he thought.

On reaching the corridor on which both of the chambers were situated, he stood a moment before Andy's door, and listened. It was not often that our young hero was guilty of snoring, but to-night he was weary, and had begun to indulge in this nocturnal disturbance. The sounds which he heard were very satisfactory to Fairfax.

"The boy's fast asleep," he muttered. "I'll go into his room, and make quick work of it. Fairfax, you're in luck, for once. Fortune has taken a turn."

Softly he opened the door of his own room, and entered. He lit the gas, and then, going to the door of communication between the two rooms, he listened again. There was no cessation of the sounds which he had heard from the outside. He determined to make the attempt at once. Taking the proper key from his pocket, he fitted it into the lock, and, turning it, the door opened, and he stepped into the adjoining apartment. It was dark, for Andy had extinguished the gas on going to bed, but the gas from his own room made it sufficiently light for his purpose. He at once caught sight of Andy's clothes lying on the chair, where he had placed them. He glanced cautiously at our hero, as he lay extended upon the bed, with one arm flung out, but he saw no reason for alarm. Quickly he glided to the chair with noiseless step (he had removed his boots, by way of precaution), and thrust his hand into the pocket of the coat. It came in contact with the false pocketbook, which seemed bulky and full of money. Fairfax never doubted that it was the right one, and quickly thrust it into his own pocket. Just then Andy moved a little in bed, and Fairfax retreated, hastily, through the door, closing it after him.

"Now, the sooner I get out of this hotel, the better!" he thought. "The boy may wake and discover his loss. It isn't likely, but it may happen. At any rate it's very much better to be on the safe side."

He did not stop to examine the prize which he had secured. He had no doubt whatever that it contained the money he was after. To stop to count it might involve him in peril. He, therefore, put on his boots, and glided out of the chamber and downstairs.

To the clerk who was at the desk he said, as he surrendered his key:

"How late do you keep open? Till after midnight?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"All right. I may be out till late."

He left the key, and went out into the street. He hailed a passing car in Tremont Street, and rode for some distance. In Court Street he got on board a Charlestown car, and in half an hour found himself in the city everywhere known by the granite shaft that commemorates the battle of Bunker Hill. He made his way to a hotel, where he took a room, entering here under the name of James Simmons, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Anxious to examine his prize, he desired to be shown at once to a chamber. He followed the servant who conducted him with impatient steps. The stolen money was burning in his pocket. He wanted to know how much he had, and was more than half resolved to take an early train the next morning for the West, where he thought he should be secure from discovery.

"Is there anything wanted, sir?" asked the servant, lingering at the door.

"No, no," said Fairfax, impatiently. "It's all right."

"Might be a little more polite," muttered the snubbed servant, as he went downstairs.

"Now for it!" exclaimed Fairfax, exultingly. "Now, let me see how much I have got."

He drew the pocketbook from his pocket, and opened it. His heart gave a quick thump, and he turned ashy pale, as his glance rested upon the worthless roll of brown paper with which it had been stuffed.

"Curse the boy!" he cried, in fierce and bitter disappointment. "He has fooled me, after all! Why didn't I stop long enough to open the pocketbook before I came away? Blind, stupid fool that I was! I am

as badly off as before—nay, worse, for I have exposed myself to suspicion, and haven't got a penny to show for it."

I will not dwell upon his bitter self-reproaches, and, above all, the intense mortification he felt at having been so completely fooled by a boy, whom he had despised as verdant and inexperienced in the ways of the, world—to think that success had been in his grasp, and he had missed it, after all, was certainly disagreeable enough. It occurred to him that he might go back to the Adams House even now, and repair his blunder. It was not likely that Andy was awake yet. He was very weary, and boys of his age were likely, unless disturbed, to sleep through the night. He might retrieve his error, and no one would be the wiser.

"I'll do it," he said, at length.

He went downstairs, and left the hotel without the knowledge of the clerk. Jumping into the horse-cars, he returned to Boston, and entered the Adams House about half-past twelve o'clock. He claimed his key at the desk, and went upstairs to his room. He had scarcely lit the gas, however, when a knock was heard at the door. Opening it unsuspiciously, he turned pale, as he recognized the clerk, in company with an officer of the law.

"What's wanted?" he faltered.

"You are wanted," was the brief reply.

"What for?" he gasped.

"You are charged with entering the adjoining room, and stealing a pocketbook from the boy who sleeps there."

"It's a lie!" he said, but his tone was nervous.

"You must submit to a search," said the officer.

"Do you mean to insult me?" demanded Fairfax, assuming an air of outraged virtue.

"Not at all. I am only giving you a chance to clear yourself from suspicion."

"I am a respectable merchant from Portland. I was never so insulted in my life," said Fairfax.

"If the charge proves groundless, I will make you an ample apology," said the officer.

Fairfax was compelled to submit to the search. He cursed his stupidity in not throwing away the worthless pocketbook, but this he had neglected to do, and, of course, it was very significant evidence against him. Not only was this found, but the variety of keys already referred to.

"You carry a great many keys," said the officer.

"It isn't a crime to carry keys, is it?" demanded Fairfax, sullenly.

"Not if no improper use is made of them. I suspect that one of them will open the door into the next chamber."

The keys were tried, and one did open the door. As the light flashed into the room, Andy got up.

"Come here, young man," said the officer. "Can you identify that pocketbook?"

"I can," said Andy.

"Is it yours?"

"When I went to bed, it was in the pocket of my coat, lying on that chair."

"It is certainly a wonderful pocketbook. I have just found it in that gentleman's pocket."

Fairfax's eyes were bent malignantly upon Andy. A light flashed upon him. Now, he recognized him.

"I know you," he said. "You are the man that stopped Colonel Preston, and tried to rob him."

"You lie, curse you!" exclaimed Fairfax, springing forward, and trying to throw himself upon Andy. But he was not quick enough. The officer had interposed, and seized him by the collar.

"Not so fast, Mr. Marvin, or whatever your name is. We don't allow any such games as that. Sit down till I want you."

The baffled adventurer was jerked into a chair, from which he continued to eye Andy savagely.

"What's that affair you were talking about, young man?" asked the officer.

Andy briefly related his adventure with Fairfax on a former occasion.

"I'll trouble you to come with me, Mr. Marvin, or Fairfax," said the officer. "There's another hotel where lodgings are provided for such as you."

Resistance was useless, and the detected thief, though his name was registered at two hotels, was compelled to occupy a less agreeable room at the station-house. How he was detected will be explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXIX — A STARTLING EVENT

Sometimes, the mere presence of a person in the room is sufficient to interrupt even sound repose. At all events, whether it was the entrance of Fairfax, acting in some mysterious way upon Andy, or the light that streamed into the room, his slumber was disturbed, and his eyes opened just as the adventurer was retiring, with his supposed booty.

Our hero did not immediately take in the situation. He was naturally a little bewildered, being just aroused from sleep, but in a short time the real state of the case dawned upon him.

"By the powers!" he said to himself, "it's that man that went to the museum with me! He saw my money, and he came in for it! I'll get up and see."

Quietly and noiselessly he got out of bed, and, going to the chair, felt in his pockets, and so discovered the loss of the stuffed pocketbook.

