

FICTION

James Otis

**The Adventures
of a Country
Boy at a
Country Fair**



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FICTION



In an instant Sam was off at full speed, crying, "Stop thief!" at the full strength of his lungs.

The
Adventures of a
Country Boy
at a
Country Fair
By James Otis

— Author of Toby Tyler Etc. —

ILLUSTRATED

Boston
Charles E. Brown & Co.

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THE ADVENTURES OF A COUNTRY BOY AT A COUNTRY FAIR.

CHAPTER I.

A YOUNG FAKIR.

"I'm going to try it. Deacon Jones says I can have the right to run both things for ten dollars, and Uncle Nathan is going to lend me money enough to get the stock."

"What scheme have you got in your head now, Teddy Hargreaves?" and Mrs. Fernald looked over her spectacles at the son of her widowed sister, who was literally breathless in his excitement.

"I'm going to run a cane an' knife board at the Peach Bottom fair, and try to make money enough to pay the debt mother owes on the place."

"You're crazy--mad as a March hare! The idea of a child like you setting yourself up to earn three or four hundred dollars, when your father worked all his life and couldn't get so much together."

Mrs. Fernald really appeared to be angry, and she really believed there was good cause why she should lose her temper. The thought that little Teddy--a "whiflet" she called him--should set up his opinion in such matters against his elders, and attempt to earn in one season an amount which Seth Hargreaves had never been able to repay during his thirty-six years of life, was so preposterous that the good lady looked upon the boy's assertion as positive proof that he was not only ready but willing to "fly in the face of Providence."

"I shall try it all the same," Teddy replied in a most provokingly matter-of-fact tone, "an' I'm going down to see Uncle Nathan this very minute."

"Very well, and I consider it my bounden duty to advise your mother to keep you in the house until the fair is ended," Aunt Sarah said, as she took from its peg the well-worn gingham sun-bonnet.

Teddy had no desire to prolong the conversation, which had been begun simply because his aunt insisted on knowing where he had been, but hurried away from the gate on which he had been swinging while Mrs. Fernald questioned him, as if fearful lest she might try to detain him until the matter could be settled according to her own ideas of propriety.

"I can have the right to run what I want to, every day the fair lasts, for ten dollars, an' now, if you lend me fifteen, I'll be all right," the boy cried as he burst into Nathan Hargreaves' store, just as the old gentleman was adding a trifle more sand to the sugar, in order to compensate for what might possibly have been spilled by the careless clerk.

"Oh, it's fixed, eh? And you're really goin' to turn fakir?" Uncle Nathan asked, wrinkling his face into the semblance of a laugh, but remaining silent, as if fearing to waste even such a cheap thing as mirth.

"What's a fakir?"

"A man, or a boy, for that matter, who goes out to sell things as you count on doin', if I'm fool enough to let you throw away fifteen good dollars of mine."

"But you promised to lend me the money."

"An' I'm going to do it; but that don't make me any less a fool jest because I'm holdin' to my word. Tell me what you count on doin', an' then we'll come down to the business end of the scheme."

"I'll pay the ten dollars I've got to Deacon Jones for the right to run the games, an' with what you lend me I'm goin' to Waterville an' buy a whole lot of knives an' canes. There's a storekeeper over there who promises to sell that kind of goods for less than they cost him."

"An' he's lyin' when he says it. People don't do business for the fun of it; but that's neither here nor there so far as our trade is concerned. I'm goin' to give you the fifteen dollars now--it's a power of money for a boy of your size, Teddy--, an' if you make anything, as I allow you will, I'm to have eighteen dollars back; don't forget that part of the trade."

"I'll stand to what I agreed, Uncle Nathan, and you shall be paid the very day the fair closes."

"Here it is," and with a sigh which was almost a groan Uncle Nathan took from a fat calfskin wallet three five-dollar bills, adding, as he handed them to Teddy: "Be careful of it, my boy, for I'm puttin' almost too much confidence in a child of your size, an' nobody knows how distressed I'd be if anything happened to prevent your paying it back."

Teddy placed the money carefully in the inside pocket of his vest, and, after promising for at least the hundredth time that it should be repaid by the close of the following week, hurried home confident in the belief that he was on an

extremely short road to wealth.

Mrs. Hargreaves was by no means as sanguine as her son concerning the success of the scheme, and actually appeared frightened when Teddy showed her the money he had received from his Uncle Nathan, who was reputed to be the "closest-fisted" merchant to be found within a day's ride of Peach Bottom Run.

"If you should lose it, Teddy, and be unable to pay him back at the exact time you promised, it would be the undoing of us, for we could never expect to get another dollar. I know he is not generous, but have always believed that if we should be in yet more straitened circumstances he would give us some assistance. He has neither charity nor mercy for any one who does not pay a little more than his just debts--"

"But I shall give back every cent of this, mother, so don't look as if you were in such distress. I want to go to Waterville to buy my stock in the morning, an' am counting on walking. It's only seven miles, an' I'll save fifty cents by traveling on shanks' mare."

"I will have breakfast ready by four o'clock; but you must come back on the stage, Teddy."

"Yes, if I feel very tired; but I don't know of any easier way to earn a dollar than by walking both ways."

The young "fakir" believed he knew exactly what kind and amount of stock he wished to purchase on the following day, therefore he had no preparations to make for the journey save to get his limbs in the best possible condition for the tramp by retiring very early, in order to "scoop in" plenty of sleep.

The thought of the success which should attend him in his new venture kept his eyes open a long while after getting into bed, and when he finally succeeded in crossing over to the land of Nod, dreams of the fortune to be made during the coming week visited his brain, and remained there until his mother's voice summoned him to breakfast.

The sun had not yet come up from behind the hills when he was trudging sturdily along over the dusty road, carrying a generous luncheon tied in a snowy-white napkin, and with his money secured by many pins in the lining of his cap.

"Be careful not to lose it, for your Uncle Nathan would never forgive you," his mother had said, and he cried cheerily, as he walked swiftly down the lane to the highway:

"There's no fear of anything like that happening; the bills can't get away without my knowing it so long as they stay here," and Teddy pulled his cap yet more closely down on his head.

In a trifle more than two hours he was at Waterville, wondering why the stores were not open, no matter how early it was, when such an important customer as himself came to town.

Since the merchants were evidently ignorant of his arrival, as was evidenced by the fact that their places of business yet remained closed, there was no more profitable occupation for him than to eat a second breakfast, which he proceeded to do, using a hand-truck on the depot-platform as a seat.

The train which left New York on the evening before had arrived some time previous, and the station was temporarily deserted by all save a boy of about Teddy's age, who was walking to and fro in an aimless manner.

By the time the young "fakir" had finished his second biscuit he noticed that the stranger was watching him narrowly, and, holding forth the napkin with its generous store, he asked:

"Have one?"

"I don't care if I do," said the boy, carelessly, and he continued:

"I reckon you live 'round here?"

"No, I jest come up from Peach Bottom Run, an' am waiting for the stores to be opened."

"Why, you're from the same place where the fair is goin' to be held."

"No; I live at the Run, an' the fair is over to Peach Bottom, most five miles from my house. Are you goin' there?"

"I should reckon I was. Why, I'm goin' to help run it."

"You are?" and Teddy's mouth opened wide in astonishment.

"Yes, sir-ree, an' you fellers will be jest about crazy when I tell you what I've come to do."

"Don't flash it upon us too quick, for we want kind of keep our wits about us till the fun is over."

The tone of sarcasm in Teddy's voice appeared to nettle the stranger.

"I've come down here to give away a steamboat what's worth five hundred dollars."

"Then there ain't any need for you to go any farther, 'cause I'm willin' to take it now."

"If you won't be so smart I'll tell you about it," was the dignified reply. "There's a firm out in Detroit what's goin' to do that very thing to the feller that can guess how much she weighs, an' I've been hired to help the man who is comin' down to Peach Bottom to show off a lot of boats."

"What are you goin' to do?" and now Teddy was interested.

"Row around in the creek while he looks out for the stuff in the fair. It won't be any more'n fun, an' if you'll come over I'll take you out."

"I don't s'pose you could help me guess how much the steamer weighs, could you?"

"There ain't anybody as can do that, 'cause you see she ain't built yet; but you can find out all about it by lookin' on the fair grounds for the circulars what the Davis Boat and Oar Company of Detroit will throw around, an' if there's somethin' else you wanter know jest ask for Sam Balderston; all the folks will know me before I've been there very long."

"I'm going to work at the fair myself," Teddy replied, and then, in response to his new friend's questions, he gave him all the particulars of his proposed venture.

"I reckon you'll get along all right, an' come out way ahead, if some of these smart fakirs don't try to get the best of you. Say, why can't I go to your house, an' stay till it's time to go over to the fair? I'll pay my way."

"If mother's willin', I'd like to have you, an' I don't believe she'll care. Now, I've got to buy my stuff. Where'll I meet you afterward?"

"I'm goin' with you," Sam said, in a matter-of-fact tone. "I know a good deal about such things, an' won't see you cheated."

Teddy hardly thought he was in need of any assistance; but since he did not want to offend this fellow who was concerned in giving away a steamboat, he could not well refuse, therefore the two started up the street together.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD FAKIR.

Sam had very much advice to give during the short walk, and while the greater portion of it was worthless, there were bits which might be of value to the young "fakir."

"Don't buy anything till you have seen all there is in town, an' then you'll know which is the cheapest," Sam repeated several times, with an air of wisdom, and Teddy believed this to be a good idea.

With this object in view the two boys walked from store to store, examining that particular quality of canes and knives which Teddy thought would be best suited to his purpose, and Sam had no hesitation in criticising the goods boldly, until more than one of the clerks lost his temper entirely and refused to show the full stock.

"If you go on this way, Sam, we won't get the business done to day, an' I want to send the stuff down in the stage, which leaves here at three o'clock."

"There'll be plenty of time for that; I know what I'm about. Now, if you had sent your money to me, I'd got you a dandy lot in New York for almost nothing."

"Seein's how I didn't even know your name till a couple of hours ago, there wasn't much chance for me to do that, an' I guess I'll make out well enough here if you don't keep on raisin' a fuss with the clerks."

"I won't so much as yip ag'in, if that's the way you look at it. The question is, which store you're goin' to buy from?"

"There's a place near the depot that wasn't open when we came past. Let's go there, an' then I'll make up my mind."

Sam, feeling a trifle injured because his advice had not been fully appreciated, said nothing more until they were near the station, and then, seeing a train approaching, he proposed that they stop for a few minutes.

"Jest as likely as not there'll be people on it whom I know goin' to the fair, an' you want to get acquainted with all the fakirs, so's they'll help you along now an' then."

"The stage goes at three."

"An' it ain't more'n ten now. Come on!" Sam cried, triumphantly, as he motioned for Teddy to come nearer.

Sam had already quickened his pace, and Teddy was forced to follow, or injure the feelings of one whom he believed held a responsible position in the Peach Bottom exhibition. Among the passengers alighting from the train as the boys arrived was a man who carried a large package enveloped in green cloth, and Sam whispered, excitedly:

"I'll bet that's an old fakir, and if he is we want to let him know who we are."

Teddy failed to understand exactly why this was necessary; but his companion seemed so positive on the point that he remained silent.

This particular passenger appeared to have plenty of time at his disposal. He placed his package at one end of the platform, lighted a pipe, and then walked to and fro as the remainder of the travelers dispersed.

"You foller me, an' we'll find out who he is," Sam whispered, when he thought a fitting opportunity had come, and then advanced boldly toward the stranger. "Goin' to the fair?" he asked.

"Yes; what of it?"

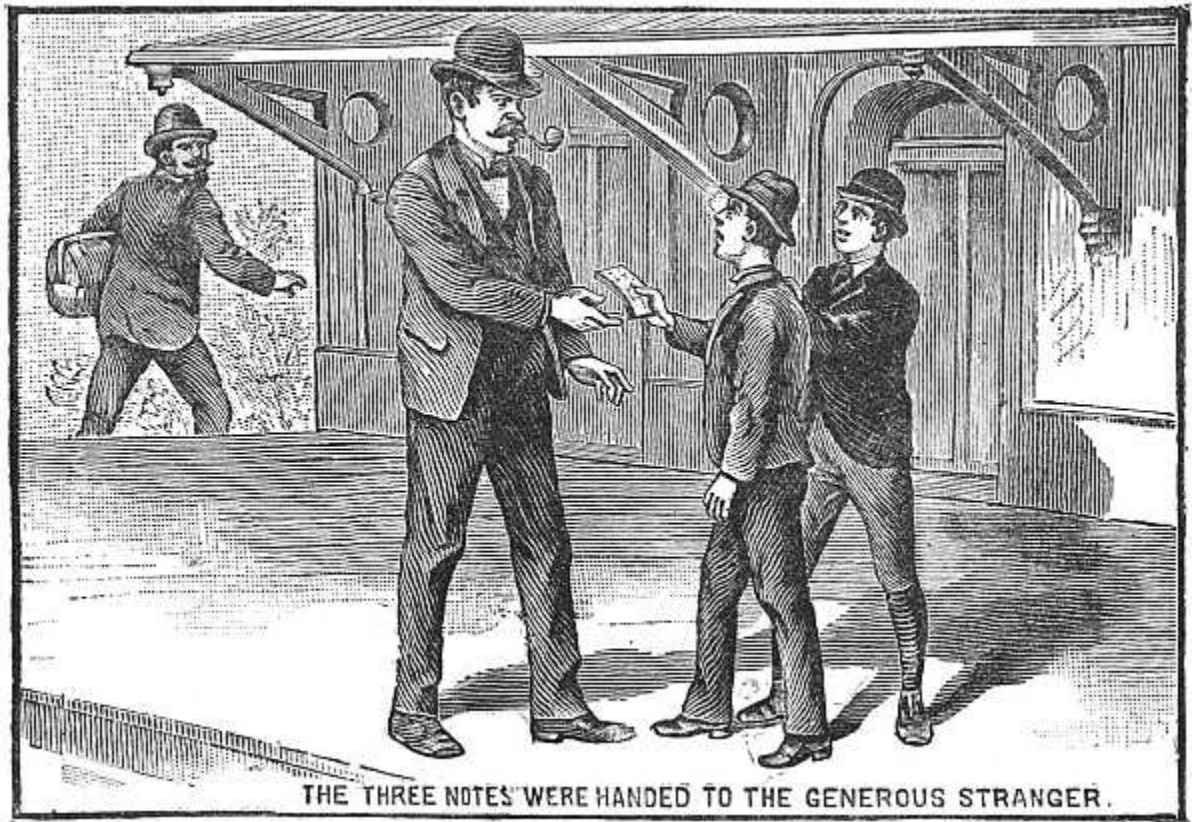
"Nothin', only I s'pose you know you've got to take another train here."

"If I didn't why would I be loafin' around this dead place?"

"I jest spoke of it 'cause this feller an' I are goin' there, too," and Sam waved his hand in the direction where Teddy was standing.

"I s'pose there'll be other boys besides you at the fair, eh?"

"But we belong to it. I'm to give a steamboat away, an' he's goin' to run a cane an' knife board. We're waiting here to buy the stock."



THE THREE NOTES WERE HANDED TO THE GENEROUS STRANGER.

"Oh, you are, eh?" and now the man appeared to be interested. "I reckon you're goin' to spend as much as a dollar?"

"One? Why, he's got fifteen, an' the whole of it will be spent before the stage leaves. We know something about the business an' don't count on gettin' an outfit for nothing."

"I thought you was a fakir," the man said, in a more friendly tone, as, unobserved by the worldly-wise Sam, he made a peculiar gesture to a stranger immediately in the rear.

"That's what I am," was the proud reply, "an' I'll make things hum over at Peach Bottom before I leave the town. You see I thought I'd speak to you, 'cause all of us fellers should know each other."

"You're right, an' it's mighty lucky you did strike up an acquaintance, for I can give you a big lift. I've helped many a boy into the business when they had money enough to help themselves."

The last dozen words were spoken in a loud tone, as if for the benefit of the stranger in the rear; but instead of waiting to hear more the latter turned abruptly and walked toward the package with a green covering at the end of the platform.

"I knew we oughter talk with you."

"Did you count on buying your stuff in this one-horse town?" the man asked as Teddy approached, and the latter replied:

"There wasn't any other place I could go to, 'cause it costs too much for a ticket to New York."

"How big a stock do you want?"

"All I can get for fifteen dollars. Don't you think that will be enough?"

"It depends," the stranger replied, reflectively. "If you buy the goods here you'll have to pay such a big price that it won't be much of a pile. Now, if--I've got the very thing in mind! You'll remember the day you saw me if my plan works. I know a fakir here who has a fine layout that he wants to sell. You can get fifty dollars' worth of stuff for--well, he asks twenty; but I'll say you are friends of mine, an' the chances are you can make a trade."

"That would be a regular snap!" Sam cried, and Teddy's eyes glistened at the thought of thus procuring a full outfit so cheaply.

"I'll do what I can for you," the man said, in a patronizing tone. "At any rate, I'll make him come down in his price, and if there's any balance it can be paid after the fair has been opened long enough for you to take in some money."

"If business is good, I'm willing to do what is right," Teddy replied; "but I must pay Uncle Nathan first."

"How much do you owe him?"

"Fifteen dollars."

"Why, bless my soul, it'll be a pretty poor fair if you can't make five times that amount in the first two days."

"Where can we see the man?" Sam asked, eager that his wonderfully good trade should be consummated at the earliest possible opportunity.

"I don't know; but he's somewhere in the town. Give me your cash, an' I'll hunt him up inside of half an hour. The stuff is right here in the baggage-room, and you can ship it on the stage without any trouble."

Just for an instant Teddy hesitated to part with what seemed to him like an enormous amount of money; but then came the thought that an old fakir would not wrong a young one--and he considered himself such. After some little difficulty he succeeded in extracting all the pins, and the three notes were handed to the generous stranger almost at the same moment that the green-covered package disappeared from the edge of the platform simultaneously with the departure of the second stranger.

"Wait right here for me," the man said, as he put the money in his pocket. "I've got too much work to do to spend any very great amount of time hunting you fellows up in case you don't stay in one place."

After thus cautioning them, the old fakir walked slowly away, and Sam said:

"It was lucky you fell in with me, Teddy, for I know how these things are worked, an' can give you a good many pointers before the fair is over. Why, you'll have a first-class outfit for about half what it's worth."

"Yes, it's a good chance; but I can't see why he didn't take us with him if he was in a hurry, an' then he wouldn't have had to come back."

"He's got to do that anyway, for his stuff is here," Sam replied, pointing toward where he had last seen the man's package; but it was no longer there. "I guess the baggage-master has taken it in," he added; "but you needn't be afraid of losin' your money while I'm with you."

Then Sam occupied his companion's attention by telling of his many alleged wonderful exploits, and an hour passed before his story was concluded.

In the meantime one train had arrived and departed; another was on the point of leaving the depot, bound for Peach Bottom, when Teddy cried as he leaped to his feet:

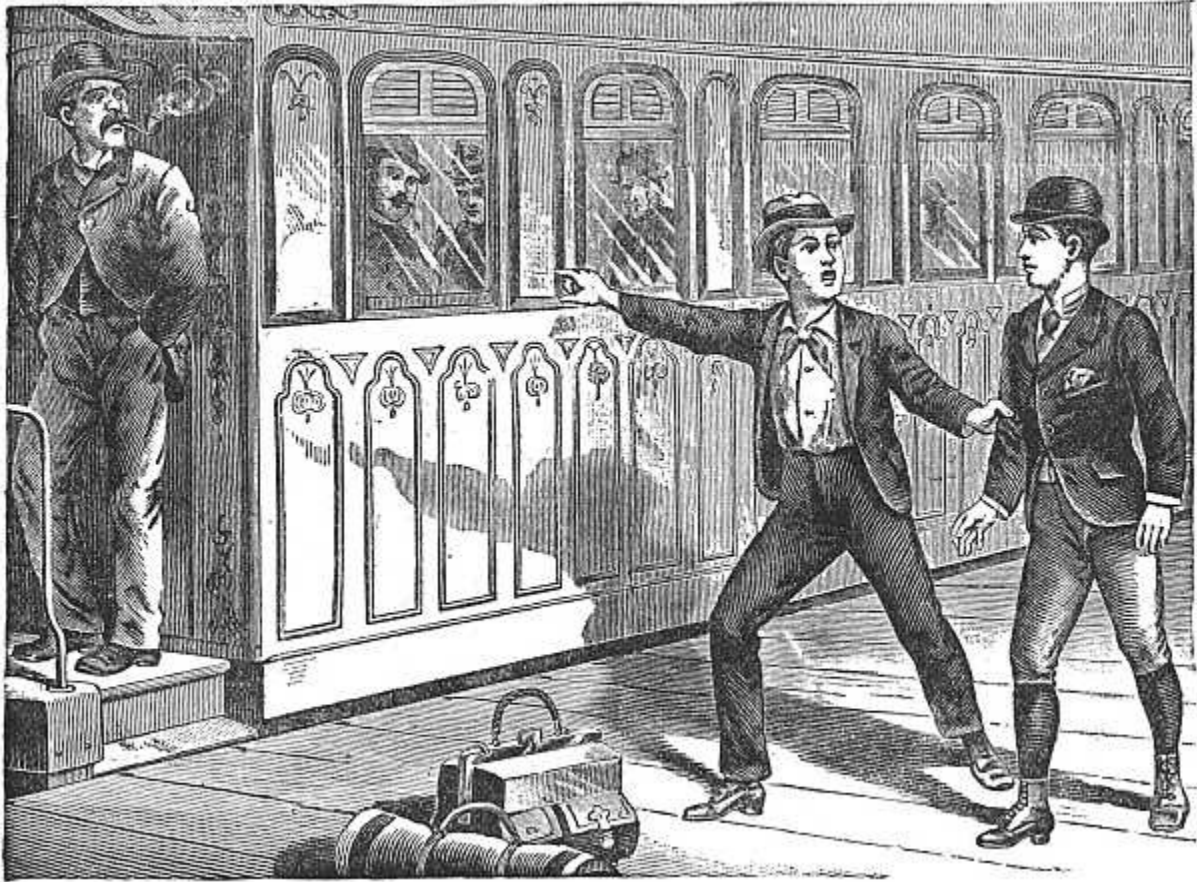
"See! I'm certain that's the man who has got my money!"

"Where?"

"On the platform of the front car!"

Before he could say anything more the train steamed out, leaving the would-be young fakir staring at it in distress and consternation.

"Of course it wasn't him," Sam said, confidently, when the last car had disappeared from view. "The stuff he was goin' to buy for you is here in the baggage-room, 'cause he said so, an' we'll see him before long."



"See! I'm certain that's the man who has got my money."

Teddy's suspicions had been aroused, and he was not easily quieted. The thought that it was possible he might have lost the money loaned him by Uncle Nathan was sufficient to cause the liveliest fear, and he said, decidedly:

"I'm going to know where that man's baggage went to."

"How'll you find out?"

"Ask the baggage-master."

"Don't make a fool of yourself. It would be nice for an old fakir like that man to know you thought he'd steal your money."

"I don't care what he knows, so long as I get my fifteen dollars back."

Teddy, trembling with apprehension and excitement, went into the baggage-room and asked there if a green-covered package had been taken in by any of the attendants.

No one had seen such an article, and all were positive there was nothing of the kind remaining in their charge.

Then he asked if a bundle of canes had been left there, and to this question there was a most decided negative.

"The hangers-on at the fairs haven't begun to come yet," the baggage-master said, "and when they do come, we sha'n't have any of their stuff to handle, for it will all be transferred across the platform without being brought in here. What is the matter? Anything gone wrong?"

The lump which had been rising in Teddy's throat was now so large that it was with difficulty he could say:

"A man has run off with fifteen dollars of mine, an' Uncle Nathan will jest about kill me!"

CHAPTER III.

A FRIEND.

The baggage-master immediately displayed the utmost sympathy for the victim of the old fakir's seductive scheme, and Sam was loud in his denunciations of a brother in the craft who would serve them in such a shabby manner.

"You leave him to me, an' I'll show you what can be done," that young gentleman said, and Teddy replied, reproachfully:

"I've left too much to you already. If you hadn't thought it was necessary to make the acquaintance of every fellow who was going to the fair I'd have my fifteen dollars in my cap now."

"I'll get them back for you."

"How?"

"I can't say jest now; but you wait an' see what I can do."

Inasmuch as Teddy must account first to his mother and afterward to Uncle Nathan for that amount, the confident assertion of his friend failed to give him any mental relief, and he said, quite sharply:

"You thought it was all right to give the money to him, an' if you didn't know any more than a country boy who'd never even heard of such fellows, I can't see how you can do much toward helping."

At this point the baggage-master, who had been listening to the conversation, broke in with the sage remark:

"It's no use for you fellows to fight over what has been done. The money is gone; there's no doubt about that; but it may be you can get it back."

"How?" Teddy asked, eagerly.

"By notifying the police, and it is possible that they may find your man long before the fair is ended."

"But even if they should, how can I pay Uncle Nathan the eighteen dollars he wants, after givin' Deacon Jones the ten which I promised?"

"That, of course, is a question I cannot answer," the officer of the company replied, not unkindly; "but it will certainly be better to get some of the money back than to lose the whole."

"Of course it will," Sam said, promptly, after waiting a few seconds without hearing any reply from Teddy. "Tell us what to do, an' I'll see to the whole thing."

"Hello! What kind of a meeting are you holding here?" a cheery voice cried, and, looking up, the disconsolate Teddy saw a merchant whose stock he had been examining a short time previous.

In a few words the baggage-master explained the condition of affairs.

"Can nothing be done?" the merchant asked.

"It is barely possible. The fact of the matter is that the two swindlers left on the last train, and this boy's money has gone with them beyond a doubt."

Then the merchant turned to the would-be fakir and asked for further particulars, which were readily given, the latter saying, as he finished the sad story:

"Uncle Nathan is bound to raise a big row, an' I won't be able to help mother, as I counted on doing; but I s'pose it serves me right."

"I'm not so sure of that, lad, for all of us are liable to be taken in at some time or another. It is possible you may make money at the fair, and I will give you credit to the amount you lost. Go to the store, show this slip, and get what you think may be needed."

While speaking the merchant had been writing on a piece of paper torn from his memorandum book, and when he handed it to Teddy the almost heartbroken boy read the following words:

The bearer, Edward Hargreaves, is entitled to credit, thirty days' time, on all he may need, to the extent of thirty

dollars.

JOHN REAVES.

"But I only lost fifteen dollars," Teddy said, as he read the order.

"I so understood; but you may need more, therefore I have made the amount sufficiently large. Don't hesitate to buy what is wanted, and whether you ever find the swindler or not, I feel very positive my bill will be paid."

Teddy tried to thank the merchant, but that lump in his throat was still too near his mouth to admit of many words, and Sam whispered:

"Don't say anything more about it. You've struck the biggest kind of luck, and the safest way is to hold your tongue."

Even had it been possible to speak, Teddy could not have said all that was in his heart, and before Sam had time to give any further advice the merchant boarded a train which was just starting for New York, leaving the young fakir and his newly-made friend to settle matters among themselves.

"You're in big luck," the latter said, consolingly. "What's the difference if you have lost fifteen dollars so long as you know how to get thirty dollars' worth of goods to start in business?"

"But this bill will have to be paid, and Uncle Nathan must have his money; that leaves me forty-five dollars in debt."

"S'pose'n it does? You're bound to make a good deal more'n that, an' I'm here to help you through."

Teddy came very near saying that if Sam had not been there the fifteen dollars would still be reposing beneath the lining of his cap; but he succeeded in checking himself, and the reproachful words remained unspoken.

At this point in the conversation the baggage-master insisted that information of the swindler should be given to the police, and, whether they desired to do so or not, the boys were forced to accompany him to headquarters.

Here it is possible their story might have been told without exciting more than ordinary interest if the name of the kindly-disposed merchant had not been used; but that was sufficient to awaken a decided interest, and every detail was written down carefully.

"We will try to get the money for you," the chief said. "Several of my men will be at the fair, and if you see this fellow again, information must be given to them immediately."

Teddy had but little hope that any good would result by this means, but he promised faithfully to do as requested, and then the boys were at liberty to finish the business which had been interrupted so disastrously.

So much time had been wasted that it was necessary to move around very lively in order to have the goods ready before the stage should leave, and Teddy did a great deal toward expediting matters by explaining to the clerk at the store on which he had the order for credit exactly what he proposed to do.

The young man understood at once the kind of goods which would be needed, and without listening to the many suggestions made by Sam selected a good assortment of both knives and canes.

"Ain't you getting more than thirty dollars' worth?" Teddy asked, as the clerk continued to add to the pile.

"I think not. These are all cheap goods, you know, and make a big show without amounting to any very great value. I will put in cotton cloth enough for the cane board, and as many rings as you will need unless business should be very brisk."

The clerk was bent on making the bill exactly the size of the order, and when the prices had been figured out Teddy had invested just thirty dollars in a stock which must bring in a profit of at least fifty per cent. in order to admit of his paying the debts already contracted.

The goods were to be put on the stage by the salesman, and there was nothing further for the boys to do but decide on their manner of traveling to the Run.

"After losin' fifteen dollars, I reckon there's only one thing for me to do," Teddy said, as they left the store. "I'm goin' to walk; but you can do as you please."

"S'pose'n we both ride? You're bound to make a pile of money before the fair is over, an' can afford---- By jinks! There's that fakir now!"

In an instant Sam was off at full speed, crying: "Stop thief!" with the full strength of his lungs, as he pursued a man

carrying a bundle covered with green cloth.

Such an appeal was well calculated to arouse every idler in the immediate vicinity, and before Teddy fully understood what had happened not less than twenty men and boys were in chase of the stranger, who, strange to say, had not quickened his pace.

The thought that it might yet be possible to regain his money lent unusual speed to the would-be fakir's heels, and he was among the foremost when the man suddenly halted, turned squarely around, and asked:

"What is the matter with you people? Do you want me?"

"I guess we do," a policeman replied, as he seized the stranger by the collar. "Somebody yelled for us to stop the thief, and you must be the man."

"Who says I am?" was the angry question.

By this time both Teddy and Sam had discovered the latter's mistake. The only point of resemblance between this stranger and the one who stole the money was that both carried packages covered with green cloth; but while the first bundle was bulky and apparently heavy, this was small and readily held under the man's arm.

Sam did not wait to explain matters. Fearing lest he might get into serious trouble because of the mistake, he slipped quietly away, leaving Teddy to bear the brunt of the accused's wrath.

The latter realized that something must be done at once, for the greater portion of the crowd was looking inquiringly at him, and he said, in a voice which was far from steady:

"I didn't do the hollerin'; but a feller who was with me when a man stole my money thought you must be the one."

"Where is he?" the stranger asked, advancing threateningly.

"I don't know. He ran away when he saw it was a mistake."

The crowd immediately began to disperse. The policeman called down quite the reverse of blessings on Sam's head, and then walked away, leaving Teddy and the stranger comparatively alone.

