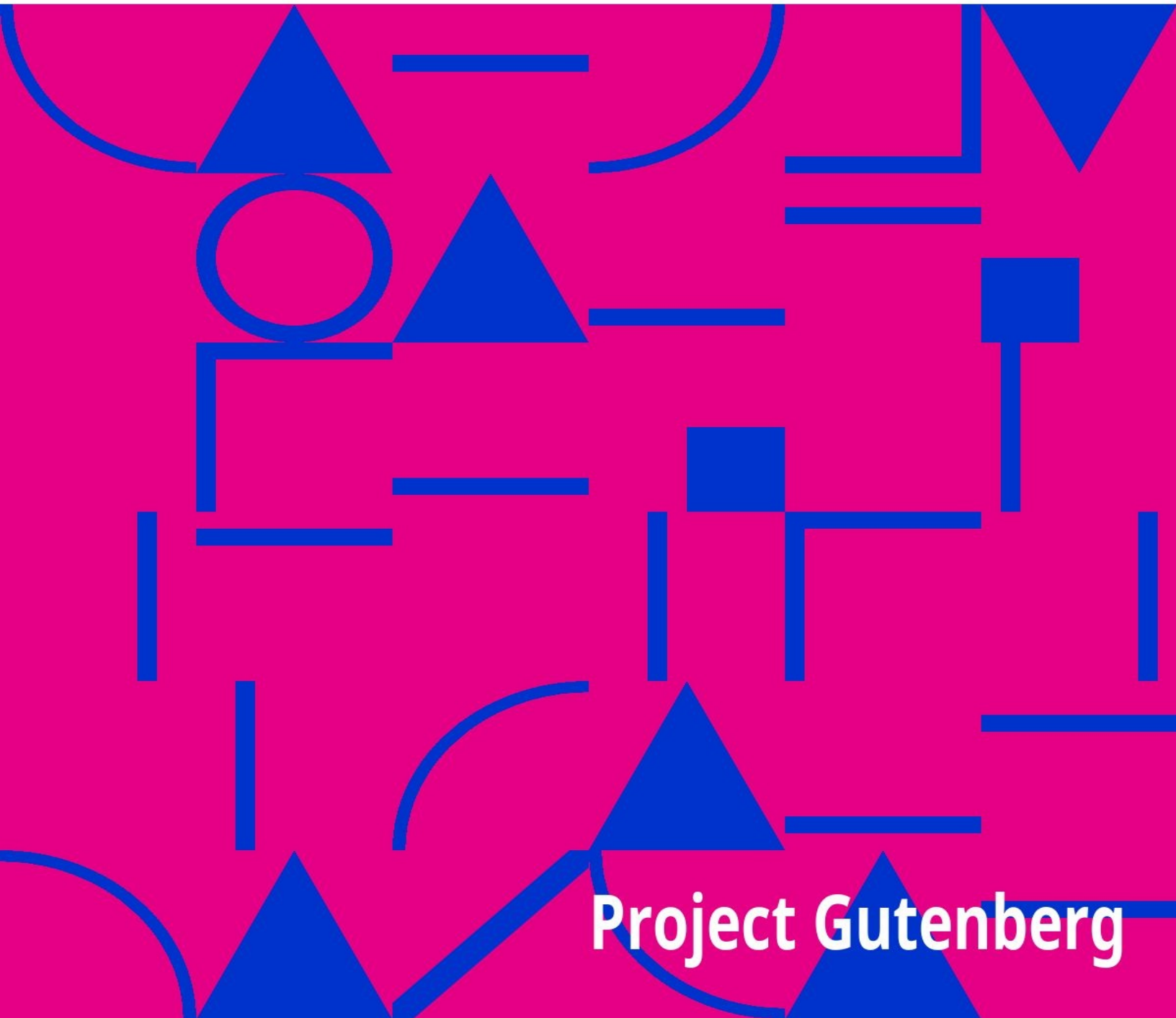
Jack's Ward; Or, The Boy Guardian

Jr. Horatio Alger



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OR

THE BOY GUARDIAN

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

1910

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BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Horatio Alger, Jr., an author who lived among and for boys and himself remained a boy in heart and association till death, was born at Revere, Mass., January 13, 1834. He was the son of a clergyman; was graduated at Harvard College in 1852, and at its Divinity School in 1860; and was pastor of the Unitarian Church at Brewster, Mass., in 1862-66.

In the latter year he settled in New York and began drawing public attention to the condition and needs of street boys. He mingled with them, gained their confidence, showed a personal concern in their affairs, and stimulated them to honest and useful living. With his first story he won the hearts of all red-blooded boys everywhere, and of the seventy or more that followed over a million copies were sold during the author's lifetime.

In his later life he was in appearance a short, stout, bald-headed man, with cordial manners and whimsical views of things that amused all who met him. He died at Natick, Mass., July 18, 1899.

Mr. Alger's stories are as popular now as when first published, because they treat of real live boys who were always up and about—just like the boys found everywhere to-day. They are pure in tone and inspiring in influence, and many reforms in the juvenile life of New York may be traced to them. Among the best known are:

Strong and Steady; Strive and Succeed; Try and Trust; Bound to Rise; Risen from the Ranks; Herbert Carter's Legacy; Brave and Bold; Jack's Ward; Shifting for Himself; Wait and Hope; Paul the Peddler; Phil the Fiddler; Slow and Sure; Julius the Street Boy; Tom the Bootblack; Struggling Upward; Facing the World; The Cash Boy; Making His Way; Tony the Tramp; Joe's Luck; Do and Dare; Only an Irish Boy; Sink or Swim; A Cousin's Conspiracy; Andy Gordon; Bob Burton; Harry Vane; Hector's Inheritance; Mark Mason's Triumph; Sam's Chance; The Telegraph Boy; The Young Adventurer; The Young Outlaw; The Young Salesman, and *Luke Walton*.

JACK'S WARD

CHAPTER I

JACK HARDING GETS A JOB

"Look here, boy, can you hold my horse a few minutes?" asked a gentleman, as he jumped from his carriage in one of the lower streets in New York.

The boy addressed was apparently about twelve, with a bright face and laughing eyes, but dressed in clothes of coarse material. This was Jack Harding, who is to be our hero.

"Yes, sir," said Jack, with alacrity, hastening to the horse's head; "I'll hold him as long as you like."

"All right! I'm going in at No. 39; I won't be long."

"That's what I call good luck," said Jack to himself. "No boy wants a job more than I do. Father's out of work, rent's most due, and Aunt Rachel's worrying our lives out with predicting that we'll all be in the poorhouse inside of three months. It's enough to make a fellow feel blue, listenin' to her complainin' and groanin' all the time. Wonder whether she was always so. Mother says she was disappointed in love when she was young. I guess that's the reason."

"Have you set up a carriage, Jack?" asked a boy acquaintance, coming up and recognizing Jack.

"Yes," said Jack, "but it ain't for long. I shall set down again pretty soon."

"I thought your grandmother had left you a fortune, and you had set up a team."

"No such good news. It belongs to a gentleman that's inside."

"Inside the carriage?"

"No, in No. 39."

"How long's he going to stay?"

"I don't know."

"If it was half an hour, we might take a ride, and be back in time."

Jack shook his head.

"That ain't my style," he said. "I'll stay here till he comes out."

"Well, I must be going along. Are you coming to school to-morrow?"

"Yes, if I can't get anything to do."

"Are you trying for that?"

"I'd like to get a place. Father's out of work, and anything I can earn comes in handy."

"My father's got plenty of money," said Frank Nelson, complacently. "There isn't any need of my working."

"Then your father's lucky."

"And so am I."

"I don't know about that. I'd just as lieve work as not."

"Well, I wouldn't. I'd rather be my own master, and have my time to myself. But I must be going home."

"You're lazy, Frank."

"Very likely. I've a right to be."

Frank Nelson went off, and Jack was left alone. Half an hour passed, and still the gentleman, who had entered No. 39, didn't appear. The horse showed signs of impatience, shook his head, and eyed Jack in an unfriendly manner.

"He thinks it time to be going," thought Jack. "So do I. I wonder what the man's up to. Perhaps he's spending the day."

Fifteen minutes more passed, but then relief came. The owner of the carriage came out.

"Did you get tired of waiting for me?" he asked.

"No," said Jack, shrewdly. "I knew the longer the job, the bigger the pay."

"I suppose that is a hint," said the gentleman, not offended.

"Perhaps so," said Jack, and he smiled too.

"Tell me, now, what are you going to do with the money I give you—buy candy?"

"No," answered Jack, "I shall carry it home to my mother."

"That's well. Does your mother need the money?"

"Yes, sir. Father's out of work, and we've got to live all the same."

"What's your father's business?"

"He's a cooper."

"So he's out of work?"

"Yes, sir, and has been for six weeks. It's on account of the panic, I suppose."

"Very likely. He has plenty of company just now."

It may be remarked that our story opens in the year 1867, memorable for its panic, and the business depression which followed. Nearly every branch of industry suffered, and thousands of men were thrown out of work, and utterly unable to find employment of any kind. Among them was Timothy Harding, the father of our hero. He was a sober, steady man, and industrious; but his wages had never been large, and he had been unable to save up a reserve fund, on which to draw in time of need. He had an excellent wife, and but one child—our present hero; but there was another, and by no means unimportant member of the family. This was Rachel Harding, a spinster of melancholy temperament, who belonged to that unhappy class who are always prophesying evil, and expecting the worst. She had been "disappointed" in early life, and this had something to do with her gloomy views, but probably she was somewhat inclined by nature to despondency.

The family lived in a humble tenement, which, however, was neatly kept, and would have been a cheerful home but for the gloomy presence of Aunt Rachel, who, since her brother had been thrown out of employment, was gloomier than ever.

But all this while we have left Jack and the stranger standing in the street.

"You seem to be a good boy," said the latter, "and, under the circumstances, I will pay you more than I intended."

He drew from his vest pocket a dollar bill, and handed it to Jack.

"What! is all this for me?" asked Jack, joyfully.

"Yes, on the condition that you carry it home, and give it to your mother."

"That I will, sir; she'll be glad enough to get it."

"Well, good-by, my boy. I hope your father'll find work soon."

"He's a trump!" ejaculated Jack. "Wasn't it lucky I was here just as he wanted a boy to hold his horse. I wonder what Aunt Rachel will have to say to that? Very likely she'll say the bill is bad."

Jack made the best of his way home. It was already late in the afternoon, and he knew he would be expected. It was with a lighter heart than usual that he bent his steps homeward, for he knew that the dollar would be heartily welcome.

We will precede him, and give a brief description of his home.

There were only five rooms, and these were furnished in the plainest manner. In the sitting room were his mother and aunt. Mrs. Harding was a motherly-looking woman, with a pleasant face, the prevailing expression of which was a serene cheerfulness, though of late it had been harder than usual to preserve this, in the straits to which the family had been reduced. She was setting the table for tea.

Aunt Rachel sat in a rocking-chair at the window. She was engaged in knitting. Her face was long and thin, and, as Jack expressed it, she looked as if she hadn't a friend in the world. Her voice harmonized with her mournful expression, and was equally doleful.

"I wonder why Jack don't come home?" said Mrs. Harding, looking at the clock. "He's generally here at this time."

"Perhaps somethin's happened," suggested her sister-in-law.

"What do you mean, Rachel?"

"I was reading in the *Sun* this morning about a boy being run over out West somewhere."

"You don't think Jack has been run over!"

"Who knows?" said Rachel, gloomily. "You know how careless boys are, and Jack's very careless."

"I don't see how you can look for such things, Rachel."

"Accidents are always happening; you know that yourself, Martha. I don't say Jack's run over. Perhaps he's been down to the wharves, and tumbled over into the water and got drowned."

"I wish you wouldn't say such things, Rachel. They make me feel uncomfortable."

"We may as well be prepared for the worst," said Rachel, severely.

"Not this time, Rachel," said Mrs. Harding, brightly, "for that's Jack's step outside. He isn't drowned or run over, thank God!"

"I hear him," said Rachel, dismally. "Anybody might know by the noise who it is. He always comes stamping along as if he was paid for makin' a noise. Anybody ought to have a cast-iron head that lives anywhere within his hearing."

Here Jack entered, rather boisterously, it must be admitted, in his eagerness slamming the door behind him.

CHAPTER II

THE EVENTS OF AN EVENING

"I am glad you've come, Jack," said his mother. "Rachel was just predicting that you were run over or drowned."

"I hope you're not very much disappointed to see me safe and well, Aunt Rachel," said Jack, merrily. "I don't think I've been drowned."

"There's things worse than drowning," replied Rachel, severely.

"Such as what?"

"A man that's born to be hanged is safe from drowning."

"Thank you for the compliment, Aunt Rachel, if you mean me. But, mother, I didn't tell you of my good luck. See this," and he displayed the dollar bill.

"How did you get it?" asked his mother.

"Holding horses. Here, take it, mother; I warrant you'll find a use for it."

"It comes in good time," said Mrs. Harding. "We're out of flour, and I had no money to buy any. Before you take off your boots, Jack, I wish you'd run over to the grocery store, and buy half a dozen pounds. You may get a pound of sugar, and quarter of a pound of tea also."

"You see the Lord hasn't forgotten us," she remarked, as Jack started on his errand.

"What's a dollar?" said Rachel, gloomily. "Will it carry us through the winter?"

"It will carry us through to-night, and perhaps Timothy will have work to-morrow. Hark, that's his step."

At this moment the outer door opened, and Timothy Harding entered, not with the quick, elastic step of one who brings good tidings, but slowly and deliberately, with a quiet gravity of demeanor in which his wife could read only

too well that he had failed in his efforts to procure work.

Reading all this in his manner, she had the delicacy to forbear intruding upon him questions to which she saw it would only give him pain to reply.

Not so Aunt Rachel.

"I needn't ask," she began, "whether you've got work, Timothy. I knew beforehand you wouldn't. There ain't no use in tryin'! The times is awful dull, and mark my words, they'll be wuss before they're better. We mayn't live to see 'em. I don't expect we shall. Folks can't live without money; and if we can't get that, we shall have to starve."

"Not so bad as that, Rachel," said the cooper, trying to look cheerful; "I don't talk about starving till the time comes. Anyhow," glancing at the table, on which was spread a good plain meal, "we needn't talk about starving till to-morrow with that before us. Where's Jack?"

"Gone after some flour," replied his wife.

"On credit?" asked the cooper.

"No, he's got money enough to pay for a few pounds," said Mrs. Harding, smiling with an air of mystery.

"Where did it come from?" asked Timothy, who was puzzled, as his wife anticipated. "I didn't know you had any money in the house."

"No more we had; but he earned it himself, holding horses, this afternoon."

"Come, that's good," said the cooper, cheerfully. "We ain't so bad off as we might be, you see, Rachel."

"Very likely the bill's bad," she said, with the air of one who rather hoped it was.

"Now, Rachel, what's the use of anticipating evil?" said Mrs. Harding. "You see you're wrong, for here's Jack with the flour."

The family sat down to supper.

"You haven't told us," said Mrs. Harding, seeing her husband's cheerfulness in a measure restored, "what Mr. Blodgett said about the chances for employment."

"Not much that was encouraging," answered Timothy. "He isn't at all sure when it will be safe to commence work; perhaps not before spring."

"Didn't I tell you so?" commented Rachel, with sepulchral sadness.

Even Mrs. Harding couldn't help looking sober.

"I suppose, Timothy, you haven't formed any plans," she said.

"No, I haven't had time. I must try to get something else to do."

"What, for instance?"

"Anything by which I can earn a little; I don't care if it's only sawing wood. We shall have to get along as economically as we can—cut our coat according to our cloth."

"Oh, you'll be able to earn something, and we can live very plain," said Mrs. Harding, affecting a cheerfulness she didn't feel.

"Pity you hadn't done it sooner," was the comforting suggestion of Rachel.

"Mustn't cry over spilt milk," said the cooper, good-humoredly. "Perhaps we might have lived a leetle more economically, but I don't think we've been extravagant."

"Besides, I can earn something, father," said Jack, hopefully. "You know I did this afternoon."

"So you can," said his mother, brightly.

"There ain't horses to hold every day," said Rachel, apparently fearing that the family might become too cheerful, when, like herself, it was their duty to be profoundly gloomy.

"You're always tryin' to discourage people, Aunt Rachel," said Jack, discontentedly.

Rachel took instant umbrage at these words.

"I'm sure," said she, mournfully, "I don't want to make you unhappy. If you can find anything to be cheerful about when you're on the verge of starvation, I hope you'll enjoy yourselves, and not mind me. I'm a poor, dependent creetur, and I feel I'm a burden."

"Now, Rachel, that's all foolishness," said Timothy. "You don't feel anything of the kind."

"Perhaps others can tell how I feel better than I can myself," answered his sister, with the air of a martyr. "If it hadn't been for me, I know you'd have been able to lay up money, and have something to carry you through the winter. It's hard to be a burden on your relations, and bring a brother's family to this poverty."

"Don't talk of being a burden, Rachel," said Mrs. Harding. "You've been a great help to me in many ways. That pair of stockings, now, you're knitting for Jack—that's a help, for I couldn't have got time for them myself."

"I don't expect," said Aunt Rachel, in the same sunny manner, "that I shall be able to do it long. From the pains I have in my hands sometimes, I expect I'm goin' to lose the use of 'em soon, and be as useless as old Mrs. Sprague, who for the last ten years of her life had to sit with her hands folded on her lap. But I wouldn't stay to be a burden—I'd go to the poorhouse first. But perhaps," with the look of a martyr, "they wouldn't want me there, because I'd be discouragin' 'em too much."

Poor Jack, who had so unwittingly raised this storm, winced under the last words, which he knew were directed at him.

"Then why," asked he, half in extenuation, "why don't you try to look pleasant and cheerful? Why won't you be jolly, as Tom Piper's aunt is?"

"I dare say I ain't pleasant," said Rachel, "as my own nephew twits me with it. There is some folks that can be cheerful when their house is a-burnin' down before their eyes, and I've heard of one young man that laughed at his aunt's funeral," directing a severe glance at Jack; "but I'm not one of that kind. I think, with the Scriptures, that there's a time to weep."

"Doesn't it say there's a time to laugh, too?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"When I see anything to laugh about, I'm ready to laugh," said Aunt Rachel; "but human nater ain't to be forced. I can't see anything to laugh at now, and perhaps you won't by and by."

It was evidently quite useless to persuade Rachel to cheerfulness, and the subject dropped.

The tea things were cleared away by Mrs. Harding, who then sat down to her sewing. Aunt Rachel continued to knit in grim silence, while Jack seated himself on a three-legged stool near his aunt, and began to whittle out a boat, after a model lent him by Tom Piper, a young gentleman whose aunt has already been referred to.

The cooper took out his spectacles, wiped them carefully with his handkerchief, and as carefully adjusted them to his nose. He then took down from the mantelpiece one of the few books belonging to his library—"Dr. Kane's Arctic Explorations"—and began to read, for the tenth time, it might be, the record of these daring explorers.

The plain little room presented a picture of graceful tranquillity, but it proved to be only the calm which preceded the storm.

The storm in question, I regret to say, was brought about by the luckless Jack. As has been said, he was engaged in constructing a boat, the particular operation he was now intent upon being the excavation, or hollowing out. Now three-legged stools are not the most secure seats in the world. This, I think, no one will deny who has any practical acquaintance with them. Jack was working quite vigorously, the block from which the boat was to be fashioned being held firmly between his knees. His knife having got wedged in the wood, he made an unusual effort to draw it out, in which he lost his balance, and disturbed the equilibrium of his stool, which, with its load, tumbled over backward. Now, it very unfortunately happened that Aunt Rachel sat close behind, and the treacherous stool came down with considerable force upon her foot.

A piercing shriek was heard, and Aunt Rachel, lifting her foot, clung to it convulsively, while an expression of pain disturbed her features.

At the sound, the cooper hastily removed his spectacles, and, letting "Dr. Kane" fall to the floor, started up in great dismay. Mrs. Harding likewise dropped her sewing, and jumped to her feet in alarm.

It did not take long to see how matters stood.

"Hurt ye much, Rachel?" inquired Timothy.

"It's about killed me," groaned the afflicted maiden. "Oh, I shall have to have my foot cut off, or be a cripple anyway." Then, turning upon Jack fiercely: "You careless, wicked, ungrateful boy, that I've been wearin' myself out knittin' for.

I'm almost sure you did it a purpose. You won't be satisfied till you've got me out of the world, and then—then, perhaps"—here Rachel began to whimper —"perhaps you'll get Tom Piper's aunt to knit your stockings."

"I didn't mean to, Aunt Rachel," said Jack, penitently, eying his aunt, who was rocking to and fro in her chair. "You know I didn't. Besides, I hurt myself like thunder," rubbing himself vigorously.

"Served you right," said his aunt, still clasping her foot.

"Shan't I get something for you to put on it, Rachel?" asked Mrs. Harding.

But this Rachel steadily refused, and, after a few more postures indicating a great amount of anguish, limped out of the room, and ascended the stairs to her own apartment.

CHAPTER III

JACK'S NEW PLAN

Aunt Rachel was right in one thing, as Jack realized. He could not find horses to hold every day, and even if he had succeeded in that, few would have paid him so munificently as the stranger of the day before. In fact, matters came to a crisis, and something must be sold to raise funds for immediate necessities. Now, the only article of luxury—if it could be called so—in the possession of the family was a sofa, in very good preservation, indeed nearly new, for it had been bought only two years before when business was good. A neighbor was willing to pay fifteen dollars for this, and Mrs. Harding, with her husband's consent, agreed to part with it.

"If ever we are able we will buy another," said Timothy.

"And, at any rate, we can do without it," said his wife.

"Rachel will miss it."

"She said the other day that it was not comfortable, and ought never to have been bought; that it was a shameful waste of money."

"In that case she won't be disturbed by our selling it."

"No, I should think not; but it's hard to tell how Rachel will take anything."

This remark was amply verified.

The sofa was removed while the spinster was out, and without any hint to her of what was going to happen. When she returned, she looked around for it with surprise.

"Where's the sofy?" she asked.

"We've sold it to Mrs. Stoddard," said Mrs. Harding, cheerfully.

"Sold it!" echoed Rachel, dolefully.

"Yes; we felt that we didn't need it, and we did need money. She offered me

fifteen dollars for it, and I accepted."

Rachel sat down in a rocking-chair, and began straightway to show signs of great depression of spirits.

"Life's full of disappointments!" she groaned. "Our paths is continually beset by 'em. There's that sofa. It's so pleasant to have one in the house when a body's sick. But, there, it's gone, and if I happen to get down, as most likely I shall, for I've got a bad feeling in my stummick this very minute, I shall have to go upstairs, and most likely catch my death of cold, and that will be the end of me."

"Not so bad as that, I hope," said Mrs. Harding, cheerfully. "You know when you was sick last, you didn't want to use the sofa; you said it didn't lay comfortable. Besides, I hope before you are sick we may be able to buy it back again."

Aunt Rachel shook her head despondingly.

"There ain't any use in hoping that," she said. "Timothy's got so much behindhand that he won't be able to get up again; I know he won't!"

"But, if he only manages to find steady work soon, he will."

"No, he won't," said Rachel, positively. "I'm sure he won't. There won't be any work before spring, and most likely not then."

"You are too desponding, Aunt Rachel."

"Enough to make me so. If you had only taken my advice, we shouldn't have come to this."

"I don't know what advice you refer to, Rachel," said Mrs. Harding, patiently.

"No, I don't expect you do. My words don't make no impression. You didn't pay no attention to what I said, that's the reason."

"But if you'll repeat the advice, Rachel, perhaps we can still profit by it," answered Mrs. Harding, with imperturbable good humor.

"I told you you ought to be layin' up something agin' a rainy day. But that's always the way. Folks think when times is good it's always a-goin' to be so, but I know better."

"I don't see how we could have been much more economical," said Mrs.

Harding, mildly.

"There's a hundred ways. Poor folks like us ought not to expect to have meat so often. It's frightful to think what the butcher's bill must have been for the last two months."

Inconsistent Rachel! Only the day before she had made herself very uncomfortable because there was no meat for dinner, and said she couldn't live without it. Mrs. Harding might have reminded her of this, but the good woman was too kind and forbearing to make the retort. She really pitied Rachel for her unhappy habit of despondency. So she contented herself by saying that they must try to do better in future.

"That's always the way," muttered Rachel; "shut the stable door after the horse is stolen. Folks never learn from experience till it's too late to be of any use. I don't see what the world was made for, for my part. Everything goes topsy-turvy, and all sorts of ways except the right way. I sometimes think 'tain't much use livin'!"

"Oh, you'll feel better by and by, Rachel."

"No, I shan't; I feel my health's declinin' every day. I don't know how I can stand it when I have to go to the poorhouse."

"We haven't gone there yet, Rachel."

"No, but it's comin' soon. We can't live on nothin'."

"Hark, there's Jack coming," said his mother, hearing a quick step outside.

"Yes, he's whistlin' just as if nothin' was the matter. He don't care anything for the awful condition of the family."

"You're wrong there, Rachel; Jack is trying every day to get something to do. He wants to do his part."

Rachel would have made a reply disparaging to Jack, but she had no chance, for our hero broke in at this instant.

"Well, Jack?" said his mother, inquiringly.

"I've got a plan, mother," he said.

"What's a boy's plan worth?" sniffed Aunt Rachel.

"Oh, don't be always hectorin' me, Aunt Rachel," said Jack, impatiently.

"Hectorin'! Is that the way my own nephew talks to me?"

"Well, it's so. You don't give a feller a chance. I'll tell you what I'm thinking of, mother. I've been talkin' with Tom Blake; he sells papers, and he tells me he makes sometimes a dollar a day. Isn't that good?"

"Yes, that is very good wages for a boy."

"I want to try it, too; but I've got to buy the papers first, you know, and I haven't got any money. So, if you'll lend me fifty cents, I'll try it this afternoon."

"You think you can sell them, Jack?"

"I know I can. I'm as smart as Tom Blake, any day."

"Pride goes before a fall!" remarked Rachel, by way of a damper. "Disappointment is the common lot."

"That's just the way all the time," said Jack, provoked.

"I've lived longer than you," began Aunt Rachel.

"Yes, a mighty lot longer," interrupted Jack. "I don't deny that."

"Now you're sneerin' at me on account of my age, Jack. Martha, how can you allow such things?"

"Be respectful, Jack."

"Then tell Aunt Rachel not to aggravate me so. Will you let me have the fifty cents, mother?"

"Yes, Jack. I think your plan is worth trying."

She took out half a dollar from her pocketbook and handed it to Jack.

"All right, mother. I'll see what I can do with it."

Jack went out, and Rachel looked more gloomy than ever.

"You'll never see that money again, you may depend on't, Martha," she said.

"Why not, Rachel?"

"Because Jack'll spend it for candy, or in some other foolish way."

"You are unjust, Rachel. Jack is not that kind of boy."

"I'd ought to know him. I've had chances enough."

"You never knew him to do anything dishonest."

"I suppose he's a model boy?"

"No, he isn't. He's got faults enough, I admit; but he wouldn't spend for his own pleasure money given him for buying papers."

"If he buys the papers, I don't believe he can sell them, so the money's wasted anyway," said Rachel, trying another tack.

"We will wait and see," said Mrs. Harding.

She saw that Rachel was in one of her unreasonable moods, and that it was of no use to continue the discussion.

CHAPTER IV

MRS. HARDING TAKES A BOARDER

Jack started for the newspaper offices and bought a supply of papers.

"I don't see why I can't sell papers as well as other boys," he said to himself. "I'm going to try, at any rate."

He thought it prudent, however, not to buy too large stock at first. He might sell them all, but then again he might get "stuck" on a part, and this might take away all his profits.

Jack, however, was destined to find that in the newspaper business, as well as in others, there was no lack of competition. He took his place just below the Astor House, and began to cry his papers. This aroused the ire of a rival newsboy a few feet away.

"Get away from here!" he exclaimed, scowling at Jack.

"What for?" said Jack.

"This is my stand."

"Keep it, then. This is mine," retorted Jack, composedly.

"I don't allow no other newsboys in this block," said the other.

"Don't you? You ain't the city government, are you?"

"I don't want any of your impudence. Clear out!"

"Clear out yourself!"

"I'll give you a lickin'!"

"Perhaps you will when you're able."

Jack spoke manfully; but the fact was that the other boy probably was able, being three years older, and as many inches taller.