Andy wanted to laugh, but forbore, lest the sound should be heard in the next room.

"It's a good joke on the dirty thafe!" said Andy, to himself. "He's welcome to all the money, he's got—it won't carry him far, I'm thinkin'."

Prudence suggested another thought. When Fairfax found out the worthlessness of his booty, would he not come back and search for the real treasure?

"If he does, I'll fight him," thought Andy.

Still, he knew the conflict would be unequal, since the other was considerably his superior in strength. However, Andy determined that, come what might, he would defend his trust, "or perish in the attempt." But, while he was coming to this determination, he heard the door of the adjoining chamber open softly, and then he could hear steps along the corridor. Evidently, the thief had not found out the actual character of his booty, but was going off under the impression that it was valuable.

"Maybe he'll come back," thought Andy. "I guess I'd better go down and give notice at the desk. Then, if he comes back, he'll get into hot water."

He hastily dressed himself, and, locking his door, went downstairs. First, however, he removed the money from under his pillow, and put it into his pocket. He found the clerk at the desk.

"Has the man that came in with me gone out?" asked Andy.

"Mr. Marvin?"

"Yes."

"He went out about five minutes ago."

"Did he say anything about coming back?"

"He said it would be late when he returned. He asked me if we kept open after twelve. Did you want to find him?"

"I should like to have the police find him," said Andy.

"How is that?" asked the clerk, surprised.

"He has robbed me."

"Did you leave your door unlocked?"

"No; but there was a door between our rooms. He opened it, and stole a pocketbook from the pocket of my coat."

"While you were asleep?"

"Yes; but I awoke just in time to see him go through the door."

"How much money was there in it?"

"That's the joke of it," said Andy, laughing; "there was no money at all, only some folds of paper. He got hold of the wrong pocketbook."

Thereupon, he told the story of the "drop game," of which he came near being a victim, and what a useful turn the bogus treasure had done him.

"There's the right pocketbook," he said, in conclusion. "I wish you would take care of it for me till to-morrow. The money isn't mine, and I don't want to run any more risk with it."

"I'll lock it up in the safe for you," said the clerk. "Is there much?"

"Several hundred dollars."

"You were very fortunate in escaping as you did," said the clerk.

"True for you," said Andy. "He may come back when he finds out how he has been fooled."

"If he does, I'll call a policeman. We'll make short work with him."

The reader has already heard how Fairfax (or Marvin) did return, and how he met with a reception he had not calculated upon. Andy was informed in the morning that it would be necessary for him to appear as a witness against him in order to secure his conviction. This he did the next day, but the judge delayed sentence, on being informed that the accused was charged with a more serious offense, that of stopping a traveler on the highway. His trial on this count must come before a higher court, and he was remanded to prison till his case was called in the calendar. Andy was informed that he would be summoned as a witness in that case also, as well as Colonel Preston, and answered that he would be ready when called upon.

We will so far anticipate events as to say that the testimony of Andy and the colonel was considered conclusive by the court, and,

on the strength of it, Mr. Fairfax, alias Marvin, was sentenced to several years' imprisonment at hard labor.

Andy met with no further adventures in his present visit, but had the satisfaction of delivering the money he had been sent to collect to Miss Priscilla Grant.

Now, advancing our story some three months, we come to an afternoon when Miss Sophia Grant, returning from a walk, with visible marks of excitement, rushed, breathless and panting, into her sister's presence.

"What's the matter, Sophia?" asked Priscilla.

"Such an awful thing!" she gasped.

"What is it?"

"You won't believe it."

"Tell me at once what it is!"

"It seems so sudden!"

"Good heavens! Sophia, why do you tantalize me so?"

"Just so!" gasped Sophia.

"If you don't tell me, I'll shake you!"

"Colonel Preston's dead—dropped dead in the store ten minutes ago. I was there, and saw him."

This startling intelligence was only too true. Suddenly, without an instant's warning, the colonel had been summoned from life—succumbing to a fit of apoplexy. This event, of course, made a great sensation in the village, but it is of most interest to us as it affects the fortunes of our young hero.

CHAPTER XXX — COLONEL PRESTON'S WILL

Mrs. Preston was a cold woman, and was far from being a devoted wife. She was too selfish for that supreme love which some women bestow upon their husbands. Still, when Colonel Preston's lifeless form was brought into the house, she did experience a violent shock. To have the companion of nearly twenty years so unexpectedly taken away might well touch the most callous, and so, for a few minutes, Mrs. Preston forgot herself and thought of her husband.

But this was not for long. The thought of her own selfish interests came back, and in the midst of her apparent grief the question forced itself upon her consideration, "Did my husband make a will?"

Of course, she did not give utterance to this query. She knew what was expected of her, and she was prudent enough to keep up appearances before the neighbors, who poured into the house to offer their sympathy. She received them with her cambric handkerchief pressed to her eyes, from which, by dint of effort, she succeeded in squeezing a few formal tears, and, while her bosom appeared to heave with emotion, she was mentally calculating how much Colonel Preston had probably left.

"Shan't I stay with you, my dear Mrs. Preston?" said worthy Mrs. Cameron, in a tone full of warm interest and sympathy.

"Thank you," said Mrs. Preston, in a low voice; "you are very kind, but I would rather be left alone."

"But it must be so sad for you to be alone in your sorrow," said her neighbor.

"No. I can bear sorrow better alone," said the newly made widow. "Perhaps I am peculiar, but I would prefer it."

"If you really wish it," said the other, reluctantly.

"Yes, I wish it. Thank you for your kind offer, but I know my own feelings, and the presence of others would only increase my pain."

This was what she said to others who made the same offer. It did not excite great surprise, for Mrs. Preston had never leaned upon anyone for sympathy, nor was she ready with her sympathy when others were in trouble. She was self-poised and self-contained, and, in fact, for this reason was not popular with her neighbors. Still, in this her distress they were ready to forget all this and extend the same cordial sympathy which they would have done in other cases. There was but one person whose company she did crave at this time and this was her son, Godfrey. So, when Alfred Turner offered to go for him the next morning, she accepted his offer with thanks.

At last she was left alone. The servant had gone to bed, and there was no one but herself and her dead husband in the lower part of the house. She no longer sat with her handkerchief pressed before her eyes. Her face wore its usual look of calm composure. She was busily thinking, not of her husband's fate, but of her own future.

"Did he leave a will? And, if so, how much did he leave me?" she thought.

If there was a will, it was probably in the house, and Mrs. Preston determined to find it, if possible.

"Of course, all ought to come to me and Godfrey," she soliloquized. "I don't think it is right to leave money to charitable institutions as long as a wife and child are living. Fortunately, my husband had no brothers or sisters, or perhaps he would have divided the property. If there is no will, I shall have my thirds, and shall have the control of Godfrey's property till he comes of age. I think I will go to Boston to live. My friend, Mrs. Boynton, has a very pleasant house on Worcester Street. I should like to settle down somewhere near her. I don't know how much Mr. Preston was worth,

but I am sure we shall have enough for that. I always wanted to live in the city. This village is intolerably stupid, and so are the people. I shall be glad to get away."

Could the good women, whose kind hearts had prompted them to proffer their sympathy, have heard these words they would not have been likely to obtrude any more on the hard, cold woman who held them in such low estimation.