"I don't know as it does any harm to have a lot of fools chasing a man," the latter said, "but it might give him a bad name in his work."

"I'm very sorry, sir, but you see----"

"I'm not blaming you, my boy, since it was the other fellow who did the mischief. Tell me how you lost your stuff."

"My what?"

"Your stuff--money."

"Oh!" and Teddy at once gave the stranger a detailed account of all that had happened, the latter saying, as the story was concluded:

"I wouldn't be afraid to bet my head that Long Jim was the duck who played the trick. I know he came here, headed for the fair grounds, and it's jest about his style of working."

"Do you think there's any chance I'll get it back?"

"He shall give up if I see him. I'll be at the fair myself, working a neat little game, and will see you there."

With this remark the stranger walked away, and Teddy went toward the depot once more, feeling quite certain he had made a friend who would aid him in his new venture.

CHAPTER IV.

UNCLE NATHAN.

When Teddy reached the depot he was not obliged to hunt very long for Sam, for that young gentleman crept out from behind a pile of baggage on seeing his friend was alone, and asked, in a hoarse whisper:

"What did that feller do to you?"

"Nothing; but that don't prove we should get out of another scrape so easily, and you must be careful, or we'll be in no end of trouble before the fair is ended."

"I was only tryin' to catch your money."

"It surely wouldn't have done any harm if you had found out whether that was the man or not before you started the whole crowd after him."

"That's right, rub it into a feller when he tries to do you a good turn," Sam said, sarcastically, and then remembering an instant later that he proposed to be this boy's guest, he added, "I was only lookin' out for you, an' so long as there's been no harm done we needn't talk about it. Do you still mean to walk home?"

"There's nothing else to be done, if we want to get to the Run to-night, for the stage left while we were chasing that man."

This was exactly what he did not want to do; but, under the circumstances, there was no help for it, and the young gentleman who expected to form such a prominent portion of the fair set out by the side of the friend whom he had injured while thinking to do him a favor.

At the end of a trifle less than three hours, when both were footsore, hungry, and weary, the boys arrived at Teddy's home, and Mrs. Hargreaves made the stranger welcome despite the inconvenience caused by his coming.

Not until after Sam had retired did Teddy tell his mother of the theft, and for several moments the widow was in great mental distress; but finally she viewed the matter in a more cheerful light, and it was resolved that Uncle Nathan should not be told of the mishap.

"It would only make him angry," Mrs. Hargreaves said, "and you must pay him before the merchant who was so kind to you gets his money; but I am terribly afraid, Teddy, that the whole scheme will be a failure."

The amateur fakir assured her as best he could, and when they retired that night both Teddy and his mother were in a comparatively contented frame of mind.

The following day was Sunday, on which not even the all engrossing topic of cane-boards and knives was to be discussed; but before the family had finished breakfast the arrival of a stranger forced them into worldly topics.

The newcomer was none other than the man whom Sam had accused of being the thief, and he explained the cause of his visit by saying:

"I have reason to believe that Long Jim, the fakir who got away with your son's money, will be over here to-night, because the hotels at Peach Bottom are crowded, and it is possible he may be forced to give up the stuff." Although not exactly understanding what he meant, the widow insisted on his coming into the house, and he laid the details of his plan before Teddy and Sam.

"I'll hang around here for him," the stranger said, "and you shall say if he is the man who did you up; after that I'll take a hand in the business, and it'll be queer if between us all we can't make him do the square thing, more especially since the rest of his gang haven't come yet."

As might be expected, Teddy was excited by the prospect of recovering the money which he had believed was lost beyond reclaim, and plans were at once laid to trap the dishonest fakir.

While this conversation was being carried on Uncle Nathan came in to learn how his nephew had succeeded in town, and the stranger introduced himself as Frank Hazelton, a dealer in jewelry, which was to be on exhibition during the coming week at the fair.

The old man was delighted to make the stranger's acquaintance, for he fancied there would be an opportunity for him to take the agency of a valuable line of goods without the outlay of any money, and in a very few moments the two were

fast friends.

Uncle Nathan not only monopolized nearly all the conversation, but insisted on showing Mr. Hazelton around the village, and actually forced the latter to accompany him, despite the fact that it was Sunday, when an honest merchant is not supposed to so much as think of business.

On the following day it would be necessary for those who had purchased the privilege of doing business on the fair grounds to be present, ready to select their different sites for working, and very shortly after the sun sank behind the hills Sam and Teddy retired in order to be ready for an early start next morning, since the first stage left the Run at half-past five.

It lacked fully an hour of that time when the boys were called to breakfast by Mrs. Hargreaves, and in less than fifteen minutes they were at the table eating a hearty breakfast, which was interrupted by the appearance of Uncle Nathan, who looked as if he had not been in bed since the evening previous.

"I've been robbed!" he cried, passionately, "and this is what comes of trying to help my nephew enter a disreputable line of business. I believe you induced that man to come here, explaining all about my store, simply that he might act the burglar. And it wouldn't take much to make me think you had agreed to divide with him the ill-gotten gains," he added, shaking his fist in the direction of Teddy, who was so astounded by the news as to be literally incapable of movement.

"What do you mean, Nathan?" Mrs. Hargreaves cried.

"Just what I said! My store was robbed last night, and your precious son knows the thief better than I do!"

"You mean the man who came here yesterday?" the widow asked, while Teddy and Sam gazed at the old man in open-mouthed astonishment.

"Of course I do; who else could it be? Didn't I take him over there yesterday, and didn't I explain just how difficult it was to deposit money in a bank, because a man would have to pay a dollar to go to Waterville an' back, or trust the stage driver to do the business?"

By this time Teddy had recovered something like composure, and he said, gravely:

"We have no means of knowing what you said to Mr. Hazelton, but if you told him all your business, that is no concern of ours. You insisted on his going away with you, and we haven't seen him since."

"But you lied to me about my money."

"In what way?"

"You never said a word about its being stolen."

"If I never said a word I couldn't have told a lie. He has evidently given the whole story; but what happened in Waterville has nothing to do with the robbery of your store."

"Oh, it hasn't, eh? Well, I'm beginning to think it was a job cooked up by all hands to get the best of me."

"If it had been," and now Teddy was on his feet, looking the angry old man squarely in the face, "why wouldn't I have said something about it in order to make the story seem straighter? A merchant in Waterville trusted me for the goods I wanted after he heard the money was gone, and I count on paying you before I do him."

"Oh, you do, eh? Well, it's mighty doubtful whether you or this precious friend of yours will ever see the fair, for I'm going to get out a warrant for the whole lot before I'm done with this thing."

"Would you arrest Teddy when he has been in this house ever since you left here yesterday morning?" Mrs. Hargreaves cried.

"I'll have my money back, and the sooner your smart son tells me where it is, the sooner he can go about his business; but he must first pay me back my eighteen dollars."

"I only borrowed fifteen, Uncle Nathan, and that you will get before next Wednesday. If you want to arrest me, go ahead; but I promise that you'll be sorry for it."

"So you threaten, do you? That's what comes of trying to help an ungrateful boy! I knew he was going to the bad from the first minute he talked about having a cane-board," the old man added, as he turned to the widow, "and I predict that he'll come to no good even if he manages to get out of this scrape."

"You thought it was a good idea for me to do as I proposed," Teddy replied, standing his ground bravely, "and was willing to loan me the money, provided I would pay you three dollars for the use of fifteen for one week."

"That's right; throw in my teeth what I wanted to do in order to help you along, and call me an old skinflint. I am old enough to expect such things from such as you."

"I haven't called you any names, nor do I intend to do so; I only wanted mother to know the truth of the business between us. Do you really believe I had any hand in breaking into your store?"

"If you didn't your friends did, and that amounts to the same thing, as you'll soon find out. I'll have a warrant issued for the arrest of the whole crowd, if you don't tell me the truth this very minute."

"But I don't know anything, Uncle Nathan."

"I'll have the truth out of you before the day is ended," the old man cried, angrily, and without saying or doing anything save to shake his fist in the direction of his nephew and Sam he left the house.

As yet none of the little party knew the full extent of what had happened, but before Uncle Nathan was fairly out of the yard a neighbor came around to tell Mrs. Hargreaves that the old man's store had been entered by burglars on the night previous, and a large amount of money, together with the most valuable goods, had been carried away.

It is not difficult to imagine the consternation which seized upon the little party after Uncle Nathan's departure. Teddy was so overwhelmed that it was literally impossible for him to say a word, and Sam shook like one in an ague fit at the thought that he might be carried off to jail before it was possible for him to astonish the people by his skill as an oarsman.

"You must not think of leaving here until we know what your uncle proposes to do," Mrs. Hargreaves said, as she returned to the dining-room after talking with the neighbor. "Of course I know that neither of you two boys had anything to do with the robbery; but you must not run away."

"I've got to leave, no matter what the old fool says," Sam replied. "I don't know how the folks would get along if I didn't show up, an' it won't do to disappoint them."

"Are you going?" Teddy asked, and Sam replied in a voice which trembled despite all his efforts to make it sound firm:

"Of course I am. You don't allow I'm such an idiot as to stay till he can have me arrested, an' if you're sensible, both of us will go."

"I must stay here, an' lose all my chances of making money," Teddy said, gloomily.

"All right, then I'm off, an' after I once get on the fair grounds I'll bet that old duffer won't get hold of me."

Sam did not propose to lose any time. He had no baggage, and in a very few moments after so deciding he was walking up the road over which the stage would pass, while Teddy, with a heavier heart than he had ever known before, waited for his uncle to send the officers of the law to carry him to prison.

CHAPTER V.

THE FAIR.

It seemed to Teddy as if everything pleasant in life had departed from him as he waited for the return of Uncle Nathan accompanied by the officers of the law, and neither he nor his mother had any idea that the visit would be long delayed.

The widow had every proof, even if her heart had not told the truth, that her son was innocent of the charge which the angry old man made. She knew both he and Sam remained in the house during the entire day previous to the robbery, and it would have been almost impossible for them to have left during the night without her knowledge; but at the same time it was only reasonable she should be distressed in mind as to the final outcome of the matter.

One, two, three hours passed, and yet no arrest had been made.

Teddy no longer hoped to play the part of fakir at the fair; but yet he fancied it might be possible to sell his stock, which had already been forwarded by the stage, to some more fortunate fellow, and in order to do this it was necessary he should be on the grounds at the earliest possible hour; but the charge made by his uncle held him a voluntary prisoner.

At eight o'clock a neighbor, whose love of gossip was greater than her desire for housework, came to the garden gate to say that she had just heard the justice of the peace refuse to issue a warrant for either of the boys, and she added to this information her belief that it, the burglary, was a judgment upon Uncle Nathan for presuming to talk business on the Sabbath.

When this busybody had departed, Mrs. Hargreaves said, as she re-entered the house:

"There is no longer any reason, Teddy, why you shouldn't carry out your plans. Every one in this village knows where to find you in case a warrant is granted, which doesn't now seem possible, and it is better to go ahead as you proposed, knowing that your mother is certain you are innocent of any wrongdoing."

Teddy's one desire had been to be on the fair grounds, and when this advice was given from "a fellow's best friend," he started at once, saying as he left the house:

"I'll come back if there's nothing to do; but there's no reason to worry if you don't see me until Saturday, for I shall stay just as long as things run smooth."

Ten minutes later, while he was trudging along the dusty road with no other idea than that he would be forced to walk the entire distance, a friend in a wagon overtook him, proposed that he ride, and before the fair grounds were reached he had heard all the particulars of the robbery.

It appeared that the burglars must have effected an entrance to Uncle Nathan's store after midnight Saturday, and when the proprietor arrived on the following morning there was absolutely no clue to the thieves.

"They must have had a wagon to take away all the old man says he has lost," Teddy's informant added, as the story was concluded, "and because of that the justice refused to issue a warrant for the man who slept at the hotel last night. Of course the idea that you knew anything about it was all in that old fool's eye."

"Then nobody has been arrested?" Teddy exclaimed, in surprise.

"Of course not, an' more than one in town hopes he'll never see hide nor hair of his goods or money; but between you an' me I don't believe he's lost half as much as he tries to make out."

To this last assertion Teddy gave but little heed; the all absorbing thought in his mind was as to whether he would actually be arrested for the crime, and this was sufficient to prevent any speculations as to the amount of loss, or his former dreams of the future.

Arriving at the fair grounds, he found everything in a state of confusion. Goods were arriving and being put in place; men were quarreling for this or that vantage ground, and carpenters were busy in every direction.

As a matter of course, he knew that all this would be changed on the following day when the visitors began to arrive; but, nevertheless, it gave him a homesick feeling which he could not suppress, and, for a time, prevented him from attending to his own interests.

"Hello! What are you sittin' there for?" a voice cried, after he had remained inactive near the entrance nearly an hour, debating in his own mind whether or not it would be worth the while to unpack the goods which he knew were awaiting

his call somewhere on the grounds.

Looking up quickly he saw Sam, self-possessed and jaunty as at the first moment he met him in Waterville, but wearing an air of considerably more importance.

"Have you gone to work yet?" he asked, listlessly.

"Of course not; there's nothin' for me to do till the folks begin to come in to see how well I can row a boat. What did the old duffer do?"

"Do you mean Uncle Nathan?"

"Of course."

"He hasn't had anybody arrested yet; but there's no knowin' how soon he'll begin."

"He'd better not try it on me," Sam said, with an assumption of boldness. "I've found a feller here that's goin' to show off rifles, an' I can borrow as many as I want if he does any funny business."

"Would you shoot anybody?"

"You jest stay till an old lunatic comes along sayin' I've helped to rob him when your mother knows where I was, an' see what I'll do," Sam replied, in a really bloodthirsty tone as he turned to walk away, and then, as if reconsidering the matter, he stopped long enough to say, "Wait here a minute, an' I'll show you a feller what knows a thing or two."

Inasmuch as Teddy had no idea of moving from the position he had taken up near the gate it was not irksome to do as the exhibitor of boats requested, and without troubling his head as to who this very important person might be, he remained at the precise spot until Sam returned with a boy who appeared to be a year or two older than himself.

"This is Dan Summers, an' he's here to help show off a dandy rifle made in Chicopee Falls down in Massachusetts, or some such place. He'll help us out of the scrape if anybody can."

Dan looked as if this introduction was disagreeable to him rather than otherwise, and after nodding to Teddy, he said, in an explanatory tone:

"I'm here to help the man what exhibits goods from the Stevens Arms Company, that's all; but I don't see how I could be of any help if you fellers have got in a fuss."

"Neither do I," Teddy replied, and then to show that no one could aid him, he told the whole story, including all that Uncle Nathan had said.

"I wouldn't let that worry me," Dan said, philosophically, when the tale was ended. "If you want to make any money out of this fair it is time you was lookin' out for a stand, an' I know of the best place on the grounds. Come with me now, an' you can get it before the crowd of fakirs have a chance to take it up."

Teddy, rather liking the appearance of this boy, resolved to follow his advice, and signified the same by slipping down from the stack of exhibits, as he said:

"Show it to me an' I'll get right to work, for there's forty-five dollars I've got to pay back, no matter what Uncle Nathan makes up his mind to do."

"That's the way to talk," Sam cried, approvingly, and forthwith he proceeded to take charge of his two acquaintances, resolved that lack of energy should not prevent him from sharing in their triumphs, if indeed, they had any.

Dan professed to have had considerable experience with fairs, and the manner in which he proceeded to work showed that there had been no boasting on his part. He selected a spot where nearly all of the visitors would be forced to pass in order to see the cattle or the racing, and set about putting up a stand for Teddy in the most approved manner.

He ordered Sam here and there to such places as he had seen an accumulation of lumber, and so well did he work, after borrowing an ax and a hatchet from a "candy butcher," that it was not yet noon when Teddy had an inclosure sufficiently large for his purpose; the cloth was in place and the holes cut for the canes, so that it would be but the work of a few moments to make everything ready when business should begin.

"You can't do the whole thing yourself if there is anything like the crowd that ought to come," Dan said, "and I advise you to hire a clerk."

"Where'll I find one?" Teddy asked, helplessly.

"Take some of the fellers from your own village; but be sure they're honest, for after business begins there won't be any chance to watch 'em."

Teddy thought he could find the proper party before the following day, and then came the question of where they were to sleep.

"I've got that all fixed," Sam said, confidently.

"The man what runs the museum in that big tent is a friend of mine, an' he won't say a word if we stay under the canvas to-night."

"How long have you known him?" Teddy asked, warned by previous experience that Sam's statements were not always to be depended upon.

"I never saw him till this morning; but that don't make no difference so long as he's willin' for us to stay there."

"We'll go over an' look around," Dan said, leading the way, and to the surprise of at least one of the party it was found that Master Sam's statement was absolutely correct.

The proprietor of the museum was more than willing to allow the boys to sleep under his canvas, for the very good reason that they would act as sentinels in lieu of those he had neglected to hire, and all three went away in search of a place where they could obtain meals during the expected five days of excitement and money-making.

This was even a more simple matter than the first. At a boarding-house nearly opposite the main entrance to the grounds they could be accommodated at a reasonable rate, and the preliminaries had been settled. It only remained now to welcome the visitors, and get from them as much money as possible.

Teddy almost forgot the terrible fact that his Uncle Nathan might yet have him arrested, and Sam acted as if such a thing had never been possible.

It is true all three of the boys discussed the possibility of finding the money which had been stolen from Teddy; but neither thought of connecting the two crimes as the work of one person.

During the afternoon Teddy looked around in the hope of seeing the man, unjustly accused of the theft, who had promised to aid him; but as yet he had not put in an appearance, and it seemed as if all the choice places would be taken before he arrived.

It was anything rather than sport to wander around the almost deserted grounds, and at an early hour, after partaking of a remarkably poor supper, the three boys sought the seclusion granted by the mildewed canvas of the alleged museum of the "world's wonders."

A goat, a wax baby, two or three snakes, an alligator, and a contortionist, who was none other than the proprietor of this magnificent array of "marvels," made up the entire list of curiosities; but the tent would shelter the young fakirs from the wind and dew, and it was possible they might sleep as soundly as at home.

CHAPTER VI.

A CLUE.

Sam and Dan, who had worked at many fairs and been forced to sleep in far less desirable places, thought it was a rare piece of good fortune to get such comfortable quarters free; but the prospect of lying on the ground all night was far from pleasing to Teddy.

He looked around for some spot softer than another; but there was no choice, and he said to himself:

"There's one satisfaction about it, I'm better off on the ground than I would have been if Uncle Nathan had succeeded in having me arrested and put in jail."

This thought caused the interior of the tent to seem less disagreeable, and he almost persuaded himself that it would be sport to stay all night in a museum with a real contortionist as host.

Dan had thrown himself at full length on the ground where he could watch the proprietor of this "enormous exhibition" cook his supper on an oil-stove, and Sam, anxious about other people's affairs as usual, devoted his entire time to asking questions regarding the business.

"How do you count on gettin' along when the crowds get here? You can't sell tickets an' act too."

"I've got a barker an' a clown coming to-morrow; it was no use to pay 'em wages for layin' around when there was nothing to be done but put up the tent."

"What's a 'barker?'" Sam asked, in surprise.

"Why, the man who stands outside an' does the talking, of course."

Then, his supper having been cooked and eaten, the host amused himself and his guests by telling of his experience in the show business; relating stories and talking of the different fakirs he had met.

"When I started out," he said, "I made up my mind that a fortune could be made in one season. I bought a fine tent; had lots of performers, about twenty animals, and a dozen cases of stuffed birds and other curiosities. We struck hard luck from the sendoff, an' first the woman with an iron jaw gave me the shake because she got tired of waiting for the salary that never came. Two of the bears grew so disgusted with the bad business that they died, and one after another of the people skipped, till I was pretty nigh alone. A sheriff in Harmer seized the cases, another levied on my live stock, and it has only taken two seasons to bring the show down to where you see it."

This was not pleasing information for Teddy, who was obliged to make such a large amount of money in order to free himself from debt, and he asked:

"Isn't it possible to make money at every fair? I thought the fakirs got rich in a little while."

"So did I before I went into the business. A fellow may make a big stake this week and lose it all at the next stand. If you strike bad weather, or a crowd that hasn't got any money, it's up-hill work to pull in the entrance fee. Now, I have to pay a hundred dollars for this privilege, because I've got a big tent, and it wouldn't be any more if I had a show to compare with it in size. It'll take a good many ten-cent pieces to make that up."

This plain statement of facts caused Teddy to figure how many nickels he must receive before the capital invested and stolen would be returned, and the result was far from gratifying.

"The eighteen dollars which must be given to Uncle Nathan, the thirty I owe in Waterville, and ten I paid for the privilege of running the boards makes eleven hundred and sixty five-cent pieces. I'll never see so many customers as that, and Aunt Sarah was right when she called me a fool for thinking of going into the business," he said to himself, as his companions began to make their preparations for the night.

It is useless to "cry over spilled milk," however, and this he realized in time to prevent himself from being plunged into the lowest depths of despondency. It was barely possible business would be exceptionally good, he argued mentally, and if hard work could accomplish the desired result he must be successful.

Dan was already lying down with his head toward the side of the tent and his feet near the oil-stove, which had been left burning because of the dampness, and Teddy crawled over by the side of him. Sam had decided to sleep by the side of his host, probably with the idea that he might appear to be on terms of greater intimacy, and all hands gave themselves up to slumber.

The excitement of the morning and subsequent labor had so tried Teddy that, despite the hardness of his bed, he fell asleep in a very few moments, and it was not yet nine o'clock when all the inmates of the tent, save the goat, and possibly the alligator and snakes, were wrapped in blissful unconsciousness.

Half an hour later a terrific yell from Sam caused the remainder of the party to spring to their feet in alarm.

"What's the matter?" Dan cried.

"Somebody has got into the tent and been poundin' me with a club! I'm pretty near killed."

The faint glow cast by the oil-stove was not sufficient to illumine any portion of the tent, and the host made all haste to light a lantern, after which Dan proceeded to search for the supposed intruder; but before he had taken a dozen steps the proprietor of the museum burst into a hearty laugh.

"Funny, ain't it?" Sam cried, angrily. "I s'pose you'd laugh if I'd been killed in your old tent!"

This savage remark appeared to excite the man's mirth rather than check it, and while he was thus enjoying himself Teddy and Dan stood gazing at him in surprise.

It was several minutes before the man could speak, and then he said, as he pointed to the goat who stood a short distance away calmly munching some potato parings:

"That's the fellow who has been beating your friend with a club. I always let him loose at night, and he has walked over our dying boy."

Sam insisted that he had been beaten with a club; but on examining his clothing two spots of fresh earth were found, showing where the animal had stepped. A hoof-print on the sleeve and another directly on the breast of his coat comprised the full amount of damage done.

The boy who had believed himself so dangerously wounded now grew angry, and, leaping to his feet, declared he would not remain in the tent another minute unless the goat was tied.

"There's nothing to prevent your bunking somewhere else," the owner of the animal replied, quite sharply.

"Billy always has had the liberty of the tent at night, and I reckon he won't lose it now."

Sam started toward the entrance; but before reaching it he realized that he would be punishing no one but himself, and slowly turned back, saying as he approached the stove:

"It's too late to hunt for lodgings now, an' I s'pose I'll have to make the best of it."

"I guess you will," the host replied, quietly, and the angry Sam lay down on the seat of the baggage wagon, to insure himself against another visit from "Billy."

This incident had driven the desire for sleep from the eyelids of Teddy and Dan, and they remained awake some time after the loud breathing of their companions told that the visit from the goat had been temporarily effaced from their minds.

Now Teddy discovered what a hard, uncomfortable bed the bare earth was, and after tossing about for half an hour, he whispered to Dan:

"Do you suppose it would be any better in the wagon?"

"No; you'll get used to it in a little while, and the ground is softer than a board."

Teddy was about to reply when the sound of voices from the outside attracted his attention, and then came the crackle as of a match being lighted.

Two or more men had halted near the canvas within a few feet of where the boys were lying, evidently that they might be sheltered from the wind while getting their pipes or cigars in working order.

A moment later both the listeners heard one of the newcomers say:

"I don't think it will be safe for you to show up very much while we stay here."

"Why not? If them boys recognize me it will be an easy matter to frighten 'em into holdin' their tongues, and there's goin' to be good pickin's this week."

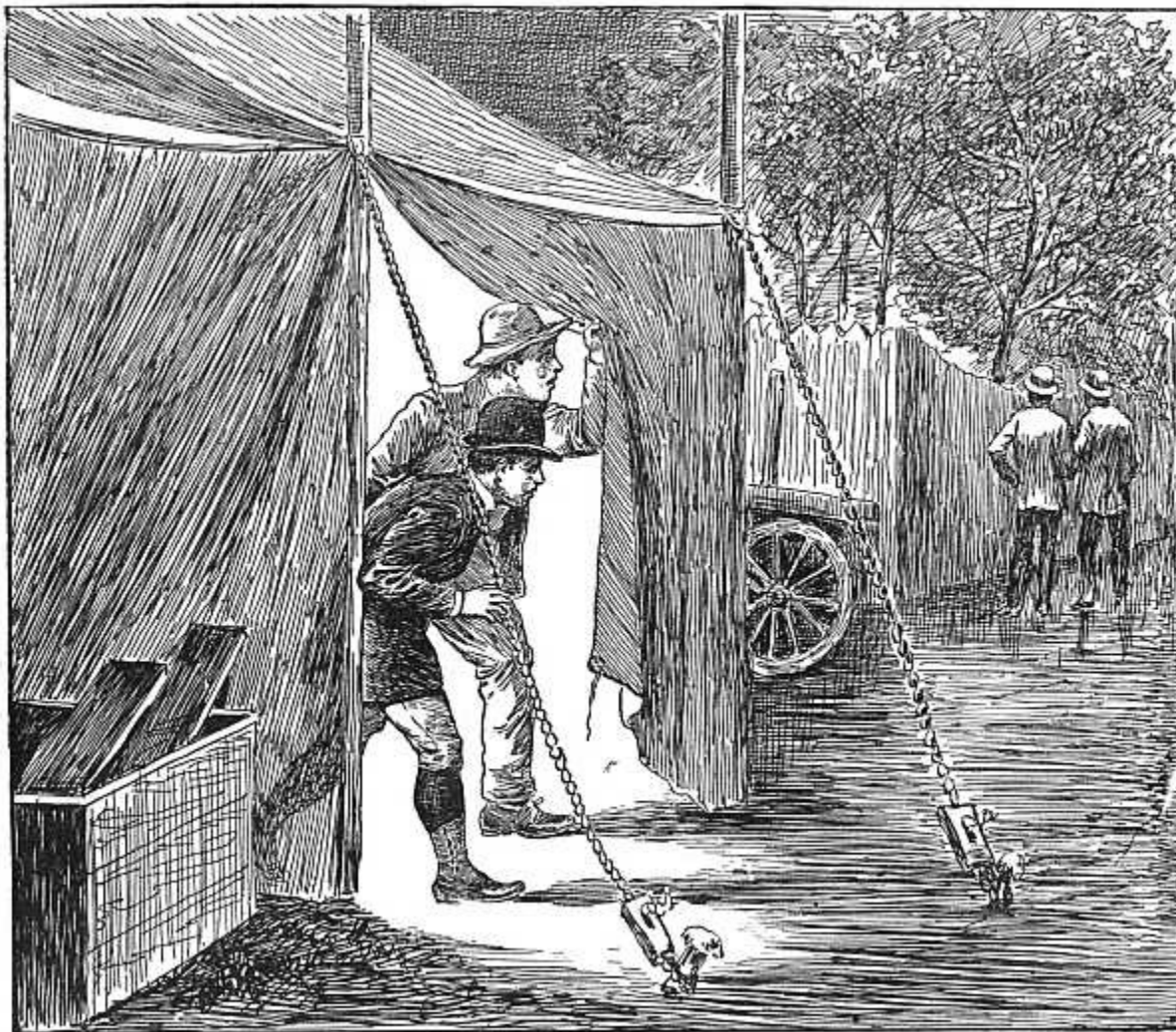
"But what's the use of runnin' any risk? We've made a fairly good haul already, an' it's better to get safe off with that

than stick our noses where it'll be hard work to pull them back."

Teddy was in the highest possible excitement. In the tone of the second speaker's voice he recognized the man who had stolen his money, and he punched Dan with his elbow to assure himself that the latter was listening.

"Keep quiet," Dan whispered, and then the conversation on the outside was continued.

"I'll take good care to keep shady, an' you see what can be done to-morrow."



The boys crept through the flap of the tent and followed the two men.

"Will you promise not to leave the house till after dark?"

"I thought you had more nerve; but so long as you haven't I reckon I'll promise, for this is bound to be a fat thing, and I don't want to lose the whole of it.

"When these country jays begin to send their stuff home I'll have ours shipped, an' there's little danger it'll be overhauled, more especially since the old man couldn't get a warrant for the only one he suspects. It's a safe bet that Hazelton has a pretty good idea who did the job, an' if they make trouble for him he'll most likely tell what he thinks."

"There's no call to be afraid of him after he has worked a couple of days, for those he ropes in would do all they could to have him arrested."

The last portion of this remark was almost indistinguishable, owing to the fact that the men were walking away, and when the sound of their footsteps could no longer be heard Teddy said:

"Those are the men who robbed Uncle Nathan's store, an' I'm certain one of them got my money."

"Would you know their voices if you heard them again?"

"Sure; but why don't we find out where they are going? It wouldn't be a hard job."

"Are you willin' to sneak after them?"

"Of course I am. Come on!"

The boys arose softly and crept through the flap of the tent without awakening the sleepers.

The night was dark and cloudy, and it was impossible to see any very great distance in either direction; but Dan had taken especial heed to the course taken by the men, and he started off without hesitation.

"We ought to have a club or something to protect ourselves in case they should see us," Teddy whispered.

"We won't get near enough to let them do much mischief. Do you see two sparks over there? They are the lighted ends of cigars, an' our men are behind them."

Dan quickened his pace; but he had failed to calculate the distance correctly, and was much nearer the game than he had suspected.

"Be careful they don't see us," he said, in a low tone, and in another instant the boys were directly in front of the men.

Teddy started back in alarm; but he was too late. In an instant the sparks flashed before his eyes, and he fell to the ground unconscious just as Dan succeeded in warding off the blow of a fist which was aimed at him.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CLERK.

When Teddy recovered from the vicious blow which had rendered him unconscious he saw Dan lying on the ground beside him, but no one else was near.

It was as if they had been fighting with phantoms of the brain, save for the fact that both bore the most indisputable signs of having been assaulted by beings of true flesh and blood.

One of Dan's eyes was closed as if by a violent blow, and Teddy bled freely from the ear, the crimson fluid telling eloquently of the exact location of that superior force which had caused so many stars to dance before his mental vision.

"We got through with that part of it mighty quick," Dan said, ruefully, as he rose to his feet. "There wasn't anything slow about the way they struck out after we made fools of ourselves by running into them, eh?"

"I don't understand how it all happened. It wasn't more than three seconds from the time I first saw them before there was a regular set of fireworks dancing in front of my eyes."