Jack kept on crying his papers, and his opponent, incensed at the contemptuous disregard of his threats, advanced toward him, and, taking Jack unawares, pushed him off the sidewalk with such violence that he nearly fell flat. Jack felt that the time for action had arrived. He dropped his papers temporarily on the sidewalk, and, lowering his head, butted against his young enemy with such force as to double him up, and seat him, gasping for breath, on the sidewalk. Tom Rafferty, for this was his name, looked up in astonishment at the unexpected form of the attack.

"Well done, my lad!" said a hearty voice.

Jack turned toward the speaker, and saw a stout man dressed in a blue coat with brass buttons. He was dark and bronzed with exposure to the weather, and there was something about him which plainly indicated the sailor.

"Well done, my lad!" he repeated. "You know how to pay off your debts."

"I try to," said Jack, modestly. "But where's my papers?"

The papers, which he had dropped, had disappeared. One of the boys who had seen the fracas had seized the opportunity to make off with them, and poor Jack was in the position of a merchant who had lost his stock in trade.

"Who took them papers?" he asked, looking about him.

"I saw a boy run off with them," said a bystander.

"I'm glad of it," said Tom Rafferty, sullenly.

Jack looked as if he was ready to pitch into him again, but the sailor interfered.

"Don't mind the papers, my lad. What were they worth?"

"I gave twenty cents for 'em."

"Then here's thirty."

"I don't think I ought to take it," said Jack. "It's my loss."

"Take it, my boy. It won't ruin me. I've got plenty more behind."

"Thank you, sir; I'll go and buy some more papers."

"Not to-night. I want you to take a cruise with me."

"All right, sir."

"I suppose you'd like to know who I am?" said the sailor, as they moved off together.

"I suppose you're a sailor."

"You can tell that by the cut of my jib. Yes, my lad, I'm captain of the *Argo*, now in port. It's a good while since I've been in York. For ten years I've been plying between Liverpool and Calcutta. Now I've got absence to come over here."

"Are you an American, sir?"

"Yes; I was raised in Connecticut, but then I began going to sea when I was only thirteen. I only arrived to-day, and I find the city changed since ten years ago, when I used to know it."

"Where are you staying—at what hotel?"

"I haven't gone to any yet; I used to stay with a cousin of mine, but he's moved. Do you know any good boarding place, where they'd make me feel at home, and let me smoke a pipe after dinner?"

An idea struck Jack. They had an extra room at home, or could make one by his sleeping in the sitting room. Why shouldn't they take the stranger to board? The money would certainly be acceptable. He determined to propose it.

"If we lived in a nicer house," he said, "I'd ask you to board at my mother's."

"Would she take me, my lad?"

"I think she would; but we are poor, and live in a small house."

"That makes no odds. I ain't a bit particular, as long as I can feel at home. So heave ahead, my lad, and we'll go and see this mother of yours, and hear what she has to say about it."

Jack took the way home well pleased, and, opening the front door, entered the sitting room, followed by the sailor.

Aunt Rachel looked up nervously, and exclaimed: "A man!"

"Yes, ma'am," said the stranger. "I'm a man, and no mistake. Are you this lad's mother?"

"No, sir!" answered Rachel, emphatically. "I am nobody's mother."

"Oh, an old maid!" said the sailor, whose mode of life had made him unceremonious.

"I am a spinster," said Rachel, with dignity.

"That's the same thing," said the visitor, sitting down opposite Aunt Rachel, who eyed him suspiciously.

"My aunt, Rachel Harding, Capt. Bowling," introduced Jack. "Aunt Rachel, Capt. Bowling is the commander of a vessel now in port."

Aunt Rachel made a stiff courtesy, and Capt. Bowling eyed her curiously.

"Are you fond of knitting, ma'am?" he asked.

"I am not fond of anything," said Rachel, mournfully. "We should not set our affections upon earthly things."

"You wouldn't say that if you had a beau, ma'am," said Capt. Bowling, facetiously.

"A beau!" repeated Rachel, horror-stricken.

"Yes, ma'am. I suppose you've had a beau some time or other."

"I don't think it proper to talk on such a subject to a stranger," said Aunt Rachel, primly.

"Law, ma'am, you needn't be so particular."

Just at this moment, Mrs. Harding entered the room, and was introduced to Capt. Bowling by Jack. The captain proceeded to business at once.

"Your son, here, ma'am, told me you might maybe swing a hammock for me somewhere in your house. I liked his looks, and here I am."

"Do you think you would be satisfied with our plain fare, and humble dwelling, Capt. Bowling?"

"I ain't hard to suit, ma'am; so, if you can take me, I'll stay."

His manner was frank, although rough; and Mrs. Harding cheerfully consented to do so. It was agreed that Bowling should pay five dollars a week for the three or four weeks he expected to stay.

"I'll be back in an hour," said the new boarder. "I've got a little business to attend to before supper."

When he had gone out, Aunt Rachel began to cough ominously. Evidently some remonstrance was coming.

"Martha," she said, solemnly, "I'm afraid you've done wrong in taking that sailor man."

"Why, Rachel?"

"He's a strange man."

"I don't see anything strange about him," said Jack.

"He spoke to me about having a beau," said Aunt Rachel, in a shocked tone.

Jack burst into a fit of hearty laughter. "Perhaps he's going to make you an offer, Aunt Rachel," he said. "He wants to see if there's anybody in the way."

Rachel did not appear so very indignant.

"It was improper for a stranger to speak to me on that subject," she said, mildly.

"You must make allowances for the bluntness of a sailor," said Mrs. Harding.

For some reason Rachel did not seem as low-spirited as usual that evening. Capt. Bowling entertained them with narratives of his personal adventures, and it was later than usual when the lamps were put out, and they were all in bed.

CHAPTER V

THE CAPTAIN'S DEPARTURE

"Jack," said the captain, at breakfast, the next morning, "how would you like to go round with me to see my vessel?"

"I'll go," said Jack, promptly.

"Very likely he'll fall over into the water and be drowned," suggested Aunt Rachel, cheerfully.

"I'll take care of that, ma'am," said Capt. Bowling. "Won't you come yourself?"

"I go to see a vessel!" repeated Rachel.

"Yes; why not?"

"I am afraid it wouldn't be proper to go with a stranger," said Rachel, with a high sense of propriety.

"I'll promise not to run away with you," said the captain, bluntly. "If I should attempt it, Jack, here, would interfere."

"No, I wouldn't," said Jack. "It wouldn't be proper for me to interfere with Aunt Rachel's plans."

"You seem to speak as if your aunt proposed to run away," said Mr. Harding, jocosely.

"You shouldn't speak of such things, nephew; I am shocked," said Rachel.

"Then you won't go, ma'am?" asked the captain.

"If I thought it was consistent with propriety," said Rachel, hesitating. "What do you think, Martha?"

"I think there is no objection," said Mrs. Harding, secretly amazed at Rachel's entertaining the idea.

The result was that Miss Rachel put on her things, and accompanied the captain. She was prevailed on to take the captain's arm at length, greatly to Jack's amusement. He was still more amused when a boy picked up her handkerchief which she had accidentally dropped, and, restoring it to the captain, said, "Here's your wife's handkerchief, gov'nor."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the captain. "He takes you for my wife, ma'am."

"Ho! ho!" echoed Jack, equally amused.

Aunt Rachel turned red with confusion. "I am afraid I ought not to have come," she murmured. "I feel ready to drop."

"You'd better not drop just yet," said the captain—they were just crossing the street—"wait till it isn't so muddy."

On the whole, Aunt Rachel decided not to drop.

The *Argo* was a medium-sized vessel, and Jack in particular was pleased with his visit. Though not outwardly so demonstrative, Aunt Rachel also seemed to enjoy the expedition. The captain, though blunt, was attentive, and it was something new to her to have such an escort. It was observed that Miss Harding was much less gloomy than usual during the remainder of the day. It might be that the captain's cheerfulness was contagious. For a stranger, Aunt Rachel certainly conversed with him with a freedom remarkable for her.

"I never saw Rachel so cheerful," remarked Mrs. Harding to her husband that evening after they had retired. "She hasn't once spoken of life being a vale of tears to-day."

"It's the captain," said her husband. "He has such spirits that it seems to enliven all of us."

"I wish we could have him for a permanent boarder."

"Yes; the five dollars a week which he pays are a great help, especially now that I am out of work."

"What is the prospect of getting work soon?"

"I am hoping for it from day to day, but it may be weeks yet."

"Jack earned fifty cents to-day by selling papers."

"His daily earnings are an important help. With what the captain pays us, it is enough to pay all our living expenses. But there's one thing that troubles me."

"The rent?"

"Yes, it is due in three weeks, and as yet I haven't a dollar laid by to meet it. It

makes me feel anxious."

"Don't lose your trust in Providence, Timothy. He may yet carry us over this difficulty."

"So I hope, but I can't help feeling in what straits we shall be, if some help does not come."

Two weeks later, Capt. Bowling sailed for Liverpool.

"I hope we shall see you again sometime, captain," said Mrs. Harding.

"Whenever I come back to New York, I shall come here if you'll keep me," said the bluff sailor.

"Aunt Rachel will miss you, captain," said Jack, slyly.

Capt. Bowling turned to the confused spinster.

"I hope she will," said he, heartily. "Perhaps when I see her again, she'll have a husband."

"Oh, Capt. Bowling, how can you say such things?" gasped Rachel, who, as the time for the captain's departure approached, had been subsiding into her old melancholy. "There's other things to think of in this vale of tears."

"Are there? Well, if they're gloomy, I don't want to think of 'em. Jack, my lad, I wish you were going to sail with me."

"So do I," said Jack.

"He's my only boy, captain," said Mrs. Harding. "I couldn't part with him."

"I don't blame you, ma'am, not a particle; though there's the making of a sailor in Jack."

"If he went away, he'd never come back," said Rachel, lugubriously.

"I don't know about that, ma'am. I've been a sailor, man and boy, forty years, and here I am, well and hearty to-day."

"The captain is about your age, isn't he, Aunt Rachel?" said Jack, maliciously.

"I'm only thirty-nine," said Rachel, sharply.

"Then I must have been under a mistake all my life," said the cooper to himself. "Rachel's forty-seven, if she's a day."

This remark he prudently kept to himself, or a fit of hysterics would probably have been the result.

"I wouldn't have taken you for a day over thirty-five, ma'am," said the captain, gallantly.

Rachel actually smiled, but mildly disclaimed the compliment.

"If it hadn't been for my trials and troubles," she said, "I might have looked younger; but they are only to be expected. It's the common lot."

"Is it?" said the captain. "I can't say I've been troubled much that way. With a stout heart and a good conscience we ought to be jolly."

"Who of us has a good conscience?" asked Rachel, in a melancholy tone.

"I have, Aunt Rachel," answered Jack.

"You?" she exclaimed, indignantly. "You, that tied a tin kettle to a dog's tail yesterday, and chased the poor cat till she almost died of fright. I lie awake nights thinking of the bad end you're likely to come to unless you change your ways."

Jack shrugged his shoulders, but the captain came to his help.

"Boys will be boys, ma'am," he said. "I was up to no end of tricks myself when I was a boy."

"You weren't so bad as Jack, I know," said Rachel.

"Thank you for standing up for me, ma'am; but I'm afraid I was. I don't think Jack's so very bad, for my part."

"I didn't play the tricks Aunt Rachel mentioned," said Jack. "It was another boy in our block."

"You're all alike," said Rachel. "I don't know what you boys are all coming to."

Presently the captain announced that he must go. Jack accompanied him as far as the pier, but the rest of the family remained behind. Aunt Rachel became

gloomier than ever.

"I don't know what you'll do, now you've lost your boarder," she said.

"He will be a loss to us, it is true," said Mrs. Harding; but we are fortunate in having had him with us so long."

"It's only puttin' off our misery a little longer," said Rachel. "We've got to go to the poorhouse, after all."

Rachel was in one of her moods, and there was no use in arguing with her, as it would only have intensified her gloom.

Meanwhile Jack was bidding good-by to the captain.

"I'm sorry you can't go with me, Jack," said the bluff sailor.

"So am I; but I can't leave mother."

"Right, my lad; I wouldn't take you away from her. But there—take that, and don't forget me."

"You are very kind," said Jack, as the captain pressed into his hand a five-dollar gold piece. "May I give it to my mother?"

"Certainly, my lad; you can't do better."

Jack stood on the wharf till the vessel was drawn out into the stream by a steam tug. Then he went home.

CHAPTER VI

THE LANDLORD'S VISIT

It was the night before the New Year. In many a household in the great city it was a night of happy anticipation. In the humble home of the Hardings it was an evening of anxious thought, for to-morrow the quarter's rent was due.

"I haven't got a dollar to meet the rent, Martha," said the cooper, in a depressed tone.

"Won't Mr. Colman wait?"

"I'm afraid not. You know what sort of a man he is, Martha. There isn't much feeling about him. He cares more for money than anything else."

"Perhaps you are doing him an injustice."

"I am afraid not. Did you never hear how he treated the Underhills?"

"How?"

"Underhill was laid up with rheumatic fever for three months. The consequence was that when quarter day came round he was in about the same situation with ourselves—a little worse, even, for his wife was sick also. But, though Colman was aware of the circumstances, he had no pity; he turned them out without ceremony."

"Is it possible?" asked Mrs. Harding, uneasily.

"And there's no reason for his being more lenient with us. I can't but feel anxious about to-morrow, Martha."

At this moment, verifying an old adage, which will perhaps occur to the reader, who should knock but Mr. Colman himself. Both the cooper and his wife had an instinctive foreboding as to his visit.

He came in, rubbing his hands in a social way, as was his custom. No one, to look at him, would have suspected the hardness of heart that lay veiled under his velvety softness of manner.

"Good-evening, Mr. Harding," he said, affably. "I trust you and your excellent wife are in good health."

"That blessing, at least, is continued to us," said the cooper, gravely.

"And how comfortable you're looking, too, eh! It makes an old bachelor like me feel lonesome when he contrasts his own solitary room with such a scene of comfort as this. You've got a comfortable home, and dog cheap, too. All my other tenants are grumbling to think you don't have to pay any more for such superior accommodations. I've about made up my mind that I must ask you twenty-five dollars a quarter hereafter."

All this was said very pleasantly, but the pill was none the less bitter.

"It seems to me, Mr. Colman," answered the cooper, soberly, "you have chosen rather a singular time for raising the rent."

"Why singular, my good sir?" inquired the landlord, urbanely.

"You know, of course, that this is a time of general business depression; my own trade in particular has suffered greatly. For a month past I have not been able to find any work."

Colman's face lost something of its graciousness.

"And I fear I shall not be able to pay my quarter's rent to-morrow."

"Indeed!" said the landlord, coldly. "Perhaps you can make it up within two or three dollars."

"I can't pay a dollar toward it," said the cooper. "It's the first time, in the five years I've lived here, that this thing has happened to me. I've always been prompt before."

"You should have economized as you found times growing harder," said Colman, harshly. "It is hardly honest to live in a house when you know you can't pay the rent."

"You shan't lose it, Mr. Colman," said the cooper, earnestly. "No one ever yet lost anything by me, and I don't mean anyone shall, if I can help it. Only give me a little time, and I will pay all."

The landlord shook his head.

"You ought to have cut your coat according to your cloth," he responded. "Much as it will go against my feelings I am compelled, by a prudent regard to my own interests, to warn you that, in case your rent is not ready to-morrow, I shall be obliged to trouble you to find another tenement; and furthermore, the rent of this will be raised five dollars a quarter."

"I can't pay it, Mr. Colman," said Timothy Harding, gravely. "I may as well say that now; and it's no use agreeing to pay more rent. I pay all I can afford now."

"Very well, you know the alternative. Of course, if you can do better elsewhere, you will. That's understood. But it's a disagreeable subject. We won't talk of it any more now. I shall be round to-morrow forenoon. How's your excellent sister—as cheerful as ever?"

"Quite as much so as usual," answered the cooper, dryly.

"There's one favor I should like to ask," he said, after a pause. "Will you allow us to remain here a few days till I can look about a little?"

"I would with the greatest pleasure in the world," was the reply; "but there's another family very anxious to take the house, and they wish to come in immediately. Therefore I shall be obliged to ask you to move out to-morrow. In fact, that is the very thing I came here this evening to speak about, as I thought you might not wish to pay the increased rent."

"We are much obliged to you," said the cooper, with a tinge of bitterness unusual to him. "If we are to be turned into the street, it is pleasant to have a few hours' notice of it."

"Turned out of doors, my good sir! What disagreeable expressions you employ! If you reflect for a moment, you will see that it is merely a matter of business. I have an article to dispose of. There are two bidders, yourself and another person. The latter is willing to pay a larger sum. Of course I give him the preference, as you would do under similar circumstances. Don't you see how it is?"

"I believe I do," replied the cooper. "Of course it's a regular proceeding; but you must excuse me if I think of it in another light, when I reflect that to-morrow at this time my family may be without a shelter."

"My dear sir, positively you are looking on the dark side of things. It is

actually sinful for you to distrust Providence as you seem to do. You're a little disappointed, that's all. Just take to-night to sleep on it, and I've no doubt you'll see things in quite a different light. But positively"—here he rose, and began to draw on his gloves—"positively I have stayed longer than I intended. Good-night, my friends. I'll look in upon you in the morning. And, by the way, as it's so near, permit me to wish you a happy New Year."

The door closed upon the landlord, leaving behind two anxious hearts.

"It looks well in him to wish that," said the cooper, gloomily. "A great deal he is doing to make it so. I don't know how it seems to others; for my part, I never say them words to anyone, unless I really wish 'em well, and am willing to do something to make 'em so. I should feel as if I was a hypocrite if I acted anyways different."

Martha was not one who was readily inclined to think evil of anyone, but in her own gentle heart she could not help feeling a repugnance for the man who had just left them. Jack was not so reticent.

"I hate that man," he said, decidedly.

"You should not hate anyone, my son," said Mrs. Harding.

"I can't help it, mother. Ain't he goin' to turn us out of the house to-morrow?"

"If we cannot pay our rent, he is justified in doing so."

"Then why need he pretend to be so friendly? He don't care anything for us."

"It is right to be polite, Jack."

"I s'pose if you're goin' to kick a man, it should be done politely," said Jack, indignantly.

"If possible," said the cooper, laughing.

"Is there any tenement vacant in this neighborhood?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"Yes, there is one in the next block belonging to Mr. Harrison."

"It is a better one than this."

"Yes; but Harrison only asks the same rent that we have been paying. He is not so exorbitant as Colman."

"Couldn't we get that?"

"I am afraid if he knows that we have failed to pay our rent here, that he will object."

"But he knows you are honest, and that nothing but the hard times would have brought you to this pass."

"It may be, Martha. At any rate, you have lightened my heart a little. I feel as if there was some hope left, after all."

"We ought always to feel so, Timothy. There was one thing that Mr. Colman said that didn't sound so well, coming from his lips; but it's true for all that."

"What do you refer to?"

"I mean that about not distrusting Providence. Many a time have I been comforted by reading the verse: 'Never have I seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.' As long as we try to do what is right, Timothy, God will not suffer us to want."

"You are right, Martha. He is our ever-present help in time of trouble. When I think of that, I feel easier."

They retired to rest thoughtfully but not sadly.

The fire upon the hearth flickered and died out at length. The last sands of the old year were running out, and the new morning ushered in its successor.

CHAPTER VII

THE NEW YEAR'S GIFT

"Happy New Year!" was Jack's salutation to Aunt Rachel, as with an unhappy expression of countenance she entered the sitting room.

"Happy, indeed!" she repeated, dismally. "There's great chance of its being so, I should think. We don't any of us know what the year may bring forth. We may all be dead and buried before the next new year."

"If that's the case," said Jack, "let us be jolly as long as life lasts."

"I don't know what you mean by such a vulgar word," said Aunt Rachel, disdainfully. "I've heard of drunkards and such kind of people being jolly; but, thank Providence, I haven't got to that yet."

"If that was the only way to be jolly," said Jack, stoutly, "then I'd be a drunkard; I wouldn't carry round such a long face as you do, Aunt Rachel, for any money."

"It's enough to make all of us have long faces," said his aunt, sourly, "when you are brazen enough to own that you mean to be a miserable drunkard."

"I didn't say any such thing," said Jack, indignantly.

"Perhaps I have ears," remarked Aunt Rachel, sententiously, "and perhaps I have not. It's a new thing for a nephew to tell his aunt that she lies. They didn't use to allow such things when I was young. But the world's going to rack and ruin, and I shouldn't wonder if the people was right that say it's coming to an end."

Here Mrs. Harding happily interposed, by asking Jack to go round to the grocery in the next street, and buy a pint of milk for breakfast.

Jack took his hat and started with alacrity, glad to leave the dismal presence of Aunt Rachel.

He had scarcely opened the door when he started back in surprise, exclaiming: "By hokey, if there isn't a basket on the steps!"

"A basket!" repeated his mother, in surprise. "Can it be a New Year's present? Bring it in, Jack."

It was brought in immediately, and the cover being lifted, there appeared a female child, apparently a year old.

All uttered exclamations of surprise, each in itself characteristic.

"What a dear, innocent little thing!" said Mrs. Harding, with true maternal instinct.

"Ain't it a pretty un?" exclaimed Jack, admiringly.

"It looks as if it was goin' to have the measles," said Aunt Rachel, "or scarlet fever. You'd better not take it in, Martha, or we may all catch it."

"You wouldn't leave it out in the cold, would you, Rachel? The poor thing might die of exposure."

"Probably it will die," said Rachel, mournfully. "It's very hard to raise children. There's something unhealthy in its looks."

"It don't seem to me so. It looks plump and healthy."

"You can't never judge by appearances. You ought to know that, Martha."

"I will take the risk, Rachel."

"I don't see what you are going to do with a baby, when we are all on the verge of starvation, and going to be turned into the street this very day," remarked Rachel, despondently.

"We won't think of that just now. Common humanity requires us to see what we can do for the poor child."

So saying, Mrs. Harding took the infant in her arms. The child opened its eyes, and smiled.

"My! here's a letter," said Jack, diving into the bottom of the basket. "It's directed to you, father."

The cooper opened the letter, and read as follows:

"For reasons which it is unnecessary to state, the guardians of this child find it

expedient to intrust it to others to bring up. The good account which they have heard of you has led them to select you for that charge. No further explanation is necessary, except that it is by no means their intention to make this a service of charity. They, therefore, inclose a certificate of deposit on the Broadway Bank of five hundred dollars, the same having been paid in to your credit. Each year, while the child remains in your charge, the same will in like manner be placed to your credit at the same bank. It may be as well to state, further, that all attempt to fathom whatever of mystery may attach to this affair will prove useless."

The letter was read in amazement. The certificate of deposit, which had fallen to the floor, was picked up by Jack, and handed to his father.

Amazement was followed by a feeling of gratitude and relief.

"What could be more fortunate?" exclaimed Mrs. Harding. "Surely, Timothy, our faith has been rewarded."

"God has listened to our cry!" said the cooper, devoutly, "and in the hour of our sorest need He has remembered us."

"Isn't it prime?" said Jack, gleefully; "five hundred dollars! Ain't we rich, Aunt Rachel?"

"Like as not," observed Rachel, "the certificate isn't genuine. It doesn't look natural it should be. I've heard of counterfeits afore now. I shouldn't be surprised at all if Timothy got took up for presenting it."

"I'll take the risk," said her brother, who did not seem much alarmed at the suggestion.

"Now you'll be able to pay the rent, Timothy," said Mrs. Harding, cheerfully.

"Yes, and it's the last quarter's rent I mean to pay Mr. Colman, if I can help it."

"Why, where are you going?" asked Jack.

"To the house belonging to Mr. Harrison that I spoke of last night, that is, if it isn't already engaged. I think I will see about it at once. If Mr. Colman should come in while I am gone, tell him I will be back directly; I don't want you to tell him of the change in our circumstances."

The cooper found Mr. Harrison at home.

"I called to inquire," asked Mr. Harding, "whether you have let your house?"

"Not as yet," was the reply.

"What rent do you ask?"

"Twenty dollars a quarter. I don't think that unreasonable."

"It is satisfactory to me," was the cooper's reply, "and if you have no objections to me as a tenant, I will engage it at once."

"Far from having any objections, Mr. Harding," was the courteous reply, "I shall be glad to secure so good a tenant. Will you go over and look at the house?"

"Not now, sir; I am somewhat in haste. Can we move in to-day?"

"Certainly."

His errand satisfactorily accomplished, the cooper returned home.

Meanwhile the landlord had called.

He was a little surprised to find that Mrs. Harding, instead of looking depressed, looked cheerful rather than otherwise.

"I was not aware you had a child so young," he remarked, looking at the baby.

"It is not mine," said Mrs. Harding, briefly.

"The child of a neighbor, I suppose," thought the landlord.

Meanwhile he scrutinized closely, without appearing to do so, the furniture in the room.

At this point Mr. Harding entered the house.

"Good-morning," said Colman, affably. "A fine morning, Mr. Harding."

"Quite so," responded his tenant, shortly.

"I have called, Mr. Harding, to ask if you are ready with your quarter's rent."

"I think I told you last evening how I was situated. Of course I am sorry."

"So am I," interrupted the landlord, "for I may be obliged to have recourse to

unpleasant measures."

"You mean that we must leave the house."

"Of course you cannot expect to remain in it, if you are unable to pay the rent. I suppose," he added, making an inventory of the furniture with his eyes, "you will leave behind a sufficient amount of furniture to cover your debt."

"Surely you would not deprive us of our furniture!"

"Is there any injustice in requiring payment of honest debts?"

"There are cases of that description. However, I will not put you to the trouble of levying on my furniture. I am ready to pay your dues."

"Have you the money?" asked Colman, in surprise.

"I have, and something over. Can you cash my check for five hundred dollars?"

It would be difficult to picture the amazement of the landlord.

"Surely you told me a different story last evening," he said.

"Last evening and this morning are different times. Then I could not pay you. Now, luckily, I am able. If you will accompany me to the bank, I will draw some money and pay your bill."

"My dear sir, I am not at all in haste for the money," said the landlord, with a return of his affability. "Any time within a week will do. I hope, by the way, you will continue to occupy this house."

"I don't feel like paying twenty-five dollars a quarter."

"You shall have it for the same rent you have been paying."

"But you said there was another family who had offered you an advanced rent. I shouldn't like to interfere with them. Besides, I have already hired a house of Mr. Harrison in the next block."

Mr. Colman was silenced. He regretted too late the hasty course which had lost him a good tenant. The family referred to had no existence; and, it may be remarked, the house remained vacant for several months, when he was glad to rent it at the old price.

CHAPTER VIII

A LUCKY RESCUE

The opportune arrival of the child inaugurated a season of comparative prosperity in the home of Timothy Harding. To persons accustomed to live in their frugal way, five hundred dollars seemed a fortune. Nor, as might have happened in some cases, did this unexpected windfall tempt the cooper or his wife to enter upon a more extravagant mode of living.

"Let us save something against a rainy day," said Mrs. Harding.

"We can if I get work soon," answered her husband. "This little one will add but little to our expenses, and there is no reason why we shouldn't save up at least half of it."

"So I think, Timothy. The child's food will not amount to a dollar a week."

"There's no tellin' when you will get work, Timothy," said Rachel, in her usual cheerful way. "It isn't well to crow before you are out of the woods."

"Very true, Rachel. It isn't your failing to look too much at the sunny side of the picture."

"I'm ready to look at it when I can see it anywhere," answered his sister, in the same enlivening way.

"Don't you see it in the unexpected good fortune which came with this child?" asked Timothy.

"I've no doubt you think it very fortunate now," said Rachel, gloomily; "but a young child's a great deal of trouble."

"Do you speak from experience, Aunt Rachel?" asked Jack.

"Yes," said his aunt, slowly. "If all babies were as cross and ill-behaved as you were when you were an infant, five hundred dollars wouldn't begin to pay for the trouble of having them around."

Mr. Harding and his wife laughed at the manner in which the tables had been

turned upon Jack, but the latter had his wits about him sufficiently to answer: "I've always heard, Aunt Rachel, that the crosser a child is, the pleasanter he will grow up. What a very pleasant baby you must have been!"

"Jack!" said his mother, reprovingly; but his father, who looked upon it as a good joke, remarked, good-humoredly: "He's got you there, Rachel."