Mrs. Preston took the lamp in her hand, and began to explore her husband's desk. She had often thought of doing so, but, as his death was not supposed to be so near, she had not thought that there was any immediate cause of doing so. Besides, it had almost been her belief that he had made no will. Now she began to open drawers and untie parcels of papers, but it was some time before she came to what she sought. At length, however, her diligence was rewarded. In the middle of a pile of papers, she found one labeled on the outside:

MY WILL.

Her heart beat as she opened it, and, though there was no need, for it was now past ten o'clock, and there was not likely to be a caller at that late hour, she looked cautiously about her, and even peered out of the window into the darkness, but could find no one whose observation she might fear.

I am not about to recite at length the items in the will, which covered a page of foolscap. It is enough to quote two items, which Mrs. Preston read with anger and dissatisfaction. They are as follows:

"Item.—To my young friend, Andy Burke, son of the widow Burke, of this village, in consideration of a valuable service rendered to me on one occasion, and as a mark of my regard and interest, I give and bequeath the sum of five thousand dollars; and to his mother, as a token of gratitude for her faithful nursing when I was dangerously sick with the smallpox, I give and bequeath, free of all incumbrance, the cottage in which she at present resides.

"Item.—To the town I give five thousand dollars, the interest to be annually appropriated to the purchase of books for a public library, for the benefit of all the citizens,

provided the town will provide some suitable place in which to keep them."

All the balance of the property was left to his wife and son, in equal proportions, his wife to be the guardian of Godfrey till he should have attained his majority. As Colonel Preston was well known to be rich, this seemed to be an adequate provision, but Mrs. Preston did not look upon it in that light. On the contrary, she was deeply incensed at the two legacies of which mention has been made above.

"Was ever anything more absurd than to waste five thousand dollars and a house upon that Irish boy and his mother?" she said to herself. "I don't suppose it was so much my husband's fault. That artful woman got around him, and wheedled him into it. I know now why she was so willing to come here and take care of him when he was sick. She wanted to wheedle him into leaving money to her low-lived boy. She is an artful and designing hussy, and I should like to tell her so to her face."

The cold and usually impassible woman was deeply excited. Her selfish nature made her grudge any of her husband's estate to others, except, indeed, to Godfrey, who was the only person she cared for. As she thought over the unjust disposition, as she regarded it, which her husband had made of his property, a red spot glowed in her usually pale cheek.

Then it was another grievance that money should have been left to the town.

"What claim had the town on my husband," she thought, "that he should give it five thousand dollars? In doing it, he was robbing Godfrey and me. It was wrong. He had no right to do it. What do I care for these people? They are a set of common farmers and mechanics, with whom I condescend to associate because I have no one else here, except the minister's and the doctor's family, to speak to. Soon I shall be in the city, and then I don't care if I never set eyes on any of them again. In Boston I can find suitable society."

The more Mrs. Preston thought of it, the more she felt aggravated by the thought that so large a share of her husband's property was to go to others. She fixed her eyes thoughtfully on the document which she held in her hand, and a strong temptation came to her.

"If this should disappear," she said to herself, "the money would be all mine and Godfrey's, and no one would be the wiser. That Irish boy and his mother would stay where they belonged, and my Godfrey would have his own. Why should I not burn it? It would only be just."

Deluding herself by this false view, she persuaded herself that it was right to suppress the will. With steady hand she held it to the flame of the lamp, and watched it as it was slowly consumed. Then, gathering up the fragments, she threw them away.

"It is all ours now," she whispered, triumphantly, as she prepared to go to bed. "It was lucky I found the will."

CHAPTER XXXI — MRS. PRESTON'S INTENTIONS

Godfrey returned home on the day after his father's death. He had never witnessed death before, and it frightened him, for the time, into propriety. He exhibited none of the stormy and impetuous grief which a warm-hearted and affectionate boy would have been likely to exhibit. It was not in his nature.

When he and his mother were left alone, he showed his resemblance to her, by asking:

"Do you know how much property father left?"

"I don't know. He never told me about his affairs as he ought. I think he must have left near a hundred thousand dollars."

Godfrey's eyes sparkled.

"That's a pile of money," he said. "It goes to me, don't it?"

"To us," said Mrs. Preston.

"A woman doesn't need so much money as a man," said Godfrey, selfishly.

"You are not a man yet," said his mother, dryly. "Your father may have left a will. In that case, he may have left a part of his property to others."

"Do you think he has?" inquired Godfrey, in alarm.

"I don't think any will will be found," said his mother, quietly. "He never spoke to me of making one."

"Of course not. That wouldn't be fair, would it?"

"It is fitting that the property should all go to us."

"When shall I get mine?"

"When you are twenty-one."

"That's a long time to wait," said Godfrey, grumblingly.

"You are only a boy yet. I shall probably be your guardian."

"I hope you'll give me a larger allowance than father did."

"I will."

"Must I go back to boarding school? I don't want to."

"If I go to Boston to live, as I think I shall, I will take you with me, and you can go to school there."

"That'll be jolly," said Godfrey, his eyes sparkling with anticipation. "I've got tired of this miserable town."

"So have I," said his mother. "We shall have more privileges in Boston."

"I can go to the theater as often as I please there, can't I?"

"We will see about that."

"How soon shall we move to the city?"

"As soon as business will allow. I must settle up your father's affairs here."

"Can't I go beforehand?"

"Would you leave me alone?" asked his mother, with a little touch of wounded affection, for she did feel attached to her son. He was the only one, indeed, for whom she felt any affection.

"You won't miss me, mother. It'll be awfully stupid here, and you know you'll be coming to the city as soon as you get through with the business."

Mrs. Preston was disappointed, but she should not have been surprised. Her only son reflected her own selfishness.

"It would not look well for you to go to the theater just at the present," she said.

"Why not?"

"So soon after your father's death."

Godfrey said nothing, but looked discontented. It was early to think of amusement, while his father lay yet unburied in the next room. He left the room, whistling. He could not gainsay his mother's objections, but he thought it hard luck.

A funeral in a country village is a public occasion. Friends and neighbors are expected to be present without invitation. Among those who assembled at the house were Mrs. Burke and Andy. They felt truly sorry for the death of Colonel Preston, who had been a friend to both. Mrs. Preston saw them enter, and, notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, the thought intruded: "They're after the legacy, but they will be disappointed. I've taken good care of that."

Godfrey saw them, also, and his thought was a characteristic one:

"What business has that Irish boy at my father's funeral? He ought to know better than to poke himself in where he is not wanted."

Even Godfrey, however, had the decency to let this thought remain unspoken. The services proceeded, and among those who followed on foot in the funeral procession were Andy and his mother. It never occurred to them that they were intruding. They wanted to show respect for the memory of one who had been a friend to them.

On the day after the funeral Squire Tisdale called at the house, invited by Mrs. Preston. The squire had a smattering of law, and often acted as executor in settling estates.

"I invited you to come here, Squire Tisdale," said Mrs. Preston, "to speak about my affairs. Of course, it is very trying to me to think of business so soon after the death of my dear husband"—here she

pressed her handkerchief to her tearless eyes—"but I feel it to be my duty to myself and my boy."