"It so happens that they saw us first," Dan replied, as he rubbed his head. "Those men were the thieves, and what I said showed them that we were on the scent."

"Where are they now?"

"You'll have to ask that question of someone else," Dan said, with a grimace of pain. "The last thing I know was when the tall fellow landed one square on my nose, and before I recovered both were out of sight. We have done harm rather than good, for now they know we overheard the conversation, an' we'll be mighty lucky if this is all we get before the fair comes to an end."

"Suppose we tell the police now?"

"What can you say to them? We heard those men talking about something which may have had nothing to do with the robbery, and want to have them arrested. On what grounds will we ask for a warrant? Besides, if Nathan Hargreaves was my uncle, I would let him fight his own battles."

"But I owe him eighteen dollars."

"What of that? He wouldn't take a penny off if you got your head broke while trying to find his money, and after all that has happened I think we have good reason to let him severely alone."

"I'm willing to go back to the tent," Teddy said, as he began to feel faint, and Dan aided him during the short walk, both staggering as they came through the flap, meeting their host near the entrance, who asked, sharply:

"What has been going on? I counted on helping a party of boys, rather than giving my tent up to a lot of roughs, as you appear to be."

In the fewest possible words Dan explained what had happened, and in addition told all the story of Teddy's losing his money, together with the accusation made by Uncle Nathan.

"I'm sorry I said a word," and the proprietor of the museum did really appear to be grieved. "It makes no difference whether you got a whipping or not, the guilty parties are here, and you can count on my help in turning them up."

"That's what I'm afraid we sha'n't be able to do," Teddy replied; "we tried our best to-night, and got the worst of it."

"There is plenty of time between now and Saturday. I'll do all any man can, an' it'll be strange if we don't get some proof before the fair closes."

"How did you know we were out?" Dan asked.

"I saw you go, and there was no reason why I should kick; but I began to be afraid you were up to something crooked. Now I know the whole story, I'll do my best to help you out of the scrape. Go to sleep, and we'll talk the whole matter over in the morning."

This was good advice, but not easily followed. Both the boys began to feel the effects of the blows received from the thieves, and the pain resulting therefrom was not conducive to repose.

They did manage to close their eyes in slumber now and then, however, and when the day broke Mr. Sweet, the proprietor of the museum, was standing ready to minister to their necessities.

"You haven't got exactly the right kind of faces to bring very big business," he said, cheerily; "but I reckon we can make a change in the general appearance. Use this plentifully as a bath, and before business opens you'll be respectable members of society."

It was certainly necessary for them to do something toward improving their appearance. Teddy's ear was swollen to nearly twice its natural size, and Dan had an eye which was rapidly blackening.

Thanks to the application provided by the owner of the museum, these evidences of a fight were rapidly reduced, and when Sam awoke they looked little the worse for wear, although he readily discovered that something serious had happened while he was wrapped in slumber.

"What has been goin' on?" he asked, suspiciously.

"Nothing much," Dan replied, with a forced laugh. "The goat walked over us, and we're kinder used up, that's all. Are you ready to go to breakfast?"

It was evident that Sam did not believe this explanation, but since he said nothing more about it, the two actors in the previous night's adventures held their peace; therefore it would not be in his power to betray any secrets.

Breakfast was eaten at an early hour, and the young fakirs returned to the grounds in time for Teddy to meet the first visitors.

Under Dan's instructions he continued to cry out:

"Here's where you can get a cane or a knife for nothing! Three rings for five cents, and every time you throw it over the mark you get what you ring! Three for five, and every cane or knife you ring is yours!"

It was yet too early for the exhibits to be opened, therefore Teddy had the assistance of his friends in reclaiming the rings thrown, and after nearly four dollars had been taken in with a loss only of a ten cent cane, the amateur fakir began to understand that it would be necessary for him to have a clerk.

"You're bound to do a good business this week," Dan said, at about eight o'clock. "Sam and I must go now to attend to our own work, an' if you see some fellow who can be trusted, I advise you to hire him, or there'll be considerable trade lost, for when these people want to spend their money they won't wait for you to hunt up assistants."

"Yes, I reckon there's more'n a thousand who are jest aching to see how I can row in one of them dandy boats," Master Sam added; "but if you get into any kind of a scrape, an' don't know how to get out, come to me. I'll see you through, no matter how good business is."

These two friends and advisers had hardly left him when a particular chum from the Run came up, and knowing he could be trusted, Teddy immediately made a trade for his services.

Tim Jones accepted the offer of ten cents on each dollar which might be taken in, and straightway engaged himself as Teddy's clerk, promising faithfully to account for every penny he should receive.

"I know you are honest," the proprietor of the board said to his friend, "and I want you to help me on the square, so I'm willing to give a fair price, for I may have to be away a good deal of the time."

"You mean that Nathan Hargreaves is goin' to have you arrested?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because he's tellin' around town at the Run that you know who robbed his store, an' says he'll have a warrant out, if he has to go to Waterville for it."

"That is where he's making a great big mistake, Tim; but if he should do anything of the kind I expect you to do your best here," and Teddy spoke very solemnly, for he really believed his uncle would succeed in having him arrested. "I don't know positively who broke into his store; but Dan an' I heard enough last night to make us believe we can find the thieves if we have time to work it out."

"I'd let him hustle to get the stuff, if it was my pudding," Tim replied with emphasis, and then as a party of young fellows bent on spending money approached the board he began to cry, as lustily as might have been expected from any old fakir:

"Here's where you get 'em, three rings for a nickel, and every cane or knife you ring is yours; all for the small sum of five cents!"

Convinced that he had a capable clerk, who was willing to work hard in order to earn an additional percentage, Teddy contented himself with making change for the rush of customers, which continued unabated until nearly ten o'clock and then came a lull, when he was able to watch the other fakirs around him.

Up to this point business had continued in the most promising manner, and if it held out as well there would be no difficulty in his paying all the money he owed, even although there might be no very large profit.

"I only want to get out square," he said to himself, while nursing his injured ear; but this experience led him to believe it was possible to do very much toward helping his mother, and already had he begun to dream of large returns, despite the fifteen dollars out of which he had been swindled.

It was just when his customers had gone to other parts of the ground, and after Teddy had figured up the amount of money taken in, showing that there was nearly eight dollars in the treasury with an offset only of one twenty-cent knife and two ten-cent canes lost, that the young fakir saw Hazelton standing some distance away beckoning to him.

"Look out sharp for things, Tim," he cried, as he vaulted over the railing and ran to the side of the man whom he believed to be a friend.

"Did anything happen last night?" the latter asked.

Teddy told him the whole story, keeping back not one incident.

"I heard quite so much in the hotel where I board. It is Long Jim and his partner who have done the job of which both you and I are accused. As for your uncle, he isn't worth a minute's thought; but I'm going to get to work, an' what he says may go against me, so you and I must turn those fellows up if we can."

"Ain't your business honest?" Teddy asked, in surprise.

"Well, when we come right down to dots, I don't suppose it is. Watch me when I leave here, and you'll have a chance to judge for yourself. I may want to leave my satchel with you for a while, and I reckon you're willing to take care of it?"

"Of course I am. I'll do anything you ask."

"Better wait and see the game first, but don't forget that we've got to turn up the two men who whipped you and your friend last night, or stand the chance of being hauled up for the robbery ourselves."

"Did you say anything to Uncle Nathan to make him think you would break into his store?"

"No; I only played him for a jay, as you shall see me do with two or three hundred of these smart fellows here, and he jumped down on me because there was no one else on whom to fasten the crime. I've got to go, now. Don't forget to hurry back to your cane-board when you see I'm getting through with my first stand, for I want to leave my stuff with somebody whom I can trust."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JEWELRY FAKIR.

Teddy's curiosity regarding the kind of business which Hazelton proposed to do was so great that, for the time being, he forgot his own venture in watching this supposed friend.

The jewelry fakir disappeared amid the crowd for a few moments, reappearing in a carriage drawn by a fancifully decorated horse, and the gaudy trappings caused the sightseers to stop, believing something interesting or curious was to be seen.

Hazelton introduced himself as an agent for a large manufacturing company, and proposed to dispose of "samples" of their goods in a manner which would be satisfactory to all. He began by throwing away great numbers of cheap rings made to imitate gold, and as the boys scrambled for them he complained that the older members of the throng--those people whom he particularly wished should test the merits of his wares--were getting nothing.

"I can change that," he said, after hesitating a moment, as if to devise some plan. Then holding up half a dozen pairs of cuff-buttons, he continued: "I am allowed to give away only six of these. What gentleman will advance twenty-five cents for one of these sets, knowing the money will be returned to him? By that means I shall place the goods where they will do the most good."

In a short time the necessary number of purchasers was found, each having paid a quarter of a dollar, and then, with great ostentation, the fakir returned to every one the money he had given.

A similar performance was gone through with in the case of ten seal rings, and by that time the crowd were in a state of high excitement, for they were getting supposedly valuable goods by simply loaning this agent their money for a short time.

The fakir then held up a lot of watch-chains, asking who would give him a dollar for one, but in this instance he made no mention of returning the money.

Believing these also were to be given away, every man scrambled to pass up his dollar before the supply should be exhausted, and fully two hundred dollars was taken in by the generous "agent." Then, as the demand ceased, Hazelton produced from his valise what appeared to be a heavy gold watch.

Wrapping it in paper, and attaching it to a chain, he cried:

"Who wants to take another, and receive as a present what I have fastened to the end of it; but on the condition that this paper shall not be removed until I give permission?"

A young fellow standing near Teddy made all possible haste to pass the fakir a dollar and receive the prize.

Then the remainder of the crowd clamored for more to be put up in the same manner, and Hazelton disposed of at least a hundred before the clamorous throng could be appeased.

While this was being done Teddy saw the young fellow slyly remove the paper and examine his goods. A look of anger and disappointment overspread his face as a cheap, empty locket, fashioned on the outside something like the case of a watch, was revealed to view. Twenty cents would have been an extravagantly high price for what he had paid a dollar; but it was possible the agent would return the money as he had done in the previous cases, and the victimized fellow held his peace.

Hazelton was now ready to take a hurried departure. No more dollars were passed up, and quickly seizing the reins, he said:

"I have not represented these goods to be gold; but they are a fine imitation, and Mr. Nathan Hargreaves, of Peach Bottom Run, will probably act as my agent for the sale of them. You can get what may be wanted from him if you need any more."

The last words were hardly spoken before he drove quickly through the throng, leaving his dupes in a daze, from which they did not recover until he was lost to view.

Now Teddy understood what the "Give-Away" game was, and he also knew that it was far from being honest, although Hazelton had really made no promises which he did not fulfill.

Some of the victims were angry, and vowed to flog "that feller within an inch of his life" before sunset; others bore their

loss philosophically, and turned away with the remark that the fakir was "a cute one," while the majority hastened off lest they should be suspected of being victims.

Teddy returned to his cane-board feeling sad because he had been so mistaken in this particular man, and had hardly reached there when Hazelton, on foot, came from the side of the fair grounds opposite where he had disappeared, saying hurriedly, as he handed the boy a black satchel somewhat resembling a sample case:

"Look out for this! All my money is in it."

Without waiting for an answer the man was gone, and the young fakir was in no slight distress at being the custodian of so much wealth.

After considerable discussion with Tim he decided to leave it behind the cane-board where it would be screened from view, and then a crowd of customers suddenly appearing, he was so busy during the next half hour that he hardly had time to think of that which had been intrusted to his keeping.

Not until trade grew dull once more did Hazelton appear, looking decidedly well pleased with himself, and, standing where the passers-by could not hear, he asked:

"Well, what do you think of the give-away game now?"

"It looks to me like a swindle," Teddy replied, bluntly. "The things you sold were not worth half what you got for them."

"Six cents apiece for the chains, and five for the locket is what I pay by the quantity," the fakir said, with a laugh.

"But you made the people think they were getting real watches."

"I was mighty careful to say nothing of the kind. They thought they saw a watch, and I told them I would make each purchaser a present of what was on the chain. Their idea was to get the best of me, and in that I didn't lose very much. It's a case of setting a thief to catch a thief, and the smartest man comes out ahead."

"But why did you leave all the money with me?"

"Because it sometimes happens that my customers make a kick, and try to get back their stuff by force, so I don't carry much cash in my pockets while I am on the fair grounds."

"Of course you are all through now. You can't expect to do the same thing over again."

"That's exactly what I shall do in about an hour, only in a different portion of the inclosure, and you'll see that I can catch just as many suckers as before."

Then, in order to be rid of the satchel, for it seemed as if he was really concerned in the swindle so long as it remained in his keeping, Teddy said he wanted to see what Dan and Sam were doing.

"Go ahead; I'll stay near by where I can keep an eye on the stuff, so you needn't let that worry you."

As a matter of fact, the boy was not eager to leave his place of business; but having said so, it was necessary to go, or let Hazelton understand exactly why the remark had been made.

Cautioning Tim to "keep his eyes open for trade," he walked across the grounds to the building where Dan was employed, and found that young gentleman displaying the good qualities of a peculiar-looking weapon.

"This is the Model Pocket Rifle," Dan was saying to a party of gentlemen. "The shoulder-rest is detachable, and you can buy an effective weapon for a trifle over fifteen dollars, as--- Hello, Teddy, how's business?" he added, suddenly, on observing his friend, and the two had an opportunity for conversation, while the curious ones were examining the rifle.

Teddy gave a brief account of what had already been done, and then asked:

"Can't you get off a few minutes and go with me to see what Sam is doing?"

It was not difficult for Dan to get a short leave of absence, and the two went directly to the creek where their acquaintance, who proposed to make himself the central figure of the fair, was rowing around in a jaunty looking craft.

Sam wore a sailor's shirt, turned away at the throat, and tied with a black silk handkerchief, while on the breast of the garment was worked the name "Davis Boat and Oar Co., Detroit, Mich." The same legend being printed in gold on the band of his straw hat.

Sam had evidently been expecting his friends, for he espied them before they reached the shore, and, rowing to the bank, insisted they should take a sail.

"Come on, it's all right," he said. "It don't make any difference whether I carry passengers or not so long as the boat is kept goin', an' I want to show you somethin' fine in the way of rowin'."

Neither of the boys cared very much about accepting the invitation; but he was so persistent that they finally stepped on board as the easiest manner of settling the matter.

"I tell you what it is, fellers," he said, as he pulled out into the stream, "I'm jest makin' things hum around here. These folks have never seen any kind of style put into rowin', an' I'm knockin' their eyes out."

"Don't give it to them too strong, or they may want to keep you here as an ornament after the fair closes, and then the rest of the world would suffer," Dan said, with a laugh, and Sam replied:

"You fellers can make fun; but what I say is straight," and then he made preparations for giving an exhibition. "Watch me now, an' you'll learn a thing or two about boats."

During the next ten minutes he pulled as if in a race, first up and then down the stream, until sheer lack of breath forced him to stop.

"I hope you haven't set the keel on fire," Dan said, solicitously. "There's no question but that you made good time, though I'm inclined to think the build of the boat had considerable to do with the speed. This one looks as if she would row herself."

"That's all you know about it. If I hadn't been a first-class hand at----"

"See there!" Teddy cried, excitedly, as he pointed toward the shore. "That's the man who got my fifteen dollars. Pull in, Sam, an' pull for all you are worth!"

The oarsman delayed only long enough to gaze in the direction indicated, where he saw the old fakir whom they had met with such great loss at Waterville, and then he bent himself to the task.

"Do you believe it will be safe to tackle him after last night?" Dan asked.

"I'm going to, and if he don't get away from me I'll ask some of the crowd to help me have him arrested," Teddy replied, grimly.

The little craft was a considerable distance from the shore. Sam was so excited that he only thought of landing in the shortest possible space of time, and instead of keeping a lookout for other boats, rowed vigorously, as if he were the only oarsman on the stream.

Teddy and Dan sat motionless, with their eyes fixed on the man, and thus it happened that no one on board saw a double ender, in which were three ladies and two gentlemen, come around a bend in the creek directly in Sam's course.

There was a shout from the bank, three shrill screams of terror, and then a crash as the two craft came together with terrific force.

The occupants of both boats were thrown into the water as the frail timbers were splintered, and the spectators on the bank acted as if panic-stricken.

CHAPTER IX.

A BRAVE RESCUE.

Sam was a fairly good swimmer, and as soon as he found himself in the water he struck out for the shore, paying no attention to any one else until he had assured his own safety.

One of the gentlemen in the other craft did the same selfish thing, while the other, unable to help even himself, was trying to keep his head above water by resting his chin on an oar and piece of planking.

The women were in imminent danger of being drowned, for there was no other boat near at hand which could be sent to the rescue, and the throng of spectators was in that unreasoning state of fear and excitement which prevents people from being of any service at such a time.

When Teddy and Dan came to the surface after having been thrown from their seats, they were within a few feet of each other, and the latter asked:

"Can you swim?"

"Yes; don't pay any attention to me, but do what you can toward saving those women."

"Will you help me?"

"Of course; but I can't take care of more than one."

Both boats had disappeared, and nothing save a few fragments showed where they had gone down.

Teddy thought only of aiding the struggling women, for there was no question that the man with the oar could take care of himself, at least until those on the bank should be sufficiently composed to do something effective, and he swam to the nearest struggling being, clasping her firmly under one arm as he said:

"Don't make a row; but keep perfectly quiet, an' I'll take you ashore."

Half-unconscious as she was, the woman attempted to grasp him by the neck, and for several seconds he had all he could do to prevent her from choking him to death; but after two or three kicks judiciously administered, he succeeded in making her understand that her life as well as his own depended upon her remaining passive, and from that moment all went well.

The employees of the company which had the boats on exhibition flung into the water several life-saving arrangements of cork and canvas, and by dint of much persuading he induced her to trust to one of these while he went to the assistance of Dan, who had been carried beneath the surface more than once by the struggles of the woman whom he was trying to save.

By this time a boat was brought up from around the point, and as these two helpless ones were taken on board both the boys swam to the rescue of the last of the party who had sunk beneath the surface for the third time.

Teddy, now nearly exhausted by his efforts, was the first to grasp her; but if it had not been for Dan the struggle would have been useless, since his strength was so far spent that he could not have brought her above the water unaided.

By their united efforts, however, she was taken on board the boat in a state of unconsciousness, and they made their way to the shore cheered by the shouts of the assembled multitude.

Weak, almost exhausted beyond the power to stand upright, they landed a few seconds in advance of the craft, and the reception received was enough to have nerved stronger men to a semblance of strength.

It was not until they were in the private apartments allotted to the Davis Company that either fully understood how weak he was, and then willing hands aided them to recuperate.

Hot flannels, warm drinks, and dry clothes were contributed by the different exhibitors, until, as Teddy said, they looked like "circus clowns;" but they were in fairly good bodily condition, and it appeared as if the involuntary bath had done them no real injury.

Outside the building the people were shouting themselves hoarse in praise of the two boys who had saved three lives, and Sam stood bowing acknowledgments as if he had been the chief actor in the thrilling scene.

The difference between the real and the pretended life-savers was readily understood, however, when Dan and Teddy

made their appearance, looking decidedly the worse for their struggles, and the cheers which went up would have been ample reward for the most praise-loving person in the world.

They looked like anything rather than reputable employees as they appeared in the borrowed garments; but as Teddy said, they couldn't stay in the building until their clothes were dried, and it was absolutely necessary he should attend to his business.

Dan's duties necessitated his remaining near the creek; but Teddy was forced to go back to his cane-board, and the crowd which followed him was good evidence of the money he would make.

During two hours after he returned from this thrilling adventure the cane-board had more customers than could conveniently be attended to, and it is safe to say that he then handled a larger amount than he had ever before seen.

"At this rate it won't take long to square up things, and you shall have a fair portion of the profits, Tim," he said, when there was an opportunity for him to speak with his clerk without being overheard by the customers.

"It's a lucky thing for us that them boats were smashed," Tim said, devoutly, as he handed his employer half a dollar to change. "We might have stood here with our tongues hangin' out all day an' never seen a quarter of this money if you hadn't known how to swim."

"You are right to a certain extent; but I can't take all the credit of this spurt, because more than half the people are trying to get a cane for nothing."

"In the same way they thought to swindle Mr. Hazelton out of a watch," Tim replied, with a smile; "but we won't fight about what brings trade so long as it comes with the cash."

Up to this time Teddy had no very definite idea of how much money had been taken in, and he was thinking it would be a good idea to ascertain, when a gruff, familiar voice from the rear asked:

"Are the wages of sin as much as they should be?"

Turning quickly he saw Uncle Nathan, and replied:

"I don't know exactly what they should be; but, perhaps, you do."

"Whatever I may know now, I remember that it was not allowed I should insult my elders either by plainly spoken words or insinuations," the old man said, sternly.

"Neither would I have done such a thing if you had not given me the provocation; but when I promised to pay three dollars for the use of fifteen one week, you did not seem to think that amount would be the wages of sin."

"At the time I had no idea you would conspire with others to rob me of my hard-earned savings."

"You know very well, Uncle Nathan, that I haven't done any such thing. On the night your store was robbed I staid in the house, and hadn't left it when you came to tell us the news."

"Every person of your class has some such excuse ready in case of an emergency; but that kind of talk will not do with me. If you meant to do the square thing, why was I not told you lost the money I lent you?"

"Because I knew you would raise an awful row, thinking possibly it would not be paid back."

"Have I yet any assurance that it will be?" the old man asked, in a fury.

"Do you need it now?"

"I always need my own."

"And in this case, if I pay you at once, do you think it right to charge me three dollars for the use of fifteen lent two days ago?"

"That was what you promised, and the world gauges a man by the way he keeps his word."

"I owe the storekeeper in Waterville thirty dollars; but I told him you must be paid first, and so you shall."

"Then give me the money now," Uncle Nathan snarled.

"That is exactly what I am willing to do," Teddy replied, calmly; "but if you can't trust me I have reason to be suspicious of you, so give me a receipt for the amount, and the matter can be settled."

The old man literally glared at his nephew for an instant, and then, eager to have the cash in his possession, he wrote a receipt, handing it to the young fakir, as he said, angrily:

"Now, let me see if you can settle the bill."

Since the mishap on the creek, where Teddy had covered himself with glory, business had been so good that he had more than twice that amount, and, emptying the contents of his money bag on a board, he proceeded to select the required sum.

Uncle Nathan watched him jealously, his eyes twinkling enviously, and when the money was placed in his hand he counted it twice over before delivering up the written acknowledgment.

"Are you certain all this has been honestly earned, Teddy?" he asked, gravely.

"How else could I have got it?"

"There are many ways. While I would not be willing to take my oath to it, several of these ten-cent pieces look very much like those I lost night before last."

"Do you mean to say I had anything to do with robbing your store?" and now that this particular debt had been canceled Teddy felt very brave.

"I know that such an amount of money has not been earned honestly, and, what is more, my eyes have been opened to the character of your friends."

"If you mean Mr. Hazelton, he is as much your friend as mine, for you were with him all day Sunday."

"That is exactly who I do mean," Uncle Nathan replied, with provoking deliberation. "I have seen his method of doing business since I came into this fair, and know he is nothing more than a deliberate swindler."

"But one with whom you were perfectly willing to go into partnership," a voice in the rear of Teddy cried sharply, and the jewelry fakir stepped directly in front of Uncle Nathan. "I told you exactly how I worked, and you offered to put up even money with me, growing angry when I said you would be of no use in the business. If it is swindling, you were mighty eager to have a hand in the same business."

"I don't want to talk with you," Uncle Nathan said, as he put Teddy's eighteen dollars carefully in his pocket.

"Then why do you come around here trying to bully this boy? He had no idea of what I was going to do until he saw me work, while you understood the whole plan. Make any trouble for him, and I will get up here and tell every person who comes along that you wanted to be my partner."

"Do it," the old man said, angrily. "After having cheated so many people out of their money, who will believe a word you say?"

At the same time, however, Uncle Nathan took good care to leave this particular spot, and Hazelton stepped to the rear of the board where he could talk privately with Teddy.

CHAPTER X.

AN ENCOUNTER.

First of all, the jewelry fakir wanted to hear the particulars of the accident on the lake, and Teddy began by telling him the primary cause of the trouble.

"I reckon all three of us lost our heads when we saw that man; I know I did and we were so eager to get on shore that we paid no attention to anything else. Have you seen him?"

"Who? Long Jim? No; but the boys say he is here somewhere running the swinging ball game."

"What is that?"

"A wooden ball is swung on two short uprights about eight inches apart, and between them, in the center, stands a small peg. You pay ten cents for the privilege of swinging the ball, and if it hits the peg when it comes back after leaving your hand, you get a dollar."

"I should think that would be easy enough to do."

"Well, don't try it with such an idea or you'll go broke mighty quick. It looks simple; but it isn't accomplished very often."

"Have you done anything since I left here?"

"Yes, and scooped in as much as I had any right to expect. I don't want to spoil to-morrow's business, so sha'n't make another pitch, but will spend my time trying to find Jim."

"What good can that do?"

"I still count on making him give back your fifteen dollars, if nothing more. I reckon your Uncle Nathan won't try again to get a warrant out for us, and so I sha'n't bother my head about learning anything regarding the robbery."

"He'll make things just as disagreeable as he can; there's no question about that."

"Well, let him, and we'll see who comes out ahead. Trade is beginning to pick up, and you'd better attend to your customers."

Hazelton walked away, and from that moment until nearly nightfall Teddy had all the business both he and his clerk could attend to.

Nearly every one had something to say about the accident on the creek, and the young fakir was forced to tell the story over and over again, until he really got tired of repeating the details.

When nearly all of the visitors had left the grounds Teddy made up his cash account, and the sum total surprised both himself and Tim.

Including the amount paid Uncle Nathan he had taken in fifty-five dollars and twenty cents. Ten per cent. of this was paid to the clerk, and he found himself possessed of the magnificent sum of thirty-one dollars and seventy cents.

"At this rate we shall be rich before the end of the week," he said, in a tone of satisfaction.

"That's a fact; but it don't seem right for me to take so much," Tim replied, as he wrapped the five dollars and a half which had been given him in his handkerchief.

"That was the agreement, an' we'll stick to it."

"But when you promised ten cents on every dollar neither of us believed trade would be half so good."

"You're right; I thought if we got one-third as much business would be booming; but that has nothing to do with our bargain. You've hung right on here, without even stopping for anything to eat, an' are entitled to what you've been paid. Everybody says there'll be a bigger crowd to-morrow, an' so we stand a chance to make considerable more. Are you going home to-night, or do you count on staying here?"

"I've got to let the folks know where I am, for when I left it was allowed I'd be back by sunset. To-morrow I'll come prepared to stay the rest of the week."

"There'll be plenty of stages running, an' you can afford to ride both ways after this day's work. I want to send some of this money home to mother, for it ain't safe to carry so much around with me."

"Am I to take it?"

"Yes, an' you can tell her all that has happened. Ask her to come over Thursday, an' see for herself that we're getting rich."

Twenty-five dollars was tied in a bundle with many wrappings of paper, and Tim started off, looking almost afraid at being the custodian of so much wealth.

It was necessary Teddy should pack up his entire stock until next morning, and this he proceeded to do as soon as he was alone. Mr. Sweet had given him permission to bring his goods into the museum tent, and his only trouble was how everything could be carried without assistance. Before he was ready for departure, however, Sam came up, and the question of transportation was settled.

"Well, how do you feel now?" Teddy asked, cheerily, for the knowledge that he had already taken in nearly enough to pay his debts caused him to feel very jolly.

"I allers get the worst of everything," Sam replied, disconsolately. "You an' Dan made a big strike when you tumbled into the water, an' I've had a blowin' up; come mighty near losin' my job into the bargain."

"Why?"

"Cause the boss says that I was careless an' reckless, an' that I couldn't earn enough in a month to pay for the two boats I've smashed."

"Are they lost entirely?"

"No, of course not. We pulled 'em out a little while ago, an' it cost so very much to fix both. The folks in the other boat were as much to blame as me."

"They certainly were not keeping any better lookout, and, as a matter of fact, I suppose I'm more at fault than any one else, for if I hadn't sung out about the fakir it wouldn't have happened."

"That's what I told the boss; but he's chuck full of foolish talk about the bravery he says you an' Dan showed, an' is tryin' to get up what he calls a testimonial for you."

"A what?" Teddy cried, in surprise.

"I heard him say testimonial; but if you know what that means you can go to the head."

"I don't, and I hope it won't amount to anything. I've been paid enough for what was done by the boom it gave my business."

"Of course, you an' Dan are bound to have the best end of it."

"Why didn't you stop an' do the same thing?"

"Cause I had sense enough to look out for myself first."

"But you know how to swim."

"What of that? It's mighty risky catchin' hold of people in the water, an' I don't mean to take any chances. How much have you made to-day?"

When Teddy told him, the expert in rowing looked decidedly envious.

"You've got all that money in one day?"

"Yes; but I sent the most of it home to mother."

"It's funny what luck some folks have, when them as knows the business twice as well don't much more'n earn their salt," Sam said, as if to himself, and before he could continue Dan arrived.

He wore his own clothes, and carried those Teddy had left in the boat-house.

"These were dry, so I brought 'em up. You needn't carry back the ones you borrowed till to-morrow, so Sam's boss says."

Then Dan asked concerning business, and by the time all three had finished discussing this very important matter the knives and canes were packed ready for removal.

Each boy took a load, carried it to the tent where Mr. Sweet was figuring up his receipts for the day, and then went to supper, returning half an hour later so tired that there was no desire on the part of either to do anything other than sleep.

The proprietor of the museum was in very good spirits. He had taken in one hundred and six dollars and eighty cents, and said, in a tone of satisfaction:

"I reckon this fair will pan out all right. Trade is bound to be better to-morrow, and Thursday is always the biggest of the week. I hear you boys have been distinguishing yourselves. Tell me about it."

Dan related the incident of the day very modestly, interrupted now and then by Sam, who was eager to pose as a hero also, and Mr. Sweet expressed himself as being well satisfied with their behavior.

"Chasing a thief and getting a whipping in the night, and then saving the lives of three people the next day is record enough for one week, so you'd better not try for any more adventures," he said, with a laugh.

Now that the incident of the previous night had been spoken of so openly, it was necessary Sam's curiosity should be satisfied, and Dan was forced to tell the story.

While he was doing so, and listening to the oarsman's comments, Teddy had an opportunity to see the "barker" and clown who arrived that morning. Neither was a very prepossessing-looking man. They were lying on the ground some distance from the boys, as if bent on minding their own business, and there was no real reason for an unfavorable opinion concerning them.

But little time was spent in conversation on this evening. Every one was thoroughly tired, and each sought for a soft spot on which to pass the night.

As before, Sam crawled up on the wagon to be out of harm's way when the goat should be unfastened, while Dan and Teddy lay down in very nearly the same place as before.

"I don't fancy we shall hear many secrets between now and morning, no matter how many men come around here to talk," the former said, laughingly. "It won't take me two minutes to fall asleep, and the noise that can awaken me then will have to be very great."

Teddy's only reply was a yawn, and in even less time than Dan had mentioned he was wrapped in slumber.