But Rachel took it as a serious matter, and observed that, when she was young, children were not allowed to speak so to their elders.

"But I don't know as I can blame 'em much," she continued, wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron, "when their own parents encourage 'em in it."

Timothy was warned, by experience of Rachel's temper, that silence was his most prudent course. Anything that he might say would only be likely to make matters worse than before.

Aunt Rachel sank into a fit of deep despondency, and did not say another word till dinner time. She sat down to the table with a profound sigh, as if there was little in life worth living for. Notwithstanding this, it was observed that she had a good appetite. Indeed, Miss Harding appeared to thrive on her gloomy views of life and human nature. She was, it must be acknowledged, perfectly consistent in all her conduct, so far as this peculiarity was concerned. Whenever she took up a newspaper, she always looked first to the space appropriated to deaths, and next in order to the column of accidents, casualties, etc., and her spirits were visibly exhilarated when she encountered a familiar name in either list.

The cooper continued to look out for work; but it was with a more cheerful spirit. He did not now feel as if the comfort of his family depended absolutely on his immediate success. Used economically, the money he had by him would last eight months; and during that time it was hardly possible that he should not find something to do. It was this sense of security, of having something to fall back upon, that enabled him to keep up good heart. It is too generally the case that people are content to live as if they were sure of constantly retaining their health, and never losing their employment. When a reverse does come, they are at once plunged into discouragement, and feel the necessity of doing something immediately. There is only one way of fending off such an embarrassment; and that is, to resolve, whatever may be the amount of one's income, to lay aside some part to serve as a reliance in time of trouble. A little economy—though it involves self-denial—will be well repaid by the feeling of security it engenders.

Mr. Harding was not compelled to remain inactive as long as he feared. Not that his line of business revived—that still remained depressed for a considerable time—but another path was opened to him.

Returning home late one evening, the cooper saw a man steal out from a doorway, and attack a gentleman, whose dress and general appearance indicated probable wealth.

Seizing him by the throat, the villain effectually prevented his calling for help, and at once commenced rifling his pockets, when the cooper arrived on the scene. A sudden blow admonished the robber that he had more than one to deal with.

"What are you doing? Let that gentleman be!"

The villain hesitated but a moment, then springing to his feet, he hastily made off, under cover of the darkness.

"I hope you have received no injury, sir," said Mr. Harding, respectfully, addressing the stranger he had rescued.

"No, my worthy friend; thanks to your timely assistance. The rascal nearly succeeded, however."

"I hope you have lost nothing, sir."

"Nothing, fortunately. You can form an idea of the value of your interference, when I say that I have fifteen hundred dollars with me, all of which would doubtless have been taken."

"I am glad," said Timothy, "that I was able to do you such a service. It was by the merest chance that I came this way."

"Will you add to my indebtedness by accompanying me with that trusty club of yours? I have some distance yet to go, and the money I have with me I don't want to lose."

"Willingly," said the cooper.

"But I am forgetting," continued the gentleman, "that you will yourself be obliged to return alone."

"I do not carry enough money to make me fear an attack," said Mr. Harding,

laughing. "Money brings care, I have always heard, and the want of it sometimes freedom from anxiety."

"Yet most people are willing to take their share of that."

"You are right, sir, nor I can't call myself an exception. Still I would be satisfied with the certainty of constant employment."

"I hope you have that, at least."

"I have had until three or four months since."

"Then, at present, you are unemployed?"

"Yes, sir."

"What is your business?"

"I am a cooper."

"I will see what I can do for you. Will you call at my office to-morrow, say at twelve o'clock?"

"I shall be glad to do so, sir."

"I believe I have a card with me. Yes, here is one. And this is my house. Thank you for your company. Let me see you to-morrow."

They stood before a handsome dwelling house, from whose windows, draped by heavy crimson curtains, a soft light proceeded. The cooper could hear the ringing of childish voices welcoming home their father, whose life, unknown to them, had been in such peril, and he felt grateful to Providence for making him the instrument of frustrating the designs of the villain who would have robbed the merchant, and perhaps done him further injury. Timothy determined to say nothing to his wife about the night's adventure, until after his appointed meeting for the next day. Then, if any advantage accrued to him from it, he would tell the whole story.

When he reached home, Mrs. Harding was sewing beside the fire. Aunt Rachel sat with her hands folded in her lap, with an air of martyr-like resignation to the woes of life.

"I've brought you home a paper, Rachel," said her brother, cheerfully. "You may find something interesting in it."

"I shan't be able to read it this evening," said Rachel, mournfully. "My eyes have troubled me lately. I feel that it is more than probable I am getting blind; but I trust I shall not live to be a burden to you, Timothy. Your prospects are dark enough without that."

"Don't trouble yourself with any fears of that sort, Rachel," said the cooper, cheerily. "I think I know what will enable you to use your eyes as well as ever."

"What?" asked Rachel, with melancholy curiosity.

"A pair of spectacles."

"Spectacles!" retorted Rachel, indignantly. "It will be a good many years before I am old enough to wear spectacles. I didn't expect to be insulted by my own brother. But I ought not to be surprised. It's one of my trials."

"I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, Rachel," said the cooper, perplexed.

"Good-night!" said Rachel, rising and taking a lamp from the table.

"Come, Rachel, don't go up to bed yet; it's only nine o'clock."

"After what you have said to me, Timothy, my self-respect will not allow me to stay."

Rachel swept out of the room with something more than her customary melancholy.

"I wish Rachel wasn't quite so contrary," said the cooper to his wife. "She turns upon a body so sudden it's hard to know how to take her. How's the little girl, Martha?"

"She's been asleep ever since six o'clock."

"I hope you don't find her very much trouble? That all comes on you, while we have the benefit of the money."

"I don't think of that, Timothy. She is a sweet child, and I love her almost as much as if she were my own. As for Jack, he perfectly idolizes her."

"And how does Rachel look upon her?"

"I am afraid she will never be a favorite with Rachel."

"Rachel never took to children much. It isn't her way. Now, Martha, while you are sewing, I will read you the news."

CHAPTER IX

WHAT THE ENVELOPE CONTAINED

The card which had been handed to the cooper contained the name of Thomas Merriam, No. —— Pearl Street.

Punctually at twelve, he presented himself at the countingroom, and received a cordial welcome from the merchant.

"I am glad to see you," he said, affably. "You rendered me an important service last evening, even if the loss of money alone was to be apprehended. I will come to business at once, as I am particularly engaged this morning, and ask you if there is any way in which I can serve you?"

"If you could procure me a situation, sir, you would do me a great service."

"I think you told me you were a cooper?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does this yield you a good support?"

"In good times it pays me two dollars a day, and on that I can support my family comfortably. Lately it has been depressed, and paid me but a dollar and a half."

"When do you anticipate its revival?"

"That is uncertain. I may have to wait some months."

"And, in the meantime, you are willing to undertake some other employment?"

"I am not only willing, but shall feel very fortunate to obtain work of any kind. I have no objection to any honest employment."

Mr. Merriam reflected a moment.

"Just at present," he said, "I have nothing better to offer you than the position of porter. If that will suit you, you can enter upon its duties to-morrow."

"I shall be very glad to undertake it, sir. Anything is better than idleness."

"As to the compensation, that shall be the same that you have been accustomed to earn by your trade—two dollars a day."

"I only received that in the best times," said Timothy, conscientiously.

"Your services as porter will be worth that amount, and I will cheerfully pay it. I will expect you to-morrow morning at eight, if you can be here at that time."

"I will be here promptly."

"You are married, I suppose?" said the merchant, inquiringly.

"Yes, sir; I am blessed with a good wife."

"I am glad of that. Stay a moment."

Mr. Merriam went to his desk, and presently came back with a sealed envelope.

"Give that to your wife," he said.

"Thank you, sir."

Here the interview terminated, and the cooper went home quite elated by his success. His present engagement would enable him to bridge over the dull time, until his trade revived, and save him from incurring debts, of which he had a just horror.

"You are just in time, Timothy," said Mrs. Harding, cheerfully, as he entered. "We've got an apple pudding to-day."

"I see you haven't forgotten what I like, Martha."

"There's no knowing how long you'll be able to afford puddings," said Rachel, dolefully. "To my mind it's extravagant to have meat and pudding both, when a month hence you may be in the poorhouse."

"Then," said Jack, "I wouldn't eat any if I were you, Aunt Rachel."

"Oh, if you grudge me the little I eat," said his aunt, in serene sorrow, "I will go without."

"Tut, Rachel! nobody grudges you anything here," said her brother; "and as to

the poorhouse, I've got some good news to tell you that will put that thought out of your head."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Harding, looking up brightly.

"I have found employment."

"Not at your trade?"

"No; but at something else which will pay equally well till trade revives."

Here he told the chance by which he was enabled to serve Mr. Merriam the evening previous, and then he gave an account of his visit to the merchant's countingroom, and the engagement which he had made.

"You are indeed fortunate, Timothy," said his wife, her face beaming with pleasure. "Two dollars a day, and we've got nearly the whole of the money left that came with this dear child. Why, we shall be getting rich soon!"

"Well, Rachel, have you no congratulations to offer?" asked the cooper of his sister, who, in subdued sorrow, was eating as if it gave her no pleasure, but was rather a self-imposed penance.

"I don't see anything so very fortunate in being engaged as a porter," said Rachel, lugubriously. "I heard of a porter once who had a great box fall upon him and kill him instantly; and I was reading in the *Sun* yesterday of another out West somewhere who committed suicide."

The cooper laughed.

"So, Rachel, you conclude that one or the other of these calamities is the inevitable lot of all who are engaged in this business?"

"You may laugh now, but it is always well to be prepared for the worst," said Rachel, oracularly.

"But it isn't well to be always looking for it, Rachel."

"It'll come whether you look for it or not," retorted his sister, sententiously.

"Then suppose we waste no time thinking about it, since, according to your admission, it's sure to come either way."

Rachel did not deign a reply, but continued to eat in serene melancholy.

"Won't you have another piece of pudding, Timothy?" asked his wife.

"I don't care if I do, Martha, it's so good," said the cooper, passing his plate. "Seems to me it's the best pudding you ever made."

"You've got a good appetite, that is all," said Mrs. Harding, modestly disclaiming the compliment.

"Apple puddings are unhealthy," observed Rachel.

"Then what makes you eat them?" asked Jack.

"A body must eat something. Besides, life is so full of sorrow, it makes little difference if it's longer or shorter."

"Won't you have another piece, Rachel?"

Aunt Rachel passed her plate, and received a second portion. Jack winked slyly, but fortunately his aunt did not observe it.

When dinner was over, the cooper thought of the sealed envelope which had been given him for his wife.

"Martha," he said, "I nearly forgot that I have something for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, from Mr. Merriam."

"But he don't know me," said Mrs. Harding, in surprise.

"At any rate, he first asked me if I was married, and then handed me this envelope, which he asked me to give to you. I am not quite sure whether I ought to allow strange gentlemen to write letters to my wife."

Mrs. Harding opened the envelope with considerable curiosity, and uttered an exclamation of surprise as a bank note fell out, and fluttered to the carpet.

"By gracious, mother!" said Jack, springing to get it, "you're in luck. It's a hundred-dollar bill."

"So it is, I declare," said his mother, joyfully. "But, Timothy, it isn't mine. It belongs to you."

"No, Martha, I have nothing to do with it. It belongs to you. You need some

clothes, I am sure. Use part of it, and I will put the rest in the savings bank for you."

"I never expected to have money to invest," said Mrs. Harding. "I begin to feel like a capitalist. When you want to borrow money, Timothy, you'll know where to come."

"Merriam's a trump and no mistake," said Jack. "By the way, when you see him again, father, just mention that you've got a son. Ain't we in luck, Aunt Rachel?"

"Boast not overmuch," said his aunt. "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

"I never knew Aunt Rachel to be jolly but once," said Jack under his breath; "and that was at a funeral."

CHAPTER X

JACK'S MISCHIEF

One of the first results of the new prosperity which had dawned upon the Hardings, was Jack's removal from the street to the school. While his father was out of employment, his earnings seemed necessary; but now they could be dispensed with.

To Jack, the change was not altogether agreeable. Few boys of the immature age of eleven are devoted to study, and Jack was not one of these few. The freedom which he had enjoyed suited him, and he tried to impress it upon his father that there was no immediate need of his returning to school.

"Do you want to grow up a dunce, Jack?" said his father.

"I can read and write already," said Jack.

"Are you willing to enter upon life with that scanty supply of knowledge?"

"Oh, I guess I can get along as well as the average."

"I don't know about that. Besides, I want you to do better than the average. I am ambitious for you, if you are not ambitious for yourself."

"I don't see what good it does a feller to study so hard," muttered Jack.

"You won't study hard enough to do you any harm," said Aunt Rachel, who might be excused for a little sarcasm at the expense of her mischievous nephew.

"It makes my head ache to study," said Jack.

"Perhaps your head is weak, Jack," suggested his father, slyly.

"More than likely," said Rachel, approvingly.

So it was decided that Jack should go to school.

"I'll get even with Aunt Rachel," thought he. "She's always talking against me, and hectorin' me. See if I don't."

An opportunity for getting even with his aunt did not immediately occur. At length a plan suggested itself to our hero. He shrewdly suspected that his aunt's single blessedness, and her occasional denunciations of the married state, proceeded from disappointment.

"I'll bet she'd get married if she had a chance," he thought. "I mean to try her, anyway."

Accordingly, with considerable effort, aided by a school-fellow, he concocted the following letter, which was duly copied and forwarded to his aunt's address:

"DEAR GIRL: Excuse the liberty I have taken in writing to you; but I have seen you often, though you don't know me; and you are the only girl I want to marry. I am not young—I am about your age, thirty-five—and I have a good trade. I have always wanted to be married, but you are the only one I know of to suit me. If you think you can love me, will you meet me in Washington Park, next Tuesday, at four o'clock? Wear a blue ribbon round your neck, if you want to encourage me. I will have a red rose pinned to my coat.

"Don't say anything to your brother's family about this. They may not like me, and they may try to keep us apart. Now be sure and come. DANIEL."

This letter reached Miss Rachel just before Jack went to school one morning. She read it through, first in surprise, then with an appearance of pleasure.

"Who's your letter from, Aunt Rachel?" asked Jack, innocently.

"Children shouldn't ask questions about what don't concern 'em," said his aunt.

"I thought maybe it was a love letter," said he.

"Don't make fun of your aunt," said his father, reprovingly.

"Jack's question is only a natural one," said Rachel, to her brother's unbounded astonishment. "I suppose I ain't so old but I might be married if I wanted to."

"I thought you had put all such thoughts out of your head long ago, Rachel."

"If I have, it's because the race of men are so shiftless," said his sister. "They ain't worth marrying."

"Is that meant for me?" asked the cooper, good-naturedly.

"You're all alike," said Rachel, tossing her head.

She put the letter carefully into her pocket, without deigning any explanation.

"I suppose it's from some of her old acquaintances," thought her brother, and he dismissed the subject.

As soon as she could, Rachel took refuge in her room. She carefully locked

the door, and read the letter again.

"Who can he be?" thought the agitated spinster. "Do I know anybody of the name of Daniel? It must be some stranger that has fallen in love with me unbeknown. What shall I do?"

She sat in meditation for a short time. Then she read the letter again.

"He will be very unhappy if I frown upon him," she said to herself, complacently. "It's a great responsibility to make a fellow being unhappy. It's a sacrifice, I know, but it's our duty to deny ourselves. I don't know but I ought to go and meet him."

This was Rachel's conclusion.

The time was close at hand. The appointment was for that very afternoon.

"I wouldn't have my brother or Martha know it for the world," murmured Rachel to herself, "nor that troublesome Jack. Martha's got some blue ribbon, but I don't dare to ask her for it, for fear she'll suspect something. No, I must go out and buy some."

"I'm goin' to walk, Martha," she said, as she came downstairs.

"Going to walk in the forenoon! Isn't that something unusual?"

"I've got a little headache. I guess it'll do me good," said Rachel.

"I hope it will," said her sister-in-law, sympathetically.

Rachel went to the nearest dry-goods store, and bought a yard of blue ribbon.

"Only a yard?" inquired the clerk, in some surprise.

"That will do," said Rachel, nervously, coloring a little, as though the use which she designed for it might be suspected.

She paid for the ribbon, and presently returned.

"Does your head feel any better, Rachel?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"A little," answered Rachel.

"You've been sewing too steady lately, perhaps?" suggested Martha.

"Perhaps I have," assented Rachel.

"You ought to spare yourself. You can't stand work as well as when you were younger," said Martha, innocently.

"A body'd think I was a hundred by the way you talk," said Rachel, sharply.

"I didn't mean to offend you, Rachel. I thought you might feel as I do. I get tired easier than I used to."

"I guess I'll go upstairs," said Rachel, in the same tone. "There isn't anybody there to tell me how old I am gettin'."

"It's hard to make Rachel out," thought Mrs. Harding. "She takes offense at the most innocent remark. She can't look upon herself as young, I am sure."

Upstairs Rachel took out the letter again, and read it through once more. "I wonder what sort of a man Daniel is," she said to herself. "I wonder if I have ever noticed him. How little we know what others think of us! If he's a likely man, maybe it's my duty to marry him. I feel I'm a burden to Timothy. His income is small, and it'll make a difference of one mouth. It may be a sacrifice, but it's my duty."

In this way Rachel tried to deceive herself as to the real reason which led her to regard with favoring eyes the suit of this supposed lover whom she had never seen, and about whom she knew absolutely nothing.

Jack came home from school at half-past two o'clock. He looked roguishly at his aunt as he entered. She sat knitting in her usual corner.

"Will she go?" thought Jack. "If she doesn't there won't be any fun."

But Jack, whose trick I am far from defending, was not to be disappointed.

At three o'clock Rachel rolled up her knitting, and went upstairs. Fifteen minutes later she came down dressed for a walk.

"Where are you going, Aunt Rachel?" asked Jack.

"Out for a walk," she answered, shortly.

"May I go with you?" he asked, mischievously.

"No; I prefer to go alone," she said, curtly.

"Your aunt has taken a fancy to walking," said Mrs. Harding, when her sister-in-law had left the house. "She was out this forenoon. I don't know what has come over her."

"I do," said Jack to himself.

Five minutes later he put on his hat and bent his steps also to Washington Park.

CHAPTER XI

MISS HARDING'S MISTAKE

Miss Rachel Harding kept on her way to Washington Park. It was less than a mile from her brother's house, and though she walked slowly, she got there a quarter of an hour before the time.

She sat down on a seat near the center of the park, and began to look around her. Poor Rachel! her heart beat quicker than it had done for thirty years, as she realized that she was about to meet one who wished to make her his wife.

"I hope he won't be late," she murmured to herself, and she felt of the blue ribbon to make sure that she had not forgotten it.

Meanwhile Jack reached the park, and from a distance surveyed with satisfaction the evident nervousness of his aunt.

"Ain't it rich?" he whispered to himself.

Rachel looked anxiously for the gentleman with the red rose pinned to his coat.

She had to wait ten minutes. At last he came, but as he neared her seat, Rachel felt like sinking into the earth with mortification when she recognized in the wearer a stalwart negro. She hoped that it was a mere chance coincidence, but he approached her, and raising his hat respectfully, said:

"Are you Miss Harding?"

"What if I am?" she demanded, sharply. "What have you to do with me?"

The man looked surprised.

"Didn't you send word to me to meet you here?"

"No!" answered Rachel, "and I consider it very presumptuous in you to write such a letter to me."

"I didn't write you a letter," said the negro, astonished.

"Then what made you come here?" demanded the spinster.

"Because you wrote to me."

"I wrote to you!" exclaimed Rachel, aghast.

"Yes, you wrote to me to come here. You said you'd wear a blue ribbon on your neck, and I was to have a rose pinned to my coat."

Rachel was bewildered.

"How could I write to you when I never saw you before, and don't know your name. Do you think a lady like me would marry a colored man?"

"Who said anything about that?" asked the other, opening his eyes wide in astonishment. "I couldn't marry, nohow, for I've got a wife and four children."

Rachel felt ready to collapse. Was it possible that she had made a mistake, and that this was not her unknown correspondent, Daniel?

"There is some mistake," she said, nervously. "Where is that letter you thought I wrote? Have you got it with you?"

"Here it is, ma'am."

He handed Rachel a letter addressed in a small hand to Daniel Thompson.

She opened it and read:

"Mr. Thompson: I hear you are out of work. I may be able to give you a job. Meet me at Washington Park, Tuesday afternoon, at four o'clock. I shall wear a blue ribbon round my neck, and you may have a red rose pinned to your coat. Otherwise I might not know you.

"RACHEL HARDING."

"Some villain has done this," said Rachel, wrathfully. "I never wrote that letter."

"You didn't!" said Daniel, looking perplexed. "Who went and did it, then?"

"I don't know, but I'd like to have him punished for it," said Rachel, energetically.

"But you've got a blue ribbon," said Mr. Thompson. "I can't see through that. That's just what the letter said."

"I suppose somebody wrote the letter that knew I wear blue. It's all a mistake. You'd better go home."

"Then haven't you got a job for me?" asked Daniel, disappointed.

"No, I haven't," said Rachel, sharply.

She hurriedly untied the ribbon from her neck, and put it in her pocket.

"Don't talk to me any more!" she said, frowning. "You're a perfect stranger. You have no right to speak to me."

"I guess the old woman ain't right in her head!" thought Daniel. "Must be she's crazy!"

Poor Rachel! she felt more disconsolate than ever. There was no Daniel, then. She had been basely imposed upon. There was no call for her to sacrifice herself on the altar of matrimony. She ought to have been glad, but she wasn't.

Half an hour later a drooping, disconsolate figure entered the house of Timothy Harding.

"Why, what's the matter, Rachel?" asked Martha, who noticed her woe-begone expression.

"I ain't long for this world," said Rachel, gloomily. "Death has marked me for his own."

"Don't you feel well this afternoon, Rachel?"

"No; I feel as if life was a burden."

"You have tired yourself with walking, Rachel. You have been out twice to-day."

"This is a vale of tears," said Rachel, hysterically. "There's nothin' but sorrow and misfortune to be expected."

"Have you met with any misfortune? I thought fortune was smiling upon us all."

"It'll never smile on me again," said Rachel, despondently.

Just then Jack, who had followed his aunt home, entered.

"Have you got home so quick, Aunt Rachel?" he asked. "How did you enjoy your walk?"

"I shall never enjoy anything again," said his aunt, gloomily.

"Why not?"

"Because there's nothing to enjoy."

"I don't feel so, aunt. I feel as merry as a cricket."

"You won't be long. Like as not you'll be took down with fever to-morrow, and maybe die."

"I won't trouble myself about it till the time comes," said Jack. "I expect to live to dance at your wedding yet, Aunt Rachel."

This reference was too much. It brought to Rachel's mind the Daniel to whom she had expected to link her destiny, and she burst into a dismal sob, and hurried upstairs to her own chamber.

"Rachel acts queerly to-day," said Mrs. Harding. "I think she can't be feeling well. If she don't feel better to-morrow I shall advise her to send for the doctor."

"I am afraid it was mean to play such a trick on Aunt Rachel," thought Jack, half repentantly. "I didn't think she'd take it so much in earnest. I must keep dark about that letter. She'd never forgive me if she knew."

For some days there was an added gloom on Miss Rachel's countenance, but the wound was not deep; and after a time her disappointment ceased to rankle in her too sensitive heart.

CHAPTER XII

SEVEN YEARS

Seven years slipped by unmarked by any important change. The Hardings were still prosperous in an humble way. The cooper had been able to obtain work most of the time, and this, with the annual remittance for little Ida, had enabled the family not only to live in comfort, but even to save up one hundred and fifty dollars a year. They might even have saved more, living as frugally as they were accustomed to do, but there was one point in which they would none of them consent to be economical. The little Ida must have everything she wanted. Timothy brought home nearly every day some little delicacy for her, which none of the rest thought of sharing. While Mrs. Harding, far enough from vanity, always dressed with extreme plainness, Ida's attire was always of good material and made up tastefully.

Sometimes the little girl asked: "Mother, why don't you buy yourself some of the pretty things you get for me?"

Mrs. Harding would answer, smiling: "Oh, I'm an old woman, Ida. Plain things are best for me."

"No, I'm sure you're not old, mother. You don't wear a cap. Aunt Rachel is a good deal older than you."

"Hush, Ida. Don't let Aunt Rachel hear that. She wouldn't like it."

"But she is ever so much older than you, mother," persisted the child.

Once Rachel heard a remark of this kind, and perhaps it was that that prejudiced her against Ida. At any rate, she was not one of those who indulged her. Frequently she rebuked her for matters of no importance; but it was so well understood in the cooper's household that this was Aunt Rachel's way, that Ida did not allow it to trouble her, as the lightest reproach from Mrs. Harding would have done.

Had Ida been an ordinary child, all this petting would have had an injurious effect upon her mind. But, fortunately, she had the rare simplicity, young as she was, which lifted her above the dangers which might have spoiled her otherwise.

Instead of being made vain and conceited, she only felt grateful for the constant kindness shown her by her father and mother, and brother Jack, as she was wont to call them. Indeed it had not been thought best to let her know that such were not the actual relations in which they stood to her.

There was one point, much more important than dress, in which Ida profited by the indulgence of her friends.

"Martha," the cooper was wont to say, "Ida is a sacred charge in our hands. If we allow her to grow up ignorant, or only allow her ordinary advantages, we shall not fulfill our duty. We have the means, through Providence, of giving her some of those advantages which she would enjoy if she had remained in that sphere to which her parents doubtless belong. Let no unwise parsimony on our part withhold them from her."

"You are right, Timothy," said his wife; "right, as you always are. Follow the dictates of your own heart, and fear not that I shall disapprove."

"Humph!" said Aunt Rachel; "you ain't actin' right, accordin' to my way of thinkin'. Readin', writin' and cypherin' was enough for girls to learn in my day. What's the use of stuffin' the girl's head full of nonsense that'll never do her no good? I've got along without it, and I ain't quite a fool."

But the cooper and his wife had no idea of restricting Ida's education to the rather limited standard indicated by Rachel. So, from the first, they sent her to a carefully selected private school, where she had the advantage of good associates, and where her progress was astonishingly rapid.

Ida early displayed a remarkable taste for drawing. As soon as this was discovered, her adopted parents took care that she should have abundant opportunity for cultivating it. A private master was secured, who gave her lessons twice a week, and boasted everywhere of the progress made by his charming young pupil.

"What's the good of it?" asked Rachel. "She'd a good deal better be learnin' to sew and knit."

"All in good time," said Timothy. "She can attend to both."

"I never wasted my time that way," said Rachel. "I'd be ashamed to."

Nothing could exceed Timothy's gratification, when, on his birthday, Ida

presented him with a beautifully drawn sketch of his wife's placid and benevolent face.

"When did you do it, Ida?" he asked, after earnest expressions of admiration.

"I did it in odd minutes," she answered, "when I had nothing else to do."

"But how could you do it, without any of us knowing what you were about?"

"I had a picture before me, and you thought I was copying it, but, whenever I could do it without being noticed, I looked up at mother as she sat at her sewing, and so, after a while, I finished the picture."

"And a fine one it is," said the cooper, admiringly.

Mrs. Harding insisted that Ida had flattered her, but this Ida would not admit.

"I couldn't make it look as good as you, mother," she said. "I tried, but somehow I didn't succeed as I wanted to."

"You wouldn't have that difficulty with Aunt Rachel," said Jack, roguishly.

Ida could not help smiling, but Rachel did not smile.

"I see," she said, with severe resignation, "that you've taken to ridiculing your poor aunt again. But it's only what I expect. I don't never expect any consideration in this house. I was born to be a martyr, and I expect I shall fulfill my destiny. If my own relations laugh at me, of course I can't expect anything better from other folks. But I shan't be long in the way. I've had a cough for some time past, and I expect I'm in consumption."

"You make too much of a little joke, Rachel," said the cooper, soothingly. "I'm sure Jack didn't mean anything."

"What I said was complimentary," said Jack.

Rachel shook her head incredulously.

"Yes, it was. Ask Ida. Why won't you draw Aunt Rachel, Ida? I think she'd make a very striking picture."

"So I will," said Ida, hesitatingly, "if she will let me."

"Now, Aunt Rachel, there's a chance for you," said Jack. "Take my advice, and

improve it. When it's finished it can be hung up in the Art Rooms, and who knows but you may secure a husband by it."