"Of course," said the squire, soothingly. "We can't give way to our feelings, however much we want to."

"That is my feeling," said Mrs. Preston, whose manner was wonderfully cool and collected, considering the grief which she desired to have it thought she experienced for her husband.

"Did Colonel Preston leave a will?" asked the squire.

"I don't think he did. He never mentioned making one to me. Did you ever hear of his making any?"

"I can't say that I ever did. I suppose it will be best to search."

"Won't it be more proper for you to make the search, Squire Tisdale?" said the widow. "I am an interested party."

"Suppose we search together. You can tell me where your husband kept his private papers."

"Certainly. He kept them in his desk. I locked it as soon as he died; but here is the key. If there is a will, it is probably there."

"Very probably. We shall soon ascertain, then."

Squire Tisdale took the key, and Mrs. Preston led the way to her late husband's desk. A momentary fear seized her.

"What if there was an earlier will, or two copies of the last?" she thought. "I ought to have made sure by looking over the other papers."

But it was too late now. Besides, it seemed very improbable that there should be another will. Had there been an earlier one, it would, doubtless, have been destroyed on the drafting of the one she had found. She reassured herself, therefore, and awaited with tranquillity the result of the search.

The search was careful and thorough. Mrs. Preston desired that it should be so. Knowing the wrong she had done to Andy and his mother, as well as the town, she was unnecessarily anxious to appear perfectly fair, and assured Squire Tisdale that, had there been a will, its provisions should have been carried out to the letter.

"There is no will here," said the squire, after a careful search.

"I did not expect you would find one," said the widow; "but it was necessary to make sure."

"Is there any other place where your husband kept papers?"

"We will look in the drawers and trunks," said Mrs. Preston; "but I don't think any will be found."

None was found.

"Can I do anything more for you, Mrs. Preston?" asked the squire.

"I should like your advice, Squire Tisdale. I am not used to business, and I would like the aid of your experience."

"Willingly," said the squire, who felt flattered.

"As my husband left no will, I suppose the estate goes to my son and myself?"

"Undoubtedly."

"How ought I to proceed?"

"You should apply for letters of administration, which will enable you to settle up the property."

"Will you help me to take the necessary steps?"

"Certainly."

"I should like to settle the estate as rapidly as possible, as I intend to remove to Boston."

"Indeed? We shall be sorry to lose you. Can you not content yourself here?"

"Everything will remind me of my poor husband," said Mrs. Preston, with another application of the handkerchief to her still tearless eyes.

Squire Tisdale was impressed with the idea that she had more feeling than he had thought.

"I didn't think of that," he said, sympathetically. "No doubt you are right."

Mrs. Preston lost no time in applying for letters of administration.

"As soon as I get them," she said to herself, "I will lose no time in ejecting that Irishwoman from the house my husband bought for her. I'll make her pay rent, too, for the time she has been in it."

CHAPTER XXXII — MRS. PRESTON'S REVENGE

Andy Burke was passing the house of Mrs. Preston, within a month after Colonel Preston's death, when Godfrey, who had not gone back to boarding school, showed himself at the front door.

"Come here!" said Godfrey, in an imperious tone.

Andy turned his head, and paused.

"Who are you talking to?" he asked.

"To you, to be sure."

"What's wanted?"

"My mother wants to see you."

"All right; I'll come in."

"You can go around to the back door," said Godfrey, who seemed to find pleasure in making himself disagreeable.

"I know I can, but I don't mean to," said Andy, walking up to the front entrance, where Godfrey was standing.

"The back door is good enough for you," said the other, offensively.

"I shouldn't mind going to it if you hadn't asked me," said Andy. "Just move away, will you?"

Godfrey did not stir.

"Very well," said Andy, turning; "tell your mother you would not let me in."

"Come in, if you want to," said Godfrey, at length, moving aside.

"I don't care much about it. I only came to oblige your mother."

"Maybe you won't like what she has to say," said Godfrey, with a disagreeable smile.

"I'll soon know," said Andy.

He entered the house, and Godfrey called upstairs: "Mother, the Burke boy is here."

"I'll be down directly," was the answer. "He can sit down."

Andy sat down on a chair in the hall, not receiving an invitation to enter the sitting-room, and waited for Mrs. Preston to appear. He wondered a little what she wanted with him, but thought it likely that she had some errand or service in which she wished to employ him. He did not know the extent of her dislike for him and his mother.

After a while Mrs. Preston came downstairs. She was dressed in black, but showed no other mark of sorrow for the loss of her husband. Indeed, she was looking in better health than usual.

"You can come into the sitting-room," she said, coldly.

Andy followed her, and so did Godfrey, who felt a malicious pleasure in hearing what he knew beforehand his mother intended to say.

"I believe your name is Andrew?" she commenced.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Your mother occupies a house belonging to my late husband."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Andy, who now began to guess at the object of the interview.

"I find, by examining my husband's papers, that she has paid no rent for the last six months."

"That's true," said Andy. "She offered to pay it, but Colonel Preston told her he didn't want no rent from her. He said she could have it for nothing."

"That's a likely story," said Godfrey, with a sneer.

"It's a true story," said Andy, in a firm voice, steadily eying his young antagonist.

"This may be true, or it may not be true," said Mrs. Preston, coldly. "If true, I suppose my husband gave your mother a paper of some kind, agreeing to let her have the house rent-free."

"She hasn't got any paper," said Andy.

"I thought not," said Godfrey, sneering. "You forgot to write her one."

"Be quiet, Godfrey," said his mother. "I prefer to manage this matter myself. Then, your mother has no paper to show in proof of what you assert?"

"No, ma'am. The colonel didn't think it was necessary. He just told my mother, when she first came with the rent, that she needn't trouble herself to come again on that errand. He said that she had nursed him when he was sick with the smallpox, and he'd never forget it, and that he'd bought the house expressly for her."

"I am aware that your mother nursed my husband in his sickness," said Mrs. Preston, coldly. "I also know that my husband paid her very handsomely for her services."

"That's true, ma'am," said Andy. "He was a fine, generous man, the colonel was, and I'll always say it."

"There really seems no reason why, in addition to this compensation, your mother should receive a present of her rent. How much rent did she pay before my husband bought the house?"

"Fifteen dollars a quarter."

"Then she has not paid rent for six months. I find she owes my husband's estate thirty dollars."

"Colonel Preston told her she wasn't to pay it."

"How do I know that?"

"My mother says it, and she wouldn't tell a lie," said Andy, indignantly.

"I have nothing to say as to that," said Mrs. Preston. "I am now managing the estate, and the question rests with me. I decide that your mother has been sufficiently paid for her services, and I shall claim rent for the last six months."

Andy was silent for a moment. Then he spoke:

"It may be so, Mrs. Preston. I'll speak to the doctor, and I'll do as he says."

"I don't know what the doctor has to do with the matter," said Mrs. Preston, haughtily.

"He wants to get an excuse for not paying," said Godfrey, with a sneer.

"Mind your business," said Andy, excusably provoked.

"Do you hear that, mother?" said Godfrey. "Are you going to let that beggar insult me before your very face?"

"You have spoken very improperly to my son," said Mrs. Preston.

"He spoke very improperly to me at first," said Andy, sturdily.