Shortly after the proprietor of the exhibition began to make his preparations for retiring, and the clown asked:

"How did that row start this afternoon?"

"Half a dozen of the village toughs tried to get in without paying, and I had to polish one of 'em off," the barker replied.

"You must have done it pretty quick, for when I got out there the thing was over," Mr. Sweet said.

"The fellow was more than half-drunk, an' it wasn't a very big job. They threaten to come back and clean the whole show out."

"Yes, I've heard such threats made before; but never lost much sleep worrying about it."

Ten minutes later all the human occupants of the tent were enjoying a well-earned rest, and the goat had about concluded it would be a profitless job to prospect for anything more to eat, when the sound of footsteps could have been heard from the outside.

Had Mr. Sweet been awake he would have decided that these late visitors were trying to find the flap of the tent, for they walked cautiously around the canvas twice, and then a sharp knife was thrust through the fabric.

An instant later Sam awoke his companion with a yell that would have done credit to any Indian.

Some one had given him such a blow as sent him from the seat to the ground, and the remainder of the party leaped to their feet only to be confronted by a large party of half-drunken toughs who had come to avenge the insult received during the afternoon.

CHAPTER XI.

LONG JIM.

Teddy's first thought when he was awakened by Sam's yells was that the officers of the law were coming to arrest him for the robbery committed at Uncle Nathan's store; but in a very few seconds he understood that this was not the case.

He and Dan had been sleeping some distance from the remainder of the company; therefore, when the hand-to-hand struggle began they were out of it entirely, and owing to the darkness could not be seen by the assailants; but Sam's cries served to show the mob where he was, and one after another pounded him when they failed to find any of the other occupants.

While one might have counted twenty Teddy and Dan stood motionless, undecided as to what should be done, while the din caused by the combatants and the screaming boy were almost deafening, and then the latter said:

"We've got to take a hand in this row, Teddy. Mr. Sweet has given us the chance to sleep here, and the least we can do is to help as much as possible, for it appears to me that his men are getting the worst of it."

A broken tent-peg was lying on the ground near at hand, and Dan added, as he seized it:

"Try to light one of the lanterns so we can see which is an enemy, and then sail in."

It seemed to Teddy as if he would never be able to follow these instructions. He had plenty of matches; but in his excitement one after another was extinguished until he fancied half an hour must have elapsed before the wick was ignited.

The faint glow of light served to show one of the intruders Teddy's form, and the latter had but just succeeded in hanging the lantern on the center-pole when it became necessary to defend himself.

The drunken bully made a lunge at him, which he managed to avoid by jumping aside, and in another instant he had seized the man by the waist, doing his best to throw him.

From this moment Teddy knew nothing more of the row than that portion in which he was immediately concerned. He was able to prevent the man from striking by hugging close to his body, and the two swayed here and there in the effort to gain the mastery. Now and then they came in contact with the other combatants, one or both receiving a chance blow, but no especial injury was done to either.

Had the man been sober, Teddy must have been overcome in a very short time; but as he was far from being steady on his feet the odds were about even, and the boy succeeded in holding his own until the others had retreated or been so disabled that it was no longer possible for them to continue the assault.

Fully thirty minutes had elapsed from the time Sam first sounded the alarm before the occupants of the tent could count themselves as victors, and then Mr. Sweet and the clown pulled Teddy's adversary away, throwing him bodily out of the tent after administering summary punishment.

During all this time the other exhibitors who intended to sleep on the grounds had been gathering around the canvas, but no one cared to risk his precious body by entering until it was certain the battle had been ended.

Then the tent was filled with sympathizing friends, who endeavored to ascertain the amount of injury done, but were interrupted in the work by the proprietor, who cried, angrily:

"Clear out of here, every mother's son! You didn't dare to come in when it would have been possible to help us, and there's no need of you now. We were attacked by a crowd of men from the town, who proposed to clean the show out because we wouldn't let them in free, and that's all there is to it."

Not until the last visitor had unwillingly departed did the little party pay any attention to their wounds, and then the result of the engagement was ascertained.

The barker had a broken nose, but it would not prevent him from doing a full share of talking on the following day. The clown's eye looked rather bad, and Mr. Sweet's cheek had been cut, but these were only trifling mishaps. Teddy had come out of the affray comparatively uninjured; Dan showed nothing worse than a bruise under the left ear, and while Sam appeared to be unscathed, he declared that he had been pounded until every inch of his body felt like jelly.

"You squealed fairly well for a fellow who was so badly done up," Mr. Sweet said, with a laugh, as he proceeded to dress the barker's wounded nose, "and I reckon you'll be all right by morning. Light some of the other lanterns so I can

see what I'm about, and during the remainder of the night we'll stand guard, for no one can say how soon those scoundrels may attempt to pay us a second visit, although I think they had a full dose this time."

How the assailants had fared no one was able to form a very good opinion. The general belief among the occupants of the tent, however, was that they had received such severe punishment that there would be no further attack on this night, at least.

When the wounds had been dressed, Mr. Sweet said, as he took up a position near the flap:

"You fellows had better try to go to sleep now. I'll keep awake for a while, and then call some one to relieve me. Dan, can't you borrow one of those queer-looking rifles you are exhibiting, and bring it with you to-morrow night?"

"I might get the one I use for shooting at a target; but you wouldn't think of trying to kill a man, would you, Mr. Sweet?"

"I could do a good deal toward scaring them, and if a crowd insisted on forcing an entrance, I'd take mighty good care that one would carry away a bullet to remember me by."

"I'll bring the rifle," Dan replied, and Teddy whispered:

"When I came here to run a cane-board I didn't count on being obliged to do any fighting."

"I don't reckon there'll be much more here. The managers of the fair will see to it that those fellows are put where they can't do any additional mischief, for the exhibitors must be protected, and we shall be safe enough, except something else comes up to make a row."

Then the sore, tired party lay down in search of slumber once more, and, strange as it may seem after the exciting events, all save the sentinel were soon wrapped again in slumber.

Each in turn was aroused to do his share of guard duty before morning came; but no enemy appeared, and at sunrise the three boys went across the grounds to the boarding-house, where, as Dan said: "The price was twice as big as the breakfast."

Teddy had his place of business ready for the reception of customers before the first stage-load of visitors arrived, and when Tim came he had already taken in nearly a dollar.

"What's the news?" he asked, as the clerk appeared, looking radiant and happy at the thought of earning as much money as on the previous day.

"Your mother was pretty nigh wild when I told her what we took in yesterday, an' says she'll be here sure on Thursday. There's no more news of your Uncle Nathan's goods, an' he's still tryin' to have you arrested; but your mother says not to be afraid, 'cause she has talked with a lawyer, an' don't think there'll be any trouble. I told the folks at home that the old skinflint made you pay three dollars interest on the money what was stole, an' everybody in town will know it before night."

Tim was forced to stop his story to wait upon a party of young gentlemen who were eager to get dollar canes for five cents, and the booths adjoining Teddy's place of business had not yet been opened when he announced that there were four dollars in the money box.

"We're bound to have a big day," Tim said, confidently. "The band from the Run is comin' over this mornin', an' if the city people hear about it you bet they'll jest crowd in to hear the music. There'll be [---] of the boys to see you, but take my advice an' don't let 'em have any rings on credit, for I wouldn't trust the best of the whole lot at fair time. I'm goin' to stay till Friday; do you s'pose that man will let me sleep in his tent with you fellers?"

Teddy promised to inquire, and then advised Tim to have a look at the grounds before business began to be rushing, and the clerk was glad to take advantage of the proposition.

He started off with the air of one who owned the entire inclosure, and was hardly lost to view amid the fast-gathering throng when Teddy was literally dazed by seeing Long Jim, the very man who had robbed him in Waterville, lounging along toward his stand.

Not until the fakir stood directly in front of the boy did he appear to recognize him, and then he would have turned quickly away but for the latter's cry:

"Somebody hold that man till I get a constable! He stole my money."

Realizing that a flight across the grounds with hundreds of men and boys crying "Stop thief!" in full pursuit would be

disastrous, Long Jim turned to face his young accuser.

"What do you mean by saying such a thing?" he asked, angrily. "If you wasn't so small I'd make you eat the words."

"I was big enough for you to steal from, and I want my money."

It was only natural that a crowd should gather after such an accusation, and Long Jim looked around for some means of escape, but, realizing that he could not well get away while so many were near, he stepped close to Teddy, as he whispered:

"If you say another word I'll smash your face, you young whelp! Hold your tongue if you want to leave here alive."

"I'll say exactly what's true. Give me my money, or I'll find some one to have you arrested!"

"The boy is a liar, and, what is more, has just robbed his uncle's store, if what they say over at the Run be true," the fakir said, excitedly, as he turned to face the crowd. "I don't want to hurt him; but I won't be insulted by a thief, so the best thing for me to do is to leave."

Saying this, he walked deliberately away, and the curious ones, who a moment previous had been friendly to Teddy, began to sympathize with the man.

"Don't let him off!" the boy cried, starting to follow, and then remembering that he would be forced to leave his wares at the mercy of the crowd, turned back, while Long Jim continued straight across the grounds unmolested.

"It looks like it was a case of the pot calling the kettle black," an old farmer said, and his immediate circle of friends laughed heartily, while the younger portion of the crowd gazed earnestly at Teddy, believing they saw before them a fullfledged burglar.

CHAPTER XII.

A DISCOVERY.

With feelings of mingled anger, vexation and disappointment, Teddy stood silent and motionless for several moments after Long Jim disappeared, striving to keep the tears from his eyes.

It seemed hard enough to be swindled out of fifteen dollars, but to be held up as a thief by the very man who had done him the wrong, and to be stared at as a criminal by the curious, was an aggravation of misfortune.

Just for one instant he made up his mind to tell the whole story to the bystanders, but before there was time for him to speak he realized that many of them would think he was trying to shield himself by an untruth against just accusations, therefore he remained quiet, not making the slightest effort to influence trade.

Fortunately he was soon aroused from this very disagreeable frame of mind by a very pleasing incident.

The band from the Run arrived, and to the young fakir's surprise marched directly to his booth, the leader saying, in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard by every one in the immediate vicinity as the musicians halted about ten feet away:

"We have been hired to play on the grounds to-day, Teddy, and left home half an hour earlier than the specified time for the sole purpose of giving you a serenade to show that, whatever your uncle may say, the folks at the Run are positive there isn't a shadow of truth in his ridiculous story. We know what you are working for, and intend to help you along as much as possible."

Then the musicians began to play, while, as a matter of course, every one who came up wanted to know why the band was there instead of on the stand built for its especial accommodation, and there were people enough who had heard the leader's remarks to explain matters to the newcomers.

The immediate result was that instead of believing him to be a burglar, the same ones who fancied a few moments previous that he looked guilty, were now quite positive he was a victim.

Tim arrived while the serenade was in progress, and when Teddy explained the situation, he exclaimed, gleefully:

"Well, by jinks! This jest knocks the spots outer everything! Trade will hum after this, or I'm a duffer."

And the clerk's prediction was verified in a very short time.

When the musicians had concluded the concert they laid aside their instruments, and during the next ten minutes every man of them threw rings at the canes or knives so rapidly that both Teddy and his assistant had all they could do to wait upon the throng.

Then, giving the signal for the march to be resumed, the leader said to the young fakir:

"Don't get discouraged, my boy, no matter what happens. If you have any trouble it can't last long, for you've plenty of friends at the Run, and after what happened here yesterday there should be a good many on the grounds."

The kind-hearted musicians marched away without giving Teddy an opportunity to thank them, and as if to atone for their previously spoken harsh words the bystanders devoted themselves with unusual zest to the task of winning a cane worth a dollar by an outlay of five cents.

It was nearly an hour before trade began to grow dull again, and both the boys were quite willing to rest a few moments.

"At this rate we stand a chance of getting rich before the fair closes," Teddy exclaimed, in a tone of satisfaction. "I wonder what Uncle Nathan would have said if he'd been here to hear the leader?"

"I'll tell you," a disagreeable but familiar sounding voice replied from the rear of the stand where its owner had been concealed by an adjoining booth, and Nathan Hargreaves stalked into view with a comically tragic air. "Things have come to a pretty pass when a man's own relations, an' them as he has set up in business with his own hard-earned money, try to bring scorn and reproach upon him. You are a snake in the grass, Teddy Hargreaves, an' not content with helpin' rob me, concoct such a disgraceful scene as I have jest witnessed."

"What could I have had to do with it?" Teddy cried, in surprise. "I didn't know they were going to give me a lift."

"Of course you did; I ain't blind if I am such a fool as to put you in the way of makin' so much money. There wasn't a

man in that band who'd have countenanced the speech the leader made if you hadn't been workin' on their sympathies. But your race won't be much longer. Don't think that I've stopped all proceedings, for it may be that you're shoved into jail this very day unless you make a clean breast of the whole thing."

"I've got nothing to tell simply because I don't know anything; but I believe the same man who took my fifteen dollars robbed your store. Dan and I heard him and another fellow talking, and in trying to find out something for your benefit got knocked down."

"What did they say? Who are they?" the old man asked, eagerly, his bearing toward Teddy changing very suddenly. "Tell me! Tell your poor, old uncle, who'll be mighty near the poor-house, if he don't get his own again."

This appeal touched Teddy's heart immediately, but Tim said, half to himself, taking good care Uncle Nathan should hear him, however:

"More'n a hundred robberies like that wouldn't make him poor. Why, down at the Run folks say you'd hardly miss what's been taken."

"Those who make that kind of talk are only shiftless people with never a dollar of their own, consequently they don't know the value of one," the old man cried, angrily. "It's all very well for a set of loafers who are mad with me because I wouldn't give them credit to say such things. Do you suppose I'd spend my time runnin' around the country huntin' for the thieves if I hadn't lost a power of money?"

"You'd be willin' to run pretty far if there was a nickel at the end of the road," Tim retorted, but before he could say anything more Teddy motioned for him to be silent.

"Are you goin' to tell me who the robbers are?" Uncle Nathan asked, in a wheedling tone, as he turned once more toward his nephew.

"I don't know the men whom I suspect, except by sight, but it's more than possible we may find out enough to warrant their arrest before the fair closes."

The old man insisted on knowing at once, and alternately coaxed and threatened, but all to no purpose.

Teddy positively refused to make a statement until he had more proof, and recognizing the fact that he might hurt his own cause by insisting, Uncle Nathan said, in a most affectionate tone:

"I must go now, Teddy, but I'll see you again before night. If you'll do all you can to help find them scoundrels I'll never say that you had anything to do with the crime."

"You'd no business to make any such talk, for you knew it was impossible for me to take any hand in it, even if I'd wanted to be a thief."

"There's a good deal of circumstantial evidence," the old man said, solemnly, as he turned to leave, "an' it stands you in hand to do all a boy can to clear your own skirts. I'm goin' to give you a chance, an' promise there won't be any arrest made to-day at all events."

"There's a good reason why you promise that," Tim cried, angrily, as Uncle Nathan walked away. "You tried mighty hard, but couldn't get a warrant, an' there ain't a justice of the peace between here an' Waterville as would grant one without any other evidence than what you can say."

"Don't make him angry, Tim. He's feeling bad about his money, an' you can't blame him for trying to find out who has got it."

"I don't blame him for that, but what I'm kickin' about is that he keeps naggin' at you when there's no reason for it."

"Most likely he thinks there is."

"He can't; it's only the wretched old skinflint's way of gettin' even with the world, an' so he picks on a feller what he believes can't strike back."

"I wish I could find out who the robbers are, and where the goods have been hidden."

"Well, I don't. It serves him right to lose 'em, an'---- Hello! here comes that feller what helps exhibit the rifles! I wonder what he wants at this time of day, jest when business is beginnin' to be rushin'!"

Dan was evidently in a high state of excitement, for he forced his way through the crowds, regardless of possible injury to himself or others, and did not slacken speed until he stood in front of the cane-board, breathless and panting.

"What's up?" Teddy asked, in surprise.

"The fakir who got your money, an' another man, who I think is the same one we heard talkin' outside the tent, have jest bought a boat from the Davis Company. Sam saw 'em, an' ran over to tell me while the bargain was bein' made. He's watchin' down there till we can get back."

"I don't believe it would do any good for me to say another word to Long Jim. He went past here this mornin', an' I only made a bad matter worse by trying to make him give back what he stole."

"We ain't countin' on doin' that, but I believe they're gettin' ready to cart away the goods what were stole from your Uncle Nathan. Perhaps we can foller without bein' seen, an' get on to the whole snap. Could you get off for the balance of the day?"

And now Teddy was quite as excited as Dan.

"Yes, an' so can Sam."

"Are you goin' to help find his goods after all that old duffer has threatened?" Tim asked, impatiently.

"I'll do what I can," was the decided reply. "Do you think you will be able to get along alone to-day?"

"I could do it easy enough by hirin' a boy to pick up the rings, but I hate to see you make a fool of yourself, Teddy."

"You'll think different later. Come on, Dan. I'll be back as soon as I can, Tim," and then the young fakir urged his friend in the direction of the creek.

"It won't do to go anywhere near the boat-house," Dan said. "Sam is up the bank a long piece where the willows hide him. He's keepin' his eye on the craft they bought, so it can't be taken away without his seein' it."

By mingling with the crowd it was possible to make their way to the desired spot without being seen, save by those with whom they came into immediate contact, and in a few moments the watcher was joined by his friends.

"Now I want you fellers to let me manage this case," Sam said, pompously. "I know more 'bout detective business than both of you put together, an' if you'd only told me what was up the other night we'd had the whole thing settled."

"Have you seen the men?" Dan asked, impatiently.

"Lots of times. The old fakir is loafin' around close by the landin', an' the other one must 'a gone off for somethin'. The Davis Company told me I could take any of the boats, an' the minute the thieves start we'll jump right on their trail."

CHAPTER XIII.

AMATEUR DETECTIVES.

It was fated that the thrilling work of running down and capturing the thieves should not be begun until after considerable delay.

"Now, I wonder what he is up to?" Dan said, when it was no longer possible to see the supposed burglar.

"Why is it that you can't let me do this thing?" Sam asked, angrily. "If you keep meddlin' we'll never fix matters."

"I don't see that I'm interfering," Dan replied, in surprise.

The three boys watched this one particular boat in silence for ten minutes or more, seeing Long Jim now and then, and just as they believed he was about to step on board the man walked toward the exhibition buildings, and was soon lost to view amid the throng of people.

"You was gettin' ready, too, I could tell that by your eye."

"I'll have to give in that you're the smartest feller in this section of the country, Sam, an' that's a fact."

"Of course it is," the amateur detective replied, complacently, thinking Dan's sarcasm was really praise. "If I have my own way I can turn up the biggest thief that ever walked on two legs; but you mustn't bother me, or things may go wrong."

If the matter had not been so serious to him Teddy would have laughed long and often at the dignity and superior knowledge assumed by this fellow, who, since he made his acquaintance, had done nothing more difficult than to get himself into trouble; but, under the circumstances, he was so deeply interested in the outcome of the business that there was no room in his mind for mirth.

"Dan," he said, "let you and I walk around two or three minutes. We'll stay close by so that Sam can give us the signal in case the men show up, and we may find Hazelton."

"Don't tell him what we're doin'," the amateur detective cried, sharply.

"Why not?"

"Cause it's likely he'll want to meddle with our business, an' then my work will be spoiled."

"I won't say a word to him until after seeing you again," Teddy replied as he led Dan away, and added when they were where it would be impossible for Sam to hear them: "See here, it's foolish for us to think of trying to follow those men if he's to be allowed to make a fool of himself. With him believing he's the greatest detective in the country, something wrong is sure to happen, an' we may never get another chance of finding out about the burglary."

"Don't fret about that," Dan replied, confidently. "It won't do any harm to let him swell a little now while he's keeping watch; but when the real work begins it won't take long to sit on him."

"Then there will be a row."

"I'll attend to his case; but I don't think there'll be anything for us to do yet awhile. The men are evidently in no hurry to leave, and most likely intend to wait till the crowd begins to go."

"Then why should all three of us stay on watch?"

"We won't. Go back to your cane-board, and I'll tell Sam to come for you when the burglars put in an appearance. He'll have time to do that, an' while he's gettin' a boat ready you can come for me."

"Will it be safe to trust him?"

"Yes, indeed," Dan replied, with a laugh. "He's havin' an awful good time thinkin' he's the greatest detective in the world, and couldn't be hired to leave that clump of willows so long as the men keep out of sight."

Teddy was not so confident, and insisted on going back with Dan while the arrangement was made.

When the matter was explained Sam appeared to be perfectly satisfied.

"That's all right," he said, readily. "I can see to this thing alone; but I'll let you fellers know the minute anything

happens. Don't tell any of the constables what I'm up to, or they'll want to have a finger in the pie."

Convinced that he would be informed of any change in the situation, Teddy returned to the cane-board just in time to aid Tim in attending to a rush of customers who were spending their money liberally.

"What made you come back?" the clerk asked, in surprise. "I've hired a feller for a quarter to pick up rings, an' am gettin' along first rate."

Teddy briefly explained the condition of affairs, and then there was little opportunity for conversation until considerably past noon, when trade dropped off very decidedly for a while.

In order that he might have a glimpse of the other fakirs and rest himself at the same time, Tim was sent to see if Sam was yet at his self-selected post of duty, and Teddy took advantage of the opportunity to ascertain the amount of his receipts.

To his great surprise he found nearly forty dollars in the money-box, and from this he took thirty with which to pay the merchant in Waterville who had given him credit for his stock.

"It has turned out to be a mighty good venture, even if Aunt Sarah was so sure I'd make a fool of myself by tryin' it. All the money I make now will be clear profit, and it looks as if I'd be able to help mother quite a bit."



"They're getting ready to start!" he said, breathlessly.

"Well, how is business?" a voice asked, in a cheery tone, and, looking up, Teddy saw his sole remaining creditor.

"I'm glad you've come," he cried, bundling the thirty dollars up in a piece of paper. "I'd jest counted this out for you, an' when you take it I'll be free from debt."

"But I don't want the money," the merchant replied. "I only came around to see if you were successful."

"I've already made more than I reckoned on, an' it'll be a favor if you take this, 'cause I don't like to have so much around."

Then Teddy explained the condition of his business affairs, not forgetting to tell of the accusation made against him by his Uncle Nathan, and the merchant said, as he concluded:

"I heard the whole story, my boy, and have already talked with Mr. Hargreaves, whom I met a few moments ago. I do not think he can do anything to you, because you have made many friends here. The money I will take, as it is not well to keep it where it might be stolen; but can give you no receipt until I get home."

"That'll be all right," Teddy replied, contentedly; "you trusted me with the goods, an' it would be funny if I couldn't wait for a receipted bill. It's through you that I've had the chance to make so much, an' I want you to know I feel grateful."

"I believe that, and am more than pleased to have put you in the way of getting a start in the world. Come to see me when the fair closes, and it is possible I may show you an opportunity of learning to be a merchant on a large scale, rather than a fakir whose method of getting a living is very precarious, regardless of the fact that he sometimes makes very great profits."

It can be readily understood that Teddy accepted the invitation, and then, trade commencing once more, the gentleman walked away, leaving the proprietor of the cane-board with the pleasing consciousness that he was free from debt, and with quite a large amount of money in his mother's keeping.

Tim returned very shortly after the merchant's departure, and reported that Sam was still on duty.

"The boat hasn't been moved nor have the men showed up again," he said. "That feller acts as if he thought he was bigger than the President. He told me he could be the greatest detective that ever lived if it wasn't that folks made him show off at rowin' 'cause he had so much style about him. I don't think he's so very wonderful; but, of course, I never saw many out an' out detectives."

"And you don't see one when you met him. I'm sure he'll get Dan an' me in trouble before this thing is ended."

"Then why don't you let him go off alone? That's what I'd do with such a chump."

"I can't, because----"

The sentence was not concluded, for at that moment Dan came up at full speed.

"They're gettin' ready to start!" he said, breathlessly. "I saw 'em go by the buildin', an' run over to tell Sam that I'd fetch you. Our boat is a long distance up the creek, an' we'll have to hurry, or run the chance of missing their craft."

There was no delay on Teddy's part, despite the misgivings he had regarding Sam.

One parting injunction to Tim on the subject of business, and then he followed Dan at full speed toward the creek on such a course as would bring them fully a quarter of a mile above the boat-house outside the fair grounds.

Sam had made everything ready for the journey by the time they arrived, and was so excited that he could no longer speak of his own wonderful powers as a thief-catcher.

"One of you fellers had better row while I steer," he said, seating himself in the stern sheets and taking the tiller-ropes. "If they see the way I handle the oars they'll know exactly who's after them, an' then the game'll be up."

"Don't worry yourself about that," Dan replied, calmly. "Neither Teddy nor I knows anything about a boat, except it may be to steer, so you'll have to hump yourself."

Sam grumbled considerably about taking so many risks; but he finally moved over to the bow and his companions took their seats aft.

"I won't put any style to it, an', perhaps, that'll keep 'em from knowin' I'm on their trail," he said, and immediately began rowing in such a bungling fashion that Dan said, sharply:

"Look here, if you're goin' to pull this boat, do it, or we'll go back. At this rate, you'll have everybody at the fair watching to see what kind of chumps have been allowed to risk their lives. We've got no time to spare, either; for we must get on the other side of the creek where it will be possible to watch the men without getting too near."

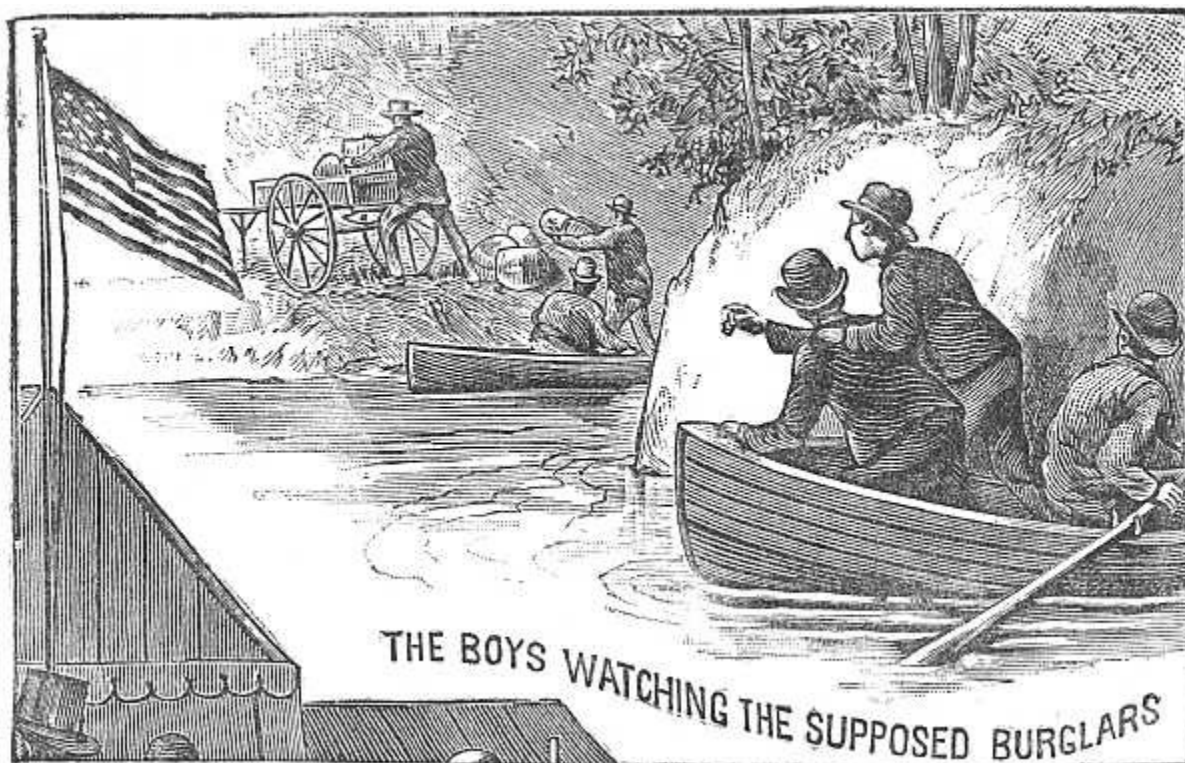
"I'll take care of that part of the business," Sam replied, loftily, and Dan immediately put into operation his plan of "sitting" on the amateur detective.

"You do your share, and that will be enough. Teddy and I propose to take a hand in this ourselves."

"Then I might as well go back."

"You can, if you want to."

It so chanced that he had no such desire, and with the air of one whose feelings have been deeply wounded he rowed steadily on, Dan steering, until they were where it was possible to have a full view of a long stretch of the creek.



THE BOYS WATCHING THE SUPPOSED BURGLARS

"There they are!" Teddy said.

"There they are!" Teddy said, pointing down stream to where a boat was being pulled close to the left bank. "They have stopped, and it looks as if something was being taken on board!"

"It is a portion of the goods they stole!" Dan cried. "Stop rowing, Sam, and if nothing happens we'll soon know where the whole lot is to be hidden."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

That Dan's surmise was correct could be seen a few moments after, while the boys, partially concealed by the overhanging bank, watched the proceedings with but little danger of being discovered.

On the shore were a number of packages in a cart, and these the supposed burglars loaded into the boat with the utmost haste.

If this lot comprised all that had been taken from Uncle Nathan his loss must have been greater than he stated, and Teddy said, after watching several moments in silence:

"I reckon this is only part of what they took; but I'm puzzled to know how it could have been brought so far. The idea of carting goods over here to find a place in which to hide them is a queer one, when all the thieves had to do was slip down the river in a skiff, an' before morning they'd be beyond reach of the officers."

It surely was strange that the men should have done so much useless labor, and the only solution to the apparent mystery was offered by Sam, who said, with an air of superior wisdom:

"They've done it to throw me off the scent. That fakir we saw in Waterville must have known who I was."

"How does it happen he had the nerve to come here when he knew you counted on showing the people who visited this fair your skill in rowing?" Dan asked, with a laugh.

"I reckon he didn't think I was tellin' the truth."

It was useless to attempt to make Sam acquainted with himself. He had such a remarkable idea of his own abilities, despite the scrapes he was constantly getting into, that the most eloquent orator would have been unable to convince him he was anything more than a very egotistical boy, with little save his vanity to recommend him to the notice of the general public.

In five minutes the boat at the opposite bank had received as much of a cargo as her owners wished to carry, and then the men began to row leisurely down the river.

"Now, go slow, Sam, and don't turn around to look, or they may suspect we are following them," Dan said, warningly. "I'll keep you posted about what they are doing, and you can tell us afterward what ought to have been done. Pull moderately, for we don't want to get very near while it is light enough for them to see us."

The chase was not a long one. By keeping the boat's head to the bank and moving leisurely as boys who were bent only on pleasure might have done, the pursuers evidently caused no suspicions as to their purpose, and after about a mile had been traversed the burglars turned up a narrow waterway which led to a barn or shed built on the meadows for the storing of marsh hay.