"I wouldn't marry," said Rachel, firmly compressing her lips; "not if anybody'd go down on their knees to me."

"Now, I'm sure, Aunt Rachel, that's cruel of you," said Jack, demurely.

"There ain't any man I'd trust my happiness to," pursued the spinster.

"She hasn't any to trust," observed Jack, *sotto voce*.

"Men are all deceivers," continued Rachel, "the best of 'em. You can't believe what one of 'em says. It would be a great deal better if people never married at all."

"Then where would the world be a hundred years hence?" suggested her nephew.

"Come to an end, most likely," answered Aunt Rachel; "and I'm not sure but that would be the best thing. It's growing more and more wicked every day."

It will be seen that no great change has come over Miss Rachel Harding, during the years that have intervened. She takes the same disheartening view of human nature and the world's prospects as ever. Nevertheless, her own hold upon the world seems as strong as ever. Her appetite continues remarkably good, and, although she frequently expresses herself to the effect that there is little use in living, she would be as unwilling to leave the world as anyone. It is not impossible that she derives as much enjoyment from her melancholy as other people from their cheerfulness. Unfortunately her peculiar mode of enjoying herself is calculated to have rather a depressing influence upon the spirits of those with whom she comes in contact—always excepting Jack, who has a lively sense of the ludicrous, and never enjoys himself better than in bantering his aunt.

"I don't expect to live more'n a week," said Rachel, one day. "My sands of life are 'most run out."

"Are you sure of that, Aunt Rachel?" asked Jack.

"Yes, I've got a presentiment that it's so."

"Then, if you're sure of it," said her nephew, gravely, "it may be as well to order the coffin in time. What style would you prefer?"

Rachel retreated to her room in tears, exclaiming that he needn't be in such a hurry to get her out of the world; but she came down to supper, and ate with her usual appetite.

Ida is no less a favorite with Jack than with the rest of the household. Indeed, he has constituted himself her especial guardian. Rough as he is in the playground, he is always gentle with her. When she was just learning to walk, and in her helplessness needed the constant care of others, he used, from choice, to relieve his mother of much of the task of amusing the child. He had never had a little sister, and the care of a child as young as Ida was a novelty to him. It was perhaps this very office of guardian to the child, assumed when she was young, that made him feel ever after as if she were placed under his special protection.

Ida was equally attached to Jack. She learned to look to him for assistance in any plan she had formed, and he never disappointed her. Whenever he could, he would accompany her to school, holding her by the hand, and, fond as he was of rough play, nothing would induce him to leave her.

"How long have you been a nursemaid?" asked a boy older than himself, one day.

Jack's fingers itched to get hold of his derisive questioner, but he had a duty to perform, and he contented himself with saying: "Just wait a few minutes, and I'll let you know."

"I dare say you will," was the reply. "I rather think I shall have to wait till both of us are gray before that time."

"You will not have to wait long before you are black and blue," retorted Jack.

"Don't mind what he says, Jack," whispered Ida, fearing that he would leave her.

"Don't be afraid, Ida; I won't leave you. I'll attend to his business another time. I guess he won't trouble us to-morrow."

Meanwhile the boy, emboldened by Jack's passiveness, followed, with more abuse of the same sort. If he had been wiser, he would have seen a storm gathering in the flash of Jack's eye; but he mistook the cause of his forbearance.

The next day, as they were going to school, Ida saw the same boy dodging round the corner with his head bound up.

"What's the matter with him, Jack?" she asked.

"I licked him like blazes, that's all," said Jack, quietly. "I guess he'll let us alone after this."

Even after Jack left school, and got a position in a store at two dollars a week, he gave a large part of his spare time to Ida.

"Really," said Mrs. Harding, "Jack is as careful of Ida as if he was her guardian."

"A pretty sort of a guardian he is!" said Aunt Rachel. "Take my word for it, he's only fit to lead her into mischief."

"You do him injustice, Rachel. Jack is not a model boy, but he takes the best care of Ida."

Rachel shrugged her shoulders, and sniffed significantly. It was quite evident that she did not have a very favorable opinion of her nephew.

CHAPTER XIII

A MYSTERIOUS VISITOR

About eleven o'clock one forenoon Mrs. Harding was in the kitchen, busily engaged in preparing the dinner, when a loud knock was heard at the front door.

"Who can it be?" said Mrs. Harding. "Aunt Rachel, there's somebody at the door; won't you be kind enough to see who it is?"

"People have no business to call at such an hour in the morning," grumbled Rachel, as she laid down her knitting reluctantly, and rose from her seat. "Nobody seems to have any consideration for anybody else. But that's the way of the world."

Opening the outer door, she saw before her a tall woman, dressed in a gown of some dark stuff, with strongly marked, and not altogether pleasant, features.

"Are you the lady of the house?" inquired the visitor, abruptly.

"There ain't any ladies in this house," answered Rachel. "You've come to the wrong place. We have to work for a living here."

"The woman of the house, then," said the stranger, rather impatiently. "It doesn't make any difference about names. Are you the one I want to see?"

"No, I ain't," said Rachel, shortly.

"Will you tell your mistress that I want to see her, then?"

"I have no mistress," said Rachel. "What do you take me for?"

"I thought you might be the servant, but that don't matter. I want to see Mrs. Harding. Will you call her, or shall I go and announce myself?"

"I don't know as she'll see you. She's busy in the kitchen."

"Her business can't be as important as what I've come about. Tell her that, will you?"

Rachel did not fancy the stranger's tone or manner. Certainly she did not

manifest much politeness. But the spinster's curiosity was excited, and this led her the more readily to comply with the request.

"Stay here, and I'll call her," she said.

"There's a woman wants to see you," announced Rachel.

"Who is it?"

"I don't know. She hasn't got any manners, that's all I know about her."

Mrs. Harding presented herself at the door.

"Won't you come in?" she asked.

"Yes, I will. What I've got to say to you may take some time."

Mrs. Harding, wondering vaguely what business this strange visitor could have with her, led the way to the sitting room.

"You have in your family," said the woman, after seating herself, "a girl named Ida."

Mrs. Harding looked up suddenly and anxiously. Could it be that the secret of Ida's birth was to be revealed at last? Was it possible that she was to be taken from her?

"Yes," she answered, simply.

"Who is not your child?"

"But I love her as much. I have always taught her to look upon me as her mother."

"I presume so. My visit has reference to her."

"Can you tell me anything of her parentage?" inquired Mrs. Harding, eagerly.

"I was her nurse," said the stranger.

Mrs. Harding scrutinized anxiously the hard features of the woman. It was, at least, a relief to know that no tie of blood connected her with Ida, though, even upon her assurance, she would hardly have believed it.

"Who were her parents?"

"I am not permitted to tell."

Mrs. Harding looked disappointed.

"Surely," she said, with a sudden sinking of the heart, "you have not come to take her away?"

"This letter will explain my object in visiting you," said the woman, drawing a sealed envelope from a bag which she carried in her hand.

The cooper's wife nervously broke open the letter, and read as follows:

"MRS. HARDING: Seven years ago last New Year's night a child was left on your doorsteps, with a note containing a request that you would care for it kindly as your own. Money was sent at the same time to defray the expenses of such care. The writer of this note is the mother of the child, Ida. There is no need to explain here why I sent away the child from me. You will easily understand that it was not done willingly, and that only the most imperative necessity would have led me to such a step. The same necessity still prevents me from reclaiming my child, and I am content still to leave Ida in your charge. Yet there is one thing I desire. You will understand a mother's wish to see, face to face, her own child. With this view I have come to this neighborhood. I will not say where I am, for concealment is necessary to me. I send this note by a trustworthy attendant, Mrs. Hardwick, my little Ida's nurse in her infancy, who will conduct Ida to me, and return her again to you. Ida is not to know who she is visiting. No doubt she believes you to be her mother, and it is well that she should so regard you. Tell her only that it is a lady, who takes an interest in her, and that will satisfy her childish curiosity. I make this request as IDA'S MOTHER."

Mrs. Harding read this letter with mingled feelings. Pity for the writer; a vague curiosity in regard to the mysterious circumstances which had compelled her to resort to such a step; a half feeling of jealousy, that there should be one who had a claim to her dear, adopted daughter, superior to her own; and a strong feeling of relief at the assurance that Ida was not to be permanently removed—all these feelings affected the cooper's wife.

"So you were Ida's nurse?" she said, gently.

"Yes, ma'am," said the stranger. "I hope the dear child is well?"

"Perfectly well. How much her mother must have suffered from the separation!"

"Indeed you may say so, ma'am. It came near to breaking her heart."

"I don't wonder," said sympathizing Mrs. Harding. "I can judge of that by my

own feelings. I don't know what I should do, if Ida were to be taken from me."

At this point in the conversation, the cooper entered the house. He had come home on an errand.

"It is my husband," said Mrs. Harding, turning to her visitor, by way of explanation. "Timothy, will you come here a moment?"

The cooper regarded the stranger with some surprise. His wife hastened to introduce her as Mrs. Hardwick, Ida's old nurse, and placed in her husband's hands the letter which we have already read.

He was not a rapid reader, and it took him some time to get through the letter. He laid it down on his knee, and looked thoughtful.

"This is indeed unexpected," he said, at last. "It is a new development in Ida's history. May I ask, Mrs. Hardwick, if you have any further proof? I want to be careful about a child that I love as my own. Can you furnish any other proof that you are what you represent?"

"I judged that the letter would be sufficient. Doesn't it speak of me as the nurse?"

"True; but how can we be sure that the writer is Ida's mother?"

"The tone of the letter, sir. Would anybody else write like that?"

"Then you have read the letter?" asked the cooper, quickly.

"It was read to me before I set out."

"By whom?"

"By Ida's mother. I do not blame you for your caution," said the visitor. "You must be deeply interested in the happiness of the dear child, of whom you have taken such excellent care. I don't mind telling you that I was the one who left her at your door, seven years ago, and that I never left the neighborhood until I saw you take her in."

"And it was this that enabled you to find the house to-day?"

"You forget," corrected the nurse, "that you were not then living in this house, but in another, some rods off, on the left-hand side of the street."

"You are right," said Timothy. "I am inclined to believe in the truth of your story. You must pardon my testing you in such a manner, but I was not willing to yield up Ida, even for a little time, without feeling confident of the hands she was falling into."

"You are right," said Mrs. Hardwick. "I don't blame you in the least. I shall report it to Ida's mother as a proof of your attachment to the child."

"When do you wish Ida to go with you?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"Can you let her go this afternoon?"

"Why," said the cooper's wife, hesitating, "I should like to have a chance to wash out some clothes for her. I want her to appear as neat as possible when she meets her mother."

The nurse hesitated, but presently replied: "I don't wish to hurry you. If you will let me know when she will be ready, I will call for her."

"I think I can get her ready early to-morrow morning."

"That will answer. I will call for her then."

The nurse rose, and gathered her shawl about her.

"Where are you going, Mrs. Hardwick?" asked the cooper's wife.

"To a hotel," was the reply.

"We cannot allow that," said Mrs. Harding, kindly. "It's a pity if we cannot accommodate Ida's old nurse for one night, or ten times as long, for that matter."

"My wife is quite right," said the cooper, hesitatingly. "We must insist on your stopping with us."

The nurse hesitated, and looked irresolute. It was plain she would have preferred to be elsewhere, but a remark which Mrs. Harding made, decided her to accept the invitation.

It was this: "You know, Mrs. Hardwick, if Ida is to go with you, she ought to have a little chance to get acquainted with you before you go."

"I will accept your kind invitation," she said; "but I am afraid I shall be in your way."

"Not in the least. It will be a pleasure to us to have you here. If you will excuse me now, I will go out and attend to my dinner, which I am afraid is getting behindhand."

Left to herself, the nurse behaved in a manner which might be regarded as singular. She rose from her seat, and approached the mirror. She took a full survey of herself as she stood there, and laughed a short, hard laugh. Then she made a formal courtesy to her own reflection, saying: "How do you do, Mrs. Hardwick?"

"Did you speak?" asked the cooper, who was passing through the entry on his way out.

"No," answered the nurse, rather awkwardly. "I may have said something to myself. It's of no consequence."

"Somehow," thought the cooper, "I don't fancy the woman's looks; but I dare say I am prejudiced. We're all of us as God made us."

When Mrs. Harding was making preparations for the noonday meal, she imparted to Rachel the astonishing information which has already been detailed to the reader.

"I don't believe a word of it," said Rachel, resolutely. "The woman's an impostor. I knew she was, the very minute I set eyes on her."

This remark was so characteristic of Rachel, that her sister-in-law did not attach any special importance to it. Rachel, of course, had no grounds for the opinion she so confidently expressed. It was consistent, however, with her general estimate of human nature.

"What object could she have in inventing such a story?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"What object? Hundreds of 'em," said Rachel, rather indefinitely. "Mark my words; if you let her carry off Ida, it'll be the last you'll ever see of her."

"Try to look on the bright side, Rachel. Nothing is more natural than that her mother should want to see her."

"Why couldn't she come herself?" muttered Rachel.

"The letter explains."

"I don't see that it does."

"It says that same reasons exist for concealment as ever."

"And what are they, I should like to know? I don't like mysteries, for my part."

"We won't quarrel with them, at any rate, since they enable us to keep Ida with us."

Aunt Rachel shook her head, as if she were far from satisfied.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Harding, "but I ought to invite Mrs. Hardwick in here. I have left her alone in the front room."

"I don't want to see her," said Rachel. Then, changing her mind suddenly: "Yes, you may bring her in. I'll soon find out whether she's an impostor or not."

The cooper's wife returned with the nurse.

"Mrs. Hardwick," she said, "this is my sister, Miss Rachel Harding."

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, ma'am," said the visitor.

"Rachel, I will leave you to entertain Mrs. Hardwick, while I get ready the dinner."

Rachel and the nurse eyed each other with mutual dislike.

"I hope you don't expect me to entertain you," said Rachel. "I never expect to entertain anybody ag'in. This is a world of trial and tribulation, and I've had my share. So you've come after Ida, I hear?" with a sudden change of tone.

"At her mother's request," said the nurse.

"She wants to see her, then?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I wonder she didn't think of it before," said Rachel, sharply. "She's good at waiting. She's waited seven years."

"There are circumstances that cannot be explained," commenced the nurse.

"No, I dare say not," said Rachel, dryly. "So you were her nurse?"

"Yes, ma'am," answered the nurse, who did not appear to enjoy this cross-examination.

"Have you lived with Ida's mother ever since?"

"No—yes," stammered the stranger. "Some of the time," she added, recovering herself.

"Umph!" grunted Rachel, darting a sharp glance at her.

"Have you a husband living?" inquired the spinster.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Hardwick. "Have you?"

"I!" repeated Rachel, scornfully. "No, neither living nor dead. I'm thankful to say I never married. I've had trials enough without that. Does Ida's mother live in the city?"

"I can't tell you," said the nurse.

"Humph! I don't like mystery."

"It isn't any mystery," said the visitor. "If you have any objections to make, you must make them to Ida's mother."

"So I will, if you'll tell me where she lives."

"I can't do that."

"Where do you live yourself?" inquired Rachel, shifting her point of attack.

"In Brooklyn," answered Mrs. Hardwick, with some hesitation.

"What street, and number?"

"Why do you want to know?" inquired the nurse.

"You ain't ashamed to tell, be you?"

"Why should I be?"

"I don't know. You'd orter know better than I."

"It wouldn't do you any good to know," said the nurse. "I don't care about receiving visitors."

"I don't want to visit you, I am sure," said Rachel, tossing her head.

"Then you don't need to know where I live."

Rachel left the room, and sought her sister-in-law.

"That woman's an impostor," she said. "She won't tell where she lives. I shouldn't be surprised if she turns out to be a thief."

"You haven't any reason for supposing that, Rachel."

"Wait and see," said Rachel. "Of course I don't expect you to pay any attention to what I say. I haven't any influence in this house."

"Now, Rachel, you have no cause to say that."

But Rachel was not to be appeased. It pleased her to be considered a martyr, and at such times there was little use in arguing with her.

CHAPTER XIV

PREPARING FOR A JOURNEY

Later in the day, Ida returned from school. She bounded into the room, as usual, but stopped short in some confusion, on seeing a stranger.

"Is this my own dear child, over whose infancy I watched so tenderly?" exclaimed the nurse, rising, her harsh features wreathed into a smile.

"It is Ida," said the cooper's wife.

Ida looked from one to the other in silent bewilderment.

"Ida," said Mrs. Harding, in a little embarrassment, "this is Mrs. Hardwick, who took care of you when you were an infant."

"But I thought you took care of me, mother," said Ida, in surprise.

"Very true," said Mrs. Harding, evasively; "but I was not able to have the care of you all the time. Didn't I ever mention Mrs. Hardwick to you?"

"No, mother."

"Although it is so long since I have seen her, I should have known her anywhere," said the nurse, applying a handkerchief to her eyes. "So pretty as she's grown up, too!"

Mrs. Harding glanced with pride at the beautiful child, who blushed at the compliment, a rare one, for her adopted mother, whatever she might think, did not approve of openly praising her appearance.

"Ida," said Mrs. Hardwick, "won't you come and kiss your old nurse?"

Ida looked at her hard face, which now wore a smile intended to express affection. Without knowing why, she felt an instinctive repugnance to this stranger, notwithstanding her words of endearment.

She advanced timidly, with a reluctance which she was not wholly able to conceal, and passively submitted to a caress from the nurse.

There was a look in the eyes of the nurse, carefully guarded, yet not wholly concealed, which showed that she was quite aware of Ida's feeling toward her, and resented it. But whether or not she was playing a part, she did not betray this feeling openly, but pressed the unwilling child more closely to her bosom.

Ida breathed a sigh of relief when she was released, and moved quietly away, wondering what it was that made the woman so disagreeable to her.

"Is my nurse a good woman?" she asked, thoughtfully, when alone with Mrs. Harding, who was setting the table for dinner.

"A good woman! What makes you ask that?" queried her adopted mother, in surprise.

"I don't know," said Ida.

"I don't know anything to indicate that she is otherwise," said Mrs. Harding. "And, by the way, Ida, she is going to take you on a little excursion to-morrow."

"She going to take me!" exclaimed Ida. "Why, where are we going?"

"On a little pleasure trip; and perhaps she may introduce you to a pleasant lady, who has already become interested in you, from what she has told her."

"What could she say of me?" inquired Ida. "She has not seen me since I was a baby."

"Why," answered the cooper's wife, a little puzzled, "she appears to have thought of you ever since, with a good deal of affection."

"Is it wicked," asked Ida, after a pause, "not to like those who like us?"

"What makes you ask?"

"Because, somehow or other, I don't like this Mrs. Hardwick, at all, for all she was my old nurse, and I don't believe I ever shall."

"Oh, yes, you will," said Mrs. Harding, "when you find she is exerting herself to give you pleasure."

"Am I going with her to-morrow morning?"

"Yes. She wanted you to go to-day, but your clothes were not in order."

"We shall come back at night, shan't we?"

"I presume so."

"I hope we shall," said Ida, decidedly, "and that she won't want me to go with her again."

"Perhaps you will feel differently when it is over, and you find you have enjoyed yourself better than you anticipated."

Mrs. Harding exerted herself to fit Ida up as neatly as possible, and when at length she was got ready, she thought with sudden fear: "Perhaps her mother will not be willing to part with her again."

When Ida was ready to start, there came upon all a little shadow of depression, as if the child were to be separated from them for a year, and not for a day only. Perhaps this was only natural, since even this latter term, however brief, was longer than they had been parted from her since, in her infancy, she had been left at their door.

The nurse expressly desired that none of the family should accompany her, as she declared it highly important that the whereabouts of Ida's mother should not be known.

"Of course," she added, "after Ida returns she can tell you what she pleases. Then it will be of no consequence, for her mother will be gone. She does not live in this neighborhood. She has only come here to see her child."

"Shall you bring her back to-night?" asked Mrs. Harding.

"I may keep her till to-morrow," said the nurse. "After seven years' absence her mother will think that short enough."

To this, Mrs. Harding agreed, though she felt that she should miss Ida, though absent but twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER XV

THE JOURNEY

The nurse walked as far as Broadway, holding Ida by the hand.

"Where are we going?" asked the child, timidly. "Are you going to walk all the way?"

"No," said the nurse; "not all the way—perhaps a mile. You can walk as far as that, can't you?"

"Oh, yes."

They walked on till they reached the ferry at the foot of Courtland Street.

"Did you ever ride in a steamboat?" asked the nurse, in a tone meant to be gracious.

"Once or twice," answered Ida. "I went with Brother Jack once, over to Hoboken. Are we going there now?"

"No; we are going to the city you see over the water."

"What place is it? Is it Brooklyn?"

"No; it is Jersey City."

"Oh, that will be pleasant," said Ida, forgetting, in her childish love of novelty, the repugnance with which the nurse had inspired her.

"Yes, and that is not all; we are going still further," said the nurse.

"Are we going further?" asked Ida, in excitement. "Where are we going?"

"To a town on the line of the railroad."

"And shall we ride in the cars?" asked Ida.

"Yes; didn't you ever ride in the cars?"

"No, never."

"I think you will like it."

"And how long will it take us to go to the place you are going to carry me to?"

"I don't know exactly; perhaps three hours."

"Three whole hours in the cars! How much I shall have to tell father and Jack when I get back!"

"So you will," replied Mrs. Hardwick, with an unaccountable smile—"when you get back."

There was something peculiar in her tone, but Ida did not notice it.

She was allowed to sit next the window in the cars, and took great pleasure in surveying the fields and villages through which they were rapidly whirled.

"Are we 'most there?" she asked, after riding about two hours.

"It won't be long," said the nurse.

"We must have come ever so many miles," said Ida.

"Yes, it is a good ways."

An hour more passed, and still there was no sign of reaching their journey's end. Both Ida and her companion began to feel hungry.

The nurse beckoned to her side a boy, who was selling apples and cakes, and inquired the price.

"The apples are two cents apiece, ma'am, and the cakes are one cent each."

Ida, who had been looking out of the window, turned suddenly round, and exclaimed, in great astonishment: "Why, Charlie Fitts, is that you?"

"Why, Ida, where did you come from?" asked the boy, with a surprise equaling her own.

"I'm making a little journey with this lady," said Ida.

"So you're going to Philadelphia?" said Charlie.

"To Philadelphia!" repeated Ida, surprised. "Not that I know of."

"Why, you're 'most there now."

"Are we, Mrs. Hardwick?" inquired Ida.

"It isn't far from where we're going," she answered, shortly. "Boy, I'll take two of your apples and four cakes. And, now, you'd better go along, for there's somebody over there that looks as if he wanted to buy something."

"Who is that boy?" asked the nurse, abruptly.

"His name is Charlie Fitts."

"Where did you get acquainted with him?"

"He went to school with Jack, so I used to see him sometimes."

"With Jack?"

"Yes, Brother Jack. Don't you know him?"

"Oh, yes, I forgot. So he's a schoolmate of Jack?"

"Yes, and he's a first-rate boy," said Ida, with whom the young apple merchant was evidently a favorite. "He's good to his mother. You see, his mother is sick most of the time, and can't work much; and he's got a little sister—she ain't more than four or five years old—and Charlie supports them by selling things. He's only sixteen years old; isn't he a smart boy?"

"Yes," said the nurse, indifferently.

"Sometime," continued Ida, "I hope I shall be able to earn something for father and mother, so they won't be obliged to work so hard."

"What could you do?" asked the nurse, curiously.

"I don't know as I can do much yet," answered Ida, modestly; "but perhaps when I am older I can draw pictures that people will buy."

"Have you got any of your drawings with you?"

"No, I didn't bring any."

"I wish you had. The lady we are going to see would have liked to see some of them."

"Are we going to see a lady?"

"Yes; didn't your mother tell you?"

"Yes, I believe she said something about a lady that was interested in me."

"That's the one."

"And shall we come back to New York to-night?"

"No; it wouldn't leave us any time to stay."

"West Philadelphia!" announced the conductor.

"We have arrived," said the nurse. "Keep close to me. Perhaps you had better take hold of my hand."

As they were making their way slowly through the crowd, the young apple merchant came up with his basket on his arm.

"When are you going back, Ida?" he asked.

"Mrs. Hardwick says not till to-morrow."

"Come, Ida," said the nurse, sharply. "I can't have you stopping all day to talk. We must hurry along."

"Good-by, Charlie," said Ida. "If you see Jack, just tell him you saw me."

"Yes, I will," was the reply.

"I wonder who that woman is with Ida?" thought the boy. "I don't like her looks much. I wonder if she's any relation of Mr. Harding. She looks about as pleasant as Aunt Rachel."

The last-mentioned lady would hardly have felt flattered at the comparison.

Ida looked about her with curiosity. There was a novel sensation in being in a new place, particularly a city of which she had heard so much as Philadelphia. As far back as she could remember, she had never left New York, except for a brief excursion to Hoboken; and one Fourth of July was made memorable by a trip to Staten Island, under the guardianship of Jack.

They entered a horse car just outside the depot, and rode probably a mile.

"We get out here," said the nurse. "Take care, or you'll get run over. Now turn down here."

They entered a narrow and dirty street, with unsightly houses on each side.

"This ain't a very nice-looking street," said Ida.

"Why isn't it?" demanded her companion, roughly.

"Why, it's narrow, and the houses don't look nice."

"What do you think of that house there?" asked Mrs. Hardwick, pointing to a dilapidated-looking structure on the right-hand side of the street.

"I shouldn't like to live there," answered Ida.

"You wouldn't, hey? You don't like it so well as the house you live in in New York?"

"No, not half so well."

The nurse smiled.

"Wouldn't you like to go in, and look at the house?"

"Go in and look at the house?" repeated Ida. "Why should we?"

"You must know there are some poor families living there that I am interested in," said Mrs. Hardwick, who appeared amused at something. "Didn't your mother ever tell you that it is our duty to help the poor?"

"Oh, yes, but won't it be late before we get to the lady?"

"No, there's plenty of time. You needn't be afraid of that. There's a poor man living in this house that I've made a good many clothes for, first and last."

"He must be much obliged to you," said Ida.

"We're going up to see him now," said her companion. "Take care of that hole in the stairs."

Somewhat to Ida's surprise, her guide, on reaching the first landing, opened a door without the ceremony of knocking, and revealed a poor, untidy room, in which a coarse, unshaven man was sitting, in his shirt sleeves, smoking a pipe.

"Hello!" exclaimed this individual, jumping up. "So you've got along, old woman! Is that the gal?"

Ida stared from one to the other in amazement.

CHAPTER XVI

UNEXPECTED QUARTERS

The appearance of the man whom Mrs. Hardwick addressed so familiarly was more picturesque than pleasing, He had a large, broad face, which, not having been shaved for a week, looked like a wilderness of stubble. His nose indicated habitual indulgence in alcoholic beverages. His eyes were bloodshot, and his skin looked coarse and blotched; his coat was thrown aside, displaying a shirt which bore evidence of having been useful in its day and generation. The same remark may apply to his nether integuments, which were ventilated at each knee, indicating a most praiseworthy regard to the laws of health.

Ida thought she had never seen so disgusting a man. She continued to gaze at him, half in astonishment, half in terror, till the object of her attention exclaimed:

"Well, little gal, what you're lookin' at? Hain't you never seen a gentleman before?"

Ida clung the closer to her companion, who, she was surprised to find, did not resent the man's familiarity.

"Well, Dick, how've you got along since I've been gone?" asked the nurse, to Ida's astonishment.

"Oh, so-so."

"Have you felt lonely any?"

"I've had good company."

"Who's been here?"

Dick pointed significantly to a jug.

"That's the best company I know of," he said, "but it's 'most empty. So you've brought along the gal," he continued. "How did you get hold of her?"

There was something in these questions which terrified Ida. It seemed to indicate a degree of complicity between these two which boded no good to her.

"I'll tell you the particulars by and by."

At the same time she began to take off her bonnet.

"You ain't going to stop, are you?" asked Ida, startled.

"Ain't goin' to stop?" repeated the man called Dick. "Why shouldn't she stop, I'd like to know? Ain't she at home?"

"At home!" echoed Ida, apprehensively, opening wide her eyes in astonishment.

"Yes; ask her."

Ida looked inquiringly at Mrs. Hardwick.

"You might as well take off your things," said the latter, grimly. "We ain't going any further to-day."