"You do not appear to understand the respect due to me," said Mrs. Preston, with emphasis.

"If I've treated you disrespectfully, I'm sorry," said Andy; "but Godfrey mustn't insult me, and call me names."

"We have had enough of this," said Mrs. Preston. "I have only to repeat that your mother is indebted to me for six months' rent—thirty dollars—which I desire she will pay as soon as possible. One thing more: I must request her to find another home, as I have other plans for the house she occupies."

"You're not goin' to turn her out of her house, sure?" said Andy, in some dismay.

"It is not her house," said Mrs. Preston; though it occurred to her that it might have been, if she had not suppressed the will. But, of course, Andy knew nothing of this, nor did he suspect anything, since neither he nor his mother had the faintest idea of being remembered in Colonel Preston's will, kind though he had been to them both in his life.

"I know it isn't," said Andy; "but she's got used to it. I don't know any other place we can get."

"That is your lookout," said Mrs. Preston. "I have no doubt you can get in somewhere. As I said, the house is mine, and I have other views for it."

"Can't we stay till the end of the quarter, ma'am?"

"No; I wish to finish my business here as soon as possible, and then shall go to Boston."

"How long can we stay, then?"

"Till the first of the month."

"That's only three days."

"It is long enough to find another place. That is all I have to say," and Mrs. Preston turned to go.

Andy rose, and followed her, without a word. He saw that it would be of no use to appeal for more time. Her tone was so firm and determined that there evidently was no moving her.

"What will we do?" thought Andy, as he walked slowly and silently along the road.

He felt the need of consulting somebody older and more experienced than himself. Just in the nick of time he met Dr. Townley, in whose friendship he felt confidence.

"Can you stop a minute, Dr. Townley?" he said. "I want to speak to you about something."

"I can spare two minutes, if you like, Andy," said the doctor, smiling.

Andy explained the case.

"It is quite true," said the doctor. "Colonel Preston intended your mother to pay no rent—he told me so himself; but, as your mother has no written proof, I suppose you will have to pay it. Shall I lend you the money?"

"No need, doctor. We've got money enough for that. But we must move out in three days. Where shall we go?"

"I'll tell you. I own the small house occupied by Grant Melton. He sets out for the West to-morrow, with his family. I'll let it to your mother for the same rent she's been paying."

"Thank you," said Andy, gratefully. "It's better than the house we've been living in. It's a good change."

"Perhaps you won't like me for a landlord so well as Mrs. Preston," said the doctor, smiling.

"I'll risk it," said Andy.

Two days afterward the transfer was made. Mrs. Preston was disappointed, and Godfrey still more so, to find their malice had done the widow Burke no harm.

By advice of the doctor, Andy deferred paying the thirty dollars claimed as rent, availing himself of the twelve months allowed for the

payment of debts due the estate of one deceased.

"If it was anybody else, I'd pay at once," said Andy; "but Mrs. Preston has treated us so meanly that I don't mean to hurry."

The delay made Mrs. Preston angry, but she was advised that it was quite legal.

CHAPTER XXXIII — ANDY LOSES HIS PLACE

Andy and his mother moved into Dr. Townley's cottage. It was rather an improvement upon the house in which they had lived hitherto, but, then, there was this great difference: For the one they had no rent to pay, but for the other they paid fifty dollars rent. Dr. Townley would gladly have charged nothing, but he was a comparatively poor man, and could not afford to be as generous as his heart would have dictated. He had a fair income, being skillful and in good practice, but he had a son in college, and his expenses were a considerable drain upon his father's purse. Still, with the money saved, and Andy's weekly earnings, the Burkes were able to live very comfortably and still pay the rent. But a real misfortune was in store for Andy.

Miss Sophia Grant was taken sick with lung fever. The sickness lasted for some weeks, and left her considerably debilitated.

"What do you think of Sophia, Dr. Townley?" asked Priscilla, anxiously. "She remains weak, and she has a bad cough. I am feeling alarmed about her."

"I'll tell you what I think, Miss Priscilla," said the doctor, "though I am sorry to do it. The fact is, the air here is altogether too bracing for your sister. She will have to go to some inland town, where the east winds are not felt."

"Then I must go, too," said Miss Priscilla. "We have lived together from girlhood, and we cannot be separated."

"I supposed you would be unwilling to leave her, so I am afraid we must make up our minds to lose you both."

"Do you think, doctor, that Sophia will, by and by, be strong enough to return here?"

"I am afraid not. The effects of lung fever are always felt for a long time. She will improve, no doubt, but a return to this harsh air would, I fear, bring back her old trouble."

"I asked because I wanted to know whether it would be best to keep this place. After what you have told me, I shall try to sell it."

"I am truly sorry, Miss Priscilla."

"So am I, Dr. Townley. I don't expect any place will seem so much like home as this."

"Have you any particular place that you think of going to?"

"Yes; I have a niece married in a small town near Syracuse, New York State. They don't have east winds there. I'll get Priscilla (she's named after me) to hunt up a cottage that we can live in, and move right out there. I suppose we'd better go soon?"

"Better go at once. Weak lungs must be humored."

"Then I'll write to Priscilla to get me a boarding house, and we'll start next week."

There was one person whom this removal was likely to affect seriously, and this was our young hero.

"I hope Andy'll be able to get a place," said Priscilla, after she had communicated the doctor's orders to her sister.

"Just so, Priscilla. He's a good boy."

"I will give him a good recommendation."

"Just so. Does he know it?"

"No. I will call him in and tell him, so that he can be looking out for another position."

"Just so."

Andy answered the call of Miss Priscilla. He had been sawing wood, and there was sawdust in his sleeves.

"How long have you been with us, Andy?" asked his mistress.

"Over a year, ma'am."

"I wish I could keep you for a year to come."

"Can't you?" asked Andy, startled.

"No, Andy."

"What's the matter, Miss Priscilla? Have I done anything wrong?"

"No, Andy. We are both of us quite satisfied with you."

"You haven't lost any money, ma'am, have you? I'll work for less, if you can't afford to pay as much as you've been paying."

"Thank you, Andy, but it isn't that. My sister's lungs are weak, and Dr. Townley has ordered her to move to a less exposed place. We are going to move away from the town."

"I'm sorry," said Andy, and he was, for other reasons than because he was about to lose a good place.

"We shall miss you, Andy."

"Just so," chimed in Miss Sophia, with a cough.

"You see how weak my sister's lungs are. It's on her account we are going."

"Shan't you come back again, ma'am?"

"No, Andy. The doctor says it will never be safe for us to do so. I hope you will get a good place."

"I hope so, ma'am; but you needn't think of that."

"We are prepared to give you a good recommendation. We feel perfectly satisfied with you in every way."

"Just so," said Sophia.

"Thank you, ma'am, and you, too, Miss Sophia. I've tried to do my duty faithfully by you."

"And you have, Andy."

"How soon do you go, ma'am?"

"Next week, if we can get away. The doctor says we can't get away too soon. So you had better be looking around, to see if you can get a place somewhere."

"I will, ma'am; but I'll stay with you till the last day. You'll need me to pack up for you."

"Yes, we shall. To-morrow I'll write you the recommendation."

"Thank you, ma'am."