There were plenty of ditches near at hand into which the amateur detectives could run their craft unobserved, and as the pursued left the creek Dan steered into one of these.

Here their heads hardly came above the bank, and all three could see the men carrying their cargo to the building.

"We've got 'em now," said Sam, triumphantly, as the first of the packages was taken on shore, "an' the sooner we nab both the better."

"How do you intend to set about such a job?" Teddy asked.

"Go right up an' tell 'em we've been on their track."

"And in less than two minutes you would get a worse pounding than the toughs gave you last night."

Sam appeared to realize the truth of this statement, for he had no further suggestions to offer, and Dan said, after some reflection:

"I think the best thing we can do will be to go back to the fair. If those fellows find us here the jig will be up; but it isn't likely they've got the whole of their plunder with them, and intend to come here again. We'll talk with some one and find out a good plan, or keep our eyes peeled to learn what they mean to do with the goods. If they propose simply to hide them until there is a chance to get the lot away safely, we shall have the key to the situation an' can take plenty of time

deciding what should be done."

Sam did not again propose to make any attempt at intimidating the men, and Teddy thought Dan's scheme a wise one.

"They'll come here more than once before the week is ended; you know they spoke of moving the stuff when the exhibitors got ready to leave, an' we'd better go back to the grounds before those fellows have finished their work."

Sam pulled out of the water-course into the creek without a murmur; but when they were on the way back, and he felt at liberty to display his true "style," courage returned.

"I knew you fellers wasn't any good on detective work," he said, scornfully. "If I'd had charge of the case we should have them men tied hand an' foot in the bottom of this boat."

"How would you have got 'em there?" Dan asked.

"That's my business. Jest because I've let you into this thing there's no reason why I should give all my secrets away, is there?"

"Not a bit of it, an' you keep them locked up in your heart, for if Teddy an' I knew the plans we might get into a bad scrape."

"Well, what are you goin' to do now?"

"Nothing until after we have talked with those who know more than we do about such things."

Sam immediately relapsed into silence. His superior knowledge had been scorned, and he proposed to let his companions understand that he was not pleased with them.

By the time the boys reached the bend in the creek they could see the boat in which were Long Jim and his companion, half a mile behind, and Dan said:

"Those fellows don't know me. When we land you and Sam had better keep out of sight, while I try to find out where they go after striking the fair ground."

"All right. It's time I helped Tim, an' you'll come to the cane-board if there is anything to tell."

"So I don't amount to anything, eh?" Sam asked, sulkily.

"Of course you do; but it would be foolish to make a show of yourself to Long Jim, who would remember you. Keep rowing around in the boat as if you were at work, and there'll be no chance for suspicion."

By this time the little craft was at the landing stage of the boat-house, and two of the party leaped out, leaving the third feeling that he had been unjustly deprived of a very large portion of his rights.

"If them fellers think they're goin' to get the best of me they're makin' a big mistake, an' I'll show 'em so before night. They don't know any more about bein' detectives than a cat; but both will be mightily surprised before mornin', or I'm mistaken."

Then, instead of rowing around the creek as Dan had suggested, Sam pulled out into the middle of the stream, looking wondrous wise and determined as he awaited the coming of those whose secret he had partially discovered.

Meanwhile Teddy and Dan, without the slightest suspicion of what their friend proposed to do, separated at the landing stage, the former making all haste to reach his cane-board, where he found Tim doing a thriving business, and standing near by was Hazelton.

"Where have you been?" the jewelry fakir asked, solicitously. "I've come here two or three times without finding you, and had almost begun to believe old Nathan succeeded in getting a warrant."

Teddy was undecided as to whether he should tell this acquaintance of all he had seen or not; but, after some deliberation, and in view of the fact that he also had been accused of the burglary, concluded to do so.

"We've found out where Long Jim is hiding the stuff he stole from my uncle," he said, and then explained what had been done during the last hour.

Hazelton was surprised that so much information had been gained; but he was able to cause Teddy an equal amount of astonishment.

"I don't believe the packages you saw came from the old man's store. I heard, about two hours ago, that a store here in

town was robbed last night, and it isn't dead sure, after your uncle's accusations, and what I have done on the fair grounds, that I sha'n't be arrested on suspicion. Most likely the goods taken down the creek were stolen here; but I don't understand why those fellows should work so boldly."

"Probably they think, as one of them said the other night, while so many articles are being carried to and fro."

"Very likely that may be true, and now comes the question of what shall be done regarding the information you have gained. I stand in a mighty delicate position, and, quite naturally, want to save myself, if possible, for even an arrest when there is little or no proof, ain't to be contemplated calmly."

"You ought to know better than I how we should go to work. Dan an' I thought there would be plenty of time, for if those fellows were going to skip very soon they wouldn't have taken the trouble to carry the stuff down there, where it could not be gotten away quickly."

"I'll think the matter over, Teddy, and come back here in a couple of hours," Hazelton said, after a moment's thought.

"Don't tell anyone what you found out until after seeing me again."

This conversation had been carried on at the rear of the cane-board, where the customers could not overhear it, and when the jewelry fakir walked toward the exhibition building it was necessary to satisfy Tim's curiosity regarding what had been accomplished.

"I don't s'pose it's any of my business," the latter said, when Teddy concluded the story; "but I wouldn't be afraid to bet all I shall earn this week that you'll have trouble with that feller before the scrape is over. He knows so awful much that somethin' tough is bound to happen."

Teddy did not think there was any good cause for alarm, more especially since he felt confident Dan would keep an eye on the oarsman, and during the next two hours he thought of nothing save earning money, for customers were plenty, and even with the assistance of the boy Tim had engaged it was all he and his clerk could do to wait upon those who were anxious to win a cane or knife.

Now and then some of the other fakirs would visit him; but, as a rule, all were so busy that there was little time for the exchange of compliments, and even the cry of "Three rings for five cents, with the chance to get a dollar cane or knife for nothing!" was not needed to stimulate trade.

It was two hours from the time of his return when Dan came up looking decidedly uneasy, and Teddy did not stop to make change for the man who had just patronized him, before he asked, hurriedly:

"Now, what's up?"

"Sam is missing."

"What do you mean? How can that be?"

"He was to row around the creek near the landing; but for the last hour no one has seen him, and, what is more, the boat can't be found. Long Jim an' his friend haven't come ashore, as near as I can make out, an' it looks to me as if that foolish Sam has got into trouble through trying to play detective."

CHAPTER XV.

SAM'S ADVENTURES.

In order to explain Sam's absence, and one or two other incidents in their regular sequence, it is necessary to go back to the moment when, his friends having landed, the amateur detective was left to his own devices.

His first impulse was to report his arrival to the manager of the boat exhibit, and then go about his routine duties, but before this very proper plan could be carried into effect he chanced to see Hazelton on the shore.

"Now, what's he layin' around there for?" Sam asked of himself. "I'll bet Dan or Teddy has given the whole snap away, an' he's come to pull in the burglars. It's a mighty mean trick for them to play after I've worked the case so far that there's nothing to do but nab 'em. He'll get all the praise, an' folks won't know the job was managed by me."

The longer Sam thought of this apparent ingratitude and treachery on the part of Teddy and Dan the more angry he grew, and it did not require many moments' thought for him to succeed in convincing himself that he had been very shabbily treated.

Continuing to talk to himself, or rather at the tiller, on which his eyes were fixed, he added:

"Folks have said so much about their savin' them women from drownin', when I mighter done the same thing if I'd been willin' to make a fool of myself, that they want to scoop in everything; but I could stop this little game by jest goin' ahead on my own hook. If I sneaked down the creek an' brought back the stuff them men have been hidin' people would begin to know how much I understand about detective work."

This appeared in his mind as the most brilliant scheme he had ever conceived, and in a very few seconds Sam decided that it should be carried into effect.

First, and with no very well-defined idea of why such a course was necessary, he rowed cautiously to and fro past the landing stage, scrutinizing closely every face he saw, and mentally hugging himself because of the excitement which would be caused by his return with the stolen property.

Then he turned the boat, and began to row down the creek, stopping every few seconds to gaze around in such a mysterious manner that the suspicions of any one who observed him would have been instantly aroused.

In this manner, which he believed the only true way for a first-class detective to approach his prey, Sam had rowed less than half a mile when he saw Long Jim and his companion returning.

Now the time had come when true cunning was necessary, and the amateur detective began to display it by pulling the boat sharply around, heading her for an indentation on the opposite shore.

Here he ran her bow aground, and lying at full length in the bottom, peered out at the men in the most stealthy manner.

They had already taken notice of his erratic movements, and now regarded him intently, but, without checking the headway of their own craft, in a few minutes were beyond sight around the bend.

"There," Sam said, with a long-drawn breath of relief, as he arose to a sitting posture, "if Teddy an' Dan had been here them fellers would have tumbled to the whole racket, but I've put 'em off the scent, an' will have plenty of time to do my work."

He pulled out from the shore once more, gazed long and earnestly up and down the creek, and then, in the same ridiculous manner as before, continued the journey.

The trip which should have consumed no more than an hour even with the most indolent oarsman, was not completed until twice that time had elapsed, and then fully fifteen minutes were spent by this very cautious boy in landing.

He pulled his boat up high out of the water, and, in order to conceal her, heaped such a pile of dry grass on top of her that it must have attracted the attention of any one passing, more especially those who were familiar with the creek.

This done he went toward the barn after the fashion of an old-time stage villain, halting at the slightest sound, and peering in every direction, fancying himself surrounded by foes.

Not until he had circled completely around the barn twice did he venture to enter, and then, much to his disappointment, there was nothing to be seen. The building appeared to be absolutely empty, and even his eagle eye failed to discover any traces of recent occupancy.

"Well, this is mighty funny," he said, with a sigh of disappointment. "Them fellers surely brought a lot of stuff in here, but they must have carried it out again."

Having expended so much labor and time in reaching this place, he did not intend to return until after making a thorough search, however, and to this end he investigated one possible hiding-place after another, pulling up the boards of the rude flooring, and peering into places where nothing larger than a mouse could have been hidden.

During this time the burglars were returning with all possible speed. Sam's actions, both as he came down the creek, and also while screening himself from view, were so suspicious that, guilty as the men were, they immediately concluded what was very near the truth.

Long Jim recognized the boy as having been with Teddy when the bargain for the imaginary cane-board was made, and instead of returning to the fair grounds the two watched, from a point of vantage on the bank, until Master Sam had landed.

His purpose was now evident, and it was necessary the burglars should resort to desperate measures to prevent the loss of their ill-gotten gains as well as to save themselves from imprisonment.

When they arrived where it was possible to look into the barn, Sam was on his knees scraping away the dirt which appeared to have been recently disturbed, and they heard him say in a tone of exultation:

"I've got to it at last, an' now we'll see what Teddy an' Dan have to say when I flash the whole lot of stuff up with nobody to help me. I reckon----"

He did not finish the sentence, for at that moment Long Jim stepped directly in front of him, as he asked:

"Did you leave anything here, my son?"

"No--I--I--that is--you see----"

Sam was so frightened that he could not say another word. It seemed as if his tongue was swollen to twice its natural size, while his throat was parched and dry, and to make bad matters worse, he had entirely neglected to invent a plausible excuse for his presence there in case of an interruption.

"I asked if you'd left anything here?" Long Jim repeated, very mildly.

"Well--well---- You see I jest come down to--to---- I thought, perhaps, I might find something, but it's time I was gettin' back to the fair, 'cause the folks will be needin' me."

As he spoke he attempted to back toward the door, but before taking half a dozen steps a cry of fear burst from his lips, for a heavy hand was laid with no gentle force on his shirt collar, and he staggered forward helplessly.

"That's an invitation for you to hold on a bit, an' have a little conversation with two gentlemen who are mighty curious to know why you came here," Long Jim said, grimly. "You're goin' to tell us the whole partic'lars, or there won't be enough left of you to be seen under a microscope."

Sam made no reply. He was literally dazed with fear, and just at that moment he thought the life of a detective very disagreeable.

"Come, speak up, an' be quick about it," the man cried, fiercely. "We've got no time to waste on sich cubs as you, an' in about two minutes you'll get worse'n we served out the other night."

"That wasn't me follerin' you from the museum tent," Sam said, quickly, thinking possibly this fact might work in his favor.

"Who was it?"

"Teddy an' Dan."

"Who is Dan?"

"A feller who works for the Stevens Arms Company up at the fair."

"Why did they follow us?"

"Teddy wanted to get back the money he gave you to buy a cane-board with."

"If he knows what's wise for him he'll stop any such rackets, or he may get more'n he bargains for."

Then the second man, who still held firmly to Sam's collar, asked, as he shook his prisoner vigorously:

"How did you know we had been here?"

"Us fellers saw you come down in a boat."

"So all three are in the secret, eh?"

Sam's only thought was that he might possibly save his own skin, and he replied in the affirmative, although he must have known that by such answer he was destroying his friends' chances of recovering the goods.

"Where are the fools now?" Long Jim asked, angrily.

"Up at the fair."

"What do they intend to do?"

"Get somebody to arrest you."

"Then we've got to skip mighty lively, Phil," and Long Jim looked up at his companion.

"Yes; but if my advice had been follered we wouldn't be in this scrape. You was the only one the cubs knew, an' by keepin' out of sight we mighter finished the work that's been laid out. You're so pig-headed that a yoke of oxen couldn't keep you in hidin'."

"There's no use fightin' about it now; for we've got to get a move on us in short order. It won't do to let this boy have a chance to give the alarm."

"Of course not. Lash him up somewhere so he can't make a noise, an' his chums will come before he starves to death."

"Don't do that!" Sam cried, in an agony of terror. "I won't say a word about your catchin' me here, an' I'll do anything you say."

"Oh, you're a nice plum to make promises, ain't you. It didn't take much persuadin' to make you go back on your friends, an' that's enough to show whether you can be trusted. Get the rope out of the boat, Phil, an' then we'll make ready for a long jump."

Phil obeyed, grumbling as he went because his partner had refused to take his advice, thus plunging both of them into danger, and Long Jim turned his attention to the prisoner once more.

"Before we leave this part of the country for good I'm goin' to give you somethin' to remember us by so's you won't go 'round stickin' your nose into other people's business agin'."

"What are you goin' to do?" Sam asked, his face growing even paler than before.

"Give you the worst floggin' a boy ever had. I'd do it now if there wasn't so much work to be got through."

Sam had sufficient sense to know that all his pleadings for mercy would be in vain, and he held his peace until Phil returned with a long coil of rope which had been used as a boat's painter.

One of the beams at the end of the barn served as a post to which to lash the prisoner, and here the amateur detective was made fast in such a skillful manner that he could not so much as move his arms.

"Shall we gag him now?" Phil asked, and Long Jim replied:

"No, there's time enough.

"He can't make any one hear if he yells his best, an' I've got a little business to settle before he's trussed up for good."

CHAPTER XVI.

MISSING.

When Dan informed Teddy that Sam was missing, and suggested the possibility of the burglars having gotten him in their power, both the boys were decidedly alarmed; but the matter ceased to appear as serious after it had been discussed in all its bearings.

"Long Jim wouldn't have dared to spirit him away when there are so many people around," Teddy said, after a long silence, during which he was trying to imagine what Sam might have done. "Besides, what would be the good of taking him if we were left behind?"

"Perhaps they count on hauling us in, too."

"That isn't to be thought of for a moment. They don't want to burden themselves with a lot of boys when every effort must be made to get the stolen property out of this section of the country before they are discovered."

"I'll allow all that sounds reasonable, but where is Sam?"

"Of course I don't know. Do you think he would dare to go down the river again after we landed?"

"No, indeed; he's too much of a coward for that. If there's been any funny business it was done when the men got back."

"Then we have no need to worry, for there are hundreds of people on the bank of the creek all the time, an' Sam would know enough to yell if anybody tried to steal him."

The idea that the amateur detective might be stolen seemed so comical to Dan that he gave way to mirth, and what had promised to be a most sorrowful visit speedily became a merry one.

"He had permission to remain away from the exhibition building during the rest of the day," Teddy finally said, "an' most likely he's goin' to take advantage of it by roaming around the grounds, exercising his detective faculties. He'll turn up at the museum to-night all right, with a big yarn to tell about his supposed adventures."

"I reckon you're right; but I did get a little rattled when his boss asked me where he was. I'll come back this way when it's time to go to supper."

"Wait a minute. I'm mighty hungry now, an' business has been so good that I can afford to treat to sandwiches an' lemonade, if you'll go with me over to the grand stand. I'll bring you back something, Tim," he added, as he leaped over the railing.

Dan said he could remain away half an hour from the rifle exhibit, and Teddy was now so easy in mind concerning money matters that he resolved to have thirty minutes of sport.

The boys first made a tour of that portion of the grounds where the fakirs were congregated, stopping a moment to see the whip dealer lashing a pine stake to show the quality of his goods, and then watching the "Great African Dodger," who thrust his woolly head through an aperture in a canvas screen for all those to throw balls at who were inclined to pay the price.

Then they stopped at the "envelope game," where were spread on a stand a large collection of cheap, gaudy goods, each bearing a printed number, every one supposed to correspond with those contained in a box of envelopes, and this fakir was doing a big business, as was shown by the fact that he could afford to hire a barker, who cried continually at the full strength of his lungs:

"Come up now, and try your luck! Here's where we have all prizes and no blanks! Ten cents buys an envelope, with the privilege of drawing for yourself, so there can be no job put up against you, and every number calls for some one of the many valuable articles in the layout. Here's a gentleman who spends only ten cents and gets a pair of those beautiful, triple-plated, double-expansion, fine pure metal cuff buttons, worth two dollars at some stores!"

"Come on!" Dan said, impatiently. "That fellow is almost as big a snide as Hazelton."

"How do you make that out? I can see a lot of things that cost more than a dollar. Look at the silver watch, and the revolver."

"That may be all very well; but no one except a fellow who is interested in the business gets any of those articles."

"You can select any envelope you choose."

"That's right; but the ones with the numbers calling for the big prizes are lying flat in the box where nobody can get them. If you should accuse the man of cheating he would turn the whole thing upside down, and then, of course, they could be found. Here comes a fellow who I know is cappin' for that fakir. Watch how he does it."

The apparent stranger approached the stand, and after some talk as to how the game was run, invested ten cents.

The man did not open the envelope he drew; but handed it to the fakir, who, pretending to look at the card it contained, shouted:

"Number fifty-four. The gentleman has drawn that beautiful solid silver watch worth fifty dollars, and I will give him thirty for his bargain."

The stranger showed his prize to the crowd that clustered around him, and business was increased wonderfully, for it had apparently been proven that the game was conducted fairly.

"Now watch him," Dan said, as the stranger walked away with his prize ostentatiously displayed, and the two boys followed a short distance off, until they saw him halt behind a booth, where he turned the article won over to a barker who had approached.

"That's the way it is done," Dan said, "and when we come back you'll see the same watch on the layout."

Teddy was rapidly being initiated in the tricks of the fakirs, and the more he saw the more firmly was he resolved not to follow the business longer than the present week, although he believed his own game to be an honest one.

The cheap jewelry dealer; the man who had been selling the remnants of a stock of knives made by a manufacturer who "had bankrupted himself by putting into them too expensive material;" the fakir with the dolls which were to be knocked down by balls thrown from a certain distance, with a prize of one cigar if the customer could tumble two over; and the peanut-candy dealer were visited in turn, and then the boys were attracted by the sound of Hazelton's voice.

He was plying his peculiar trade again, and by the appearance of the crowd was meeting with great success.

"Let's see how he gets out of it this time," Teddy suggested, and Dan agreed.

The fakir had arrived at that point where he was giving away the supposed watches, and the boys listened until they saw his preparations for departure.

"What beats me is how he gets clear every time," Dan whispered. "I should think after he had swindled four or five hundred, some of them would lay for a chance to get even with him."

"He says they do, an' that's why he left his satchel with me."

Hazelton recognized the boys just as he was telling that Nathan Hargreaves might possibly act as his agent after the close of the fair, and nodded pleasantly, as he gathered up the reins; but this was one of the occasions when he was not to be allowed to go scot free.

Two stalwart-looking fellows were standing near the head of the horse, and when the fakir would have driven off they seized the bridle, one of them shouting:

"Come down with that money! This is the second time I've seen you do us countrymen up to-day, and now you've got to square things."

Hazelton swung his whip around, striking the speaker full in the face, and causing the horse to plunge and rear, but yet the fellows kept their hold.

The whip was pulled from the fakir's hand, and in an instant it appeared as if a riot had begun. Those who had been content to keep secret the fact of having been swindled now grew bold as they saw there was a leader in the movement, and more than a hundred leaped forward to seize the representative of the alleged jewelry manufacturers.

"He'll be killed!" Teddy shouted, and would have attempted to go to the assistance of the man who had been kind to him, despite the fact that he could not have aided him in any way against so many; but for the fact that Dan pulled him back, as he shouted:

"Can't you see that it would be fifty to one if you should go in that crowd? We couldn't help him, and what's the use of gettin' a big lickin' for nothing? Besides, what would become of your business if the people here thought you were his partner?"

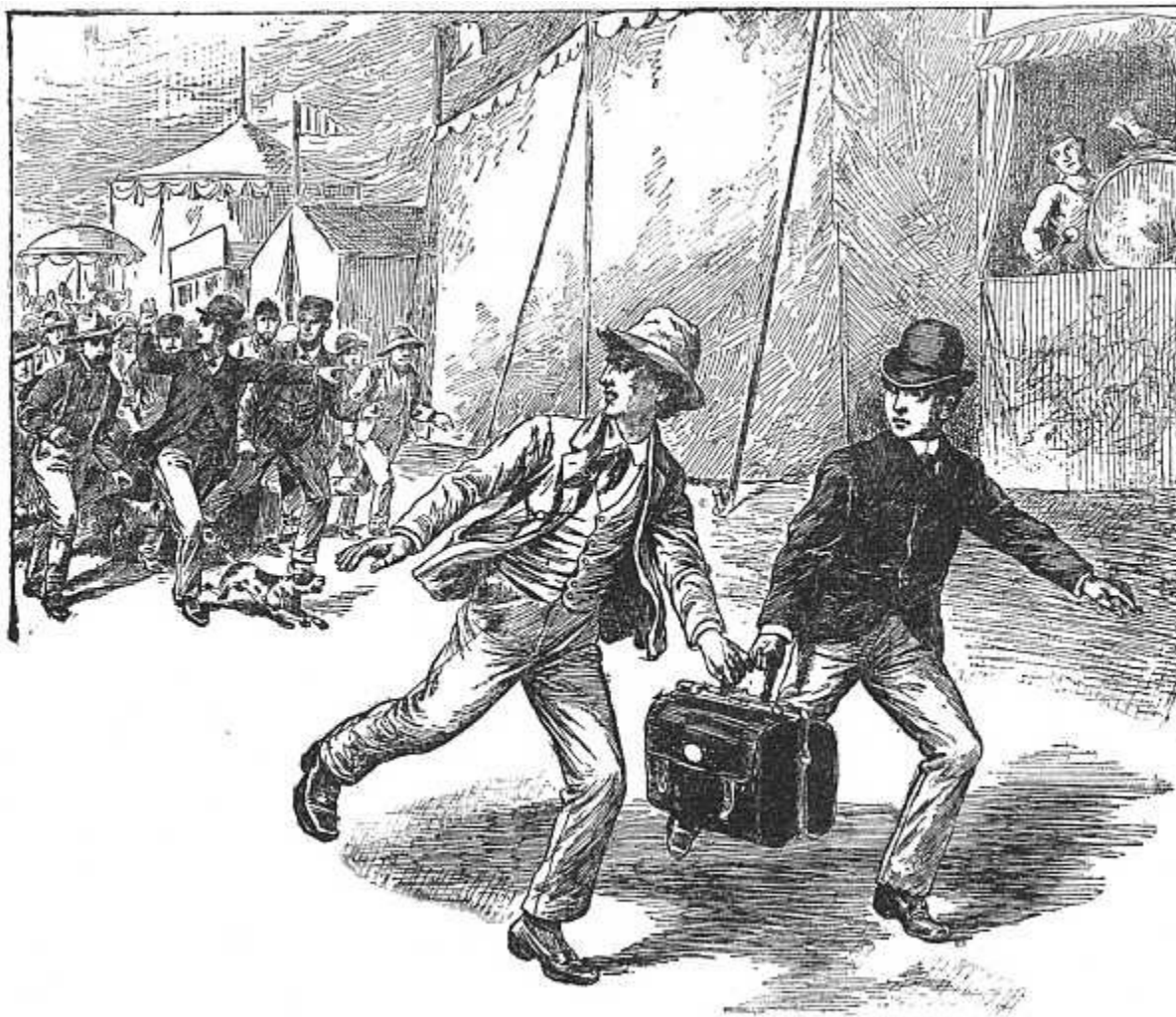
Before Dan ceased speaking Teddy realized how useless would be any effort of his, and he remained passive, trying to get a glimpse of the ill-fated fakir.

The numbers who beset him completely hid Hazelton from view. The carriage had been overturned by the first desperate rush of the victims, and the horse was clearing a space around himself by the free use of his heels.

"They'll commit murder!" Teddy cried.

"I don't believe it'll be quite as bad as that; but he won't be likely to give away any more lockets while this fair lasts."

As a matter of fact, Hazelton was not left to fight the battle alone. Like every other fakir engaged in that peculiar business, he had several partners whose duty it was to mingle with the crowd for the purpose of intimidating any who might be disposed to make trouble, and these had closed in upon him, while some of the more timid spectators shouted for the constables.



"Run as you never did before, Teddy, for if they get hold of us it'll be a bad job all around!"

Once Teddy caught a glimpse of the unfortunate man; his glossy hat was gone, his clothing torn, and his face covered with blood.

"I can see him now!" he cried, "and it looks as if they had about used him up, for----"

Before he could finish the sentence a stranger rushed toward him, and showing the familiar black satchel in his hand, said hurriedly:

"Get out of here with that. Hazelton will see you some time this evening. Don't stop a minute!"

Before the boy could reply the stranger was forcing his way through the struggling, yelling crowd, in order to aid his

partner, and Teddy said in dismay:

"Now we are in a muss. Here is all his money, an' if anybody sees us with it we'll have a tough time."

"You can't throw it away, an' we must sneak off," Dan said, and the expression on his face told how distressed he was that such a responsibility had been thrust upon them.

"Shall we go back to the stand?"

"No, that would never do, for then they would be sure to vent their anger on you. Go up to the museum; Mr. Sweet knows Hazelton, an' may be willin' to help him by keeping the satchel till the row is over."

These words had been spoken as the boys were trying to make their way through the fringe of spectators which had hemmed them in since the fight began, and after some difficulty they succeeded; but at the same moment one of the combatants, who had received more than his share of punishment, emerged close by their side.

He saw Hazelton's satchel, and recognized it.

"Come here, fellows! two little villains are making off with the money! That's what we want!"

He at once started in pursuit, as did several others, and Dan cried, as he helped carry the burden:

"Run as you never did before, Teddy, for if they get hold of us it'll be a bad job all around!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

At just about the same moment when Teddy and Dan were running with Hazelton's money at full speed toward the museum tent, with the chance of escape very much against them, Sam was in a decidedly painful frame of mind.

After he had been securely tied the two men conversed in low tones for several minutes, and then, as if having arrived at some definite conclusion, began to make preparations for leaving the place.

At the same spot where Sam had been interrupted while scraping away the dirt they proceeded to dig with a shovel which Phil procured from somewhere outside the building, and during this labor the prisoner could hear fragments of the conversation.

Once Long Jim ceased his work long enough to say:

"When you come to look at the matter quietly it doesn't seem as if we'd got into sich a very bad scrape. You can manage to bring the rest of the stuff down the creek between now an' Friday mornin' and I've got a plan for givin' anybody who may come after us a good clue to the boy's disappearance."

Phil made some remark which Sam could not hear, and his companion replied in a louder tone:

"It can all be done so's to make folks think we've gone up the creek, an' we've got to lay low for a while, which won't be a hard job while the weather is warm."

"But I don't like the idea of totin' that cub with us so long."

"I'll take care of him, an' will make him earn his board, or somethin's bound to break."

From this time until several packages were unearthed Sam could hear nothing; but what had already been said was sufficient to convince him that he was to have a very unpleasant experience, and for at least the hundredth time he fervently wished he had never so much as heard of detective work.

After the goods had been brought to light the earth was replaced in the excavation and pounded down carefully. Then fully half an hour was spent digging in different places, probably for the purpose of misleading any one who might come there in search of plunder, for Phil said in a tone of satisfaction as he ceased the apparently aimless labor:

"It'll take at least a day before all of these suspicious looking spots have been investigated, an' in the meanwhile, unless we're chumps, we shall know what's goin' on. I'll take one load to the boat; make sure the coast is clear, an' then the three of us can carry the balance. Have the boy ready for a quick move, an' see to it that he can't give an alarm."

"I'll knock his head off if he so much as thinks of such a thing," and as Phil disappeared with a portion of the plunder Long Jim began to unfasten Sam's bonds, saying as he did so:

"We've made up our minds to hold you with us a few days 'cause you're sich jolly company. If you obey orders an' keep your mouth shut there's a chance of gettin' outer this scrape mighty easy; but I'd slit your throat in a jiffy if you tried to give us the slip or made any noise."

Sam made no reply; but his captor could see very plainly that the boy was nearly paralyzed with fright, and it was safe to infer he would follow the instructions given to the letter.

Phil returned in a very short time and reported:

"The coast is clear. There's not a craft to be seen on the creek, an' we can leave without danger."

The rope had been removed from Sam's limbs, and Long Jim proceeded to load him down with bundles until he staggered under the weight.

"Now, see that you walk a chalk line," the burglar said, fiercely. "Foller Phil, an' I'll keep behind to make sure there are no tricks played. Remember what I promised!"

The men could carry the remainder of the goods in one load, and the three went out of the barn hurriedly, Sam not daring to so much as lift his eyes from the ground lest Long Jim's threat should be carried into execution.

Arriving at the water's edge the boat was loaded, the prisoner ordered to take his place at the oars, and then the final preparations were made.

Phil uncovered the boat in which Sam had come, launched and overturned her. Then taking the hat from the unresisting boy's head, threw it far out in the channel, afterward giving the little craft a shove which sent her a long distance from the shore. Next the two oars were sent after the hat, and Phil said with a laugh:

"The current ain't very strong; but with the aid of the wind I reckon that stuff will drift up to the fair grounds before dark."

Sam's despair was already so great that it did not seem as if it could be increased; but the last vestige of hope fled when he realized that these things had been done in order to make it appear as if he were dead.

"Teddy and Dan won't think of huntin' for me after the boat is found," he thought, "an' these men are sure to kill me before this scrape is over!"

The two burglars seated themselves comfortably in the stern-sheets, the packages being placed at the bow to trim the craft properly, and Long Jim said, sternly:

"You've been showin' off your skill as an oarsman for two or three days, an' we want you to do it now. Put in your best licks, for it'll be tough if we don't get through the water mighty fast."