"And where's the lady you said you were going to see?"

"The one that was interested in you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm the one," she answered, with a broad smile and a glance at Dick.

"I don't want to stay here," said Ida, now frightened.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Will you take me back early to-morrow?" entreated Ida.

"No, I don't intend to take you back at all."

Ida seemed at first stupefied with astonishment and terror. Then, actuated by a sudden, desperate impulse, she ran to the door, and had got it partly open, when the nurse sprang forward, and seizing her by the arm, pulled her violently back.

"Where are you going in such a hurry?" she demanded.

"Back to father and mother," answered Ida, bursting into tears. "Oh, why did you bring me here?"

"I'll tell you why," answered Dick, jocularly. "You see, Ida, we ain't got any

little girl to love us, and so we got you."

"But I don't love you, and I never shall," said Ida, indignantly.

"Now don't you go to saying that," said Dick. "You'll break my heart, you naughty girl, and then Peg will be a widow."

To give due effect to this pathetic speech, Dick drew out a tattered red handkerchief, and made a great demonstration of wiping his eyes.

The whole scene was so ludicrous that Ida, despite her fears and disgust, could not help laughing hysterically. She recovered herself instantly, and said imploringly: "Oh, do let me go, and father will pay you."

"You really think he would?" said Dick, in a tantalizing tone.

"Oh, yes; and you'll tell her to take me back, won't you?"

"No, he won't tell me any such thing," said Peg, gruffly; "so you may as well give up all thoughts of that first as last. You're going to stay here; so take off that bonnet of yours, and say no more about it."

Ida made no motion toward obeying this mandate.

"Then I'll do it for you," said Peg.

She roughly untied the bonnet—Ida struggling vainly in opposition—and taking this, with the shawl, carried them to a closet, in which she placed them, and then, locking the door, deliberately put the key in her pocket.

"There," said she, grimly, "I guess you're safe for the present."

"Ain't you ever going to carry me back?"

"Some years hence I may possibly," answered the woman, coolly. "We want you here for the present. Besides, you're not sure that they want you back."

"Not want me back again?"

"That's what I said. How do you know but your father and mother sent you off on purpose? They've been troubled with you long enough, and now they've bound you apprentice to me till you're eighteen."

"It's a lie!" said Ida, firmly. "They didn't send me off, and you're a wicked

woman to tell me so."

"Hoity-toity!" said the woman. "Is that the way you dare to speak to me? Have you anything more to say before I whip you?"

"Yes," answered Ida, goaded to desperation. "I shall complain of you to the police, just as soon as I get a chance, and they will put you in jail and send me home. That is what I will do."

Mrs. Hardwick was incensed, and somewhat startled at these defiant words. It was clear that Ida was not going to be a meek, submissive child, whom they might ill-treat without apprehension. She was decidedly dangerous, and her insubordination must be nipped in the bud. She seized Ida roughly by the arm, and striding with her to the closet already spoken of, unlocked it, and, rudely pushing her in, locked the door after her.

"Stay there till you know how to behave," she said.

"How did you manage to come it over her family?" inquired Dick.

His wife gave substantially the account with which the reader is already familiar.

"Pretty well done, old woman!" exclaimed Dick, approvingly. "I always said you was a deep un. I always says, if Peg can't find out how a thing is to be done, then it can't be done, nohow."

"How about the counterfeit coin?" she asked.

"We're to be supplied with all we can put off, and we are to have half for our trouble."

"That is good. When the girl, Ida, gets a little tamed down, we'll give her something to do."

"Is it safe? Won't she betray us?"

"We'll manage that, or at least I will. I'll work on her fears, so she won't any more dare to say a word about us than to cut her own head off."

"All right, Peg. I can trust you to do what's right."

Ida sank down on the floor of the closet into which she had been thrust. Utter darkness was around her, and a darkness as black seemed to hang over all her

prospects of future happiness. She had been snatched in a moment from parents, or those whom she regarded as such, and from a comfortable and happy, though humble home, to this dismal place. In place of the kindness and indulgence to which she had been accustomed, she was now treated with harshness and cruelty.

CHAPTER XVII

SUSPENSE

"It doesn't, somehow, seem natural," said the cooper, as he took his seat at the tea table, "to sit down without Ida. It seems as if half the family were gone."

"Just what I've said to myself twenty times to-day," remarked his wife. "Nobody can tell how much a child is to them till they lose it."

"Not lose it," corrected Jack.

"I didn't mean to say that."

"When you used that word, mother, it made me feel just as if Ida wasn't coming back."

"I don't know why it is," said Mrs. Harding, thoughtfully, "but I've had that same feeling several times today. I've felt just as if something or other would happen to prevent Ida's coming back."

"That is only because she's never been away before," said the cooper, cheerfully. "It isn't best to borrow trouble, Martha; we shall have enough of it without."

"You never said a truer word, brother," said Rachel, mournfully. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. This world is a vale of tears, and a home of misery. Folks may try and try to be happy, but that isn't what they're sent here for."

"You never tried very hard, Aunt Rachel," said Jack.

"It's my fate to be misjudged," said his aunt, with the air of a martyr.

"I don't agree with you in your ideas about life, Rachel," said her brother. "Just as there are more pleasant than stormy days, so I believe there is much more of brightness than shadow in this life of ours, if we would only see it."

"I can't see it," said Rachel.

"It seems to me, Rachel, you take more pains to look at the clouds than the sun."

"Yes," chimed in Jack, "I've noticed whenever Aunt Rachel takes up the newspaper, she always looks first at the deaths, and next at the fatal accidents and steamboat explosions."

"If," retorted Rachel, with severe emphasis, "you should ever be on board a steamboat when it exploded, you wouldn't find much to laugh at."

"Yes, I should," said Jack, "I should laugh—"

"What!" exclaimed Rachel, horrified.

"On the other side of my mouth," concluded Jack. "You didn't wait till I'd finished the sentence."

"I don't think it proper to make light of such serious matters."

"Nor I Aunt Rachel," said Jack, drawing down the corners of his mouth. "I am willing to confess that this is a serious matter. I should feel as they say the cow did, that was thrown three hundred feet up into the air."

"How's that?" inquired his mother.

"Rather discouraged," answered Jack.

All laughed except Aunt Rachel, who preserved the same severe composure, and continued to eat the pie upon her plate with the air of one gulping down medicine.

In the morning all felt more cheerful.

"Ida will be home to-night," said Mrs. Harding, brightly. "What an age it seems since she went away! Who'd think it was only twenty-four hours?"

"We shall know better how to appreciate her when we get her back," said her husband.

"What time do you expect her home, mother? What did Mrs. Hardwick say?"

"Why," said Mrs. Harding, hesitating, "she didn't say as to the hour; but I guess she'll be along in the course of the afternoon."

"If we only knew where she had gone, we could tell better when to expect her."

"But as we don't know," said the cooper, "we must wait patiently till she comes."

"I guess," said Mrs. Harding, with the impulse of a notable housewife, "I'll make some apple turnovers for supper to-night. There's nothing Ida likes so well."

"That's where Ida is right," said Jack, smacking his lips. "Apple turnovers are splendid."

"They are very unwholesome," remarked Rachel.

"I shouldn't think so from the way you eat them, Aunt Rachel," retorted Jack. "You ate four the last time we had them for supper."

"I didn't think you'd begrudge me the little I eat," said his aunt, dolefully. "I didn't think you counted the mouthfuls I took."

"Come, Rachel, don't be so unreasonable," said her brother. "Nobody begrudges you what you eat, even if you choose to eat twice as much as you do. I dare say Jack ate more of the turnovers than you did."

"I ate six," said Jack, candidly.

Rachel, construing this into an apology, said no more.

"If it wasn't for you, Aunt Rachel, I should be in danger of getting too jolly, perhaps, and spilling over. It always makes me sober to look at you."

"It's lucky there's something to make you sober and stiddy," said his aunt. "You are too frivolous."

Evening came, but it did not bring Ida. An indefinable sense of apprehension oppressed the minds of all. Martha feared that Ida's mother, finding her so attractive, could not resist the temptation of keeping her.

"I suppose," she said, "that she has the best claim to her, but it would be a terrible thing for us to part with her."

"Don't let us trouble ourselves about that," said Timothy. "It seems to me very natural that her mother should keep her a little longer than she intended. Think

how long it is since she saw her. Besides, it is not too late for her to return to-night."

At length there came a knock at the door.

"I guess that is Ida," said Mrs. Harding, joyfully.

Jack seized a candle, and hastening to the door, threw it open. But there was no Ida there. In her place stood Charlie Fitts, the boy who had met Ida in the cars.

"How are you, Charlie?" said Jack, trying not to look disappointed. "Come in and tell us all the news."

"Well," said Charlie, "I don't know of any. I suppose Ida has got home?"

"No," answered Jack; "we expected her to-night, but she hasn't come yet."

"She told me she expected to come back to-day."

"What! have you seen her?" exclaimed all, in chorus.

"Yes; I saw her yesterday noon."

"Where?"

"Why, in the cars," answered Charlie.

"What cars?" asked the cooper.

"Why, the Philadelphia cars. Of course you knew it was there she was going?"

"Philadelphia!" exclaimed all, in surprise.

"Yes, the cars were almost there when I saw her. Who was that with her?"

"Mrs. Hardwick, her old nurse."

"I didn't like her looks."

"That's where we paddle in the same canoe," said Jack.

"She didn't seem to want me to speak to Ida," continued Charlie, "but hurried her off as quick as possible."

"There were reasons for that," said the cooper. "She wanted to keep her

destination secret."

"I don't know what it was," said the boy, "but I don't like the woman's looks."

CHAPTER XVIII

HOW IDA FARED

We left Ida confined in a dark closet, with Peg standing guard over her.

After an hour she was released.

"Well," said the nurse, grimly, "how do you feel now?"

"I want to go home," sobbed the child.

"You are at home," said the woman.

"Shall I never see father, and mother, and Jack again?"

"That depends on how you behave yourself."

"Oh, if you will only let me go," pleaded Ida, gathering hope from this remark, "I'll do anything you say."

"Do you mean this, or do you only say it for the sake of getting away?"

"I mean just what I say. Dear, good Mrs. Hardwick, tell me what to do, and I will obey you cheerfully."

"Very well," said Peg, "only you needn't try to come it over me by calling me dear, good Mrs. Hardwick. In the first place, you don't care a cent about me; in the second place, I am not good; and finally, my name isn't Mrs. Hardwick, except in New York."

"What is it, then?" asked Ida.

"It's just Peg, no more and no less. You may call me Aunt Peg."

"I would rather call you Mrs. Hardwick."

"Then you'll have a good many years to call me so. You'd better do as I tell you, if you want any favors. Now what do you say?"

"Yes, Aunt Peg," said Ida, with a strong effort to conceal her repugnance.

"That's well. Now you're not to tell anybody that you came from New York. That is very important; and you're to pay your board by doing whatever I tell you."

"If it isn't wicked."

"Do you suppose I would ask you to do anything wicked?" demanded Peg, frowning.

"You said you wasn't good," mildly suggested Ida.

"I'm good enough to take care of you. Well, what do you say to that? Answer me?"

"Yes."

"There's another thing. You ain't to try to run away."

Ida hung down her head.

"Ha!" exclaimed Peg. "So you've been thinking of it, have you?"

"Yes," answered Ida, boldly, after a moment's hesitation. "I did think I should if I got a good chance."

"Humph!" said the woman, "I see we must understand one another. Unless you promise this, back you go into the dark closet, and I shall keep you there."

Ida shuddered at this fearful threat—terrible to a child of but eight years.

"Do you promise?"

"Yes," said Ida, faintly.

"For fear you might be tempted to break your promise, I have something to show you."

Mrs. Hardwick went to the closet, and took down a large pistol.

"There," she said, "do you see that?"

"Yes, Aunt Peg."

"Do you know what it is for?"

"To shoot people with," answered the child.

"Yes," said the nurse; "I see you understand. Well, now, do you know what I would do if you should tell anybody where you came from, or attempt to run away? Can you guess, now?"

"Would you shoot me?" asked Ida, terror-stricken.

"Yes, I would," said Peg, with fierce emphasis. "That's just what I'd do. And what's more even if you got away, and got back to your family in New York, I would follow you, and shoot you dead in the street."

"You wouldn't be so wicked!" exclaimed Ida.

"Wouldn't I, though?" repeated Peg, significantly. "If you don't believe I would, just try it. Do you think you would like to try it?" she asked, fiercely.

"No," answered Ida, with a shudder.

"Well, that's the most sensible thing you've said yet. Now that you are a little more reasonable, I'll tell you what I am going to do with you."

Ida looked eagerly up into her face.

"I am going to keep you with me for a year. I want the services of a little girl for that time. If you serve me faithfully, I will then send you back to New York."

"Will you?" asked Ida, hopefully.

"Yes, but you must mind and do what I tell you."

"Oh, yes," said Ida, joyfully.

This was so much better than she had been led to fear, that the prospect of returning home at all, even though she had to wait a year, encouraged her.

"What do you want me to do?" she asked.

"You may take the broom and sweep the room."

"Yes, Aunt Peg."

"And then you may wash the dishes."

"Yes, Aunt Peg."

"And after that, I will find something else for you to do."

Mrs. Hardwick threw herself into a rocking-chair, and watched with grim satisfaction the little handmaiden, as she moved quickly about.

"I took the right course with her," she said to herself. "She won't any more dare to run away than to chop her hands off. She thinks I'll shoot her."

And the unprincipled woman chuckled to herself.

Ida heard her indistinctly, and asked, timidly:

"Did you speak, Aunt Peg?"

"No, I didn't; just attend to your work and don't mind me. Did your mother make you work?"

"No; I went to school."

"Time you learned. I'll make a smart woman of you."

The next morning Ida was asked if she would like to go out into the street.

"I am going to let you do a little shopping. There are various things we want. Go and get your hat."

"It's in the closet," said Ida.

"Oh, yes, I put it there. That was before I could trust you."

She went to the closet and returned with the child's hat and shawl. As soon as the two were ready they emerged into the street.

"This is a little better than being shut up in the closet, isn't it?" asked her companion.

"Oh, yes, ever so much."

"You see you'll have a very good time of it, if you do as I bid you. I don't want to do you any harm."

So they walked along together until Peg, suddenly pausing, laid her hands on Ida's arm, and pointing to a shop near by, said to her: "Do you see that shop?"

"Yes," said Ida.

"I want you to go in and ask for a couple of rolls. They come to three cents apiece. Here's some money to pay for them. It is a new dollar. You will give this to the man that stands behind the counter, and he will give you back ninety-four cents. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Ida, nodding her head. "I think I do."

"And if the man asks if you have anything smaller, you will say no."

"Yes, Aunt Peg."

"I will stay just outside. I want you to go in alone, so you will learn to manage without me."

Ida entered the shop. The baker, a pleasant-looking man, stood behind the counter.

"Well, my dear, what is it?" he asked.

"I should like a couple of rolls."

"For your mother, I suppose?" said the baker.

"No," answered Ida, "for the woman I board with."

"Ha! a dollar bill, and a new one, too," said the baker, as Ida tendered it in payment. "I shall have to save that for my little girl."

Ida left the shop with the two rolls and the silver change.

"Did he say anything about the money?" asked Peg.

"He said he should save it for his little girl."

"Good!" said the woman. "You've done well."

CHAPTER XIX

BAD MONEY

The baker introduced in the foregoing chapter was named Harding. Singularly, Abel Harding was a brother of Timothy Harding, the cooper.

In many respects he resembled his brother. He was an excellent man, exemplary in all the relations of life, and had a good heart. He was in very comfortable circumstances, having accumulated a little property by diligent attention to his business. Like his brother, Abel Harding had married, and had one child. She had received the name of Ellen.

When the baker closed his shop for the night, he did not forget the new dollar, which he had received, or the disposal he told Ida he would make of it.

Ellen ran to meet her father as he entered the house.

"What do you think I have brought you, Ellen?" he said, with a smile.

"Do tell me quick," said the child, eagerly.

"What if I should tell you it was a new dollar?"

"Oh, papa, thank you!" and Ellen ran to show it to her mother.

"Yes," said the baker, "I received it from a little girl about the size of Ellen, and I suppose it was that that gave me the idea of bringing it home to her."

This was all that passed concerning Ida at that time. The thought of her would have passed from the baker's mind, if it had not been recalled by circumstances.

Ellen, like most girls of her age, when in possession of money, could not be easy until she had spent it. Her mother advised her to deposit it in some savings bank; but Ellen preferred present gratification.

Accordingly, one afternoon, when walking out with her mother, she persuaded her to go into a toy shop, and price a doll which she saw in the window. The price was seventy-five cents. Ellen concluded to buy it, and her mother tendered the dollar in payment.

The shopman took it in his hand, glanced at it carelessly at first, then scrutinized it with increased attention.

"What is the matter?" inquired Mrs. Harding. "It is good, isn't it?"

"That is what I am doubtful of," was the reply.

"It is new."

"And that is against it. If it were old, it would be more likely to be genuine."

"But you wouldn't condemn a bill because it is new?"

"Certainly not; but the fact is, there have been lately many cases where counterfeit bills have been passed, and I suspect this is one of them. However, I can soon ascertain."

"I wish you would," said the baker's wife. "My husband took it at his shop, and will be likely to take more unless he is put on his guard."

The shopman sent it to the bank where it was pronounced counterfeit.

Mr. Harding was much surprised at his wife's story.

"Really!" he said. "I had no suspicion of this. Can it be possible that such a young and beautiful child could be guilty of such an offense?"

"Perhaps not," answered his wife. "She may be as innocent in the matter as Ellen or myself."

"I hope so," said the baker; "it would be a pity that so young a child should be given to wickedness. However, I shall find out before long."

"How?"

"She will undoubtedly come again sometime."

The baker watched daily for the coming of Ida. He waited some days in vain. It was not Peg's policy to send the child too often to the same place, as that would increase the chances of detection.

One day, however, Ida entered the shop as before.

"Good-morning," said the baker; "what will you have to-day?"

"You may give me a sheet of gingerbread, sir."

The baker placed it in her hand.

"How much will it be?"

"Twelve cents."

Ida offered him another new bill.

As if to make change, he stepped from behind the counter and placed himself between Ida and the door.

"What is your name, my child?" he asked.

"Ida, sir."

"Ida? But what is your other name?"

Ida hesitated a moment, because Peg had forbidden her to use the name of Harding, and had told her, if ever the inquiry were made, she must answer Hardwick.

She answered reluctantly: "Ida Hardwick."

The baker observed her hesitation, and this increased his suspicion.

"Hardwick!" he repeated, musingly, endeavoring to draw from the child as much information as possible before allowing her to perceive that he suspected her. "And where do you live?"

Ida was a child of spirit, and did not understand why she should be questioned so closely.

She said, with some impatience: "I am in a hurry, sir, and would like to have the change as soon as you can."

"I have no doubt of it," said the baker, his manner suddenly changing, "but you cannot go just yet."

"Why not?" asked Ida.

"Because you have been trying to deceive me."

"I trying to deceive you!" exclaimed Ida.

"Really," thought Mr. Harding, "she does it well; but no doubt she is trained to it. It is perfectly shocking, such artful depravity in a child."

"Don't you remember buying something here a week ago?" he asked, in as stern a tone as his good nature would allow him to employ.

"Yes," answered Ida, promptly; "I bought two rolls, at three cents apiece."

"And what did you offer me in payment?"

"I handed you a dollar bill."

"Like this?" asked the baker, holding up the one she had just offered him.

"Yes, sir."

"And do you mean to say," demanded the baker, sternly, "that you didn't know it was bad when you offered it to me?"

"Bad!" gasped Ida.

"Yes, spurious. Not as good as blank paper."

"Indeed, sir, I didn't know anything about it," said Ida, earnestly; "I hope you'll believe me when I say that I thought it was good."

"I don't know what to think," said the baker, perplexed. "Who gave you the money?"

"The woman I board with."

"Of course I can't give you the gingerbread. Some men, in my place, would deliver you up to the police. But I will let you go, if you will make me one promise."

"Oh, I will promise anything, sir," said Ida.

"You have given me a bad dollar. Will you promise to bring me a good one to-morrow?"

Ida made the required promise, and was allowed to go.

CHAPTER XX

DOUBTS AND FEARS

"Well, what kept you so long?" asked Peg, impatiently, as Ida rejoined her at the corner of the street. "I thought you were going to stay all the forenoon. And Where's your gingerbread?"

"He wouldn't let me have it," answered Ida.

"And why wouldn't he let you have it?" said Peg.

"Because he said the money wasn't good."

"Stuff and nonsense! It's good enough. However, it's no matter. We'll go somewhere else."

"But he said the money I gave him last week wasn't good, and I promised to bring him another to-morrow, or he wouldn't have let me go."

"Well, where are you going to get your dollar?"

"Why, won't you give it to me?" said the child.

"Catch me at such nonsense!" said Mrs. Hardwick, contemptuously. "I ain't quite a fool. But here we are at another shop. Go in and see if you can do any better there. Here's the money."

"Why, it's the same bill I gave you."

"What if it is?"

"I don't want to pass bad money."

"Tut! What hurt will it do?"

"It's the same as stealing."

"The man won't lose anything. He'll pass it off again."

"Somebody'll have to lose it by and by," said Ida.

"So you've taken up preaching, have you?" said Peg, sneeringly. "Maybe you know better than I what is proper to do. It won't do for you to be so mighty particular, and so you'll find out, if you stay with me long."

"Where did you get the dollar?" asked Ida; "and how is it you have so many of

them?"

"None of your business. You mustn't pry into the affairs of other people. Are you going to do as I told you?" she continued, menacingly.

"I can't," answered Ida, pale but resolute.

"You can't!" repeated Peg, furiously. "Didn't you promise to do whatever I told you?"

"Except what was wicked," interposed Ida.

"And what business have you to decide what is wicked? Come home with me."

Peg seized the child's hand, and walked on in sullen silence, occasionally turning to scowl upon Ida, who had been strong enough, in her determination to do right, to resist successfully the will of the woman whom she had so much reason to dread.

Arrived at home, Peg walked Ida into the room by the shoulder. Dick was lounging in a chair.

"Hillo!" said he, lazily, observing his wife's frowning face. "What's the gal been doin', hey?"

"What's she been doing?" repeated Peg. "I should like to know what she hasn't been doing. She's refused to go in and buy gingerbread of the baker."

"Look here, little gal," said Dick, in a moralizing vein, "isn't this rayther undootiful conduct on your part? Ain't it a piece of ingratitude, when Peg and I go to the trouble of earning the money to pay for gingerbread for you to eat, that you ain't even willin' to go in and buy it?"

"I would just as lieve go in," said Ida, "if Peg would give me good money to pay for it."

"That don't make any difference," said the admirable moralist. "It's your dooty to do just as she tells you, and you'll do right. She'll take the risk."

"I can't," said the child.

"You hear her!" said Peg.

"Very improper conduct!" said Dick, shaking his head in grave reproval. "Little gal, I'm ashamed of you. Put her in the closet, Peg."

"Come along," said Peg, harshly. "I'll show you how I deal with those that don't obey me."

So Ida was incarcerated once more in the dark closet. Yet in the midst of her desolation, child as she was, she was sustained and comforted by the thought that she was suffering for doing right.

When Ida failed to return on the appointed day, the Hardings, though disappointed, did not think it strange.

"If I were her mother," said the cooper's wife, "and had been parted from her for so long, I should want to keep her as long as I could. Dear heart! how pretty she is and how proud her mother must be of her!"

"It's all a delusion," said Rachel, shaking her head, solemnly. "It's all a delusion. I don't believe she's got a mother at all. That Mrs. Hardwick is an impostor. I know it, and told you so at the time, but you wouldn't believe me. I never expect to set eyes on Ida again in this world."

The next day passed, and still no tidings of Jack's ward. Her young guardian, though not as gloomy as Aunt Rachel, looked unusually serious.

There was a cloud of anxiety even upon the cooper's usually placid face, and he was more silent than usual at the evening meal. At night, after Jack and his aunt had retired, he said, anxiously: "What do you think is the cause of Ida's prolonged absence, Martha?"

"I can't tell," said his wife, seriously. "It seems to me, if her mother wanted to keep her longer it would be no more than right that she should drop us a line. She must know that we would feel anxious."

"Perhaps she is so taken up with Ida that she can think of no one else."

"It may be so; but if we neither see Ida to-morrow, nor hear from her, I shall be seriously troubled."

"Suppose she should never come back," suggested the cooper, very soberly.

"Oh, husband, don't hint at such a thing," said his wife.

"We must contemplate it as a possibility," said Timothy, gravely, "though not, as I hope, as a probability. Ida's mother has an undoubted right to her."

"Then it would be better if she had never been placed in our charge," said Martha, tearfully, "for we should not have had the pain of parting with her."

"Not so, Martha," her husband said, seriously. "We ought to be grateful for God's blessings, even if He suffers us to retain them but a short time. And Ida has been a blessing to us all, I am sure. The memory of that can't be taken from us, Martha. There's some lines I came across in the paper to-night that express just what I've been sayin'. Let me find them."

The cooper put on his spectacles, and hunted slowly down the columns of the daily paper till he came to these beautiful lines of Tennyson, which he read aloud:

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"'I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost,
Than never to have loved at all.'"
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"There, wife," he said, as he laid down the paper; "I don't know who writ them lines, but I'm sure it's some one that's met with a great sorrow and conquered it."

"They are beautiful," said his wife, after a pause; "and I dare say you're right, Timothy; but I hope we mayn't have to learn the truth of them by experience. After all, it isn't certain but that Ida will come back."

"At any rate," said her husband, "there is no doubt that it is our duty to take every means that we can to recover Ida. Of course, if her mother insists upon keepin' her, we can't say anything; but we ought to be sure of that before we yield her up."

"What do you mean, Timothy?" asked Martha.

"I don't know as I ought to mention it," said the cooper. "Very likely there isn't anything in it, and it would only make you feel more anxious."

"You have already aroused my anxiety. I should feel better if you would speak out."

"Then I will," said the cooper. "I have sometimes been tempted," he continued, lowering his voice, "to doubt whether Ida's mother really sent for her."

"How do you account for the letter, then?"

"I have thought—mind, it is only a guess—that Mrs. Hardwick may have got somebody to write it for her."

"It is very singular," murmured Martha.

"What is singular?"

"Why, the very same thought has occurred to me. Somehow, I can't help feeling a little distrustful of Mrs. Hardwick, though perhaps unjustly. What object can she have in getting possession of the child?"

"That I can't conjecture; but I have come to one determination."

"What is that?"

"Unless we learn something of Ida within a week from the time she left here, I shall go on to Philadelphia, or else send Jack, and endeavor to get track of her."

CHAPTER XXI

AUNT RACHEL'S MISHAPS

The week slipped away, and still no tidings of Ida. The house seemed lonely without her. Not until then did they understand how largely she had entered into their life and thoughts. But worse even than the sense of loss was the uncertainty as to her fate.

"It is time that we took some steps about finding Ida," the cooper said. "I would like to go to Philadelphia myself, to make inquiries about her, but I am just now engaged upon a job which I cannot very well leave, and so I have concluded to send Jack."

"When shall I start?" exclaimed Jack.

"To-morrow morning," answered his father.

"What good do you think it will do," interposed Rachel, "to send a mere boy like Jack to Philadelphia?"

"A mere boy!" repeated her nephew, indignantly.

"A boy hardly sixteen years old," continued Rachel. "Why, he'll need somebody to take care of him. Most likely you'll have to go after him."

"What's the use of provoking a fellow so, Aunt Rachel?" said Jack. "You know I'm 'most eighteen. Hardly sixteen! Why, I might as well say you're hardly forty, when we all know you're fifty."

"Fifty!" ejaculated the scandalized spinster. "It's a base slander. I'm only thirty-seven."

"Maybe I'm mistaken," said Jack, carelessly. "I didn't know exactly how old you were; I only judged from your looks."

At this point, Rachel applied a segment of a pocket handkerchief to her eyes; but, unfortunately, owing to circumstances, the effect instead of being pathetic, as she intended it to be, was simply ludicrous.

It so happened that a short time previous, the inkstand had been partially spilled upon the table, through Jack's carelessness and this handkerchief had been used to sop it up. It had been placed inadvertently upon the window seat, where it had remained until Rachel, who was sitting beside the window, called it into requisition. The ink upon it was by no means dry. The consequence was, that, when Rachel removed it from her eyes, her face was discovered to be covered with ink in streaks mingling with the tears that were falling, for Rachel always had a plentiful supply of tears at command.