Andy did not sleep as much as usual that night. His wages were the main support of his mother and sister, and he could think of no other place in the village where he was likely to be employed. He had a little money saved up, but he didn't like the idea of spending it. Besides, it would not last long.

"I wish Dr. Townley wanted a boy," thought Andy. "I'd rather work for the doctor than for anybody else in the village. He's a nice man, and he cares just as much for poor folks as he does for rich folks. I am sure he likes me better than he does Godfrey Preston."

But Dr. Townley already had a boy, whom he did not like to turn off. Nor could he have afforded to pay Andy as high wages as he had received from the Misses Grant. There really seemed to be no vacant place in the village for our young hero to fill, and, of course, this troubled him.

Next week the Misses Grant got away from the village. They gave Andy as a present an old-fashioned silver watch, about the size and shape of a turnip. Andy was glad to get it, old-fashioned as it was, and he thanked them warmly.

The day afterward he was walking slowly along the village street, when he came upon Godfrey Preston strutting along, with an air of importance. He and his mother had removed to Boston, but they were visiting the town on a little business.

"Hello, there!" said Godfrey, halting.

"Hello!" said Andy.

"You've lost your place, haven't you?" asked Godfrey, with a sneer.

"Yes."

"How are you going to live?"

"By eating, I expect," answered Andy, shortly.

"If you can get anything to eat, you mean?"

"We got enough so far."

"Perhaps you won't have, long. You may have to go to the poorhouse."

"When I do, I shall find you there."

"What do you mean?" demanded Godfrey, angrily.

"I mean I shan't go there till you do."

"You're proud for a beggar."

"I'm more of a gentleman than you are."

"I'd thrash you, only I won't demean myself by doing it."

"That's lucky, or you might get thrashed yourself."

"You're only an Irish boy."

"I'm proud of that same. You won't find me go back on my country."

Godfrey walked away. Somehow, he could never get the better of Andy.

"I hope I'll see you begging in rags, some day," he thought to himself.

But boys like Andy are not often reduced to such a point.

CHAPTER XXXIV — THE WILL AT LAST

The next three months passed very unsatisfactorily for Andy. In a small country town like that in which he lived there was little opportunity for a boy, however industrious, to earn money. The farmers generally had sons of their own, or were already provided with assistants, and there was no manufacturing establishment in the village to furnish employment to those who didn't like agriculture. Andy had some idea of learning the carpenter trade, there being a carpenter who was willing to take an apprentice, but, unfortunately, he was unwilling to pay any wages for the first year—only boarding the apprentice—and our hero felt, for his mother's sake, that it would not do to make such an engagement.

When the three months were over, the stock of money which Andy and his mother had saved up was almost gone. In fact, he had not enough left to pay the next quarter's rent to Dr. Townley.

Things were in this unsatisfactory state, when something happened that had a material effect upon Andy's fortunes, and, as my readers will be glad to know, for their improvement.

To explain what it was, I must go back to a period shortly before Colonel's Preston's death. One day he met the doctor in the street, and stopped to speak to him.

"Dr. Townley," he said, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"I shall be very glad to serve you, Colonel Preston," said the doctor.

Thereupon Colonel Preston drew from his inside pocket a sealed envelope of large size.

"I want you to take charge of this for me," he said.

"Certainly," said the doctor, in some surprise.

"Please read what I have written upon the envelope."

The doctor, his attention called to the envelope, read, inscribed in large, distinct characters:

"Not to be opened till six months after my death."

"I see you want an explanation," said the colonel. "Here it is—the paper contained in this envelope is an important one. I won't tell you what it is. When you come to open it, it will explain itself."

"But, colonel, you are likely to live as long as I. In that case, I can't follow your directions."

"Of course, we can't tell the duration of our lives. Still, I think you will outlive me. If not, I shall reclaim the paper. Meanwhile, I shall be glad to have you take charge of it for me."

"Of course I will. It is a slight favor to ask."

"It may prove important. By the way, there is no need of telling anyone, unless, perchance, your wife. I don't want to force you to keep anything secret from her. Mrs. Townley, I know, may be depended upon."

"I think she may. Well, Colonel Preston, set your mind at rest. I will take care of the paper."

When Colonel Preston died, not long afterward, the doctor naturally thought of the paper, and, as no will was left, it occurred to him that this might be a will; but, in that case, he couldn't understand why he should have been enjoined to keep it six months before opening it. On the whole, he concluded that it was not a will.

Seated at the supper table, about this time, Mrs. Townley said, suddenly:

"Henry, how long is it since Colonel Preston died?"

"Let me see," said the doctor, thoughtfully. "It is—yes, it is siX — months to-morrow."

"Then it is time for you to open that envelope he gave into your charge."

"So it is. My dear, your feminine curiosity inspired that thought," said the doctor, smiling.

"Perhaps you are right. I own I am a little inquisitive in the matter."

"I am glad you mentioned it. I have so much on my mind that I should have let the day pass, and I should be sorry not to fulfill to the letter the promise I made to my friend."

"Have you any suspicion as to the nature of the document?"

"I thought it might be a will; but, if so, I can't understand why a delay of six months should have been interposed."

"Colonel Preston may have had his reasons. Possibly he did not fully trust his wife's attention to his requests."

"It may be so. I am afraid his married life was not altogether harmonious. Mrs. Preston always struck me as a very selfish woman."

"No doubt of that."

"She evidently regarded herself as superior to the rest of us."

"In that respect Godfrey is like her. He is a self-conceited, disagreeable young jackanapes. I wouldn't give much for his chances of honorable distinction in life. I'll tell you of a boy who will, in my opinion, beat him in the race of life."

"Who is that?"

"Andy Burke."

"Andy is a good boy, but I am afraid the family is doing poorly now."

"So I fear. The, fact is, there doesn't appear to be much opening for a lad like Andy in this village."

"I hear that Mr. Graves, the storekeeper, who is getting old, wants to get a boy, or young man, with a small capital to take an interest in his business, and, eventually, succeed him."

"That would be a good chance for Andy, if he had the small capital; but he probably hasn't ten dollars in the world."

"That's a pity."

"If I were a capitalist, I wouldn't mind starting him myself; but as you, my dear, are my most precious property, and are not readily convertible into cash, I don't quite see my way to do anything to assist him."

"I didn't think of you, Henry. Country doctors are not likely to get rich. But I thought Colonel Preston, who seemed to take an interest in the boy, might do something for him."

"If he had lived, he might have done so—probably he would. But Mrs. Preston and Godfrey hate the Burkes like poison, for no good reason that I know of, and there is no chance of help from that quarter."

"I should think not."

The next day, Dr. Townley, immediately after breakfast, drew the envelope already referred to from among his private papers, and, breaking the seal, opened it.

To his surprise and excitement, he discovered that the inclosure was the last will and testament of his deceased friend. Accompanying it was the following note:

"MY DEAR FRIEND, DR. TOWNLEY: This is the duplicate of a will executed recently, and expresses my well-considered wishes as to the disposition of my property. The original will may have been found and executed before you open this envelope. In that case, of course, this will be of no value, and you can destroy it. But I am aware that valuable papers are liable to loss or injury, and, therefore, I deem it prudent to place

this duplicate in your possession, that, if the other be lost, you may see it carried into execution. I have named you my executor, and am sure, out of regard to me, you will accept the trust, and fulfill it to the best of your ability. I have always felt the utmost confidence in your friendship, and this will account for my troubling you on the present occasion.