Even Sam's worst enemy would have pitied him at this moment. No galley slave chained to his seat could have been more utterly helpless, and he exerted himself to the utmost in order to please those who professed to be so willing to punish or kill.

Every stroke of the oars took them farther away from the fair grounds, and each puff of wind carried the evidences of the prisoner's death nearer the only ones who might take the trouble to search for him.

Not until fully an hour had passed did the burglars give any sign of a desire to end the journey, and then Long Jim said:

"We must be six miles from the fair grounds by this time, an' that is as far as you'll want to pull to-night, Phil. There should be plenty of good hidin'-places in this bit of woods, an' I think we'd better haul up."

"All right. Steer her into that ditch over there, an' we'll look around."

Thus far in his experience as a detective this was the only thing Sam had had for which to be thankful. His arms were so tired that it seemed as if he could not have pulled another stroke, and his clothes were literally wet from the perspiration that came from his body.

Phil went ashore, leaving his companion to watch the almost exhausted prisoner, and in a few moments the former shouted:

"Load that cub up, an' bring him over here. This is a capital place to locate in for a couple of days."

Staggering under the heavy burden Long Jim placed on his shoulders the amateur detective was forced on through the underbrush in advance of his captor until the two arrived at a perfect tangle of cedars.

Phil returned to the boat for the remainder of the goods, and all the plunder was placed inside the thicket where the foliage was so dense that one might have passed within a few feet of the spot and not had any suspicion men were hidden there.

A tiny brook ran past one side of the hiding-place, and Sam took advantage of the opportunity to check his raging thirst while the men were laying plans for the future.

"I'll go back soon after sunset," Phil said, as he lighted his pipe and proceeded to make himself comfortable. "We can leave the boy here to look out for the stuff, an' you'd better come with me up to the barn so's to learn if any one visits the place. I shall be back before morning, an' you can let me know if the coast is clear."

"Shall you try to finish the job we were talkin' about?"

"No; things are so hot jest now that it won't pay to take any more risks than are absolutely necessary. What we want is to get out of this portion of the country as soon as possible."

"All right. I'll leave you to manage the rest of the business, an' promise to follow orders."

"I think it's about time you said that, Jim. If my plans had been carried out in the first place we wouldn't be in sich a muss; but could be havin' the cream of the pickin's at the fair."

"Well, what's the use of harpin' on that all the time? The thing has been done, an' we've got to make the best of it. Do

you think it'll be safe to leave this cub here alone while we're away?"

"It will be when I get through with him," was the grim reply, and Sam, terrified by the vagueness of this remark, more even than he had been by the plain language previously used, cried, piteously:

"Please don't leave me here alone to-night! I'll pull the boat, an' do everything you say, without so much as yippin'!"

"Them as starts out in the detective business have to take what comes, 'specially when their own foolishness brings it about. You joined our party of your own accord, my son, an' must put up with what we choose to give."

Sam said nothing more. He was reaping what he had sowed, and decided that matters could not be much worse even if he was caught trying to escape, therefore he resolved to take desperate chances in an effort to give his captors the slip.

There was no opportunity to make the attempt, on this night at least, for when Phil had finished smoking he proceeded in a very methodical manner to secure the prisoner.

Sam was ordered to seat himself on the ground, with his back to the trunk of a cedar-tree, and he was fastened skillfully, with his elbows tied back in such a manner that he could not bring his hands together. Both feet were bound, and then, with a sudden movement, Phil forced the boy's mouth open, shoving into it a short piece of pine wood about an inch and a half in diameter.

This was secured in such a manner that the prisoner could not free himself from the uncomfortable bridle, neither would it be possible for him to make the slightest outcry.

"Now, don't shout for help while we are gone, an' unless the bears eat you up we shall meet again about daybreak," Phil said, with a coarse laugh as he and Jim went out of the thicket toward the creek.

Poor Sam had never thought of the possibility that there might be bears in this section of the country until the burglar suggested it, and he was so terrified as not to realize it was impossible there could be any dangerous animals in such a thickly-settled portion of the State.

Therefore, in addition to the danger to be apprehended from his captors, he had constantly before his mind this new cause for fear. The rustling of the leaves, the flight of a bird as it sought a perch for the night, or the sighing of the wind among the branches were to him so many proofs that a violent death would be his before morning.

If the beginning of the hours of darkness was so terrible it can well be fancied how he suffered before another day dawned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

Neither Teddy nor Dan had any hope of reaching the museum tent before their pursuers could overtake them, and although both knew what might be the result if they were taken with the jewelry fakir's money and goods in their possession, they did not for a moment think of abandoning the property.

The cries of those in the rear attracted the attention of the spectators elsewhere on the grounds, and without waiting to learn the cause of the trouble hundreds of men and boys joined in the chase, all shouting at the full strength of their lungs:

"Stop thief! Stop thief!"

The distance to be traversed was nearly a quarter of a mile; but the many turns the boys were forced to make in order to avoid those who were ready to capture them doubled this, and they were yet very far from the goal when a burly, red-faced man jumped in front of them.

It seemed as if capture was inevitable; but Teddy resorted to the last means of defense, and was successful.

Letting go his hold of the satchel he lowered his head, leaped forward with full force, striking the officious stranger full in the stomach.

The man, not anticipating such an attack at a moment when he almost had his hands upon the supposed thieves, was bowled over like a nine-pin, and, jumping quickly aside, Teddy caught hold of the satchel once more.

By this time both the boys were so nearly winded that speech was well nigh impossible; but Dan managed to gasp admiringly:

"You're a dandy, old fellow," and then, with one supreme effort, increased his pace a trifle.

It was fortunate that there were no spectators in front of Mr. Sweet's tent when the boys came in sight of it. The barker was lounging in a chair outside, and on catching a glimpse of the boys recognized them immediately.

The crowd in pursuit would have told a duller man than he professed to be that there had been some serious trouble, and, running to meet the boys as if to intercept them, he cried:

"Circle around the canvas, an' crawl underneath, so's that gang won't see where you've gone!"

The fugitives understood the scheme at once, and making a short detour as if to avoid him, dashed under the guy-ropes at one end, gaining the interior of the tent before the pursuers arrived.

Mr. Sweet had just started toward the flap to ascertain the cause of the commotion when the boys entered, and, thinking himself about to be attacked, leaped quickly back as he seized an ironbound stake.

"Oh, it's you, eh?" he said, on recognizing the intruders. "What's up? Are you the thieves they're yellin' for?"

Teddy was hardly able to speak; but he held up the satchel, as he panted:

"Hazelton's--they're killin' him--he--wants--this--saved."

"Yes, I understand it now. Jump into the wagon an' get under the stuff there. I'll take the valise. Them kind of fakirs are bound to come to grief sooner or later, an' honest people get into a muss tryin' to help 'em. I'd like to see the fair where them kinds of games wasn't allowed; but don't s'pose I ever shall, although it's always promised."

While Mr. Sweet had been grumbling, and at the same time concealing the satchel under the box containing the snakes, the boys were doing their best to hide themselves beneath the litter of ropes and canvas which had been carelessly thrown into the wagon.

In the meantime the pursuers came up, discovered the unpleasant fact that the fugitives were no longer in sight, and began to parley with the barker.

"I tried to catch 'em," the boys heard the latter say; "but they got around the tent before I had time to find out what the matter was."

"They've gone inside!" one of the crowd shouted. "Don't let's allow swindlers to get the best of us so easy!"

"That's the way to talk!" another cried. "We'll have 'em out if the show has to come down!"

At this moment Mr. Sweet, looking calm and undisturbed, emerged from the flap.

"Bring out them boys, or down comes your tent!" a man yelled.

"I reckon the wisest plan for you to pursue is to wait till I find out what all this means," the proprietor of the museum said loudly, at the same time beckoning the barker and the clown to his side. "It looks to me as if this was the same gang who came here last night tryin' to clean us out, an' warrants for their arrest are in the hands of the constables now. I paid one hundred dollars for the privilege of exhibitin' here, an' that means I'm to have all the protection the managers of this fair and the authorities of the town can give me. I've warned you off; but if you still want to finish up the work of last night, an' the constables don't come in time, there are three of us here who are good for twice that number of your gang, an' when a man gets a tap over the head with one of these he's not in it any longer!"

Mr. Sweet flourished the heavy stake as he spoke, and his employes showed that they were armed in the same manner.

"We didn't come to disturb you," one of the crowd said, in a milder tone, as the greater number fell back before the threats made of invoking the aid of the law. "All we want is a valise two boys brought here, for in it is quite a pile of our money."

"How did they get it from you?" the proprietor of the museum asked for the purpose of gaining time in the hope the constables would put in an appearance.

"We were swindled by a jewelry agent, an' are goin' to get back our own."

"Oh, you are, eh? Well, I haven't got the stuff; but if you allow yourselves to be swindled, will you help matters by turning thieves? You can sue the man who has done you up; but there's a penalty for stealing, as you will find out if you keep on in this way."

The less impetuous among the pursuers understood that the showman was speaking only the truth, and, now that they had an opportunity for reflection, began to be ashamed of the part they were playing. One by one walked away without making any further remonstrance, and in a short time only a dozen or so remained in front of the tent.

All these were young men, and several had been drinking, therefore the danger was not yet past.

"You stand here and brain the first man who attempts to enter," Mr. Sweet said, as he disappeared inside the tent. Then hurrying to where Teddy and Dan were hidden, he whispered:

"It may be possible that in order to avoid a row I shall be obliged to let this gang in. There is no one behind the canvas, and you can slip out readily. Go directly back where you belong, an' if anybody accuses you of being the boys who brought away the valise deny it. I'm goin' to make a big bluff about lookin' for constables, an' the minute you hear me talking, move lively."

"What about Hazelton's money?" Teddy asked.

"He'll find it here when he dares to come for it."

An instant later the fugitives heard him say from the outside:

"I propose to call for help in case you very respectable young gentleman should take a notion to break in and steal."

"All we ask is that you'll turn out them boys," one of the party replied, angrily, "for, whether it's stealing or not, we're bound to have that fakir's money."

"That part of it is nothing to me. There are no boys inside, an' if you want to go in one at a time, so there'll be no chance of gettin' the best of me an' destroyin' my property, I don't think there'll be any objection made."

"Now's our time before they come?" Dan whispered, as he slipped softly down from the wagon, and Teddy followed.

It was but the work of a moment to raise the canvas and step out. There was absolutely no one in sight. The tent had been erected near the edge of the grounds, and there was nothing in the vicinity to attract the sightseers.

"We'll get over the fence, an' come in through the main gate. It's better to pay for admission than to let people suspect we were the ones who have been chased."

"Go on; I'll stay close at your heels."

Five minutes later they were walking along the dusty road looking as innocent as possible, and feeling comparatively

safe.

"Do you suppose any one will know us?" Teddy asked after they had trudged some distance in silence.

"There can't be much danger of that. All the crowd saw were our backs, and, besides, after those fellows cool off they'll be ashamed of themselves. I don't reckon you'll have any trouble; but I may get it hot from the boss because I've been away so long."

"I guess there won't be much danger of that; but if anything should happen come to my stand. After what has happened I reckon I can afford to whack up with you on some of the profits, especially since every one says to-morrow is to be such a big day. Where do you suppose Hazelton is?"

"He must have had a chance to get off when the men started for us; but I'll bet he don't look as nice as he did this morning."

By this time the boys were at the ticket-office, and, paying the price of admission, they walked into the inclosure without attracting the slightest attention.

On the way to his place of business Teddy chanced to think of the errand on which they had started out, and he bought a generous supply of sandwiches for Dan, Tim, and himself.

When the two arrived at the cane-board business was at its height, and the clerk and his assistant were having quite as much as they could do to attend to the customers.

This saved Teddy the necessity of entering into any explanation while strangers were near, and he immediately went to work, not having an idle moment until nearly nightfall, when the greater portion of the visitors had departed.

"Where did you and Dan go that you staid away so long?" Tim asked as he and Teddy began to pack up the stock of canes and knives.

"Oh, it's a long story; I'll tell you all about it while we are eating supper," Teddy replied, with a significant look in the direction of the assistant.

Tim understood that there was some secret regarding the matter, and he at once proceeded to get rid of a possible eavesdropper by saying to the assistant:

"Here's the money I promised. There's no need of your stayin' any longer."

"Shall I come to work in the morning?"

Tim looked toward his employer, and the latter said:

"Yes, of course, if it is pleasant weather. Everybody says there'll be a bigger crowd than ever, an' I reckon we shall have work enough for all hands."

The boy had but just taken his departure when Dan approached, looking very mournful.

"Have you been bounced?" Teddy cried, excitedly.

"Not a bit of it; but look here," and Dan held up a straw hat. "That's poor Sam's! His boat has been found bottom up, an' this, with one of the oars, was fished out of the creek a few moments ago. While we were talking rough about him the poor boy was drowning!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ARREST.

Teddy was dazed by the tidings and apparent proof of Sam's death. Without being able to explain why, it seemed as if the amateur detective was not the sort of a boy who might be expected to depart this life suddenly, and the news saddened him wonderfully.

"Just think," he said, "the poor fellow wouldn't try to save the women because of the danger of approaching a drowning person, and in such a short time he himself is at the bottom of the creek."

"If he has got any folks some word ought to be sent to them."

"I never heard him say whether he had or not. Will any one search for the body?"

"The man who represents the Davis Company says he will have men out in the morning, if it is possible to hire any; if not, there will be plenty wanting a job by Saturday, and he can then get all he wants. It's bound to be a long search, for there's no telling where the boat capsized."

Nothing save Sam's untimely fate was spoken of during the time they were packing up the goods and carrying them to the tent, and then Mr. Sweet, after having been told the sad news, said, without commenting upon it:

"You boys had better go to supper now, an' get back before dark, for there's no knowin' but that some of those fellows who called on me may be waiting to take their revenge out on you."

"How did you get rid of them?" Dan asked.

"That part of it was as easy as rollin' off a log, after you boys were out of sight. I let 'em in one at a time, an' the chumps never tumbled to the fact that you had gone under the canvas. They came to the conclusion you must have climbed over the fence, an' we didn't take the trouble to show them the mistake. It was a close shave, though. At one time, when I was talkin' so loud about stealing, I thought we'd have the toughest kind of a row."

"Is the money all right?"

"It's jest where I left it, an' won't be touched till he comes to claim it, unless you boys want to take charge of the property."

"Indeed we don't," Teddy replied, quickly. "I've had all I want of such caretaking."

"Then go to supper, an' hurry back."

The boys waited only long enough to stow their goods in the wagon, and then Mr. Sweet's advice was acted upon.

As a matter of course Tim wanted to know what the proprietor of the museum had been talking about, and as they were walking across the grounds Teddy told the whole story, concluding by saying:

"It was a little the worst scrape I ever got into; but after the money had been placed in our hands, and the man who left it went off, we couldn't do different from what we did."

"That Hazelton had no business to get you into such a row," Tim replied, indignantly. "Why didn't he hang on to the stuff, an' take his lickin' like a man?"

"I don't think he knew it was to be given to us. The fellow who did it had seen him leave the satchel with us once, most likely, an' when there was danger of being robbed, believed we could look out for it again. It's the last time such a thing will happen, for I'm going to tell Hazelton that I don't want to be mixed up in his business."

At this point Dan changed the subject of conversation by speculating upon the way in which Sam met his death, and this topic was such a mournful one that nothing else was thought of until the party returned to the tent once more.

Then came the question of how much money had been taken in during the day, and after figuring up the amount he had spent, Teddy reckoned the cash on hand, announcing the result as follows:

"Countin' what I paid out, we've taken sixty-one dollars an' seventy cents since morning. It don't seem reasonable, but a feller has to believe it after seein' the money."

"You'll have a much better trade to-morrow, if it is fair, and you're not recognized as one of the boys who helped to get

Hazelton's money away," Mr. Sweet said, cheerily. "I predict that the receipts will figure up hard on to a hundred dollars."

Teddy gasped like a person who is suddenly submerged in cold water at the thought of earning so much, and he realized that if such should be the case he would be able to assist his mother very materially.

"I'll pay you, Tim, before I get so dazzled as to forget it," he said, with a laugh, and the clerk felt almost as rich as his employer when he received six dollars and seventeen cents for a day's labor which came very near being sport.

"I only wish the fair held on for six months," he said gleefully. "It seems too bad that there are only two days more, for Saturday never counts."

"You can go to the Holtown fair, and try it for yourself. I'll give you what stock we have left on hand."

"Then I'll do it," Tim replied, emphatically, and straightway he began to speculate as to the enormous amount of money he would earn.

Teddy tied his money in as compact a package as possible, intending to give it to his mother when she should arrive on the morrow, and Mr. Sweet had advised that all hands "turn in" early, when the flap was raised, admitting a man who appeared to be covered with adhesive plaster and bandages.

Not until the newcomer had approached within the circle of light cast by the lantern did the occupants of the tent recognize him as the jewelry fakir, and Teddy cried in surprise:

"Why, Mr. Hazelton! We didn't expect to see you to-night!"

"Did you think I was dead?"

"It looked as if you would be killed for a certainty, and you did get pretty well done up."

"Yes; as the reports of the prize fights put it, 'I'm badly disfigured, but still in the ring.' Was the money taken away all right?"

"Mr. Sweet has hidden it."

"And how did you come out of the scrape?"

"If it hadn't been for the folks here we should have fared about the same as you did."

"I'm sorry, my boy, that you were dragged into the matter, and it wouldn't have happened if I'd understood what Kelly was going to do. He knew you could be trusted, and so turned it over; but it was a mean situation to put you in."

"It wasn't pleasant for any of us," Mr. Sweet said; "but you can thank the boys for hanging on to the bag as if it had been their own. Most fellows of their age would have dropped it long before reaching here. How did you get off?"

"When the cry was raised that the money had gone the greater portion of the crowd started in pursuit, an' my partners and I managed to hold our own until a couple of constables came up. They took charge of the team, and gave us a chance to slip through the gates."

"What are you going to do now? Try it to-morrow?"

"With this face? Well, I should say not. There is a fellow here who has bought my right to the privilege, and I shall leave Peach Bottom early in the morning."

"That's about the best thing you can do, and I'd advise that you don't spend much time out of doors until then."

"I'm not intending to. It was necessary to come here, and, unless you object, I'll stay a while so's they will have time to sober up a bit."

"You're welcome to what we've got, even if I don't like your way of doing business."

"I want to straighten matters with the boys, and if they----"

Hazelton did not finish the sentence, for at that moment the canvas flap was pushed aside and a man entered with an unmistakable air of authority.

"Hold on there, friend," Mr. Sweet shouted. "We don't allow visitors at this time of night."

"I understand that, but reckon you won't make any very big kick when I tell you that I'm one of the deputy sheriffs of

this county, and have come to serve a warrant."

"On whom?"

"Frank Hazelton, who claims to be an agent for a firm of jewelry manufacturers. I believe you're the man," he added, approaching the disfigured fakir.

"You've got that part of it straight enough, but what am I to be arrested for?"

"You are suspected of being concerned in the burglary which was committed in this town last night."

Hazelton did not express nearly as much surprise as the boys, who were really dazed by the announcement.

"So Hargreaves has finally succeeded," the fakir said half to himself, and the officer replied, quickly:

"This has nothing to do with old Nathan's affair, although it does look as if the two burglaries were committed by the same person."

Hazelton remained silent several seconds, during which time the sheriff waited patiently for him to say he was ready to go, and then he asked:

"Can I speak to one of these boys in private. It has nothing to do with the charge, but I want him to aid me in getting a good lawyer."

"I am sorry to say I must hear all that is talked about, however trifling it may be."

"Well, I don't suppose it can make much difference," and without rising from his seat, Hazelton continued, "Teddy, you believe I had nothing to do with this thing?"

"I can tell what I heard those----"

"Don't tell anything yet a while; at least, not now. I want you to do this for me: After the fair closes go to that merchant who was so kind to you, and explain to him the whole affair, including your suspicions. Ask him to direct you to the best attorney in the county; get all the money from Mr. Sweet that may be needed, and pay the lawyer's fee. Send him to me as soon afterward as possible. It is nothing more serious than lying in jail a few days, and that won't be such a great hardship, now I've got this face on me."

"Shall I----"

"There is no need of saying anything more," Hazelton interrupted, fearing the boy was about to speak of the money the proprietor of the museum had hidden. "The merchant will understand and advise if you tell him everything--that is, I think he will; but in case he refuses, talk with some one else whom you can trust."

As he finished speaking the fakir arose to his feet, motioned to the officer, and walked directly out of the tent without so much as bidding the others goodby.

No one spoke until after he had been absent several minutes, and then Teddy asked, with a long-drawn sigh:

"Do you think he will come out all right, Mr. Sweet?"

"That's hard to say, for I don't know how much proof they may have against him. It's his business that has done a great deal toward inducing a magistrate to issue the warrant, for once a man shows himself to be a swindler, anything else can readily be believed of him."

"But what about his money?" Dan asked.

"That is to be handed over to Teddy."

"What have I got to do with it?" the boy asked, in amazement.

"He told us that as plainly as he dared to talk before the officer, and we'll count it out, after which his stock in trade shall be buried, for I want nothing to do with it."

CHAPTER XX.

A PROPOSITION.

Teddy had the most decided objections to taking charge of Hazelton's money, and for several reasons. In the first place he did not want to have the responsibility, and again, the fact of its being in his possession seemed to make him a partner in the business.

Mr. Sweet was determined, however. He insisted that Hazelton had stated this as plainly as was possible under the circumstances, and, despite the boy's protests, immediately began the transfer.

"It shall be done in such a way that he can't accuse you of having taken any," the proprietor said, as he pulled the satchel from its hiding-place and broke the lock open with a hatchet. "We'll count it in the presence of all hands, and each one shall give Teddy a written statement of how much was found."

An exclamation of surprise burst from Tim's lips as the receptacle was spread out on the ground, for it appeared to be literally crammed with money.

Mr. Sweet separated the silver from the bank notes, spreading both on the ground where they could be seen by every person present, and then he counted them slowly, taking care that the spectators were following his every movement.

"I make it three hundred an' forty-eight dollars," he announced. "If there's anybody here who ain't sure that's right, say so now."

Each member of the party had seen the amount counted, and agreed with the result as declared by Mr. Sweet, who forthwith wrote the following:

We, the undersigned, have seen a valise belonging to Frank Hazelton broken open, and certify that three hundred and forty-eight dollars, the only money found therein, was handed by Jacob Sweet to Edward Hargreaves in conformance with the orders, as we understood them, from the said Frank Hazelton.

"Now I want every one to sign that," Mr. Sweet said, as he handed his lead-pencil first to the barker, "and then Teddy and I will have some proof of the amount."

It required quite a while for all to conform with the wishes of the proprietor of the museum, owing to the fact that several of the party were far from being skillful penmen, but the task was finally accomplished, and as the money was handed to Teddy, the latter asked, ruefully:

"What shall I do with it? I'm afraid of losing so much."

"That's a risk Hazelton is bound to take. Fasten it in your clothes somehow, an' be sure you don't get into any row where it can be stolen."

By the aid of many pins, and with the assistance of both Dan and Tim, Teddy finally succeeded in disposing of the money about his person in such a way that it was not an unusual burden, and then Mr. Sweet insisted that all hands should try to get some rest in order to be fresh for the supposedly enormous amount of work to be done on the following day.

Teddy lay down on the ground with the others, but it was many hours before his eyes were closed in slumber. Sam's untimely death, the guardianship of so much money, and his own business affairs all served to keep his eyes open until nearly midnight, when he fell into a sleep so troubled by frightful dreams that it was far from being restful.

It seemed as if he had but just lost consciousness when Mr. Sweet aroused him with the information that the "big" day of the fair was breaking.

"Turn out an' get your breakfast before sunrise, for on this morning the early bird will pick up many a penny while the lazy ones are yet in bed, an' fakirs must make hay when the sun shines."

Teddy was on his feet in an instant, and half an hour later, having broken his fast, he was at the booth with his clerk and Dan, the latter volunteering his assistance until the exhibition buildings should be opened.

The proprietor of the museum had advised him well; the receipts of the cane and knife boards were nearly five dollars before more than half of the booths were in condition for trade, because the trains were running unusually early in order to accommodate the crowds, and when Dan felt obliged to leave, business was so good that the proprietor, clerk,

and assistant were all working industriously.

"If I can get off I'll see you about noon," Dan said, as he walked away, and Teddy replied:

"Be sure to come, for mother will be here, and I want you to meet her."

From that time until nine o'clock the crowd increased in numbers, and as Teddy said during a lull in business, "it seemed as if the grounds were so full that no more could get in."

When Mrs. Hargreaves arrived her son could pay little attention to her, but he proposed that she should amuse herself by looking at the different exhibits until nearly noon, when he stated that he would take an hour off, no matter how great a rush of customers might be around his booth.

"I earned sixty dollars yesterday, an' before night I'll have a hundred more, so there's little doubt that this week's work as a fakir will enable me to pay all you owe on the house," he whispered, triumphantly, and his mother walked away, hardly daring to believe what Teddy had told her.

During the next hour it seemed as if a steady stream of money was flowing into the box, and Teddy was feeling confident that Mr. Sweet's prediction would prove to be correct, when the one especial man he wanted to see came up with a folded paper in his hand.

It was the merchant from Waterville, and he said, as he handed the document to the boy:

"Here is the receipted bill, and I am more than glad to see you doing so well."

"Can I talk with you for five minutes?" Teddy asked, hardly noticing the paper as he put it in his pocket.

"As long as you want to. What is the matter? Running out of stock?"

"Oh, no, your clerk made such a good selection for me that I've got all I shall need. This is something more important."

Then Teddy hurriedly told the merchant how and where he had first met Hazelton; explained fully what the latter's business was; of the accusations made by Uncle Nathan; what he and Dan had heard and seen, and concluded by repeating the request made by the fakir as he was led away to jail.

"Are you willing to do anything for him?" the boy asked, as his story was finished.

"I can't say it is a matter which appeals very strongly to my sympathies, because of the swindles he perpetrated, but if it is an unjust accusation something should be done to help him. The one lawyer above all others who can be of assistance came over with me this morning. I will see him, and later in the day you shall have a call from us."

"Before you go I wish you would take this money," Teddy said, earnestly. "It is too large an amount for me to carry around, and it will be safe with you."

The merchant consented to take charge of Hazelton's ill-gotten gains, and Teddy felt decidedly relieved when the cash was in another's keeping, and he had nothing of more value than an acknowledgment of the same to look after.

"In this matter I shall recognize no other order than yours," the merchant said when the transaction was concluded, "and if the fakir should succeed in regaining his liberty he must come to you for the necessary document."

"I don't care how it is fixed so long as the money is not in my hands," Teddy replied, in a tone of satisfaction, and then he was called upon to attend to another rush of customers, every one of whom was eager to be waited upon first.

Another hour passed, and it was more evident than before that Mr. Sweet had been correct when he stated the sum which should be taken in at the cane-board.

Teddy, having breakfasted early, was so hungry that he was on the point of going out to buy a supply of sandwiches, when another visitor arrived.

This was no less a personage than Uncle Nathan, and he greeted his nephew with the utmost cordiality, as he said:

"It looks to me as if you were makin' a power of money here, Teddy. I had no idea these triffin' games would so attract the people."

Glad to be on pleasant terms with the old man once more, Teddy stated that they had been at work very hard since the first train arrived, and concluded by saying:

"I took over sixty dollars yesterday, and Mr. Sweet says it'll come near to a hundred to-day."

"Sixty dollars!" the old man cried. "Are you telling me the truth, Teddy Hargreaves?"

"Of course I am, an' I've got the money in my pocket to prove it."

"Why, at this rate you'll soon be a rich man, for you don't seem to lose much of the stock."

"We buy a good many canes or knives back. When a man puts a ring over one that he don't want we take it in, and give him five more chances. In that way there is very little goes out compared to the amount of money received."

Uncle Nathan looked around at the players for a moment, and then in a very confidential tone he whispered:

"See here, Teddy, don't you want a partner? I'll pay for the stock you bought, an'----"

"I've already done that out of yesterday's receipts," Teddy cried. "All the bills are settled, an' what comes in now is clear profit."

"But suppose I stood here an' called up the people I know, don't you think it would make business better?"

"And if it should, do you think we could attend to more customers? Every minute I talk with you is so much money lost, for the other fellers can't pick up rings an' make change fast enough."

"Does that mean you don't want to go into business with me?" the old man asked, angrily.

"No; but it means that there would be no reason for doing such a thing. I've got no debts, an' there are more customers than can be attended to on so small a board. If you'd made the proposition last Monday it would have been different, but now you can't expect me, after taking all the risk, to divide after the work has been done."

"Who lent you the money to start, Teddy Hargreaves?" Uncle Nathan cried, his face growing purple with rage.

"You did."

"And how have you repaid such generosity? How----"

"I gave you three dollars for the use of fifteen two days," was the prompt reply.

"But how have you repaid me for remaining inactive after my money was stolen?"

"That was something which did not concern me, therefore I had nothing to repay."

"It has a great deal to do with you, as shall be shown before this day is ended, unless you consent to take me as an equal partner in this enterprise. Your friend in crime has been arrested, and I can swear that he turned over to you his ill-gotten gains. One word from me at this time and you will be in the same prison."

The fact of his having been threatened before made Teddy bold, and he said, quietly:

"I won't pay you for holding your tongue, Uncle Nathan, so do whatever you choose."

"I will inform the authorities of all I have learned this morning, and we shall see what the result will be," the old man cried, in a fury, as he walked away, and despite the bold bearing he had assumed Teddy firmly believed that if the magistrate who issued the warrant for Hazelton's arrest should know he was in possession of the fakir's money, he would be brought before a bar of justice to explain matters.

CHAPTER XXI.

WITH THE BURGLARS.

It is well to look in upon Sam during his enforced vigil of Wednesday night.

For at least two hours after the burglars had departed he thought of nothing save that he would soon be killed, and, perhaps, devoured by wild animals. Then the pain in his jaw and limbs became so great, owing to the tightly bound cords and his inability to move, that his sufferings overcame the fear to a certain extent, and he had not even the poor consolation of being able to give vent to an audible groan.

Notwithstanding the mental and bodily torture he did sleep occasionally during the night, which appeared to be of twenty-four hours' duration, and never had he heard a sweeter sound than when his captors approached, the hum of their voices reaching him before the noise of their footsteps.

The burglars were laden with packages of what appeared to be merchandise, and by the faint light of the coming day Sam could see that they looked heated and tired.

"Well, how's our detective?" Long Jim asked, with a laugh, as he threw himself on the ground by the boy's side. "Has he decided to arrest his victims, or will he give them a little show of leaving the country?"

As a matter of course Sam could not make any reply; but the expression in his eyes must have told of the suffering which he was forced to endure, for Phil said, as he began to untie the rope holding the gag in place:

"There's no need of keepin' him trussed up any longer, an' I reckon it'll be a relief to have a chance to use his tongue once more."

Even when he was free the prisoner was unable to do more than roll upon his side. His limbs were so stiff and cramped that he had no power over them, and he could not have risen to his feet just at that moment if his life had depended upon it.