The first intimation the luckless spinster had of her mishap was conveyed in a stentorian laugh from Jack.

He looked intently at the dark traces of sorrow on his aunt's face—of which she was yet unconscious—and doubling up, went off into a perfect paroxysm of laughter.

"Jack!" said his mother, reprovingly, for she had not observed the cause of his amusement, "it's improper for you to laugh at your aunt in such a rude manner."

"Oh, I can't help it, mother. Just look at her."

Thus invited, Mrs. Harding did look, and the rueful expression of Rachel, set off by the inky stains, was so irresistibly comical, that, after a hard struggle, she too gave way, and followed Jack's example.

Astonished and indignant at this unexpected behavior of her sister-in-law, Rachel burst into a fresh fit of weeping, and again had recourse to the handkerchief.

"This is too much!" she sobbed. "I've stayed here long enough, if even my sister-in-law, as well as my own nephew, from whom I expect nothing better, makes me her laughingstock. Brother Timothy, I can no longer remain in your dwelling to be laughed at; I will go to the poorhouse and end my miserable existence as a common pauper. If I only receive Christian burial when I leave the world, it will be all I hope or expect from my relatives, who will be glad enough to get rid of me."

The second application of the handkerchief had so increased the effect, that Jack found it impossible to check his laughter, while the cooper, whose attention was now drawn to his sister's face, burst out in a similar manner.

This more amazed Rachel than Martha's merriment.

"Even you, Timothy, join in ridiculing your sister!" she exclaimed, in an "*Et tu, Brute*" tone.

"We don't mean to ridicule you, Rachel," gasped her sister-in-law, "but we can't help laughing."

"At the prospect of my death!" uttered Rachel, in a tragic tone. "Well, I'm a poor, forlorn creetur, I know. Even my nearest relations make sport of me, and when I speak of dying, they shout their joy to my face."

"Yes," gasped Jack, nearly choking, "that's it exactly. It isn't your death we're laughing at, but your face."

"My face!" exclaimed the insulted spinster. "One would think I was a fright by the way you laugh at it."

"So you are!" said Jack, with a fresh burst of laughter.

"To be called a fright to my face!" shrieked Rachel, "by my own nephew! This is too much. Timothy, I leave your house forever."

The excited maiden seized her hood; which was hanging from a nail, and was about to leave the house when she was arrested in her progress toward the door by the cooper, who stifled his laughter sufficiently to say: "Before you go, Rachel, just look in the glass."

Mechanically his sister did look, and her horrified eyes rested upon a face streaked with inky spots and lines seaming it in every direction.

In her first confusion Rachel jumped to the conclusion that she had been suddenly stricken by the plague. Accordingly she began to wring her hands in an excess of terror, and exclaimed in tones of piercing anguish:

"It is the fatal plague spot! I am marked for the tomb. The sands of my life are fast running out."

This convulsed Jack afresh with merriment, so that an observer might, not without reason, have imagined him to be in imminent danger of suffocation.

"You'll kill me, Aunt Rachel! I know you will," he gasped.

"You may order my coffin, Timothy," said Rachel, in a sepulchral voice; "I shan't live twenty-four hours. I've felt it coming on for a week past. I forgive you

for all your ill-treatment. I should like to have some one go for the doctor, though I know I'm past help."

"I think," said the cooper, trying to look sober, "you will find the cold-water treatment efficacious in removing the plague spots, as you call them."

Rachel turned toward him with a puzzled look. Then, as her eyes rested for the first time upon the handkerchief she had used, its appearance at once suggested a clew by which she was enabled to account for her own.

Somewhat ashamed of the emotion which she had betrayed, as well as the ridiculous figure which she had cut, she left the room abruptly, and did not make her appearance again till the next morning.

After this little episode, the conversation turned upon Jack's approaching journey.

"I don't know," said his mother, "but Rachel is right. Perhaps Jack isn't old enough, and hasn't had sufficient experience to undertake such a mission."

"Now, mother," expostulated Jack, "you ain't going to side against me, are you?"

"There is no better plan," said his father, quietly.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FLOWER GIRL

Henry Bowen was a young artist of moderate talent, who had abandoned the farm on which he had labored as a boy, for the sake of pursuing his favorite profession. He was not competent to achieve the highest success. But he had good taste and a skillful hand, and his productions were pleasing and popular. He had formed a connection with a publisher of prints and engravings, who had thrown considerable work in his way.

"Have you any new commission to-day?" inquired the young artist, on the day before Ida's discovery that she had been employed to pass off spurious coin.

"Yes," said the publisher, "I have thought of something which may prove attractive. Just at present, pictures of children seem to be popular. I should like to have you supply me with a sketch of a flower girl, with, say, a basket of flowers in her hand. Do you comprehend my idea?"

"I believe I do," answered the artist. "Give me sufficient time, and I hope to satisfy you."

The young artist went home, and at once set to work upon the task he had undertaken. He had conceived that it would be an easy one, but found himself mistaken. Whether because his fancy was not sufficiently lively, or his mind was not in tune, he was unable to produce the effect he desired. The faces which he successively outlined were all stiff, and though beautiful in feature, lacked the great charm of being expressive and lifelike.

"What is the matter with me?" he exclaimed, impatiently. "Is it impossible for me to succeed? It's clear," he decided, "that I am not in the vein. I will go out and take a walk, and perhaps while I am in the street something may strike me."

He accordingly donned his coat and hat, and emerged into the great thoroughfare, where he was soon lost in the throng. It was only natural that, as he walked, with his task uppermost in his thoughts, he should scrutinize carefully the faces of such young girls as he met.

"Perhaps," it occurred to him, "I may get a hint from some face I see. It is

strange," he mused, "how few there are, even in the freshness of childhood, that can be called models of beauty. That child, for example, has beautiful eyes, but a badly cut mouth. Here is one that would be pretty, if the face were rounded out; and here is a child—Heaven help it!—that was designed to be beautiful, but want and unfavorable circumstances have pinched and cramped it."

It was at this point in the artist's soliloquy that, in turning the corner of a street, he came upon Peg and Ida.

The artist looked earnestly at the child's face, and his own lighted up with sudden pleasure, as one who stumbles upon success just as he had begun to despair of it.

"The very face I have been looking for!" he exclaimed to himself. "My flower girl is found at last."

He turned round, and followed Ida and her companion. Both stopped at a shop window to examine some articles which were on exhibition there.

"It is precisely the face I want," he murmured. "Nothing could be more appropriate or charming. With that face the success of the picture is assured."

The artist's inference that Peg was Ida's attendant was natural, since the child was dressed in a style quite superior to her companion. Peg thought that this would enable her, with less risk, to pass spurious coin.

The young man followed the strangely assorted pair to the apartments which Peg occupied. From the conversation which he overheard he learned that he had been mistaken in his supposition as to the relation between the two, and that, singular as it seemed, Peg had the guardianship of the child. This made his course clearer. He mounted the stairs and knocked at the door.

"What do you want?" demanded a sharp voice.

"I should like to see you just a moment," was the reply.

Peg opened the door partially, and regarded the young man suspiciously.

"I don't know you," she said, shortly.

"I presume not," said the young man, courteously. "We have never met, I think. I am an artist. I hope you will pardon my present intrusion."

"There is no use in your coming here," said Peg, abruptly, "and you may as well go away. I don't want to buy any pictures. I've got plenty of better ways to spend my money than to throw it away on such trash."

No one would have thought of doubting Peg's word, for she looked far from being a patron of the arts.

"You have a young girl living with you, about seven or eight years old, have you not?" inquired the artist.

Peg instantly became suspicious.

"Who told you that?" she demanded, quickly.

"No one told me. I saw her in the street."

Peg at once conceived the idea that her visitor was aware of the fact that the child had been lured away from home; possibly he might be acquainted with the cooper's family? or might be their emissary.

"Suppose you did see such a child on the street, what has that to do with me?"

"But I saw the child entering this house with you."

"What if you did?" demanded Peg, defiantly.

"I was about," said the artist, perceiving that he was misapprehended, "I was about to make a proposition which may prove advantageous to both of us."

"Eh!" said Peg, catching at the hint. "Tell me what it is and we may come to terms."

"I must explain," said Bowen, "that I am an artist. In seeking for a face to sketch from, I have been struck by that of your child."

"Of Ida?"

"Yes, if that is her name. I will pay you five dollars if you will allow me to copy her face."

"Well," she said, more graciously, "if that's all you want, I don't know as I have any objections. I suppose you can copy her face here as well as anywhere?"

"I should prefer to have her come to my studio."

"I shan't let her come," said Peg, decidedly.

"Then I will consent to your terms, and come here."

"Do you want to begin now?"

"I should like to do so."

"Come in, then. Here, Ida, I want you."

"Yes, Peg."

"This gentleman wants to copy your face."

Ida looked surprised.

"I am an artist," said the young man, with a reassuring smile. "I will endeavor not to try your patience too much, or keep you too long. Do you think you can stand still for half an hour without too much fatigue?"

He kept her in pleasant conversation, while, with a free, bold hand he sketched the outlines of her face.

"I shall want one more sitting," he said. "I will come to-morrow at this time."

"Stop a minute," said Peg. "I should like the money in advance. How do I know you will come again?"

"Certainly, if you desire it," said Henry Bowen.

"What strange fortune," he thought, "can have brought them together? Surely there can be no relation between this sweet child and that ugly old woman!"

The next day he returned and completed his sketch, which was at once placed in the hands of the publisher, eliciting his warm approval.

CHAPTER XXIII

JACK OBTAINS INFORMATION

Jack set out with that lightness of heart and keen sense of enjoyment that seem natural to a young man of eighteen on his first journey. Partly by boat, partly by cars, he traveled, till in a few hours he was discharged, with hundreds of others, at the depot in Philadelphia.

He rejected all invitations to ride, and strode on, carpetbag in hand, though, sooth to say, he had very little idea whether he was steering in the right direction for his uncle's shop. By dint of diligent and persevering inquiry he found it at last, and walking in, announced himself to the worthy baker as his nephew Jack.

"What? Are you Jack?" exclaimed Mr. Abel Harding, pausing in his labor. "Well, I never should have known you, that's a fact. Bless me, how you've grown! Why, you're 'most as big as your father, ain't you?"

"Only half an inch shorter," answered Jack, complacently.

"And you're—let me see—how old are you?"

"Eighteen; that is, almost. I shall be in two months."

"Well, I'm glad to see you, Jack, though I hadn't the least idea of your raining down so unexpectedly. How's your father and mother and your adopted sister?"

"Father and mother are pretty well," answered Jack; "and so is Aunt Rachel," he continued, smiling, "though she ain't so cheerful as she might be."

"Poor Rachel!" said Abel, smiling also. "Everything goes contrary with her. I don't suppose she's wholly to blame for it. Folks differ constitutionally. Some are always looking on the bright side of things, and others can never see but one side, and that's the dark one."

"You've hit it, uncle," said Jack, laughing. "Aunt Rachel always looks as if she was attending a funeral."

"So she is, my boy," said Abel, gravely, "and a sad funeral it is."

"I don't understand you, uncle."

"The funeral of her affections—that's what I mean. Perhaps you mayn't know that Rachel was, in early life, engaged to be married to a young man whom she ardently loved. She was a different woman then from what she is now. But her lover deserted her just before the wedding was to have come off, and she's never got over the disappointment. But that isn't what I was going to talk about. You haven't told me about your adopted sister."

"That's the very thing I've come to Philadelphia about," said Jack, soberly. "Ida has been carried off, and I've come in search of her."

"Been carried off? I didn't know such things ever happened in this country. What do you mean?"

Jack told the story of Mrs. Hardwick's arrival with a letter from Ida's mother, conveying the request that her child might, under the guidance of the messenger, be allowed to pay her a visit. To this and the subsequent details Abel Harding listened with earnest attention.

"So you have reason to think the child is in Philadelphia?" he said, musingly.

"Yes," said Jack; "Ida was seen in the cars, coming here, by a boy who knew her in New York."

"Ida?" repeated the baker. "Was that her name?"

"Yes; you knew her name, didn't you?"

"I dare say I have known it, but I have heard so little of your family lately that I had forgotten it. It is rather a singular circumstance."

"What is a singular circumstance?"

"I will tell you, Jack. It may not amount to anything, however. A few days since a little girl came into my shop to buy a small amount of bread. I was at once favorably impressed with her appearance. She was neatly dressed, and had a very honest face. Having made the purchase she handed me in payment a new dollar bill. 'I'll keep that for my little girl,' thought I at once. Accordingly, when I went home at night, I just took the dollar out of, the till and gave it to her. Of course, she was delighted with it, and, like a child, wanted to spend it at once. So her mother agreed to go out with her the next day. Well, they selected some

knick-knack or other, but when they came to pay for it the dollar proved counterfeit."

"Counterfeit?"

"Yes; bad. Issued by a gang of counterfeiters. When they told me of this, I said to myself, 'Can it be that this little girl knew what she was about when she offered me that?' I couldn't think it possible, but decided to wait till she came again."

"Did she come again?"

"Yes; only day before yesterday. As I expected, she offered me in payment another dollar just like the other. Before letting her know that I had discovered the imposition I asked her one or two questions with the idea of finding out as much as possible about her. When I told her the bill was a bad one, she seemed very much surprised. It might have been all acting, but I didn't think so then. I even felt pity for her, and let her go on condition that she would bring me back a good dollar in place of the bad one the next day. I suppose I was a fool for doing so, but she looked so pretty and innocent that I couldn't make up my mind to speak or act harshly to her. But I am afraid that I was deceived, and that she was an artful character after all."

"Then she didn't come back with the good money?"

"No; I haven't seen her since."

"What name did she give you?"

"Haven't I told you? It was the name that made me think of telling you. She called herself Ida Hardwick."

"Ida Hardwick?" repeated Jack.

"Yes, Ida Hardwick. But that hasn't anything to do with your Ida, has it?"

"Hasn't it, though?" said Jack. "Why, Mrs. Hardwick was the woman who carried her away."

"Mrs. Hardwick—her mother?"

"No; not her mother. She said she was the woman who took care of Ida before she was brought to us."

"Then you think this Ida Hardwick may be your missing sister?"

"That's what I don't know yet," said Jack. "If you would only describe her, Uncle Abel, I could tell better."

"Well," said the baker, thoughtfully, "I should say this little girl was seven or eight years old."

"Yes," said Jack, nodding; "what color were her eyes?"

"Blue."

"So are Ida's."

"A small mouth, with a very sweet expression, yet with something firm and decided about it."

"Yes."

"And I believe her dress was a light one, with a blue ribbon round the waist."

"Did she wear anything around her neck?"

"A brown scarf, if I remember rightly."

"That is the way Ida was dressed when she went away with Mrs. Hardwick. I am sure it must be she. But how strange that she should come into your shop!"

"Perhaps," suggested his uncle, "this woman, representing herself as Ida's nurse, was her mother."

"No; it can't be," said Jack, vehemently. "What, that ugly, disagreeable woman, Ida's mother? I won't believe it. I should just as soon expect to see strawberries growing on a thorn bush."

"You know I have not seen Mrs. Hardwick."

"No great loss," said Jack. "You wouldn't care much about seeing her again. She is a tall, gaunt, disagreeable woman; while Ida is fair and sweet-looking. Ida's mother, whoever she is, I am sure, is a lady in appearance and manners, and Mrs. Hardwick is neither. Aunt Rachel was right for once."

"What did Rachel say?"

"She said the nurse was an impostor, and declared it was only a plot to get

possession of Ida; but then, that was to be expected of Aunt Rachel."

"Still it seems difficult to imagine any satisfactory motive on the part of the woman, supposing her not to be Ida's mother."

"Mother or not," returned Jack, "she's got possession of Ida; and, from all that you say, she is not the best person to bring her up. I am determined to rescue Ida from this she-dragon. Will you help me, uncle?"

"You may count upon me, Jack, for all I can do."

"Then," said Jack, with energy, "we shall succeed. I feel sure of it. 'Where there's a will there's a way.'"

"I wish you success, Jack; but if the people who have got Ida are counterfeiters, they are desperate characters, and you must proceed cautiously."

"I ain't afraid of them. I'm on the warpath now, Uncle Abel, and they'd better look out for me."

CHAPTER XXIV

JACK'S DISCOVERY

The first thing to be done by Jack was, of course, in some way to obtain a clew to the whereabouts of Peg, or Mrs. Hardwick, to use the name by which he knew her. No mode of proceeding likely to secure this result occurred to him, beyond the very obvious one of keeping in the street as much as possible, in the hope that chance might bring him face to face with the object of his pursuit.

Following out this plan, Jack became a daily promenader in Chestnut, Walnut and other leading thoroughfares. Jack became himself an object of attention, on account of what appeared to be his singular behavior. It was observed that he had no glances to spare for young ladies, but persistently stared at the faces of all middle-aged women—a circumstance naturally calculated to attract remark in the case of a well-made lad like Jack.

"I am afraid," said the baker, "it will be as hard as looking for a needle in a haystack, to find the one you seek among so many faces."

"There's nothing like trying," said Jack, courageously. "I'm not going to give up yet a while. I'd know Ida or Mrs. Hardwick anywhere."

"You ought to write home, Jack. They will be getting anxious about you."

"I'm going to write this morning—I put it off, because I hoped to have some news to write."

He sat down and wrote the following note:

"DEAR PARENTS: I arrived in Philadelphia right side up with care, and am stopping at Uncle Abel's. He received me very kindly. I have got track of Ida, though I have not found her yet. I have learned as much as this: that this Mrs. Hardwick—who is a double-distilled she-rascal—probably has Ida in her clutches, and has sent her on two occasions to my uncle's. I am spending most of my time in the streets, keeping a good lookout for her. If I do meet her, see if I don't get Ida away from her. But it may take some time. Don't get discouraged, therefore, but wait patiently. Whenever anything new turns up you will receive a line from your dutiful son,

"JACK."

Jack had been in the city eight days when, as he was sauntering along the

street, he suddenly perceived in front of him, a shawl which struck him as wonderfully like the one worn by Mrs. Hardwick. Not only that, but the form of the wearer corresponded to his recollections of the nurse. He bounded forward, and rapidly passing the suspected person, turned suddenly and confronted the woman of whom he had been in search.

The recognition was mutual. Peg was taken aback by this unexpected encounter.

Her first impulse was to make off, but Jack's resolute expression warned her that he was not to be trifled with.

"Mrs. Hardwick?" exclaimed Jack.

"You are right," said she, rapidly recovering her composure, "and you, if I am not mistaken, are John Harding, the son of my worthy friends in New York."

"Well," ejaculated Jack, internally, "she's a cool un, and no mistake."

"My name is Jack," he said, aloud.

"Did you leave all well at home?" asked Peg.

"You can't guess what I came here for?" said Jack.

"To see your sister Ida, I presume."

"Yes," answered Jack, amazed at the woman's composure.

"I thought some of you would be coming on," continued Peg, who had already mapped out her course.

"You did?"

"Yes; it was only natural. What did your father and mother say to the letter I wrote them?"

"The letter you wrote them?" exclaimed Jack.

"Certainly. You got it, didn't you?"

"I don't know what letter you mean."

"A letter, in which I wrote that Ida's mother had been so pleased with the appearance and manners of the child, that she could not determine to part with

her."

"You don't mean to say that any such letter as that has been written?" said Jack, incredulously.

"What? Has it not been received?" inquired Peg.

"Nothing like it. When was it written?"

"The second day after our arrival," said Peg.

"If that is the case," said Jack, not knowing what to think, "it must have miscarried; we never received it."

"That is a pity. How anxious you all must have felt!"

"It seems as if half the family were gone. But how long does Ida's mother mean to keep her?"

"Perhaps six months."

"But," said Jack, his suspicions returning, "I have been told that Ida has twice called at a baker's shop in this city, and when asked what her name was, answered, Ida Hardwick. You don't mean to say that you pretend to be her mother."

"Yes, I do," replied Peg, calmly. "I didn't mean to tell you, but as you've found out, I won't deny it."

"It's a lie," said Jack. "She isn't your daughter."

"Young man," said Peg, with wonderful self-command, "you are exciting yourself to no purpose. You asked me if I pretended to be her mother. I do pretend, but I admit frankly that it is all pretense."

"I don't understand what you mean," said Jack.

"Then I will explain to you, though you have treated me so impolitely that I might well refuse. As I informed your father and mother in New York, there are circumstances which stand in the way of Ida's real mother recognizing her as her own child. Still, as she desires her company, in order to avert suspicion and prevent embarrassing questions being asked while she remains in Philadelphia, she is to pass as my daughter."

This explanation was tolerably plausible, and Jack was unable to gainsay it.

"Can I see Ida?" he asked.

To his great joy, Peg replied: "I don't think there can be any objection. I am going to the house now. Will you come with me now, or appoint some other time."

"Now, by all means," said Jack, eagerly. "Nothing shall stand in the way of my seeing Ida."

A grim smile passed over Peg's face.

"Follow me, then," she said. "I have no doubt Ida will be delighted to see you."

"I suppose," said Jack, with a pang, "that she is so taken up with her new friends that she has nearly forgotten her old friends in New York."

"If she had," answered Peg, "she would not deserve to have friends at all. She is quite happy here, but she will be very glad to return to New York to those who have been so kind to her."

"Really," thought Jack, "I don't know what to make of this Mrs. Hardwick. She talks fair enough, though looks are against her. Perhaps I have misjudged her."

CHAPTER XXV

CAUGHT IN A TRAP

Jack and his guide paused in front of a large three-story brick building. The woman rang the bell. An untidy servant girl made her appearance.

Mrs. Hardwick spoke to the servant in so low a voice that Jack couldn't hear what she said.

"Certainly, mum," answered the servant, and led the way upstairs to a back room on the third floor.

"Go in and take a seat," she said to Jack. "I will send Ida to you immediately."

"All right," said Jack, in a tone of satisfaction.

Peg went out, closing the door after her. She, at the same time, softly slipped a bolt which had been placed upon the outside. Then hastening downstairs she found the proprietor of the house, a little old man with a shrewd, twinkling eye, and a long, aquiline nose.

"I have brought you a boarder," she said.

"Who is it?"

"A lad, who is likely to interfere in our plans. You may keep him in confinement for the present."

"Very good. Is he likely to make a fuss?"

"I should think it very likely. He is high-spirited and impetuous, but you know how to manage him."

"Oh, yes," nodded the old man.

"You can think of some pretext for keeping him."

"Suppose I tell him he's in a madhouse?" said the old man, laughing, and thereby showing some yellow fangs, which by no means improved his appearance.

"Just the thing! It'll frighten him."

There was a little further conversation in a low tone, and then Peg went away.

"Fairly trapped, my young bird!" she thought to herself. "I think that will put a stop to your troublesome appearance for the present."

Meanwhile Jack, wholly unsuspicious that any trick had been played upon him, seated himself in a rocking-chair and waited impatiently for the coming of Ida, whom he was resolved to carry back to New York.

Impelled by a natural curiosity, he examined attentively the room in which he was seated. There was a plain carpet on the floor, and the other furniture was that of an ordinary bed chamber. The most conspicuous ornament was a large full-length portrait against the side of the wall. It represented an unknown man, not particularly striking in his appearance. There was, besides, a small table with two or three books upon it.

Jack waited patiently for twenty minutes.

"Perhaps Ida may be out," he reflected. "Still, even if she is, Mrs. Hardwick ought to come and let me know. It's dull work staying here alone."

Another fifteen minutes passed, and still no Ida appeared.

"This is rather singular," thought Jack. "She can't have told Ida I am here, or I am sure she would rush up at once to see her brother Jack."

At length, tired of waiting, Jack walked to the door and attempted to open it.

There was a greater resistance than he anticipated.

"Good heavens!" thought Jack, in consternation, as the real state of the case flashed upon him, "is it possible that I am locked in?"

He employed all his strength, but the door still resisted. He could no longer doubt that it was locked.

He rushed to the windows. They were two in number, and looked out upon a yard in the rear of the house. There was no hope of drawing the attention of passersby to his situation.

Confounded by this discovery, Jack sank into his chair in no very enviable state of mind.

"Well," thought he, "this is a pretty situation for me to be in. I wonder what father would say if he knew that I had managed to get locked up like this? I am ashamed to think I let that treacherous woman, Mrs. Hardwick, lead me so quietly into a snare. Aunt Rachel was about right when she said I wasn't fit to come alone. I hope she'll never find out about this adventure of mine. If she did, I should never hear the last of it."

CHAPTER XXVI

Time passed. Every hour seemed to poor Jack to contain at least double the number of minutes. Moreover, he was getting hungry.

A horrible suspicion flashed across his mind.

"The wretches can't mean to starve me, can they?" he asked himself. Despite his constitutional courage he could not help shuddering at the idea.

He was unexpectedly answered by the opening of the door, and the appearance of the old man.

"Are you getting hungry, my dear sir?" he inquired, with a disagreeable smile upon his features.

"Why am I confined here?" demanded Jack, angrily.

"Why are you confined? Really, one would think you didn't find your quarters comfortable."

"I am so far from finding them agreeable, that I insist upon leaving them immediately," returned Jack.

"Then all you have got to do is to walk through that door."

"You have locked it."

"Why, so I have," said the old man, with a leer.

"I insist upon your opening it."

"I shall do so when I get ready to go out, myself."

"I shall go with you."

"I think not."

"Who's to prevent me?" said Jack, defiantly.

"Who's to prevent you?"

"Yes; you'd better not attempt it. I should be sorry to hurt you, but I mean to go out. If you attempt to stop me, you must take the consequences."

"I am afraid you are a violent young man. But I've got a man who is a match for two like you."

The old man opened the door.

"Samuel, show yourself," he said.

A brawny negro, six feet in height, and evidently very powerful, came to the entrance.

"If this young man attempts to escape, Samuel, what will you do?"

"Tie him hand and foot," answered the negro.

"That'll do, Samuel. Stay where you are."

He closed the door and looked triumphantly at our hero.

Jack threw himself sullenly into a chair.

"Where is the woman that brought me here?" he asked.

"Peg? Oh, she couldn't stay. She had important business to transact, my young friend, and so she has gone. She commended you to our particular attention, and you will be just as well treated as if she were here."

This assurance was not calculated to comfort Jack.

"How long are you going to keep me cooped up here?" he asked, desperately, wishing to learn the worst at once.

"Really, my young friend, I couldn't say. I don't know how long it will be before you are cured."

"Cured?" repeated Jack, puzzled.

The old man tapped his forehead.

"You're a little affected here, you know, but under my treatment I hope soon to restore you to your friends."

"What!" ejaculated our hero, terror-stricken, "you don't mean to say you think I'm crazy?"

"To be sure you are," said the old man, "but—"

"But I tell you it's a lie," exclaimed Jack, energetically. "Who told you so?"

"Your aunt."

"My aunt?"

"Yes, Mrs. Hardwick. She brought you here to be treated for insanity."

"It's a base lie," said Jack, hotly. "That woman is no more my aunt than you are. She's an impostor. She carried off my sister Ida, and this is only a plot to get rid of me. She told me she was going to take me to see Ida."

The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"My young friend," he said, "she told me all about it—that you had a delusion about some supposed sister, whom you accused her of carrying off."

"This is outrageous," said Jack, hotly.

"That's what all my patients say."

"And you are a mad-doctor?"

"Yes."

"Then you know by my looks that I am not crazy."

"Pardon me, my young friend; that doesn't follow. There is a peculiar appearance about your eyes which I cannot mistake. There's no mistake about it, my good sir. Your mind has gone astray, but if you'll be quiet, and won't excite yourself, you'll soon be well."

"How soon?"

"Well, two or three months."

"Two or three months! You don't mean to say you want to confine me here two or three months?"

"I hope I can release you sooner."

"You can't understand your business very well, or you would see at once that I am not insane."

"That's what all my patients say. They won't any of them own that their minds

are affected."

"Will you supply me with some writing materials?"

"Yes; Samuel shall bring them here."

"I suppose you will excuse my suggesting also that it is dinner time?"

"He shall bring you some dinner at the same time."

The old man retired, but in fifteen minutes a plate of meat and vegetables was brought to the room.

"I'll bring the pen and ink afterward," said the negro.

In spite of his extraordinary situation and uncertain prospects, Jack ate with his usual appetite.