"Your friend,
"Anthony Preston."

From this letter Dr. Townley turned to the perusal of the will. The contents filled him with equal surprise and pleasure.

"Five thousand dollars to Andy Burke!" he repeated. "That is capital! It will start the boy in life, and with his good habits it will make him sure of a competence by and by. With half of it he can buy an interest in Graves' store, and the balance will, if well invested, give him a handsome addition to his income. Then there's the bequest for the town library—a capital idea, that! It will do a great deal to make the town attractive, and be a powerful agency for refining and educating the people."

Just then Mrs. Townley, who knew what her husband was about, came into the room.

"Well, Henry," she said, "is the paper important?"

"I should say it was. It is Colonel Preston's last will and testatment."

"Is it possible? How does he leave his property?"

"He leaves five thousand dollars for a town library."

"Does he remember Andy Burke?"

"He leaves him five thousand dollars, and gives his mother the house they used to live in."

"That's splendid! But what will Mrs. Preston say?"

"Well, that remains to be seen," said the doctor, laughing.

CHAPTER XXXV — MRS. PRESTON IS UNPLEASANTLY SURPRISED

Dr. Townley thought it best to consult with the town authorities as to the course to be pursued, since, as it appeared, the town was interested in the will. It was decided that the doctor and Mr. Graves, who was the Chairman of the Selectmen, should go to Boston the next day and inform Mrs. Preston of the discovery of the will. Until after this interview it was deemed best not to mention the matter to Andy or his mother.

Mrs. Preston was established in a showy house at the South End. At last she was living as she desired to do. She went to the theater and the opera, and was thinking whether she could afford to set up a carriage. Godfrey she had placed at a private school, and was anxious to have him prepare for admission to Harvard College, but in this hope she seemed destined to be disappointed. Godfrey wanted to see life and enjoy himself, and had no intention of submitting to the drudgery of hard study.

"Godfrey," said his mother one morning, "I have received a letter from your teacher, complaining that you don't work."

"I'm not going to work myself to death," answered Godfrey.

"I don't expect you to hurt yourself with work, but I want you to go to college."

"Oh, well, I'll get in somehow."

"Don't you want to stand well as a scholar?" she asked.

"I leave that to the poor fellows that have got to work for a living. I am rich."

"You may lose your money."

"I don't mean to."

"Suppose you do?"

"Then I will go to work."

"I should like to have you graduate well at college and then study law. You might get into Congress," said his mother.

"I guess I'll know enough for that," said Godfrey, carelessly. "I want to have a good time."

That was not the worst of it, however. He extorted from his mother a large allowance, which he spent at bars and billiard saloons, and one day was brought home drunk by a schoolfellow.

"Oh, Godfrey, how can you do so?" exclaimed the selfish woman, for once fairly alarmed on another's account.

"Hush up, old woman!" hiccoughed Godfrey.

Mrs. Preston was mortified to think this should be said to her before Godfrey's schoolmate.

"He does not know what he is saying," she said, apologetically.

"Yes, I do," persisted Godfrey. "I'm a—a gen'leman's son. I don't want you to interfere with gen'leman's son."

He was put to bed, and awoke the next morning with a splitting headache. It was the morning of the day which the doctor and Mr. Graves had chosen to call on Mrs. Preston. She was preparing to go out, when a servant came upstairs to announce that two gentlemen were in the parlor, and wanted to see her.

"Two gentlemen! What do they look like, Nancy?"

"One of 'em looks like he was from the country, mum."

This referred to Mr. Graves, who did have a rustic look. The doctor would readily have passed for a Bostonian.

"Did they give their names?"

"No, mum."

"I will go down directly. I suppose they won't stay long."

Mrs. Preston sailed into the parlor with the air of a city lady, as she proudly imagined, but stopped short in some surprise when she recognized her visitors. Of course, she did not suspect the nature of their business.

Dr. Townley arose as she entered.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Preston," he said. "I hope I find you well?"

"I am quite well," said Mrs. Preston, coldly, for she had never liked the doctor. She had an unpleasant feeling that he understood her, and was not among her admirers. "Good-morning, Mr. Graves. You come to the city occasionally?"

"I don't often get time to come up, but the doctor thought I ought to come."

"Indeed! I am sorry to say that I am just going out."

"I must ask you to defer going till we have communicated our business," said the doctor.

"Business?" repeated Mrs. Preston, seating herself in some surprise.

"Yes—business of importance. In short, your husband's will has come to light."

"My husband's will!" exclaimed Mrs. Preston. "I thought——"

She checked herself suddenly. She was about to say, "I thought I had destroyed it," and that would have let the cat out of the bag with a vengeance.

"You thought that he left no will," said the doctor, finishing the sentence for her. "He really left two——"

"Two!"

"That's it—he executed two—exactly alike. One he left in my hands."

"That is a likely story!" said Mrs. Preston, excitedly. "If that is the case, why, I ask, have we heard nothing of this before?"

"Because it was contained in an envelope, which I was requested not to open for six months after his decease. The time having expired——"

"May I ask what are the provisions of this pretended will?" demanded Mrs. Preston, in visible excitement.

"Mrs. Preston," said the doctor, with dignity, "you appear to forget that you are addressing a gentleman. I am above fabricating a will, as you seem to insinuate. As to the provisions, it leaves five thousand dollars to the town for the establishment of a public library, and five thousand dollars to Andy Burke, besides the small house in which she used to live to the widow Burke."

The worst had come. In spite of her criminal act, she must lose the ten thousand dollars; and, worst of all, those whom she hated and despised were to profit by her loss.

"This is simply outrageous, Dr. Townley," she said.

"You are speaking of your husband's will, Mrs. Preston."

"I don't believe he made it."

"There can be no doubt of it. Mr. Graves has examined it, and he and myself are so familiar with the handwriting of your husband that we have no hesitation in pronouncing the will genuine."

"Colonel Preston must have been insane if he really made such a will."

"I was his medical adviser," said Dr. Townley, quietly, "and I never detected the least sign of an unsound mind."

"The fact of robbing his wife and child to enrich an Irishwoman and her son is proof enough of his insanity."

"Pardon me, madam, but such bequests are made every day. Outside of their legacies your husband left ample fortune, and there is no danger of your being impoverished."

"Did you bring the will with you?"

"No. I did not feel like incurring the risk."

"I shall contest the will," said Mrs. Preston, passionately.

"I would not advise you to. The proof of its genuineness is overwhelming. I suppose you never saw the other will?"

Mrs. Preston, at this unexpected question, in spite of her strong nerves, turned pale, and faltered:

"Of course not," she said, after a slight pause.

"Your husband asserts positively in a note to me that he made one," said the doctor, bending his eyes searchingly upon her, for he suspected the truth, and that it was distrust of his wife that led Colonel Preston to take the precaution he had done. "Its disappearance is mysterious."

"What do you mean?" cried Mrs. Preston, sharply, and not altogether without alarm.

"I meant only to express my surprise."