Jim seemed to think all this was very comical, for he laughed loudly at the prisoner's helplessness, and suggested that if he intended to follow the business of a detective to practice remaining in one position in order to avoid such a complete collapse when fortune should again be so unkind to him as she had been in this particular case.

When the burglar's mirth finally ceased the two men lighted their pipes, and proceeded to enjoy a season of repose after so much fatiguing work, while Sam was left to recover as best he might.

Fully half an hour elapsed before he succeeded in crawling to the brook where he quenched his thirst, and then his one desire was for sleep.

Stretched out on the ground within a few feet of his captors the blissful unconsciousness of slumber came upon him, and the sun was high in the heavens before he awoke.

Long Jim was seated on the turf, his back against a tree, and a quantity of food spread out in front of him; but Phil was not in sight.

"Well, it strikes me you've been takin' things mighty comfortable," the man said, with a grunt. "Don't give yourself so far over to a life of pleasure as to forget that I promised to give you the greatest floggin' of your life before we part, for then you won't be so much surprised when it comes."

The sight of the food caused Sam to realize how very hungry he was, and, regardless of the subject introduced by Jim, he asked, timidly:

"Can't I have somethin' to eat?"

"I don't think you can, my son. In the first place you haven't earned it, an' then, again, my partner an' I may need all the grub we've got on hand."

Then, as if reconsidering his determination, the man selected two small crackers, tossing them to Sam as he cut a slice of boiled ham for himself.

"That's more'n you deserve," he said, as the prisoner began to devour them eagerly; "so don't count on gettin' another bite to-day."

Sam literally devoured the food, and then went once more to the brook to wash down the dry repast.

It seemed as if the crackers increased rather than satisfied his hunger, and he watched Jim eagerly as the latter finished a generous meal of meat, cheese, and hard-boiled eggs.

The burglar lighted his pipe, and paid no attention to the hungry boy, who now had ample time for reflection.

He remembered that this was the important day of the fair, and pictured to himself Teddy and Dan at their work enjoying themselves at the same time they were making money. Then he thought of what he might be doing if the detective fever had not taken so firm a hold upon him, and, despite all efforts to prevent it, the tears coursed down his cheeks, plowing wide furrows in the dirt with which his face was encrusted.

This painful reverie was not prolonged. Shortly before noon Phil came into the hiding-place, his face wearing an expression of entire satisfaction.

"I reckon we needn't be afraid any one will be here lookin' for us now our detective has been drowned," he exclaimed.

"What's up?" Jim asked.

"Hazelton, the fakir, has been arrested for the burglary at Peach Bottom, an' men are draggin' the creek to find the body of the boy who worked for the Davis Boat Company."

Sam actually shuddered at the thought that people were looking for his corpse, and it gave him an "uncanny" feeling, this idea that he was numbered with the dead.

"When was the arrest made?" Jim asked.

"Last night. Old Nathan from the Run says the fakir turned over a lot of money to the boy who was goin' to buy your cane-board, an' it looks very much as if he would be locked up with the man whom people believe is his partner."

"Nothin' said about what the cubs saw at the barn?"

"Not a word."

"Then we can count on havin' the balance of this week in which to leave the country?"

"As much as that, if not more. Another load will get the stuff together; but I've been thinkin' we'd better bury it here, an' not try to move a thing for a month or two."

"In that case we'd be obliged to take that specimen along," and Jim pointed with a contemptuous gesture toward Sam. "It wouldn't do to let go of him while there was a chance of his givin' the game away."

"I'll 'tend to that part of it, an' guarantee he won't be in condition to make us much trouble," Phil said so confidently that Sam began to shake as with an ague fit, for it seemed positive to him this burglar had decided upon his murder.

"If things were so comfortable like why don't you try to make a dollar, for I reckon there's a big crowd at the fair?"

"The grounds are packed; but it ain't exactly safe to do much business," and Phil told of the assault upon Hazelton. "The whole boilin' of 'em now think everybody's tryin' to work some swindle," he added, "an' the consequence is that it would go hard with any feller who should slip up. We've done enough for one week, an' I'd rather not take chances till this stuff is off our hands."

"Do you count on goin' back agin to-day?"

"What's the use?"

"I only asked, for you're managin' this whole thing now."

"My idea was to sneak up alone to-night; take on the balance of the stuff, an' then lay low till Saturday evenin', when we'll make the big break."

"It's goin' to be mighty dull business sittin' here with nothin' to do," Jim replied, in a tone of complaint.

"I don't see how we can fix it much quicker, unless we go to-morrow, while there are so many around."

It was evident Jim did not relish the idea of leaving everything to his companion, and the latter so understood the expression on his friend's face, for he said, angrily:

"You're cookin' up some foolish scheme now, an' in spite of all I can do to prevent it we'll probably succeed in gettin'

nabbed before matters are arranged as they should be."

"Oh, you're too smart, that's what ails you. Take all the soft snaps, an' leave me here to suck my thumbs without even the chance of movin' around."

"If you think it's sich a snap to row up there an' back, why don't you try your hand."

"That's jest what I'm willin' to do. Anything's better'n stayin' here, an' I'd like you to have a taste of it."

Sam, who was expecting each moment to see the thieves come to blows, understood at once that this arrangement did not please Phil; but he made no further objection than to say:

"If you wasn't so blamed careless I'd like to have you do a share of the hard work; but it's ten to one you'll contrive to let everybody know you are there."

"I may not be so all-fired smart as you think you are, but I ain't quite a fool. Why, I've managed bigger things than this when you was around beggin' for something' to eat, 'cause you was too chicken-hearted to do this kind of work."

"You'd better not say too much; I've stuck by you when worse men would have a' given you the cold shake, an' don't intend to take any guff, especially since I've had sich hard work to get us out of the scrape you jumped into."

"I shall talk, an' if you don't want to listen, there are plenty of places to lay off in outside of this."

Then the two thieves glared at each other several moments in silence, and finally Phil said, with a mirthless laugh:

"We won't fight till this job is finished. Go an' get the balance of the stuff, an' we'll make a break whenever you are ready; but after one pull up an' back there'll be somebody besides me who'll think it hard work."

Then, in order to heal the breach which had opened between them, Phil produced a suspicious looking black bottle from his pocket, and handed it without comment to his partner.

"Why didn't you bring this out before, an' then, perhaps, the business would 'a' looked different?" Jim growled, as he drank long and deep; "but it won't make any difference about my goin' up the creek."

"That's all right; I'm satisfied."

As the two men began to drink a great hope sprang up in Sam's heart that they would become so stupefied by the liquor that he might make his escape. They had not thought it necessary to replace the bonds which had cost him so much suffering, and at the first signs of unconsciousness he resolved to make one dash for liberty, either by taking to the boat, or attempting to make his way toward the fair grounds on that side of the creek.

There was no such good fortune in store for the prisoner, however. The men drank themselves into the most friendly humor, and then the supply of liquor was exhausted.

After advising Jim not to start until sunset, Phil lay down to sleep, and Sam thought it wise to feign slumber also, lest the wakeful burglar should take it into his head to administer the promised flogging in order to pass the time more agreeably.

CHAPTER XXII.

A DISASTER.

Teddy was decidedly uncomfortable in mind after Uncle Nathan departed. By a combination of circumstances which could not well have been avoided, he had been made to appear as a confederate of Hazelton, and if all the facts concerning his relations with the fakir should become known public opinion would be against him.

He did not allow these forebodings to interfere with business, however. Customers were plenty; the nickels were coming in as rapidly as he could make change, and Tim had no hesitancy in saying that Mr. Sweet had set their receipts of one day considerably too low.

"We've done twice as much as we did yesterday at this time, an' I'm countin' on gettin' twelve or fifteen dollars as my share of this day's work."

"It looks as though you wouldn't be disappointed, and that's a fact. I wish I knew where we could get a few more canes, for we've lost quite a good many this morning."

"There's no time to go to Waterville; but we can shorten the board by putting the uprights closer together, an' that'll make the layout look all right. Here comes your mother, an' if you want to go off with her I'll promise to keep things goin' here."

That was exactly what Teddy did want to do. He felt that it was necessary she should know the true condition of affairs, and he could not talk with her confidentially near the cane-board, therefore when she came up he proposed that they walk toward the grand stand, where the Waterville band was doing its best to put in the shade the performances of the musicians from the Run.

"You are looking worried, Teddy," Mrs. Hargreaves said, as they moved away in the proposed direction. "What is the matter? Isn't business as good as you expected?"

"It is a great deal better; but Uncle Nathan has been here again, and this time I'm afraid it is in his power to do me some harm."

Then Teddy told his mother all that had happened, explaining in detail the suspicions which might be aroused against him, and she was quite as disturbed as he when the recital was finished.

"I will talk with him myself," she said, after some thought.

"Don't do anything of the kind, for then he will be worse than ever, thinking he can frighten me into giving half of all I have made, and that I won't do, no matter how many warrants he gets out."

"But Teddy, don't you think----"

Mrs. Hargreaves was interrupted by a cry from a half-intoxicated man who halted directly in front of the young fakir, and shouted to some of his companions in the rear:

"Here he is! This is the sneak who helped take that jewelry swindler's money away. I saw him then, an' can swear to his face."

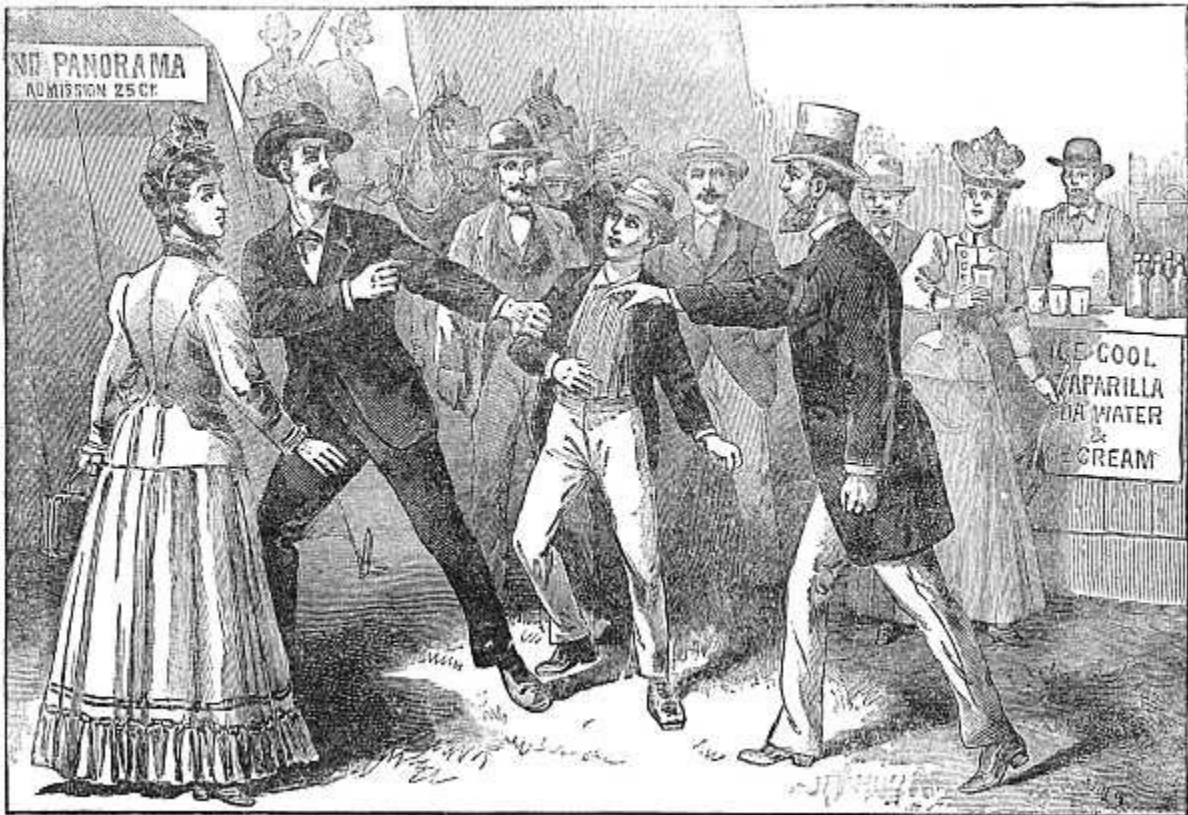
As a matter of course the tone as well as the words was sufficient to attract a crowd in this place where the throng was so dense that one could only make his way from one portion of the grounds to the other with the greatest difficulty, and for a moment, while Teddy stood unable to decide what should be said or done, every person looked at him threateningly.

"His partner has been arrested, an' we'll serve him in the same way," the man continued, as he advanced toward the boy.

"Why do you want to talk to me like that?" Teddy cried, looking around in vain for a friend. "There are plenty of people here who know me, for I live down at the Run, an' never swindled anybody."

"That's a lie!" the man replied, fiercely, seizing the boy by the collar.

"It's the truth!" Mrs. Hargreaves cried. "I'm his mother, and we have lived at the Run ever since he was born. Deacon Jones is our neighbor, and he can answer for the truth of it."



"I tell you to let go of him. He is an acquaintance"

"I'll see whether he can or not," and the bully was about to drag Teddy away, aided by his half-intoxicated friend, when a familiar voice from the outskirts of the crowd cried:

"Hold on there! What are you about?"

"I've caught the feller what sneaked away the jewelry swindler's money, an' am goin' to put him with his partner."

"You are going to take your hand off his collar this instant, or get yourself into trouble," and the merchant from Waterville forced his way through the throng until he stood by Teddy's side.

"Is that you, Mr. Reaves?" the bully asked, in surprise. "Well, you don't want to interfere in this business, for the boy is a bad one all the way through. He was deep enough to get the best of us yesterday; but he won't be so lucky now."

"I tell you to let go of him. He is an acquaintance of mine whom I would trust a good deal sooner than some whom I see now."

"But you are makin' a big mistake, Mr. Reaves, for I saw him makin' off with the valise where our money had been put."

It was evident the bully had considerable respect for the merchant, for he released his hold on Teddy; but was determined that the boy's alleged character should be made known to all in the vicinity.

"I happen to know all about that affair," Mr. Reaves replied, as he led Teddy and his mother out of the throng, "and if you want the full particulars of the affair come to my store when you are more sober than now."

A very large number of those present were acquainted with the merchant, and for the majority his statement was sufficient to absolve Teddy of wrongdoing; but a few, among whom were the intoxicated party and his friends, vowed to sift the matter more thoroughly before the fair came to an end.

Mrs. Hargreaves was terribly excited, and at once insisted that Teddy should go home with her immediately, regardless of how much money he was making; but Mr. Reaves said in a matter-of-fact tone, as if such incidents were of everyday occurrence:

"It would be foolish for him to do that, more especially since it would be a tacit acknowledgment of guilt, and, besides,

his business here is too valuable to be abandoned simply because a drunken rowdy chooses to make trouble. I was on my way to see him; I have found a lawyer who will under-take Hazelton's case, and he can at the same time give Teddy some good advice."

Then the merchant introduced Mr. Harvey as the most prominent attorney in the county, and, offering Mrs. Hargreaves his arm, added:

"We will go toward the cane-board, and give them an opportunity to talk.

"There is a great deal to be said which cannot interest us, and when they are done we shall be readily found."

The widow could do no less than comply, and as soon as they were comparatively alone the lawyer said to Teddy:

"Now, I want you to begin and tell me the whole story from the time your money was stolen until this minute. Don't omit any particulars because you may chance to think they are not important; but give every detail, and thus I shall be made acquainted with your own case as well as that of Hazelton."

Teddy obeyed this command to the letter. He dwelt upon the most minute transaction or trifling movement at sufficient length to give the listener a clear idea of all that had happened, and laid bare his own business affairs, even to the extent of making the lawyer acquainted with the amount of receipts each day.

"I don't suppose it makes any difference what I think," he said, in conclusion; "but I am almost certain Mr. Hazelton did not have anything to do with the robbery, and even if I had suspected him, that which Dan and I heard while we were in the museum tent would have convinced me that the men whom we saw on the creek are the thieves."

"I believe as you do, my boy, and will send a man to the barn you speak of this very night, although so much time has now elapsed that I have no hope of finding anything crinating. However, regardless of what may happen, I believe we can show that the fakir was not the guilty party, and, to guard against a possible attack by your uncle, it will be necessary to know exactly where we can get bail in case you should be arrested."

"Then he can take me to jail?" Teddy asked, with quivering lips.

"If he proves what he claims to know there is no question that he will be able to cause your arrest; but whether he can send you to prison is an entirely different matter. I would now like to have a talk with Mr. Reaves, and shall see you before I leave the grounds. Do not be frightened; but continue your business as usual, and in a few moments I will give you full particulars as to what must be done in the event anything happens."

Teddy understood this to be an intimation that the interview was at an end, and he started toward the cane-board, the lawyer asking as he followed him:

"How shall I find your friend Dan?"

"Go down to the exhibit of the J. Stevens Arms and Tool Company in that yellow-roofed building, and you will see him showing model pocket rifles. I will go with you if you think there is any chance of missing him."

"I can find him without difficulty. Do not leave your place of business until after I have seen you again."

By this time they had arrived at the cane-board, where Mrs. Hargreaves, looking decidedly relieved in mind, was talking with Mr. Reaves.

The lawyer invited the merchant to accompany him, and as the two walked away Mrs. Hargreaves said:

"After talking with Mr. Reaves I will take back what I proposed regarding taking you home. It is not possible that anything but the right shall conquer in a case like this, and I believe you will come out all right, as a boy should who has always been as obedient and loving as you. It is time for me to be going now; but I will come back again in the morning."

"Then take this money with you, for I don't want any more in my pockets than is absolutely necessary," and Teddy counted out the contents of the box which served him as a "safe."

There was but little time for any lengthy leave-taking. The customers were plenty; Tim and his assistant had been working several hours without cessation, and Teddy felt that it was his duty to relieve them.

"You can trust Mr. Reaves, whatever happens," his mother said, as she kissed him goodby, "and I shall be back tomorrow to learn if you are all right."

"Don't worry about me," Teddy replied, cheerily. "Uncle Nathan can't have everything his own way, and he will soon

discover that fact."

It seemed to Teddy that his mother had but just left him, when a party of young men who had been talking in an apparently friendly manner directly in front of his place of business, suddenly began to quarrel, and before he was aware of what had happened his booth was overturned, and a fierce battle being waged upon the ground which he fancied belonged temporarily to him because of the money paid to the managers of the fair as rent.

Canes, knives, rings, and timbers were thrown violently about, and, while trying to save the property, Teddy and his clerk received several severe blows intended for some of the combatants.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SECOND ARREST.

When the fight began Teddy's first thought was that it had been prearranged by some one who wanted to do him an injury without taking the chances of being arrested on a charge of malicious mischief.

Tim believed it to be a scheme for robbing the money box, and while the combatants were struggling close around him he emptied the contents into his trousers pockets, regardless of the chance blows received meanwhile.

That both were wrong in their conjectures could be told later, as the fight assumed the proportions of a small riot, and the battle ground was soon shifted to an open space in front of the exhibition buildings.

It was nothing more than a causeless row such as is often witnessed at fairs where intoxicating beverages are sold, and which start from comparatively nothing, illustrating the proverb: "See what a great fire a little spark can kindle."

"This is goin' to knock our hundred dollars in the head," Tim said, ruefully, as he began to gather up the scattered stock when the combatants had surged to and fro until they were some distance from the wrecked cane-board. "It'll take an hour to straighten things out, an' all that time will be the same as lost."

"It might be worse," Teddy replied, philosophically, "and, besides, we shouldn't be able to do any business while that row is going on. If you hadn't thought of the money it might have been lost, for there were so many close around me that I couldn't get at the box."

"Oh, if you want to pick somethin' good out of the trouble, I'll help. This will give us a chance to shorten the board so the stock won't look quite so small."

The young fakirs were ready for business in considerably less time than they had fancied would be the case. Nearly every one on the grounds was attracted by the riot, and among those who came to the scene of the conflict was Dan.

Instead of watching the struggling, yelling throng, he helped Teddy and Tim restore the booth to order, and with such aid as the assistant could give the work was done very quickly.

Before the spectators had quieted down sufficiently to turn their attention to sport once more everything was ready for business, and when the constables had taken the ringleaders in the fight away, money began once more to roll into Teddy's coffers.

Before Dan returned to his own work he heard of all that had occurred since morning, and his comments on Uncle Nathan's behavior were more forcible than polite.

"He's an old fool what oughter be rode on a rail till he can't see, an' I'm goin' over to the Run before I start for home jest to give the duffer a piece of my mind."

"I don't believe that would do either you or him any good," Teddy replied, laughingly.

"I don't know what effect it'll have on him; but I'll feel a mighty sight better. He shows himself to be the worst swindler on the grounds when he tries to scare you into givin' him half you've made, for that's what his talk means."

"If he don't do any worse than threaten I won't say a word; but he's so mad there's no knowin' what'll happen."

"The lawyer will see that you pull through all right; but if trouble should come, be sure to send for me. I'll manage to get off somehow."

With this assurance Dan hurried back to the exhibition buildings, and Teddy was free to assist Tim in waiting upon the customers.

During the remainder of the afternoon the young fakirs had quite as much as they could attend to, and then, just as trade had so fallen off that Tim could wait upon the customers alone with the aid of the assistant, Teddy received a call from Mr. Harvey, the lawyer.

"Come here behind the booth where we can talk without being overheard," he said, peremptorily, and the boy obeyed at once, asking before the attorney had time to speak:

"Do you know if Uncle Nathan is goin' to do anything?"

"He is certainly trying very hard, and in case he should succeed in getting a warrant, you will demand of the officer

who serves it to be taken directly to Deacon Jones. Mr. Reaves and I have just had a talk with him, and in our absence he will render such assistance as you may require."

"That sounds as if you believed Uncle Nathan would be able to do as he threatened."

"It is well to be prepared for any emergency, since no man can say exactly what may happen. During the night two constables will go to the barn on the marshes where you saw the burglars carry some of the goods, although I do not think any good is liable to result from the visit, for the men have probably been frightened away by this time. Enough may be found, however, to prove the truth of your story, and that will be sufficient to give the thick-headed authorities an inkling that their judgment as to who the burglars are is not infallible."

"Have you seen Mr. Hazelton yet?"

"No; but I shall call on him before going home. The best thing which could happen now for all concerned would be the arrest of the man you call Long Jim, and to that end both you and Dan must keep a sharp lookout, for it is barely possible he may be bold enough to come on the grounds again."

"But what could we do in case we did see him?"

"Follow him quietly until you meet a constable, and then insist that he be arrested for swindling you out of fifteen dollars. There is not sufficient proof to connect him with the robbery here or at the Run; but I will take care that he is held long enough as a common swindler to enable us to sift the other matter. Let me see, you said Dan was with you at the time of the transaction in Waterville?"

"No; it was poor Sam, and now that he is dead I'm the only one who saw Long Jim there. Do you know if they have found Sam's body?"

"I think not; men have been dragging the creek all day, and the probabilities now are that some time will elapse before it can be recovered. I want you to be very careful during the remainder of to-day and to-night. Go to the tent where you sleep before dark, and do not venture outside under any provocation, no matter what message may be brought."

"What do you mean?" Teddy asked, in surprise.

"Nothing particular; I am only taking precautions, that is all. I shall be here to-morrow, and will see you then."

The lawyer turned to go, and had just passed out from behind the end of the booth when Teddy seized his arm, pulling him back very suddenly. "There's Long Jim now!" he whispered, excitedly. "See! That man over there by the striking machine!"

It was indeed the burglar whose partner had warned him against visiting the fair, or even showing himself in the vicinity during the daytime. It could be plainly seen that he was decidedly under the influence of liquor, and he swaggered to and fro as if in his drunken brain was the idea that no one would dare cause him trouble.

"Are you certain there is no mistake?" the lawyer asked, as he watched the man.

"I'd be able to recognize him anywhere, no matter how he was dressed, an' so would Dan, for Sam an' me pointed him out two or three times."

"Then the hardest portion of our work is finished. I shall have him arrested on the charge of swindling you, and can arrange it without the formality of first getting a warrant. It is now more necessary than ever that you should remain where I can find you readily at any hour of the day or night."

"Except when I go for supper, I'll be here or in the tent," Teddy replied, and then there was no further opportunity for conversation.

Long Jim had started leisurely, and on anything rather than a straight course, toward the grand stand, and Mr. Harvey followed so near that he could have placed his hand on the burglar's shoulder.

Teddy watched until the two were lost to view amid the throng, and then said to himself, with a sigh:

"I'll bet the lawyer can't find a constable, an' that Long Jim gets clear somehow. But what I don't understand is how he dares to come here."

He would have run down to tell Dan of the startling news had it not been for Mr. Harvey's injunction to remain in the places designated, and he was so nervous that only with the greatest difficulty could he wait upon an impatient customer.

An hour passed, and nothing had been heard from either the lawyer or the burglar.

The visitors remained later on this day than usual; but the tardy ones were departing, and it was with a decided sense of relief that Teddy began to pack up his stock for the night. Dan arrived before the work was finished, and his excitement was great when he learned of what had happened.

"Can't we go somewhere to find out if the man was arrested?" he asked, eagerly.

"I promised to be on hand in case the lawyer should want me."

"Then we'll get the stuff to the tent, go to supper, an' afterward I'll snoop 'round to hear the news."

All hands worked rapidly, and in ten minutes the three boys were at the boarding-house, eating as if each moment were of the utmost importance, when they overheard a conversation between two men at the next table which caused them no slight degree of relief and pleasure:

"Who was that drunken fellow Constable Ford lugged off this evening?" one of the men asked, and the other replied:

"A man who swindled a boy over at Waterville out of fifteen dollars."

"I didn't see any boy in the crowd."

"He wasn't there. Lawyer Harvey recognized the fellow, and insisted on his arrest, sayin' that the 'Squire already knew about the case."

"I thought at first it might be some one who had been robbing the stores around here."

"Oh, the burglar has been caught already, an' laid in jail since yesterday."

"But he was only arrested on suspicion."

"There'll be proof enough to convict him, I reckon, an' if there isn't he ought to be sent to jail for six months because of what he has done on the grounds."

Then the conversation was changed to a subject in which the boys had no interest, and Dan whispered to Teddy:

"That settles Long Jim, an' now if your lawyer is as smart as he appears to be it won't take long to show that Hazelton didn't have anything to do with the burglar tryin' to get me in jail," Teddy replied, with a sigh.

"Of course it will. Things are turning out all right after all, an' if poor Sam hadn't been drowned we'd have a reg'lar celebration to-night."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A THIRD ARREST.

When the boys returned to the museum tent from supper they had a long and interesting story to tell Mr. Sweet; but to their surprise, after the recital was concluded, he said calmly:

"I knew all of that except about the burglar's arrest."

"Why, how did you hear it?" Dan asked.

"The lawyer an' the merchant have been over here twice since noon, pumpin' me about Hazelton, an' tryin' to find out how you boys have behaved yourselves."

"Why did they want to know anything about us?" Teddy asked, in surprise.

"So's to make sure your stories were straight. When men like them take hold of a thing they don't want to run any chances of bein' fooled. What has been done about Sam?"

Dan could best answer this question, and he replied:

"The body hasn't been found; but I heard the manager of the Davis Boat Company's exhibit say that he should keep men at the work of draggin' the creek till the work was finished. I can't get through my head how he happened to capsize the craft, for she didn't seem to be cranky."

"That is something none of us will ever know," Mr. Sweet replied, solemnly, and then, as if to change the mournful subject, he asked: "How did business pan out to-day, Teddy?"

"I'll count up. We must have come pretty near to what you predicted; but we would have done a great deal better if it hadn't been for the big row. That made us lose at least an hour, to say nothin' of havin' six canes broken just when we needed every one in order to make a good show."

Then Teddy and Tim emptied the contents of their pockets on a piece of canvas, and the other occupants of the tent waited patiently for the result to be announced.

"It's ninety-four dollars and forty-five cents," the former said, after counting the money twice as if doubtful of the first result. "That's a big sum of money, but there's no chance of a mistake."

"You can figure that the row cost you six dollars," Mr. Sweet replied, puffing vigorously at his pipe. "I haven't been 'tendin' out on fairs these eight years without bein' able to name the amount of such a business as yours."

"We'd have had twenty-five more but for that row," Tim said, decidedly.

"You're wrong there, my boy," and the proprietor of the museum wore an air of one who "knows it all." "That is about as much as two boys can take in, an' you don't want to kick, for I've seen lots of fakirs come on to a fair ground with a better cane-board than yours an' not get expenses. Be thankful for what you've earned, an' hope that you can pay expenses to-morrow, for there won't be any too much money floatin' around after such a business as we've had to-day."

"I'm more than satisfied," Teddy replied, as he set aside the amount due Tim, and the latter appeared to be more than contented with having earned nine dollars and forty-four cents so easily.

"You can suck your thumbs from now out," the barker said, philosophically, "for the backbone of trade has been broken, an' the Peach Bottom fair is already numbered with the things of the past."

"Don't you think we'll do anything more?" Teddy asked.

"Oh, yes, there'll be a little to pick up until to-morrow night, but it won't amount to anything near like what has already been done, although it'll be clear profit."

"Since I am more than satisfied, there's no chance of being disappointed," Teddy replied, and at that moment the head of a stranger appeared between the flaps of canvas.

"Is there a boy named Teddy here?" the newcomer asked.

"Well, what do you want of him?" and Mr. Sweet sprang to his feet as if anticipating trouble.

"Nothing more than what Hazelton wanted me to say," was the reply, as the stranger entered, evidently thinking his search was at an end.

"And what is that?" the proprietor of the museum asked, motioning Teddy to remain silent.

"There's no need of all this secrecy with me, for I'm Hazelton's partner in everything except the give-away game," the stranger said, with a laugh. "It appears a man has been arrested by a party whom this boy Teddy knows, and I'm to say that he is to come to jail very early to-morrow morning."

Even now Mr. Sweet's suspicions were not allayed, and he asked, cautiously:

"Could you tell me what he's wanted for?"

"Lawyer Harvey will be there, and is going to talk with him where Hazelton can hear what is said."

"Is that all?"

"Everything; and if you see the boy, can I depend on your repeating the message?"

"Under the circumstances there can be no harm in taking every precaution," the proprietor of the museum replied, "and if your errand is finished, I may as well say that this is the boy Teddy whom Hazelton sent you to see."

"That's all right; there was no need of pointing him out; but since you have done so, I simply want to ask if he can spare the time to do as Hazelton and the lawyer wish?"

"Of course I can," and now Teddy spoke for himself. "Say that if nothing happens I'll be there."

"Have you heard whether your uncle has succeeded in getting a warrant?" the stranger asked.

"No; but Mr. Harvey seemed to think he might be able to do so, and I don't want to make any promises that can't be carried out."

"Then I'll count on your being there, but since leaving the jail I've heard enough to warrant my advising you to remain under cover to-night."

"Why?"