Then he penned a letter to his uncle, briefly detailing the circumstances of his present situation.

"I am afraid," the letter concluded, "that while I am shut up here, Mrs. Hardwick will carry Ida out of the city, where it will be more difficult for us to get on her track. She is evidently a dangerous woman."

Two days passed and no notice was taken of the letter.

CHAPTER XXVII

JACK BEGINS TO REALIZE HIS SITUATION

"It's very strange," thought Jack, "that Uncle Abel doesn't take any notice of my letter."

In fact, our hero felt rather indignant, as well as surprised, and on the next visit of Dr. Robinson, he asked: "Hasn't my uncle been here to ask about me?"

"Yes," said the old man, unexpectedly.

"Why didn't you bring him up here to see me?"

"He just inquired how you were, and said he thought you were better off with us than you would be at home."

Jack looked fixedly in the face of the pretended doctor, and was convinced that he had been deceived.

"I don't believe it," he said.

"Oh! do as you like about believing it."

"I don't believe you mailed my letter to my uncle."

"Have it your own way, my young friend. Of course I can't argue with a maniac."

"Don't call me a maniac, you old humbug! You ought to be in jail for this outrage."

"Ho, ho! How very amusing you are, my young friend!" said the old man. "You'd make a first-class tragedian, you really would."

"I might do something tragic, if I had a weapon," said Jack, significantly. "Are you going to let me out?"

"Positively, I can't part with you. You are too good company," said Dr. Robinson, mockingly. "You'll thank me for my care of you when you are quite cured."

"That's all rubbish," said Jack, boldly. "I'm no more crazy than you are, and you know it. Will you answer me a question?"

"It depends on what it is," said the old man, cautiously.

"Has Mrs. Hardwick been here to ask about me?"

"Certainly. She takes a great deal of interest in you."

"Was there a little girl with her?"

"I believe so. I really don't remember."

"If she calls again, either with or without Ida, will you ask her to come up here? I want to see her."

"Yes, I'll tell her. Now, my young friend, I must really leave you. Business before pleasure, you know."

Jack looked about the room for something to read. He found among other books a small volume, purporting to contain "The Adventures of Baron Trenck."

It may be that the reader has never encountered a copy of this singular book. Baron Trenck was several times imprisoned for political offenses, and this book contains an account of the manner in which he succeeded, after years of labor, in escaping from his dungeon.

Jack read the book with intense interest and wondered, looking about the room, if he could not find some similar plan of escape.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE SECRET STAIRCASE

The prospect certainly was not a bright one. The door was fast locked. Escape from the windows seemed impracticable. This apparently exhausted the avenues of escape that were open to the dissatisfied prisoner. But accidentally Jack made an important discovery.

There was a full-length portrait in the room. Jack chanced to rest his hand against it, when he must unconsciously have touched some secret spring, for a secret door opened, dividing the picture in two parts, and, to our hero's unbounded astonishment, he saw before him a small spiral staircase leading down into the darkness.

"This is a queer old house!" thought Jack. "I wonder where those stairs go to. I've a great mind to explore."

There was not much chance of detection, he reflected, as it would be three hours before his next meal would be brought him. He left the door open, therefore, and began slowly and cautiously to go down the staircase. It seemed a long one, longer than was necessary to connect two floors. Boldly Jack kept on till he reached the bottom.

"Where am I?" thought our hero. "I must be down as low as the cellar."

While this thought passed through his mind, voices suddenly struck upon his ear. He had accustomed himself now to the darkness, and ascertained that there was a crevice through which he could look in the direction from which the sounds proceeded. Applying his eye, he could distinguish a small cellar apartment, in the middle of which was a printing press, and work was evidently going on. He could distinguish three persons. Two were in their shirt sleeves, bending over an engraver's bench. Beside them, and apparently superintending their work, was the old man whom Jack knew as Dr. Robinson.

He applied his ear to the crevice, and heard these words:

"This lot is rather better than the last, Jones. We can't be too careful, or the detectives will interfere with our business. Some of the last lot were rather

coarse."

"I know it, sir," answered the man addressed as Jones.

"There's nothing the matter with this," said the old man. "There isn't one person in a hundred that would suspect it was not genuine."

Jack pricked up his ears.

Looking through the crevice, he ascertained that it was a bill that the old man had in his hand.

"They're counterfeiters," he said, half audibly.

Low as the tone was, it startled Dr. Robinson.

"Ha!" said he, startled, "what's that?"

"What's what, sir?" said Jones.

"I thought I heard some one speaking."

"I didn't hear nothing, sir."

"Did you hear nothing, Ferguson?"

"No, sir."

"I suppose I was deceived, then," said the old man.

"How many bills have you there?" he resumed.

"Seventy-nine, sir."

"That's a very good day's work," said the old man, in a tone of satisfaction. "It's a paying business."

"It pays you, sir," said Jones, grumbling.

"And it shall pay you, too, my man, never fear!"

Jack had made a great discovery. He understood now the connection between Mrs. Hardwick and the old man whom he now knew not to be a physician. He was at the head of a gang of counterfeiters, and she was engaged in putting the false money into circulation.

He softly ascended the staircase, and re-entered the room he left, closing the secret door behind him.

CHAPTER XXIX

JACK IS DETECTED

In the course of the afternoon, Jack made another visit to the foot of the staircase. He saw through the crevice the same two men at work, but the old man was not with them. Ascertaining this, he ought, in prudence, immediately to have retraced his steps, but he remained on watch for twenty minutes. When he did return he was startled by finding the old man seated, and waiting for him. There was a menacing expression on his face.

"Where have you been?" he demanded, abruptly.

"Downstairs," answered Jack.

"Ha! What did you see?"

"I may as well own up," thought Jack. "Through a crack I saw some men at work in a basement room," he replied.

"Do you know what they were doing?"

"Counterfeiting, I should think."

"Well, is there anything wrong in that?"

"I suppose you wouldn't want to be found out," he answered.

"I didn't mean to have you make this discovery. Now there's only one thing to be done."

"What's that?"

"You have become possessed of an important—I may say, a dangerous secret. You have us in your power."

"I suppose," said Jack, "you are afraid I will denounce you to the police?"

"Well, there is a possibility of that. That class of people has a prejudice against us, though we are only doing what everybody likes to do—making money."

"Will you let me go if I keep your secret?"

"What assurance have we that you would keep your promise?"

"I would pledge my word."

"Your word!" Foley—for this was the old man's real name—snapped his fingers. "I wouldn't give that for it. That is not sufficient."

"What will be?"

"You must become one of us."

"One of you!"

"Yes. You must make yourself liable to the same penalties, so that it will be for your own interest to remain silent. Otherwise we can't trust you."

"Suppose I decline these terms?"

"Then I shall be under the painful necessity of retaining you as my guest," said Foley, smiling disagreeably.

"What made you pretend to be a mad-doctor?"

"To put you off the track," said Foley. "You believed it, didn't you?"

"At first."

"Well, what do you say?" asked Foley.

"I should like to take time to reflect upon your proposal," said Jack. "It is of so important a character that I don't like to decide at once."

"How long do you require?"

"Two days. Suppose I join you, shall I get good pay?"

"Excellent," answered Foley. "In fact, you'll be better paid than a boy of your age would be anywhere else."

"That's worth thinking about," said Jack, gravely. "My father is poor, and I've got my own way to make."

"You couldn't have a better opening. You're a smart lad, and will be sure to

succeed."

"Well, I'll think of it. If I should make up my mind before the end of two days, I will let you know."

"Very well. You can't do better."

"But there's one thing I want to ask about," said Jack, with pretended anxiety. "It's pretty risky business, isn't it?"

"I've been in the business ten years, and they haven't got hold of me yet," answered Foley. "All you've got to do is to be careful."

"He'll join," said Foley to himself. "He's a smart fellow, and we can make him useful. It'll be the best way to dispose of one who might get us into trouble."

CHAPTER XXX

JACK'S TRIUMPH

The next day Jack had another visit from Foley. "Well," said the old man, nodding, "have you thought over my proposal?"

"What should I have to do?" asked Jack.

"Sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. At first we might employ you to put off some of the bills."

"That would be easy work, anyway," said Jack.

"Yes, there is nothing hard about that, except to look innocent."

"I can do that," said Jack, laughing.

"You're smart; I can tell by the looks of you."

"Do you really think so?" returned Jack, appearing flattered.

"Yes; you'll make one of our best hands."

"I suppose Mrs. Hardwick is in your employ?"

"Perhaps she is, and perhaps she isn't," said Foley, noncommittally. "That is something you don't need to know."

"Oh, I don't care to know," said Jack, carelessly. "I only asked. I was afraid you would set me to work down in the cellar."

"You don't know enough about the business. We need skilled workmen. You couldn't do us any good there."

"I shouldn't like it, anyway. It must be unpleasant to be down there."

"We pay the workmen you saw good pay."

"Yes, I suppose so. When do you want me to begin?"

"I can't tell you just yet. I'll think about it."

"I hope it'll be soon, for I'm tired of staying here. By the way, that's a capital idea about the secret staircase. Who'd ever think the portrait concealed it?" said Jack.

As he spoke he advanced to the portrait in an easy, natural manner, and touched the spring.

Of course it flew open. The old man also drew near.

"That was my idea," he said, in a complacent tone. "Of course we have to keep everything as secret as possible, and I flatter myself—"

His remark came to a sudden pause. He had incautiously got between Jack and the open door. Now our hero, who was close upon eighteen, and strongly built, was considerably more than a match in physical strength for Foley. He suddenly seized the old man, thrust him through the aperture, then closed the secret door, and sprang for the door of the room.

The key was in the lock where Foley, whose confidence made him careless, had left it. Turning it, he hurried downstairs, meeting no one on the way. To open the front door and dash through it was the work of an instant. As he descended the stairs he could hear the muffled shout of the old man whom he had made prisoner, but this only caused him to accelerate his speed.

Jack now directed his course as well as he could toward his uncle's shop. One thing, however, he did not forget, and that was to note carefully the position of the shop in which he had been confined.

"I shall want to make another visit there," he reflected.

Meantime, as may well be supposed, Abel Harding had suffered great anxiety on account of Jack's protracted absence. Several days had elapsed and still he was missing.

"I am afraid something has happened to Jack," he remarked to his wife on the afternoon of Jack's escape. "I think Jack was probably rash and imprudent, and I fear, poor boy, he may have come to harm."

"He may be confined by the parties who have taken his sister."

"It is possible that it is no worse. At all events, I don't think it right to keep it from Timothy any longer. I've put off writing as long as I could, hoping Jack

would come back, but I don't feel as if it would be right to hold it back any longer. I shall write this evening."

"Better wait till morning, Abel. Who knows but we may hear from Jack before that time?"

"If we'd been going to hear we'd have heard before this," he said.

Just at that moment the door was flung open.

"Why, it's Jack!" exclaimed the baker, amazed.

"I should say it was," returned Jack. "Aunt, have you got anything to eat? I'm 'most famished."

"Where in the name of wonder have you been, Jack?"

"I've been shut up, uncle—boarded and lodged for nothing—by some people who liked my company better than I liked theirs. But I've just made my escape, and here I am, well, hearty and hungry."

Jack's appetite was soon provided for. He found time between the mouthfuls to describe the secret staircase, and his discovery of the unlawful occupation of the man who acted as his jailer.

The baker listened with eager interest.

"Jack," said he, "you've done a good stroke of business."

"In getting away?" said Jack.

"No, in ferreting out these counterfeiters. Do you know there is a reward of a thousand dollars offered for their apprehension?"

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Jack, laying down his knife and fork. "Do you think I can get it?"

"You'd better try. The gang has managed matters so shrewdly that the authorities have been unable to get any clew to their whereabouts. Can you go to the house?"

"Yes; I took particular notice of its location."

"That's lucky. Now, if you take my advice, you'll inform the authorities before

they have time to get away."

"I'll do it!" said Jack. "Come along, uncle."

Fifteen minutes later, Jack was imparting his information to the chief of police. It was received with visible interest and excitement.

"I will detail a squad of men to go with you," said the chief. "Go at once. No time is to be lost."

In less than an hour from the time Jack left the haunt of the coiners, an authoritative knock was heard at the door.

It was answered by Foley.

The old man turned pale as he set eyes on Jack and the police, and comprehended the object of the visit.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Is that the man?" asked the sergeant of Jack.

"Yes."

"Secure him."

"I know him," said Foley, with a glance of hatred directed at Jack. "He's a thief. He's been in my employ, but he's run away with fifty dollars belonging to me."

"I don't care about stealing the kind of money you deal in," said Jack, coolly. "It's all a lie this man tells you."

"Why do you arrest me?" said Foley. "It's an outrage. You have no right to enter my house like this."

"What is your business?" demanded the police sergeant.

"I'm a physician."

"If you are telling the truth, no harm will be done you. Meanwhile, we must search your house. Where is that secret staircase?"

"I'll show you," answered Jack.

He showed the way upstairs.

"How did you get out?" he asked Foley, as he touched the spring, and the secret door flew open.

"Curse you!" exclaimed Foley, darting a look of hatred and malignity at him. "I wish I had you in my power once more. I treated you too well."

We need not follow the police in their search. The discoveries which they made were ample to secure the conviction of the gang who made this house the place of their operations. To anticipate a little, we may say that Foley was sentenced to imprisonment for a term of years, and his subordinates to a term less prolonged. The reader will also be glad to know that to our hero was awarded the prize of a thousand dollars which had been offered for the apprehension of the gang of counterfeiters.

But there was another notable capture made that day.

Mrs. Hardwick was accustomed to make visits to Foley to secure false bills, and to make settlement for what she had succeeded in passing off.

While Jack and the officers were in the house she rang the door bell.

Jack went to the door.

"How is this?" she asked.

"Oh," said Jack, "it's all right. Come in. I've gone into the business, too."

Mrs. Hardwick entered. No sooner was she inside than Jack closed the door.

"What are you doing?" she demanded, suspiciously. "Let me out."

But Jack was standing with his back to the door. The door to the right opened, and a policeman appeared.

"Arrest this woman," said Jack. "She's one of them."

"I suppose I must yield," said Peg, sulkily; "but you shan't be a gainer by it," she continued, addressing Jack.

"Where is Ida?" asked our hero, anxiously.

"She is safe," said Peg, sententiously.

"You won't tell me where she is?"

"No; why should I? I suppose I am indebted to you for this arrest. She shall be kept out of your way as long as I have power to do so."

"Then I shall find her," said Jack. "She is somewhere in the city, and I'll find her sooner or later."

Peg was not one to betray her feelings, but this arrest was a great disappointment to her. It interfered with a plan she had of making a large sum out of Ida. To understand what this was, we must go back a day or two, and introduce a new character.

CHAPTER XXXI

MR. JOHN SOMERVILLE

Jack's appearance on the scene had set Mrs. Hardwick to thinking. This was the substance of her reflections: Ida, whom she had kidnaped for certain reasons of her own, was likely to prove an incumbrance rather than a source of profit. The child, her suspicions awakened in regard to the character of the money she had been employed to pass off, was no longer available for that purpose.

Under these circumstances Peg bethought herself of the ultimate object which she had proposed to herself in kidnaping Ida—that of extorting money from a man who has not hitherto figured in our story.

John Somerville occupied a suite of apartments in a handsome lodging house in Walnut Street. A man wanting yet several years of forty, he looked many years older than that age. Late hours and dissipated habits, though kept within respectable limits, left their traces on his face. At twenty-one he inherited a considerable fortune, which, combined with some professional income—for he was a lawyer, and not without ability—was quite sufficient to support him handsomely, and leave a considerable surplus every year. But latterly he had contracted a passion for gaming, and, shrewd though he might be naturally, he could hardly be expected to prove a match for the wily *habitues* of the gaming table, who had marked him for their prey.

The evening before his introduction to the reader he had passed till a late hour at a fashionable gaming house, where he had lost heavily.

His reflections on waking were not the most pleasant. For the first time within fifteen years he realized the folly and imprudence of the course he had pursued. The evening previous he had lost a thousand dollars, for which he had given his IOU. Where to raise the money he did not know. After making his toilet, he rang the bell and ordered breakfast.

For this he had but scanty appetite. He drank a cup of coffee and ate part of a roll. Scarcely had he finished, and directed the removal of the dishes, than the servant entered to announce a visitor.

"Is it a gentleman?" he inquired, hastily, fearing that it might be a creditor. He occasionally had such visitors.

"No, sir."

"A lady?"

"No, sir."

"A child? But what could a child want of me?"

"No, sir. It isn't a child," said the servant, in reply.

"Then if it's neither a gentleman, lady nor child," said Somerville, "will you have the goodness to inform me what sort of a being it is?"

"It's a woman, sir," answered the servant, his gravity unmoved.

"Why didn't you say so when I asked you?"

"Because you asked me if it was a lady, and this isn't—leastways she don't look like one."

"You can send her up, whoever she is," said Somerville.

A moment afterward Peg entered his presence.

John Somerville looked at her without much interest, supposing that she might be a seamstress, or laundress, or some applicant for charity. So many years had passed since he had met with this woman that she had passed out of his remembrance.

"Do you wish to see me about anything?" he asked. "You must be quick, for I am just going out."

"You don't seem to recognize me, Mr. Somerville."

"I can't say I do," he replied, carelessly. "Perhaps you used to wash for me once."

"I am not in the habit of acting as laundress," said the woman, proudly.

"In that case," said Somerville, languidly, "you will have to tell me who you are, for it is quite out of my power to remember all the people I meet."

"Perhaps the name of Ida will assist your recollection; or have you forgotten that name, too?"

"Ida!" repeated John Somerville, throwing off his indifferent manner, and surveying the woman's features attentively. "Yes."

"I have known several persons of that name," he said, recovering his former indifferent manner. "I haven't the slightest idea to which of them you refer. You don't look as if it was your name," he added, with a laugh.

"The Ida I mean was and is a child," she said. "But there's no use in beating about the bush, Mr. Somerville, when I can come straight to the point. It is now about seven years since my husband and myself were employed to carry off a child—a female child of a year old—named Ida. You were the man who employed us." She said this deliberately, looking steadily in his face. "We placed it, according to your directions, on the doorstep of a poor family in New York, and they have since cared for it as their own. I suppose you have not forgotten that?"

"I remember it," he said, "and now recall your features. How have you fared since I employed you? Have you found your business profitable?"

"Far from it," answered Peg. "I am not yet able to retire on a competence."

"One of your youthful appearance," said Somerville, banteringly, "ought not to think of retiring under ten years."

"I don't care for compliments," she said, "even when they are sincere. As for my youthful appearance, I am old enough to have reached the age of discretion, and not so old as to have fallen into my second childhood."

"Compliments aside, then, will you proceed to whatever business brought you here?"

"I want a thousand dollars," said Peg, abruptly.

"A thousand dollars!" repeated Somerville. "Very likely. I should like that amount myself. Did you come here to tell me that?"

"I have come here to ask you to give me that amount."

"Have you a husband?"

"Yes."

"Then let me suggest that your husband is the proper person to apply to in such a case."

"I think I am more likely to get it out of you," said Peg, coolly. "My husband couldn't supply me with a thousand cents, even if he were willing."

"Much as I am flattered by your application," said Somerville, with a polite sneer, "since it would seem to place me next in estimation to your husband, I cannot help suggesting that it is not usual to bestow such a sum on a stranger, or even a friend, without an equivalent rendered."

"I am ready to give you an equivalent."

"Of what nature?"

"I am willing to be silent."

"And how can your silence benefit me?"

"That you will be best able to estimate."

"Explain yourself, and bear in mind that I can bestow little time on you."

"I can do that in a few words. You employed me to kidnap a child. I believe the law has something to say about that. At any rate, the child's mother may have."

"What do you know about the child's mother?" demanded Somerville, hastily.

"All about her!" said Peg, emphatically.

"How am I to credit that? It is easy to claim a knowledge you do not possess."

"Shall I tell you the whole story, then? In the first place, she married your cousin, after rejecting you. You never forgave her for this. When, a year after marriage, her husband died, you renewed your proposals. They were rejected, and you were forbidden to renew the subject on pain of forfeiting her friendship forever. You left her presence, determined to be revenged. With this object you sought Dick and myself, and employed us to kidnap the child. There is the whole story, briefly told."

"Woman, how came this within your knowledge?" he demanded, hoarsely.

"That is of no consequence," said Peg. "It was for my interest to find out, and I did so."

"Well?"

"I know one thing more—the residence of the child's mother. I hesitated this morning whether to come here, or to carry Ida to her mother, trusting to her to repay from gratitude what I demand from you because it is for your interest to comply with my request."

"You speak of carrying the child to her mother. How can you do that when she is in New York?"

"You are mistaken," said Peg, coolly. "She is in Philadelphia."

John Somerville paced the room with hurried steps. Peg felt that she had succeeded.

He paused after a while, and stood before her.

"You demand a thousand dollars," he said.

"I do."

"I have not that amount with me. I have recently lost a heavy sum, no matter how. But I can probably get it to-day. Call to-morrow at this time—no, in the afternoon, and I will see what I can do for you."

"Very well," said the woman, well satisfied.

Left to himself, John Somerville spent some time in reflection. Difficulties encompassed him—difficulties from which he found it hard to find a way of escape. He knew how difficult it would be to meet this woman's demand. Gradually his countenance lightened. He had decided what that something should be.

When Peg left John Somerville's apartments, it was with a high degree of satisfaction at the result of the interview. All had turned out as she wished. She looked upon the thousand dollars as already hers. The considerations which she had urged would, she was sure, induce him to make every effort to secure her silence.

Then, with a thousand dollars, what might not be done? She would withdraw

from the business, for one thing. It was too hazardous. Why might not Dick and she retire to the country, lease a country inn, and live an honest life hereafter? There were times when she grew tired of the life she lived at present. It would be pleasant to go to some place where they were not known, and enroll themselves among the respectable members of the community. She was growing old; she wanted rest and a quiet home. Her early years had been passed in the country. She remembered still the green fields in which she played as a child, and to this woman, old and sin-stained, there came a yearning to have that life return.

But her dream was rudely broken by her encounter with the officers of the law at the house of her employer.

CHAPTER XXXII

A PROVIDENTIAL MEETING

"By gracious, if that isn't Ida!" exclaimed Jack, in profound surprise.

He had been sauntering along Chestnut Street, listlessly troubled by the thought that though he had given Mrs. Hardwick into custody, he was apparently no nearer the discovery of his young ward than before. What steps should he take to find her? He could not decide. In his perplexity his eyes rested suddenly upon the print of the "Flower Girl."

"Yes," he said, "that is Ida, fast enough. Perhaps they will know in the store where she is to be found."

He at once entered the store.

"Can you tell me anything about the girl in that picture?" he asked, abruptly, of the nearest clerk.

"It is a fancy picture," he said. "I think you would need a long time to find the original."

"It has taken a long time," said Jack. "But you are mistaken. That is a picture of my sister."

"Of your sister!" repeated the salesman, with surprise, half incredulous.

"Yes," persisted Jack. "She is my sister."

"If it is your sister," said the clerk, "you ought to know where she is."

Jack was about to reply, when the attention of both was called by a surprised exclamation from a lady who had paused beside them. Her eyes also were fixed upon the "Flower Girl."

"Who is this?" she asked, in visible excitement. "Is it taken from life?"

"This young man says it is his sister," said the clerk.

"Your sister?" repeated the lady, her eyes fixed inquiringly upon Jack.

In her tone there was a mingling both of surprise and disappointment.

"Yes, madam," answered Jack, respectfully.

"Pardon me," she said, "there is very little personal resemblance. I should not have suspected that you were her brother."

"She is not my own sister," explained Jack, "but I love her just the same."

"Do you live in Philadelphia? Could I see her?" asked the lady, eagerly.

"I live in New York, madam," said Jack; "but Ida was stolen from us about three weeks since, and I have come here in pursuit of her. I have not been able to find her yet."

"Did you call her Ida?" demanded the lady, in strange agitation.

"Yes, madam."

"My young friend," said the woman, rapidly, "I have been much interested in the story of your sister. I should like to hear more, but not here. Would you have any objection to coming home with me, and telling me the rest? Then we will together concert measures for recovering her."

"You are very kind, madam," said Jack, bashfully; for the lady was elegantly dressed, and it had never been his fortune to converse with a lady of her social position. "I shall be glad to go home with you, and shall be very much obliged for your advice and assistance."

"Then we will drive home at once."

With natural gallantry, Jack assisted the lady into the carriage, and, at her bidding, got in himself.

"Home, Thomas!" she directed the driver; "and drive as fast as possible."

"Yes, madam."

"How old was your sister when your parents adopted her?" asked Mrs. Clifton.

Jack afterward ascertained that this was her name.

"About a year old, madam."

"And how long since was that?" asked the lady, waiting for the answer with breathless interest.

"Seven years since. She is now eight."

"It must be," murmured the lady, in low tones. "If it is indeed, as I hope, my life will indeed be blessed."

"Did you speak, madam?"

"Tell me under what circumstances your family adopted her."

Jack related briefly how Ida had been left at their door in her infancy.

"And do you recollect the month in which this happened?"

"It was at the close of December, the night before New Year's."

"It is, it must be she!" ejaculated Mrs. Clifton, clasping her hands, while tears of joy welled from her eyes.

"I—I don't understand," said Jack, naturally astonished.

"My young friend," said the lady, "our meeting this morning seems providential. I have every reason to believe that this child—your adopted sister—is my daughter, stolen from me by an unknown enemy at the time of which I speak. From that day to this I have never been able to obtain the slightest clew that might lead to her discovery. I have long taught myself to think of her as dead."

It was Jack's turn to be surprised. He looked at the lady beside him. She was barely thirty. The beauty of her girlhood had ripened into the maturer beauty of womanhood. There was the same dazzling complexion, the same soft flush upon the cheeks. The eyes, too, were wonderfully like Ida's. Jack looked, and as he looked he became convinced.

"You must be right," he said. "Ida is very much like you."

"You think so?" said Mrs. Clifton, eagerly.

"Yes, madam."

"I had a picture—a daguerreotype—taken of Ida just before I lost her; I have treasured it carefully. I must show it to you when we get to my house."

The carriage stopped before a stately mansion in a wide and quiet street. The driver dismounted and opened the door. Jack assisted Mrs. Clifton to alight.

Bashfully our hero followed the lady up the steps, and, at her bidding, seated himself in an elegant parlor furnished with a splendor which excited his admiration and wonder. He had little time to look about him, for Mrs. Clifton, without pausing to remove her street attire, hastened downstairs with an open daguerreotype in her hand.

"Can you remember Ida when she was first brought to your house?" she asked. "Did she look anything like this picture?"

"It is her image," answered Jack, decidedly. "I should know it anywhere."

"Then there can be no further doubt," said Mrs. Clifton. "It is my child you have cared for so long. Oh! why could I not have known it before? How many lonely days and sleepless nights it would have spared me! But God be thanked for this late blessing! I shall see my child again."

"I hope so, madam. We must find her."

"What is your name, my young friend?"

"My name is Harding—Jack Harding."

"Jack?" repeated the lady, smiling.

"Yes, madam; that is what they call me. It would not seem natural to be called John."

"Very well," said Mrs. Clifton, with a smile which went to Jack's heart at once, and made him think her, if any more beautiful than Ida; "as Ida is your adopted sister—"

"I call her my ward. I am her guardian, you know."

"You are a young guardian. But, as I was about to say, that makes us connected in some way, doesn't it? I won't call you Mr. Harding, for that would sound too formal. I will call you Jack."

"I wish you would," said our hero, his face brightening with pride.

It almost upset him to be called Jack by a beautiful lady, who every day of her life was accustomed to live in a splendor which it seemed to Jack could not be

exceeded even by royal state. Had Mrs. Clifton been Queen Victoria herself, he could not have felt a profounder respect and veneration for her than he did already.

"Now, Jack," said Mrs. Clifton, in a friendly manner which delighted our hero, "we must take measures to discover Ida immediately. I want you to tell me about her disappearance from your house, and what steps you have taken thus far toward finding her."

Jack began at the beginning and described the appearance of Mrs. Hardwick; how she had been permitted to carry Ida away under false representations, and the manner in which he had tracked her to Philadelphia. He spoke finally of her arrest, and her obstinate refusal to impart any information as to where Ida was concealed.

Mrs. Clifton listened attentively and anxiously. There were more difficulties in the way than she had supposed.