"If your business is over, I will go out."

"I have only this to say, that, being named in the will as executor, I shall take immediate measures to have the will admitted to probate. Should you make up your mind to contest it, you can give me due notice through your legal adviser. In that case," he added, significantly, "the question of the disappearance of the other will will come up."

"I will consult my lawyer," said Mrs. Preston.

Though she said this, her determination was already made. "Conscience makes cowards of us all," and the doctor's last hint alarmed her so much that she decided to make no opposition to the setting up of the will. But it was a bitter pill to swallow.

"Graves," said Dr. Townley, as he left the house, "that woman destroyed the other will."

"Do you think so?" asked Mr. Graves, startled.

"I feel sure of it. Let me predict also that she will not contest this will. She is afraid to."

And the doctor was right.

CHAPTER XXXVI — ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL

Andy was quite unconscious of the good fortune which had come to him. Though a manly and stout-hearted boy, he was, in fact, getting discouraged. He was willing and anxious to work, but there seemed to be no work for him to do. He would have left home some time since to try his fortune elsewhere, but for the entreaties of his mother, who didn't like to lose him.

In the morning after Dr. Townley's visit to Boston, our hero knocked at the doctor's front door.

"Is Dr. Townley at home?" he asked.

"Yes, Andy," said the doctor, who overheard the inquiry. "Come right in. You're just the boy I want to see."

Andy entered, twirling his hat awkwardly in his hand.

"Good-morning, Andy," said the doctor, cordially. "Take a seat."

"Thank you, sir," said Andy, but did not sit down.

"What is the matter? You are looking rather blue this morning."

"Faith, doctor, and that's the way I feel entirely."

"You're not sick, are you? Let me feel your pulse."

"No, I'm not sick, but it's discouraged I am."

"Why should a stout boy in good health be discouraged?"

"I can't get any work to do, and I'm afraid we'll all starve."

"It strikes me," said the doctor, fixing his eyes on Andy, enjoying the effect of his intended announcement, "that I wouldn't talk of starving, if I were as rich as you are, Andy."

"As rich as me?" echoed Andy. "Shure, doctor, you're jokin'."

"Not at all."

"Why, I haven't got but seventy-five cents in the world."

"Now it's you that are joking, Andy."

"I wish I was," sighed Andy.

"Why, I had it on good authority that you were worth five thousand dollars."

Andy stared in earnest.

"I see you're laughin' at me, doctor," he said, suspecting that Dr. Townley was making game of him.

"No, I am not. I am in earnest."

"Who told you such a big falsehood as that, now?" asked our hero, bewildered.

"Perhaps I dreamed that somebody told me Colonel Preston had left you five thousand dollars in his will."

"Are you jokin'? Is it true?" asked Andy, eagerly, something in the doctor's face telling him that he really meant what he said.

"Maybe I dreamed, too, that the colonel left your mother the house she used to live in."

"Is it true, doctor? Tell me, quick!" said Andy, trembling with excitement.

"Yes, my boy, it's all true, and I'm glad to be the first to congratulate you on your good fortune."

He held out his hand, which our hero seized, and then, unable to repress his exultation, threw up his cap to the ceiling and indulged in an extempore dance, the doctor meanwhile looking on with benevolent gratification.

"Excuse me, doctor; I couldn't help it," he panted.

"It's all right, Andy. Are you discouraged now?"

"Divil a bit, doctor. It's wild I am with joy."

"And you don't think of starving yet, eh, Andy?"

"I'll wait a bit. But why didn't I know before?"

"Sit down, and I'll tell you all about it."

So Andy heard the account, which need not be repeated.

"Now," continued the doctor, "I'll tell you what plan I have for you. Mr. Graves wants to take a boy into his store who will buy an interest in the business and become his partner. He thinks well of you, and is willing to take you. What do you say?"

"I'll do whatever you think best, doctor."

"Then I think this is a good opening for you. Mr. Graves wants to retire from business before long. Probably by the time you are twenty-one he will leave everything in your hands. You will be paid weekly wages and perhaps be entitled to a portion of the profits—more than enough to support you all comfortably. What do you say? Shall we have a new firm in the village?

Andy's eyes sparkled with proud anticipation. It was so far above any dream he had ever formed.

"It's what I'd like above all things," he said. "Oh, what will mother say? I must go and tell her."

"Go, by all means, Andy, and when you have told her, come back, and I'll go over with you to Mr. Graves' store, and we'll talk over the arrangements with him."

Mrs. Burke's delight at her own success and that of Andy may be imagined. She, too, had been getting despondent, and it seemed almost like a fairy tale to find herself the owner of a house, and her boy likely to be taken into partnership with the principal trader in the village. She invoked blessings on the memory of Colonel Preston, through whose large-hearted generosity this had come to pass, but could not help speculating on what Mrs. Preston would say. She understood very well that she would be very angry.

Mrs. Preston did not dispute the will. She might have done so, but for her fear that her own criminal act would be brought to light. Godfrey, who was even more disturbed than she was at the success of "that low Irish boy," begged her to do it, but in this case she did not yield to his entreaties. She had never dared to take him into confidence respecting her destruction of the other will.

While we are upon this subject, we may as well trace out the future career of Mrs. Preston. Some years later she was induced, by the expectation of aiding her social standing, to marry an adventurer who appeared to be doing a flourishing business as a State Street broker. By spurious representations, he managed to get hold of her property, and to be appointed Godfrey's guardian. The result may be foreseen. He managed to spend or waste the whole and when Godfrey was twenty-one, he and his mother were penniless. Andy, who was now sole representative of the firm of Graves & Burke, and in receipt of an excellent income, heard of the misfortunes of his old enemy, and out of regard to the memory of his old benefactor voluntarily offered Mrs. Preston an allowance of five hundred dollars.

It cost her pride a great deal to accept this favor from the boy she had looked down upon as "only an Irish boy," but her necessity was greater than her pride, and she saw no other way of escaping the poorhouse. So she ungraciously accepted. But Andy did not care for thanks. He felt that he was doing his duty, and he asked no other reward than that consciousness. Mrs. Preston was allowed to make her home, rent free, in Mrs. Burke's old house, Andy having built a better and more commodious one, in which he had installed his mother as mistress. Mrs. Preston grew old fast, in appearance, and fretted without ceasing for the fortune and position which she had lost. Her husband left her, and has not since been heard of. As for Godfrey, Andy secured him a passage to California, where he led a disreputable life. There is a rumor that he was killed in a drunken brawl at Sacramento not long since, but I have not been able to learn whether this is true or not. His loss of fortune had something to do with his going to the bad, but I am afraid, with his character and tendencies, that neither in prosperity nor in adversity would he have built up a good character, or led an honorable career. His course had been, in all respects, far different from that of our hero, who, already prosperous, seems likely to go on adding to his wealth, and growing in the esteem of the best portion of the community. His success, aided, indeed, by good fortune, has served to demonstrate the favorable effects of honesty, industry, and good principles, upon individual success. He is not the first, nor will he be the last, to achieve prosperity and the respect of the community, though beginning life as "only an Irish boy."

THE END

Transcriber's comments:

Spelling has been left as in the original book. Specifically, the dialect and typographical errors have been left unchanged.

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