"Can you think of any plan, Jack?" she asked, anxiously.

"Yes, madam," answered Jack. "The man who painted the picture of Ida may know where she is to be found."

"You are right," said the lady. "I will act upon your hint. I will order the carriage again instantly, and we will at once go back to the print store."

An hour later Henry Bowen was surprised by the visit of an elegant lady to his studio, accompanied by a young man of seventeen.

"I think you are the artist who designed 'The Flower Girl,'" said Mrs. Clifton.

"I am, madam."

"It was taken from life?"

"You are right."

"I am anxious to find the little girl whose face you copied. Can you give me any directions that will enable me to find her?"

"I will accompany you to the place where she lives, if you desire it, madam," said the young artist, politely. "It is a strange neighborhood in which to look for so much beauty."

"I shall be deeply indebted to you if you will oblige me so far," said Mrs. Clifton. "My carriage is below, and my coachman will obey your orders."

Once more they were on the move. In due time the carriage paused. The driver opened the door. He was evidently quite scandalized at the idea of bringing his mistress to such a place.

"This can't be the place, madam," he said.

"Yes," said the artist. "Do not get out, Mrs. Clifton. I will go in, and find out all that is needful."

Two minutes later he returned, looking disappointed.

"We are too late," he said. "An hour since a gentleman called, and took away the child."

Mrs. Clifton sank back in her seat in keen disappointment.

"My child! my child!" she murmured. "Shall I ever see thee again?"

Jack, too, felt more disappointed than he was willing to acknowledge. He could not conjecture what gentleman could have carried away Ida. The affair seemed darker and mere complicated than ever.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IDA IS FOUND

Ida was sitting alone in the dreary apartment which she was now obliged to call home. Peg had gone out, and, not feeling quite certain of her prey, had bolted the door on the outside. She had left some work for the child—some handkerchiefs to hem for Dick—with strict orders to keep steadily at work.

While seated at work, she was aroused from thoughts of home by a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" asked Ida.

"A friend," was the reply.

"Mrs. Hardwick—Peg—isn't at home," returned Ida.

"Then I will come in and wait till she comes back," answered the voice outside.

"I can't open the door," said the child. "It's fastened outside."

"Yes, so I see. Then I will take the liberty to draw the bolt."

Mr. John Somerville opened the door, and for the first time in seven years his glance fell upon the child whom for so long a time he had defrauded of a mother's care and tenderness.

Ida returned to the window.

"How beautiful she is!" thought Somerville, with surprise. "She inherits all her mother's rare beauty."

On the table beside Ida was a drawing. "Whose is this?" he inquired.

"Mine," answered Ida.

"So you have learned to draw?"

"A little," answered the child, modestly.

"Who taught you? Not the woman you live with?"

"No," said Ida.

"You have not always lived with her, I am sure?"

"No, sir."

"You lived in New York with a family named Harding, did you not?"

"Do you know father and mother?" asked Ida, with sudden hope. "Did they send you for me?"

"I will tell you that by and by, my child. But I want to ask you a few questions first. Why does this woman, Peg, lock you in whenever she goes away?"

"I suppose," said Ida, "she is afraid I'll run away."

"Then she knows you don't want to live with her?"

"Oh, yes, she knows that," said the child, frankly. "I have asked her to take me home, but she says she won't for a year."

"And how long have you been with her?"

"About three weeks, but it seems a great deal longer."

"What does she make you do?"

"I can't tell what she made me do first."

"Why not?"

"Because she would be very angry."

"Suppose I should promise to deliver you from her, would you be willing to go with me?"

"And you would carry me back to my father and mother?" asked Ida, eagerly.

"Certainly, I would restore you to your mother," was the evasive reply.

"Then I will go with you."

Ida ran quickly to get her bonnet and shawl.

"We had better go at once," said Somerville. "Peg might return, you know, and then there would be trouble."

"Oh, yes, let us go quickly," said Ida, turning pale at the remembered threats of Peg.

Neither knew as yet that Peg could not return if she would; that, at this very moment, she was in legal custody on a charge of a serious nature. Still less did Ida know that in going she was losing the chance of seeing Jack and her real mother, of whose existence, even, she was not yet aware; and that this man, whom she looked upon as her friend, was in reality her worst enemy.

"I will conduct you to my own rooms, in the first place," said her companion. "You must remain in concealment for a day or two, as Peg will undoubtedly be on the look-out for you, and we want to avoid all trouble."

Ida was delighted with her escape, and with the thoughts of soon seeing her friends in New York. She put implicit faith in her guide, and was willing to submit to any conditions which he saw fit to impose.

At length they reached his lodgings.

They were furnished more richly than any room Ida had yet seen; and formed, indeed, a luxurious contrast to the dark and scantily furnished apartment which she had occupied since her arrival in Philadelphia.

"Well, you are glad to get away from Peg?" asked John Somerville, giving Ida a comfortable seat.

"Oh, so glad!" said Ida.

"And you wouldn't care about going back?"

The child shuddered.

"I suppose," she said, "Peg will be very angry. She would beat me, if she got me back again."

"But she shan't. I will take good care of that."

Ida looked her gratitude. Her heart went out to those who appeared to deal kindly with her, and she felt very grateful to her companion for delivering her from Peg.

"Now," said Somerville, "perhaps you will be willing to tell me what it was Peg required you to do."

"Yes," said Ida; "but she must never know that I told."

"I promise not to tell her."

"It was to pass bad money."

"Ha!" exclaimed her companion, quickly. "What sort of bad money?"

"It was bad bills."

"Did she do much in that way?"

"A good deal. She goes out every day to buy things with the money."

"I am glad to learn this," said John Somerville, thoughtfully.

"Why?" asked Ida, curiously; "are you glad she is wicked?"

"I am glad, because she won't dare to come for you, knowing I can have her put in prison."

"Then I am glad, too."

"Ida," said her companion, after a pause, "I am obliged to go out for a short time. You will find books on the table, and can amuse yourself by reading. I won't make you sew, as Peg did," he added, smiling.

"I like to read," she said. "I shall enjoy myself very well."

"If you get tired of reading, you can draw. You will find plenty of paper on my desk."

Mr. Somerville went out, and Ida, as he had recommended, read for a time. Then, growing tired, she went to the window and looked out. A carriage was passing up the street slowly, on account of a press of other carriages. Ida saw a face that she knew. Forgetting her bonnet in her sudden joy, she ran down the stairs into the street, and up to the carriage window.

"Oh! Jack!" she exclaimed; "have you come for me?"

It was Mrs. Clifton's carriage, just returning from Peg's lodgings.

"Why, it's Ida!" exclaimed Jack, almost springing through the window of the carriage in his excitement. "Where did you come from, and where have you been all this time?"

He opened the door of the carriage and drew Ida in.

"My child, my child! Thank God, you are restored to me!" exclaimed Mrs. Clifton.

She drew the astonished child to her bosom. Ida looked up into her face in bewilderment. Was it nature that prompted her to return the lady's embrace?

"My God! I thank thee!" murmured Mrs. Clifton, "for this, my child, was lost, and is found."

"Ida," said Jack, "this lady is your mother."

"My mother!" repeated the astonished child. "Have I got two mothers?"

"This is your real mother. You were brought to our house when you were an infant, and we have always taken care of you; but this lady is your real mother."

Ida hardly knew whether to feel glad or sorry.

"And you are not my brother, Jack?"

"No, I am your guardian," said Jack, smiling.

"You shall still consider him your brother, Ida," said Mrs. Clifton. "Heaven forbid that I should seek to wean your heart from the friends who have cared so kindly for you! You may keep all your old friends, and love them as dearly as ever. You will only have one friend the more."

"Where are we going?" asked Ida, suddenly.

"We are going home."

"What will the gentleman say?"

"What gentleman?"

"The one that took me away from Peg's. Why, there he is now!"

Mrs. Clifton followed the direction of Ida's finger, as she pointed to a gentleman passing.

"Is he the one?" asked Mrs. Clifton, in surprise.

"Yes, mamma," answered Ida, shyly.

Mrs. Clifton pressed Ida to her bosom. It was the first time she had ever been

called mamma, for when Ida had been taken from her she was too young to speak. The sudden thrill which this name excited made her realize the full measure of her present happiness.

Arrived at the house, Jack's bashfulness returned. Even Ida's presence did not remove it. He hung back, and hesitated about going in.

Mrs. Clifton observed this.

"Jack," she said, "this house is to be your home while you are in Philadelphia. Come in, and Thomas shall go for your luggage."

"Perhaps I had better go with him," said Jack. "Uncle Abel will be glad to know that Ida is found."

"Very well; only return soon. As you are Ida's guardian," she added, smiling, "you will need to watch over her."

"Well!" thought Jack, as he re-entered the elegant carriage, and gave the proper direction to the coachman, "won't Uncle Abel be a little surprised when he sees me coming home in this style! Mrs. Clifton's a trump! Maybe that ain't exactly the word, but Ida's in luck anyhow."

CHAPTER XXXIV

NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND

Meanwhile Peg was passing her time wearily enough in prison. It was certainly provoking to be deprived of her freedom just when she was likely to make it most profitable. After some reflection she determined to send for Mrs. Clifton, and reveal to her all she knew, trusting to her generosity for a recompense.

To one of the officers of the prison she communicated the intelligence that she had an important revelation to make to Mrs. Clifton, absolutely refusing to make it unless the lady would visit her in prison.

Scarcely had Mrs. Clifton returned home after recovering her child, than the bell rang, and a stranger was introduced.

"Is this Mrs. Clifton?" he inquired.

"It is."

"Then I have a message for you."

The lady looked at him inquiringly.

"Let me introduce myself, madam, as one of the officers connected with the city prison. A woman was placed in confinement this morning, who says she has a most important communication to make to you, but declines to make it except to you in person."

"Can you bring her here, sir?"

"That is impossible. We will give you every facility, however, for visiting her in prison."

"It must be Peg," whispered Ida—"the woman that carried me off."

Such a request Mrs. Clifton could not refuse. She at once made ready to accompany the officer. She resolved to carry Ida with her, fearful that, unless she kept her in her immediate presence, she might disappear again as before.

As Jack had not yet returned, a hack was summoned, and they proceeded at once to the prison. Ida shuddered as she passed within the gloomy portal which shut out hope and the world from so many.

"This way, madam!"

They followed the officer through a gloomy corridor, until they came to the cell in which Peg was confined.

Peg looked up in surprise when she saw Ida enter with Mrs. Clifton.

"What brought you two together?" she asked, abruptly.

"A blessed Providence," answered Mrs. Clifton.

"I saw Jack with her," said Ida, "and I ran out into the street. I didn't expect to find my mother."

"There is not much for me to tell, then," said Peg. "I had made up my mind to restore you to your mother. You see, Ida, I've moved," she continued, smiling grimly.

"Oh, Peg," said Ida, her tender heart melted by the woman's misfortunes, "how sorry I am to find you here!"

"Are you sorry?" asked Peg, looking at her in curious surprise. "You haven't much cause to be. I've been your worst enemy; at any rate, one of the worst."

"I can't help it," said the child, her face beaming with a divine compassion. "It must be so sad to be shut up here, and not be able to go out into the bright sunshine. I do pity you."

Peg's heart was not wholly hardened. Few are. But it was long since it had been touched, as now, by this warm-hearted pity on the part of one whom she had injured.

"You're a good girl, Ida," she said, "and I'm sorry I've injured you. I didn't think I should ever ask forgiveness of anybody; but I do ask your forgiveness."

The child rose, and advancing toward her old enemy, took her large hand in hers and said: "I forgive you, Peg."

"From your heart?"

"With all my heart."

"Thank you, child. I feel better now. There have been times when I have thought I should like to lead a better life."

"It is not too late now, Peg."

Peg shook her head.

"Who will trust me when I come out of here?" she said.

"I will," said Mrs. Clifton.

"You will?" repeated Peg, amazed.

"Yes."

"After all I have done to harm you! But I am not quite so bad as you may think. It was not my plan to take Ida from you. I was poor, and money tempted me."

"Who could have had an interest in doing me this cruel wrong?" asked the mother.

"One whom you know well—Mr. John Somerville."

"Surely you are wrong!" exclaimed Mrs. Clifton, in unbounded astonishment. "That cannot be. What object could he have?"

"Can you think of none?" queried Peg, looking at her shrewdly.

Mrs. Clifton changed color.

"Perhaps so," she said. "Go on."

Peg told the whole story, so circumstantially that there was no room for doubt.

"I did not believe him capable of such great wickedness," ejaculated Mrs. Clifton, with a pained and indignant look. "It was a base, unmanly revenge to take. How could you lend yourself to it?"

"How could I?" repeated Peg. "Madam, you are rich. You have always had whatever wealth could procure. How can such as you understand the temptations of the poor? When want and hunger stare us in the face we have not the strength that you have in your luxurious homes."

"Pardon me," said Mrs. Clifton, touched by these words, half bitter, half pathetic. "Let me, at any rate, thank you for the service you have done me now. When you are released from your confinement come to me. If you wish to change your mode of life, and live honestly henceforth, I will give you the chance."

"After all the injury I have done you, you are yet willing to trust me?"

"Who am I that I should condemn you? Yes, I will trust you, and forgive you."

"I never expected to hear such words," said Peg, her heart softened, and her arid eyes moistened by unwonted emotion; "least of all from you. I should like to ask one thing."

"What is it?"

"Will you let her come and see me sometimes?" pointing to Ida as she spoke. "It will remind me that this is not all a dream—these words which you have spoken."

"She shall come," said Mrs. Clifton, "and I will come too, sometimes."

"Thank you."

They left the prison behind them, and returned home.

There was a visitor awaiting them.

"Mr. Somerville is in the drawing room," said the servant. "He said he would wait till you came in."

Mrs. Clifton's face flushed.

"I will go down and see him," she said. "Ida, you will remain here."

She descended to the drawing room, and met the man who had injured her. He had come with the resolve to stake his all upon one desperate cast. His fortunes were desperate. But he had one hope left. Through the mother's love for the daughter, whom she had mourned so long, whom as he believed he had it in his power to restore to her, he hoped to obtain her consent to a marriage which would retrieve his fortunes and gratify his ambition.

Mrs. Clifton entered the room, and seated herself quietly. She bowed slightly, but did not, as usual, offer her hand. But, full of his own plans, Mr. Somerville

took no note of this change in her manner.

"How long is it since Ida was lost?" inquired Somerville, abruptly.

Mrs. Clifton heard this question in surprise. Why was it that he had alluded to this subject?

"Seven years," she answered.

"And you believe she yet lives?"

"Yes, I am certain of it."

John Somerville did not understand her. He thought it was only because a mother is reluctant to give up hope.

"It is a long time," he said.

"It is—a long time to suffer," said Mrs. Clifton, with deep meaning. "How could anyone have the heart to work me this great injury? For seven years I have led a sad and solitary life—seven years that might have been gladdened and cheered by my darling's presence!"

There was something in her tone that puzzled John Somerville, but he was far enough from suspecting that she knew the truth, and at last knew him too.

"Rosa," he said, after a pause, "I, too, believe that Ida still lives. Do you love her well enough to make a sacrifice for the sake of recovering her?"

"What sacrifice?" she asked, fixing her eye upon him.

"A sacrifice of your feelings."

"Explain. You speak in enigmas."

"Listen, then. I have already told you that I, too, believe Ida to be living. Indeed, I have lately come upon a clew which I think will lead me to her. Withdraw the opposition you have twice made to my suit, promise me that you will reward my affection by your hand if I succeed, and I will devote myself to the search for Ida, resting not day or night till I have placed her in your arms. This I am ready to do. If I succeed, may I claim my reward?"

"What reason have you for thinking you would be able to find her?" asked Mrs. Clifton, with the same inexplicable manner.

"The clew that I spoke of."

"And are you not generous enough to exert yourself without demanding of me this sacrifice?"

"No, Rosa," he answered, firmly, "I am not unselfish enough. I have long loved you. You may not love me; but I am sure I can make you happy. I am forced to show myself selfish, since it is the only way in which I can win you."

"But consider a moment. Put it on a different ground. If you restore me my child now, will not even that be a poor atonement for the wrong you did me seven years since"—she spoke rapidly now—"for the grief, and loneliness, and sorrow which your wickedness and cruelty have wrought?"

"I do not understand you," he said, faltering.

"It is sufficient explanation, Mr. Somerville, to say I have seen the woman who is now in prison—your paid agent—and that I need no assistance to recover Ida. She is in my house."

"Confusion!"

He uttered only this word, and, rising, left the presence of the woman whom he had so long deceived and injured.

His grand scheme had failed.

CHAPTER XXXV

JACK'S RETURN

It is quite time to return to New York, from which Ida was carried but three short weeks before.

"I am beginning to feel anxious about Jack," said Mrs. Harding. "It's more than a week since we heard from him. I'm afraid he's got into some trouble."

"Probably he's too busy to write," said the cooper, wishing to relieve his wife's anxiety, though he, too, was not without anxiety.

"I told you so," said Rachel, in one of her usual fits of depression. "I told you Jack wasn't fit to be sent on such an errand. If you'd only taken my advice you wouldn't have had so much worry and trouble about him now. Most likely he's got into the House of Reformation, or somewhere. I knew a young man once who went away from home, and never came back again. Nobody ever knew what became of him till his body was found in the river half eaten by fishes."

"How can you talk so, Rachel?" said Mrs. Harding, "and about your own nephew, too?"

"This is a world of trial and disappointment," said Rachel, "and we might as well expect the worst, for it's sure to come."

"At that rate there wouldn't be much joy in life," said Timothy. "No, Rachel, you are wrong. God did not send us into the world to be melancholy. He wants us to enjoy ourselves. Now, I have no idea that Jack has jumped into the river, or become food for the fishes. Even if he should happen to tumble in, he can swim."

"I suppose," said Rachel, with mild sarcasm, "you expect him to come home in a coach and four, bringing Ida with him."

"Well," said the cooper, good-humoredly, "that's a good deal better to anticipate than your suggestion, and I don't know but it's as probable."

Rachel shook her head dismally.

"Bless me!" interrupted Mrs. Harding, looking out of the window, in a tone of excitement, "there's a carriage just stopped at the door, and—yes, it is Jack and Ida, too!"

The strange fulfillment of her own ironical suggestion struck even Aunt Rachel. She, too, hastened to the window, and saw a handsome carriage drawn, not by four horses, but by two, standing before the door.

Jack had already jumped out, and was now assisting Ida to alight. No sooner was Ida on firm ground than she ran into the house, and was at once clasped in the arms of her adopted mother.

"Oh, mother," she exclaimed, "how glad I am to see you once more!"

"Haven't you a kiss for me, too, Ida?" said the cooper, his face radiant with joy. "You don't know how much we've missed you."

"And I am so glad to see you all, and Aunt Rachel too!"

To her astonishment, Aunt Rachel, for the first time in her remembrance, kissed her. There was nothing wanting to her welcome home.

But the observant eyes of the spinster detected what had escaped the cooper and his wife, in their joy at Ida's return.

"Where did you get this handsome dress, Ida?" she asked.

Then, for the first time, the cooper's family noticed that Ida was more elegantly dressed than when she went away. She looked like a young princess.

"That Mrs. Hardwick didn't give you this gown, I'll be bound!" said Aunt Rachel.

"Oh, I've so much to tell you," said Ida, breathlessly. "I've found my mother—my other mother!"

A pang struck to the honest hearts of Timothy Harding and his wife. Ida must leave them. After all the happy years which they had watched over and cared for her, she must leave them at length.

While they were silent in view of their threatened loss, an elegantly dressed lady appeared on the threshold. Smiling, radiant with happiness, Mrs. Clifton seemed, to the cooper's family, almost a being from another sphere.

"Mother," said Ida, taking the hand of the stranger, and leading her up to Mrs. Harding, "this is my other mother, who has always taken such good care of me, and loved me so well."

"Mrs. Harding," said Mrs, Clifton, her voice full of feeling, "how can I ever thank you for your kindness to my child?"

"My child!"

It was hard for Mrs. Harding to hear another speak of Ida this way.

"I have tried to do my duty by her," she said, simply. "I love her as if she were my own."

"Yes," said the cooper, clearing his throat, and speaking a little huskily, "we love her so much that we almost forgot that she wasn't ours. We have had her since she was a baby, and it won't be easy at first to give her up."

"My good friends," said Mrs. Clifton, earnestly, "I acknowledge your claim. I shall not think of asking you to make that sacrifice. I shall always think of Ida as only a little less yours than mine."

The cooper shook his head.

"But you live in Philadelphia," he said. "We shall lose sight of her."

"Not unless you refuse to come to Philadelphia, too."

"I am a poor man. Perhaps I might not find work there."

"That shall be my care, Mr. Harding. I have another inducement to offer. God has bestowed upon me a large share of this world's goods. I am thankful for it since it will enable me in some slight way to express my sense of your great kindness to Ida. I own a neat brick house, in a quiet street, which you will find more comfortable than this. Just before I left Philadelphia, my lawyer, by my directions, drew up a deed of gift, conveying the house to you. It is Ida's gift, not mine. Ida, give this to Mr. Harding."

The child took the parchment and handed it to the cooper, who took it mechanically, quite bewildered by his sudden good fortune.

"This for me?" he said.

"It is the first installment of my debt of gratitude; it shall not be the last," said

Mrs. Clifton.

"How shall I thank you, madam?" said the cooper. "To a poor man, like me, this is a most munificent gift."

"You will best thank me by accepting it," said Mrs. Clifton. "Let me add, for I know it will enhance the value of the gift in your eyes, that it is only five minutes' walk from my house, and Ida will come and see you every day."

"Yes, mamma," said Ida. "I couldn't be happy away from father and mother, and Jack and Aunt Rachel."

"You must introduce me to Aunt Rachel," said Mrs. Clifton, with a grace all her own.

Ida did so.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Miss Rachel," said Mrs. Clifton. "I need not say that I shall be glad to see you, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Harding, at my house very frequently."

"I'm much obleeged to ye," said Aunt Rachel; "but I don't think I shall live long to go anywheres. The feelin's I have sometimes warn me that I'm not long for this world."

"You see, Mrs. Clifton," said Jack, his eyes dancing with mischief, "we come of a short-lived family. Grandmother died at eighty-two, and that wouldn't give Aunt Rachel long to live."

"You impudent boy!" exclaimed Aunt Rachel, in great indignation. Then, relapsing into melancholy: "I'm a poor, afflicted creetur, and the sooner I leave this scene of trial the better."

"I'm afraid, Mrs. Clifton," said Jack, "Aunt Rachel won't live to wear that silk dress you brought along. I'd take it myself, but I'm afraid it wouldn't be of any use to me."

"A silk dress!" exclaimed Rachel, looking up with sudden animation.

It had long been her desire to have a new silk dress, but in her brother's circumstances she had not ventured to hint at it.

"Yes," said Mrs. Clifton, "I ventured to purchase dresses for both of the ladies.

Jack, if it won't be too much trouble, will you bring them in?"

Jack darted out, and returned with two ample patterns of heavy black silk, one for his mother, the other for his aunt. Aunt Rachel would not have been human if she had not eagerly examined the rich fabric with secret satisfaction. She inwardly resolved to live a little longer.

There was a marked improvement in her spirits, and she indulged in no prognostications of evil for an unusual period.

Mrs. Clifton and Ida stopped to supper, and before they returned to the hotel an early date was fixed upon for the Hardings to remove to Philadelphia.

In the evening Jack told the eventful story of his adventures to eager listeners, closing with the welcome news that he was to receive the reward of a thousand dollars offered for the detection of the counterfeiters.

"So you see, father, I am a man of fortune!" he concluded.

"After all, Rachel, it was a good thing we sent Jack to Philadelphia," said the cooper.

Rachel did not notice this remark. She was busily discussing with her sister-in-law the best way of making up her new silk.

CHAPTER XXXVI

CONCLUSION

As soon as arrangements could be made, Mr. Harding and his whole family removed to Philadelphia. The house which Mrs. Clifton had given them exceeded their anticipations. It was so much better and larger than their former dwelling that their furniture would have appeared to great disadvantage in it. But Mrs. Clifton had foreseen this, and they found the house already furnished for their reception. Even Aunt Rachel was temporarily exhilarated in spirits when she was ushered into the neatly furnished chamber which was assigned to her use.

Through Mrs. Clifton's influence the cooper was enabled to establish himself in business on a larger scale, and employ others, instead of working himself for hire. Ida was such a frequent visitor that it was hard to tell which she considered her home—her mother's elegant residence, or the cooper's comfortable dwelling.

Jack put his thousand dollars into a savings bank, to accumulate till he should be ready to go into business for himself, and required it as capital. A situation was found for him in a merchant's counting-room, and in due time he was admitted into partnership and became a thriving young merchant.

Ida grew lovelier as she grew older, and her rare beauty and attractive manners caused her to be sought after. It may be that some of my readers are expecting that she will marry Jack; but they will probably be disappointed. They are too much like brother and sister for such a relation to be thought of. Jack reminds her occasionally of the time when she was his little ward, and he was her guardian and protector.

One day, as Rachel was walking up Chestnut Street, she was astonished by a hearty grasp of the hand from a bronzed and weather-beaten stranger.

"Release me, sir," she said, hysterically. "What do you mean by such conduct?"

"Surely you have not forgotten your old friend, Capt. Bowling," said the stranger.

Rachel brightened up.

"I didn't remember you at first," she said, "but now I do."

"Now tell me, how are all your family?"

"They are all well, all except me—I don't think I am long for this world."

"Oh, yes, you are. You are too young to think of leaving us yet," said Capt. Bowling, heartily.

Rachel was gratified by this unusual compliment.

"Are you married?" asked Capt. Bowling, abruptly.

"I shall never marry," she said. "I shouldn't dare to trust my happiness to a man."

"Not if I were that man?" said the captain, persuasively.

"Oh, Capt. Bowling!" murmured Rachel, agitated. "How can you say such things?"

"I'll tell you why, Miss Harding. I'm going to give up the sea, and settle down on land. I shall need a good, sensible wife, and if you'll take me, I'll make you Mrs. Bowling at once."

"This is so unexpected, Capt. Bowling," said Rachel; but she did not look displeased. "Do you think it would be proper to marry so suddenly?"

"It will be just the thing to do. Now, what do you say—yes or no."

"If you really think it will be right," faltered the agitated spinster.

"Then it's all settled?"

"What will Timothy say?"

"That you've done a sensible thing."

Two hours later, leaning on Capt. Bowling's arm, Mrs. Rachel Bowling re-entered her brother's house.

"Why, Rachel, where have you been?" asked Mrs. Harding, and she looked hard at Rachel's companion.

"This is my consort, Capt. Bowling," said Rachel, nervously.

"This is Mrs. Bowling, ma'am," said the captain.

"When were you married?" asked the cooper. It was dinner time, and both he and Jack were at home.

"Only an hour ago. We'd have invited you, but time was pressing."

"I thought you never meant to be married, Aunt Rachel," said Jack, mischievously.

"I—I don't expect to live long, and it won't make much difference," said Rachel.

"You'll have to consult me about that," said Capt. Bowling. "I don't want you to leave me a widower too soon."

"I propose that we drink Mrs. Bowling's health," said Jack. "Can anybody tell me why she's like a good ship?"

"Because she's got a good captain," said Mrs. Harding.

"That'll do, mother; but there's another reason—because she's well manned."

Capt. Bowling evidently appreciated the joke, judging from his hearty laughter. He added that it wouldn't be his fault if she wasn't well rigged, too.

The marriage has turned out favorably. The captain looks upon his wife as a superior woman, and Rachel herself has few fits of depression nowadays. They have taken a small house near Mr. Harding's, and Rachel takes no little pride in her snug and comfortable home.

One word more. At the close of her term of imprisonment, Peg came to Mrs. Clifton and reminded her of her promise. Dick was dead, and she was left alone in the world. Imprisonment had not hardened her, as it often does. She had been redeemed by the kindness of those whom she had injured. Mrs. Clifton found her a position, in which her energy and administrative ability found fitting exercise, and she leads a laborious and useful life in a community where her history is not known. As for John Somerville, with the last remnants of a once handsome fortune, he purchased a ticket to Australia, and set out on a voyage for that distant country. But he never reached his destination. The vessel was wrecked in a violent storm, and he was not among the four that were saved. Henceforth Ida

and her mother are far from his evil machinations, and we may confidently hope for them a happy and peaceful life.

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