"Those fellows who started the fight when you got away with the money are swearing vengeance. I don't think it's likely they'll attack the tent, for, owing to the representations made by the lawyer, there'll be a big force of constables on duty to-night; but if you should venture outside the grounds it might be impossible to keep any engagement in the future."

"I wasn't thinkin' of leaving here," Teddy replied; but the mere fact that he ought not do so made him feel very uncomfortable.

"I couldn't be in any worse fix if I had committed some big crime," he said, bitterly, "and it is tough to feel like a criminal when a fellow is only trying to earn honest money."

"It isn't the rule that honest people fare the best," the stranger replied, with a laugh; "but I hope you'll come out on the top of the heap. At all events, my business here is finished and I'll go."

The folds of canvas dropped behind him, and Mr. Sweet said, musingly:

"It beats all how you boys have succeeded in getting yourselves mixed up in this affair. If I didn't know all the circumstances I'd say there must be some fire where there is so much smoke."

"The smoke isn't of our makin', an' Teddy's uncle can be blamed for the most of it," Dan said, angrily. "I only wish he was here to know my opinion of him."

"Are you talkin' about me?" Uncle Nathan asked, as he pushed aside the canvas and entered without so much as asking permission.

"That's exactly what I was doing," Dan replied, without any show of fear, "an' if you've been sneakin' 'round to listen, there's no need of my tellin' over ag'in jest what I think of a man who tries to frighten an honest boy into givin' up half of what he has made."

"An honest boy?" the old man repeated, with a sneer, and Teddy whispered to his friend:

"Don't say anything to make him angry, for I'll only get the worst of it."

"Of course you will," Uncle Nathan replied, having overheard the words. "When an ungrateful wretch like you conspires to rob the hand that has fed him he must expect to get the worst of it."

"I never took from you the value of a cent," Teddy said, stoutly, and Dan cried as he sprang to his feet:

"If there has been any attempt at robbery, you're the guilty one, for you've tried to steal half the money he made by threatening to have him arrested if he didn't divide his profits."

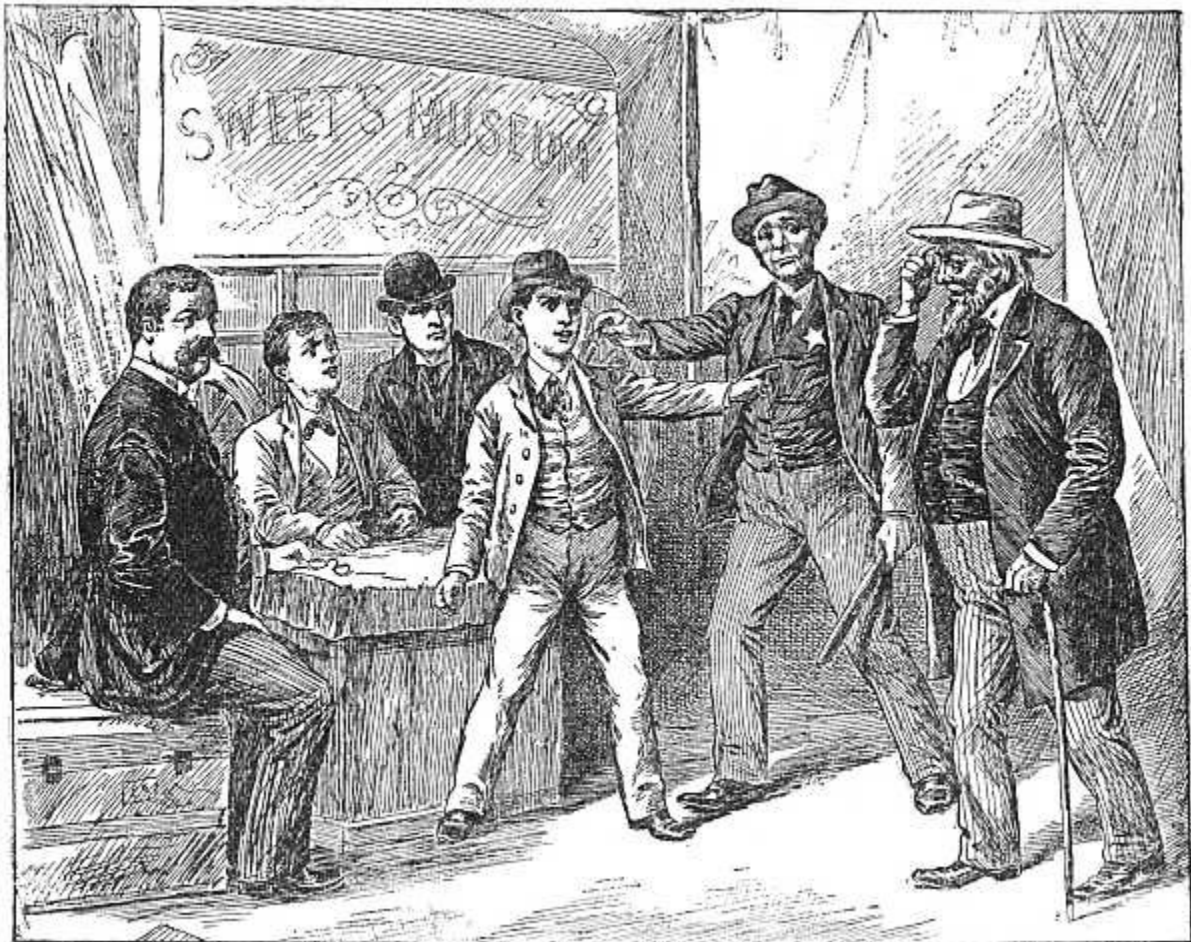
"That was only a business proposition," the old man replied, not in the least abashed, "and he has aided others in stealing from me."

"What do you want here?" Mr. Sweet cried, angrily. "This is my tent; I have paid for the privilege of putting it upon these grounds, and have the right to prevent such old hypocrites as you from entering without paying an admission."

"Look out that you do not come within reach of the law," Uncle Nathan replied, threateningly, stepping back quickly, as if expecting an attack. "I am here armed with the right to take this boy, and shall exercise it despite all that may be said. Come in, Mr. Officer."

In response to this call a constable entered, and Teddy's heart sank within him, for he understood that the long-deferred arrest was about to be made.

"There is your prisoner," the old man said, vindictively, as he pointed to the boy, "and the sooner you take him to jail where he belongs the sooner we shall be rid of a viper."



As the constable approached him, Teddy said, "I demand to be first taken to Deacon Jones!"

Teddy's grief and fear were so great that he could not speak, and even Dan appeared to have been made dumb by this show of authority; but Mr. Sweet was somewhat accustomed to such scenes, and he demanded:

"Show me the warrant. I do not propose to let any one be taken out of my tent by such an old reprobate as that until I

am satisfied it is done under the sanction of the law."

"Convince yourself," Uncle Nathan replied, as the constable held out a folded document. "That will show under what authority we act."

Sweet read it carefully, and handed it to the officer as he said to the old man:

"This shows that the constable has the right to take Teddy to prison; but as certain as there will be a sun in the sky tomorrow so certain will I aid him in making you suffer for doing this thing. You know he had nothing to do with the burglary committed at your store, and have only had this issued in the hope of defrauding him of what he has earned honestly."

"Talk is cheap," Uncle Nathan said, impatiently. "Officer, take your prisoner away unless you count on stayin' here all night."

The short parley between the proprietor of the museum and the accuser gave Teddy time to think of what the lawyer had said, and he added, as the constable approached him:

"I demand to be first carried to Deacon Jones'."

"Now what kind of a bee have you got in your bonnet?" the old man cried, displaying both surprise and fear. "I say you are to go to jail, an' that settles it."

"If he wants to see the deacon I'm bound to take him there," the constable said.

"Who's been makin' sich foolish talk to you?" Uncle Nathan screamed.

"Lawyer Harvey told me what the law was, an' I don't intend to get into any fuss by deprivin' a prisoner of his rights," was the stolid reply.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON BAIL.

When Uncle Nathan learned that the celebrated lawyer had made preparations for this move on his part he was literally beside himself with rage, and vowed that the warrant should be served and the prisoner taken to jail immediately, or he would see to it that the constable was deprived of his commission without delay.

"I've served the warrant," the man said, quietly, "an' now the prisoner is in my custody. You have no more to say what shall be done with him than that goat, so shut your mouth."

"I'll shut yours so close it won't be opened again for a month!" the old man screamed. "Do as I tell you, or take the consequences."

"And I'm goin' to give you the same advice," Mr. Sweet cried, as he advanced toward Uncle Nathan threateningly. "Now the boy has been arrested, you are an intruder here, an' I'll give you thirty seconds in which to get out; after that we'll make an example of such a reprobate."

"I'll go when I get ready, an' not a minute before. Lay a hand on me an' I'll have a warrant for you."

"If you can get it, well and good. I now order you out for the last time. In thirty seconds I'll guarantee you won't be in condition to walk."

While their employer had been speaking the barker and the clown silently ranged themselves by his side, ready for any commands which might be given, and the infuriated old man had sufficient sense left to let him understand it would be unsafe to linger.

"I'll serve you out before this thing is ended," he cried, shaking his fist in impotent rage as he went toward the flap, and Dan, who could control himself no longer, replied:

"You'd better begin on me, for I'm goin' to tell this thing to everybody who comes to the fair to-morrow, an' from what I've heard it wouldn't take much coaxin' to get the band from the Run up here, so's I could sing it. You're havin' a good time now; but there'll be a different side to the matter to-morrow."

Mr. Sweet had followed Uncle Nathan so closely, literally turning him out, that he could not reply while inside the canvas; but once in the open air, he made threats that would have frightened any one who did not know the motive by which they had been inspired.

Meanwhile the constable appeared disposed to take matters in the most comfortable manner. He asked Teddy why he wished to see Deacon Jones, and the boy said:

"I don't know; but Mr. Harvey told me that if anything happened to-night I was to see the deacon."

"Then we'll go there. Are you ready?"

Teddy thought of his money, and, fearing lest it might be taken from him, asked if he could hand something to Mr. Sweet.

"I think not," was the undecided reply. "The deacon will know, an' whatever he says I'll stand by."

"Don't bother about anything just now," the proprietor of the museum said. "We'll all go with you, an' there'll be plenty of time to make necessary arrangements before you're taken to jail."

Although the lawyer had assured him he could be involved in no serious trouble, the mere fact that he was under arrest sufficed to make Teddy wretched, and like one under sentence of death, he prepared to accompany the constable.

Dan and Tim intended to join the party, as was shown by their remaining very close to the prisoner, and only the barker and the clown were left to care for the tent.

Uncle Nathan was met on the outside, and he immediately began to insist that the boy be taken to jail at once; but the officer paid no attention to his ravings.

"If you don't hold your tongue I'll knock the whole top of your head off," Mr. Sweet whispered, brandishing his fists in the most threatening manner, and the old man cried, excitedly:

"Mr. Officer, I call upon you to bear witness that this man is threatening my life, and insist that you protect me from

insult."

"I've nothing to do with you," the constable replied, with a laugh. "The warrant has been served, an' all you've got to do is hold your horses till the case is called up in court."

"Wait till I get home once more, an' then we'll see that he's got a good deal to do with the case," Tim cried. "I'll spend every minute from then for a week tellin' the folks that he only did this to make Teddy give up half of what he made, an' it'll be a pretty poor kind of a chump who'll do any more tradin' at his store."

Uncle Nathan stepped toward the boy who had spoken so boldly as if he would inflict the direst punishment then and there; but he probably realized that this would prejudice his case, and contented himself by saying:

"We'll see whether the people at the Run will believe a couple of boys who have been in league with burglars, for you mustn't forget, Tim Jones, that I have proof you helped Teddy to carry away the burglar's money."

"If it'll do you any good I'll own up to the fact now," the boy replied. "It can't be so bad to do that as it is to arrest your own nephew because he won't give you half his money."

"Don't say anything more," Teddy whispered to his friend. "It's only makin' matters worse, an' he's got the upper hand of us all jest now."

"I don't know whether he has or not," the valiant Tim replied; "but at the same time it'll do him a world of good to let him hear the truth."

At this point Uncle Nathan appeared to understand that he was not coming out victor in this battle of tongues, and he wisely held his peace, saying not another word until the little party arrived at the home of Deacon Jones.

The manager of the fair was resting after a particularly hard day's work. More than one of the citizens of Peach Bottom had openly said he was responsible for the riot by allowing liquor to be sold on the grounds, and his greeting of the visitors was not calculated to assure the frightened Teddy.

"Well, what do you want?" he cried, roughly, as they entered his library. "If it's anything concerning the fair I won't open my mouth. A man can't be driven to death with work and then disturbed at all hours of the night, simply to give the fools in this town a chance to make trouble."

"All I know about it is that I arrested this boy, and he insisted on being brought to you, saying it was Lawyer Harvey's advice," the constable began, and the angry deacon immediately began to appear interested.

"Is this your nephew, Nathan?" he asked of the old man, who now had a smirk of confidence on his face.

"I'm sorry he is, deacon, an' after I set him up in business he goes ag'in me by givin' information to burglars, who rob me."

"And you have had him arrested?"

"I felt obliged to in the interest of society."

"That's a lie," Mr. Sweet interrupted, angrily. "He tried to make the boy pay him half he earned on the fair grounds, and has done this thing only because Teddy refused."

"We won't go into the details of the case, because I am not a magistrate," the deacon replied, with a majestic wave of the hand. "Mr. Officer, tell the 'Squire that I am prepared to go bail to any amount, and ask if the business can't be conducted here, for I'm too tired to go out of doors unless it is absolutely necessary."

"What?" the old man screamed. "Will you answer for that little villain's appearance at court?"

"That's what I said, Nathan. This affair is none of my business other than I have stated; but I must say you are goin' a leetle too far, not only in my opinion, but in that of others, an' it may prove a costly job for somebody before it's finished."

The old man was literally speechless.

He could not understand why the deacon should have turned against him so suddenly, and the last words made him decidedly uneasy.

He was not to be silenced without a struggle, however. After the first surprise had died away he said, with a comical assumption of dignity:

"I will see whether I'm to be browbeaten in this manner. The 'Squire does not dare to release the boy on bail, and I shall tell him so."

With these words he left the house hurriedly, and the constable said to the deacon:

"If you will write a line to the 'Squire, saying that you're ready to go bail, I do not think there will be any necessity of troubling you again to-night."

This suggestion was immediately acted upon, and the weary manager of the fair penned the following words:

I am ready to enter security to any amount for the appearance at court of Edward Hargreaves, and if you should not consider my bond sufficient, I am empowered to say that John Reaves, of Waterville, will add his name, therefore there can be no good reason for committing him to jail, since we are both responsible for the prisoner until the bond can be executed.

A. JONES

Having received this the constable departed with the prisoner and his friends, and once on the outside he said, confidently:

"The matter is settled, no matter how much old Nathan may rave. Both Mr. Reaves an' the deacon have got the 'Squire by the nose, and he must dance to their fiddlin'."

That this assertion was correct Teddy realized a few moments later when he was ushered into the 'Squire's dining-room, and the latter, without paying the slightest attention to the prisoner, said to the officer:

"I have just heard that you served the warrant I issued, and then took the boy to Deacon Jones' house. Is that correct?"

"Straight as a string, 'Squire. Lawyer Harvey told him if anything happened to go there, an' I thought he had a right to look up bail before being lugged off to jail. Here's what the deacon's got to say about it."

The 'Squire took the paper which the officer held out, and after reading it, said benignly:

"You were quite correct in doing what you did, Mr. Constable. This is quite sufficient guarantee that he will be produced when wanted, and you may let him go. Give me the papers, and I will indorse them."

After this formality had been gone through with the constable said to Mr. Sweet:

"That settles the matter so far as Teddy is concerned, and with such men as the deacon, Mr. Reaves, and Lawyer Harvey to back him, I don't believe old Nathan will make any too much out of this job."

"You are free to go where you please," the 'Squire added, and the young fakir with his friends left the house, wondering very much at the amount of influence which, unsolicited, had been exerted in Teddy's behalf.

As for the boy himself, he was far from feeling comfortable in mind. Unless the burglary could be brought home to Long Jim it did not seem possible that Hazelton could be set free, and this last was absolutely necessary in order to establish his own innocence.

It was a great consolation for him to be with such good friends, however, and each in turn tried to cheer him, but without success until Mr. Sweet said:

"There's no question of your getting out of the scrape with flying colors, and to celebrate I'm goin' to give a regular dinner party to every decent fakir on the grounds. Come over, boys, an' help me get ready. Business has been so good to-day that I can afford to indulge in a little extravagance."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FAKIRS' PARTY.

The idea of a party in the museum tent, where there would be no guests save fakirs, struck Teddy as being very comical, and he laughed heartily despite the fact that he was still virtually a prisoner in the meshes of the law; but at the same time he did not think Mr. Sweet was really in earnest when he made the proposition.

It was not many moments, however, before he understood that the party was to be given in the most elaborate manner possible.

On arriving at the tent Mr. Sweet sent the bouncer out with invitations to such of the fakirs as remained on the grounds all night, or lived in the immediate vicinity, and at the same time the clown started for the town in order to purchase refreshments.

"Now, you boys are to take right hold an' help the best you know how," the proprietor of the museum said as he pulled off his coat and vest preparatory to making ready for the feast. "If them as comes want to sit down it must be on the ground, owing to the lack of chairs, therefore it don't make much difference if the table is a trifle high."



"We have only one knife," said Mr. Sweet, to the amusement of the boys, "and it must serve for all hands."

To the surprise of the boys he proceeded to convert the wagon into a "festal board" by first pulling it into the center of the tent, and then removing the sides. Over the floor of this newspapers were spread, and two plates, three forks, one knife, and four tin dippers were placed on the impromptu cloth.

"The provisions will be cut ready for eating," Mr. Sweet explained, "so one knife must serve for all hands, and it won't hurt any of the crowd if they're obliged to take turns using the dippers."

The clown returned before the guests began to assemble. He brought cold sausage, sliced ham, cold fried potatoes, sweet crackers, cake, pie, and a quantity of lemons and sugar.

Contrary to his expectations, Mr. Sweet did not think this assortment sufficient for the kind of a dinner he proposed to give, and the messenger was forced to return in search of cheese, pickled pig's feet, sardines, and milk for the coffee.

Matters were in a decided state of confusion when the first of the guests arrived. Mr. Sweet, not troubled by the absence of dishes, had placed the various articles on the wagon-table in the brown paper coverings as they had been received, and it was upon his skill as a maker of coffee that he based his reputation as a host.

Therefore everything was neglected for this one important thing, and the proprietor was standing over the oil stove with a look of grave responsibility on his face when the owner of the envelope game and his assistant arrived.

"The boys will take care of you," he said, hurriedly, bending over the huge pot to inhale the odor, in order to know exactly how the berries were adapting themselves to the infusion, and, much to his surprise, Teddy found himself the one especial feature of the party.

All on the ground had evidently heard of his arrest, for each new arrival asked concerning the events of the evening, and, what was more to the purpose, so far as he was concerned, all seemed to think his troubles were only temporary.

"You'll come out of it all right," the manager of the largest sandwich booth said, confidently, as he entered with his hat on one side of his head and a cigar held in his mouth at an angle of forty-five degrees. "I heard of your uncle last year, when he tried to make trouble for a friend of mine in the spittoon game, an' you can bet your bottom dollar that the people here are not going to take much stock in what he says."

"It seems they did, so far as to issue a warrant for my arrest," Teddy replied, with a mirthless smile.

"But that won't amount to anything. I hear you have got John Reaves as a friend, an' he comes pretty near runnin' things to suit himself in Peach Bottom. He helped my friend out of the scrape your uncle put him into, an' folks say there's no love lost between him an' Nathan Hargreaves."

"I want to get out of my trouble simply on the ground that I am not guilty," Teddy replied. "If I am charged with aiding burglars, there's precious little consolation in being set free simply because people do not like the man who made the charge."

"Nobody believes you guilty, and for the matter of that I'm certain Hazelton had nothing to do with the job. His game ain't exactly square; but he don't go around breaking into stores."

Teddy was on the point of telling that Long Jim had been arrested because of the burglaries committed; but he remembered in time that this fact was as yet a secret, and remained silent.

The man who leased the only "Great African Dodger" was the next to arrive, and he also seemed to think it necessary to condole with the young fakir in his troubles, as did the remainder of the guests, and by the time all were assembled Teddy began to think his experience was only such as every other person in the tent had undergone at some time in his career.

"You see this is the way the matter stands," the whip man said, confidentially, while Mr. Sweet was bending all his energies to mixing the lemonade. "People think fakirs are the worst class of men in the world, whereas, if the matter was sifted right down, they'd find the class as a whole was honest because they couldn't afford to be otherwise. I'm not talking now about those who run strong games, like Hazelton; but ourselves who do a legitimate business. You've got canes an' knives to sell, while I deal in whips; now all we want is a fair show to dispose of our goods, an' we know everything must be done on the square, or there's bound to be trouble sooner or later, consequently we keep straight, an' take all the abuse which those who have come to swindle the folks deserve. Why, what, I ask you, would the managers of these fairs do if they couldn't get us to come up with our money for privileges? They couldn't pay expenses, an' that's the whole amount of the story. They run after us, an' yet when we come there's the same old howl about swindlers."

The man talked until he was literally forced to stop for lack of breath, and Teddy had not so much as spoken; but proved a good listener, which was all his condoler appeared to expect of him.

When the clown returned with the last installment of eatables there was nothing to prevent the assembled crowd from partaking of Mr. Sweet's hospitality. The coffee was done to a turn; the lemonade was neither too sour nor too sweet,

and the proprietor of the museum summoned his guests to the feast by saying:

"Now turn to an' fill yourselves up. It ain't often I do this sort of thing; but somehow or other I've got a reg'lar admiration for our cane-board fakir, an' after comin' out as he has to-night it seems only right we should kinder spread ourselves. There's no liquor in the tent, which is as it should be, for I'm a temperance man, an' them as wants it can make hogs of themselves somewhere else. Take hold hearty, an' remember that this layout is in honor of them as did a good turn to the whole gang by savin' the lives of the women what would likely have drowned if there hadn't been any fakirs in the country."

This was an unusually long speech for the proprietor of the museum, and when it was ended he set an example to his guests by attacking the eatables as if he had not indulged in a square meal since the fair was opened.

Each person present imitated him, and Tim whispered to Teddy, when his mouth was so full of cake that it was only with the greatest difficulty his words could be understood:

"This is what I call a great snap, an' when I've been fakin' at the fairs long enough to get some money ahead I'll give fellers like us a good chance to fill up, the same as Mr. Sweet has done."

Dan was equally enthusiastic. In all his experience, which extended over two years at the very least, he declared that he had never seen so much done for a boy, and concluded by saying:

"There's no question, Teddy, but that you're a big gun here, an' I'll advise you to keep right on in this business."

"I've had enough of it," was the reply. "Such times as these are very nice; but think of what may happen when I'm brought up for trial. Who knows but Uncle Nathan can succeed in makin' folks think I'm guilty of helpin' the burglars, an' then what'll be the consequences?"

"I know he can't do anything of the kind, an' that's enough," was the confident reply; but yet it failed to satisfy the boy who had been bound over to appear at court.

The entire party appeared to be having the jolliest kind of a jolly time; but ever before Teddy's mental vision came the picture of himself in prison, and even the fact that Long Jim had been arrested failed to render him confident as to the final result.

Again and again was he called upon to reply as one after another wished him good luck in the case, and the amount of lemonade which was consumed on each occasion caused the clown to make a third visit to the town in order to purchase the wherewithal to satisfy the demands of the guests.

It was nearly midnight when the last of the revelers departed and the boys were called upon to help set the interior of the tent to rights.

"It hasn't been sich a bad time after all," Mr. Sweet said, musingly, as Teddy and Dan aided him in wheeling the wagon into place. "A man can remember an evening like this with pleasure, when liquor has been kept out of the bill of fare, an' who shall say that we're not better off than if our legs were so tangled as to make walking an impossibility?"

The barker's red nose was slightly elevated, much as if its owner could explain why spirits were superior to lemon-juice and water; but Mr. Sweet's question remained unanswered, and the party set about making the final preparations for the night.

"Poor Sam ain't here to be troubled by the goat, so we can set him loose," the proprietor of the museum said as he unfastened the rope from the neck of his pet.

"He'll have a great time pickin' up odds an' ends between now an' daylight, an' then feel so lazy that it'll be hard work to make him do his tricks."

"Do you suppose Uncle Nathan will be around in the morning?" Teddy asked as he lay down by the side of Dan and Tim.

"Not a bit of it; he got sich a dose to-night that I don't count on seem' him ag'in till this fair is ended, an' then I'm going to take a trip over to the Run for the express purpose of givin' him a piece of my mind."

"But suppose he should come, what shall I say?"

"Pay no attention to the old fool, an' above all, don't let him trap you into talking. Mr. Harvey will be here to-morrow, an' he can post you better than ever I could."

"Don't fuss about the thing at all," Dan replied, philosophically. "There's plenty here who know you hadn't anything to

do with the burglaries, an' he won't have as much as a friend by the time the trial is ended."

"Dan comes pretty nigh being right," Mr. Sweet added, "an' now I want all hands to go to sleep, for there's one more day of this fair, an' we need to be somewhere near fresh, because to-morrow the dollars won't tumble without a good deal of coaxing. Good-night."

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN HIDING.

That the incidents may be related as nearly as possible in the order of their occurrence it is time to return to the spot where the burglars are in hiding.

It will be remembered that we last saw Sam after Phil had fallen asleep, and he was feigning unconsciousness lest Long Jim, having nothing else to do, should take it into his ugly head to administer the promised flogging.

Although Sam's eyes were apparently closed, he took good care to keep strict watch on the burglar; but for what seemed a very long time he saw nothing to cause any apprehensions, and was just on the point of going to sleep in reality when Jim asked, as he gave the boy a vicious kick on the side:

"Where's the grub?"

"I don't know. You put it away after finishing your dinner."

"Oh, I remember now," and the burglar, still considerably more than half stupefied by the amount of liquor he had drunk, arose to his feet so unsteadily that it seemed as if only the lightest touch would be necessary to send him headlong.

After a short search the man found that which he wanted, and proceeded to make a hearty meal, regardless of the hungry glances which the boy bestowed upon him.

"Don't think I'm goin' to give you any," he said, with a leer, as he concluded the repast, "You're lucky to be alive, an' that's enough for sich a duffer. I'll put this stuff back, an' you'll have every bone in your body broken if you so much as smell of it."

Sam made no reply. He had already learned that there are very many times when silence is indeed "golden."

"I've made up my mind to see what can be done at the fair," Jim said, as he lighted his pipe with great deliberation. "Phil thinks he's the only smart man in the world, an' it's time to show him what a mistake he's been makin' all his life. Why don't you say something?" he cried, angrily, as Sam continued silent.

"I don't know what you want me to say. If you're goin' that settles it; I sha'n't be any better off."

"You can stake your life on that, for while I'm a gentleman an' behave myself as such, Phil is a reg'lar brute, an' will make things mighty uncomfortable for a sneak like you."

Sam thought, but was very careful not to say, that it was hardly possible for a boy to have a worse master than the alleged gentleman in front of him, and the burglar continued, as he arose to his feet:

"I want to leave without wakin' Phil, but you must do it as soon as I push off from the shore, for we don't intend to give you a chance of slipping away. I shall watch mighty close, an' if he isn't on his feet before I'm a dozen yards out into the creek you'll get a reminder from this," and the man ostentatiously displayed a revolver.

"I don't count on runnin' off," Sam, replied, thoroughly frightened by the threat. "I can stay here till you get ready to let me go, because I've got to, an' I'm not sich a fool as to git into any worse scrape."

"Now you're talkin' somethin' like sense, an' if you keep on in this way I'll see to it that you don't have any harder time than a detective oughter expect; Phil will be on his ear when he knows I've gone, an' you must tell me all he says. Remember that if he isn't on his feet before I've got beyond range, I'll use your head for a target."

With this threat the burglar staggered out of the thicket, and Sam began to speculate as to whether he should make one supreme effort to escape before his other captor awakened.

A second glance at the weapon decided him in the negative, however, and he meekly stepped to the edge of the woods in order to obey the instructions given.

Despite Jim's apparent intoxication he watched the boy closely, still holding the revolver ready for use, and after pushing the boat into the stream he cried:

"Now go ahead, an' let me see him in about two minutes, or I'll fill you full of bullets."

If Sam had been a brave boy he would have made a dash for liberty at this moment; but he was in nearly every sense of

the word a coward, and obeyed the order literally.

"Who's there?" Phil asked, angrily, as the boy shook him vigorously.

"Jim told me to make you get up, or he'd shoot," Sam replied, meekly.

"Make me get up? What time is it?"

"I don't know; but it doesn't seem to be more than three o'clock."

"Where's Jim?"

"Jest startin' for the fair grounds, an' if you don't show yourself pretty soon he's sure to shoot me."

"There wouldn't be any particular harm in that, for you deserve it; but it can't be possible the fool is goin' to show himself in daylight when more than one is lookin' for him."

"That's what he said," and Sam, fearing lest the half-drunken burglar would begin his pistol practice, seated himself behind the largest tree that might protect him from the bullets.

Now that Phil was awake, he did not lose any further time in talking, but ran out to where he could command a view of the creek, and once more Sam had an opportunity for escape which he did not dare to embrace.

"Come back here, an' don't make a fool of yourself," Jim's partner cried, angrily, as he saw the man pulling leisurely from the bank.

"What's crawlin' on you? Don't I know my business?"

"Not if you count on goin' up there before dark."

"That's jest what I intend to do, so don't screech so much."

"Come back, I tell you, or it'll be all up for both of us!"

"I've been in this business long enough to know it," was the reply, as Jim continued to row, increasing each instant the distance between himself and the shore.

"Now, don't spoil a good thing," Phil said, pleadingly, and, understanding that this conversation might be continued for a short time, Sam plucked up sufficient courage to make an attack upon the provisions.

He took from the general store a large piece of cheese, some crackers and as much meat as he believed would suffice to make a hearty meal, after which he hid the lot near the tree behind which he was hiding.

Then he crept back to his former position, and listened to the conversation between his captors.

Phil alternately coaxed and threatened his partner; but all to no purpose, as could be told by the tones of the latter's voice while he pulled up stream, and the baffled burglar returned to the camping place absolutely furious with rage.

"This comes of my bein' so foolish as to bring that fool liquor," he said half to himself. "It's mighty lucky he didn't know I had more than one bottle."

Then he took from one of his pockets a second flask, refreshing himself with a portion of the contents before asking:

"What did he say to you?"

"Nothin' except that he was goin' up to the fair," Sam replied, timidly.

"But what made him tell you to waken me?"

"I s'pose that was so I couldn't have a chance to run away."

"What else did he say?"

"That I was to tell him jest how you took his leavin'."

"Well, if he's lucky enough to get back, tell him I said he was the biggest fool that ever walked on two legs. Them chums of your'n are sure to spot him, an' it's ten to one he's pinched before sunset."

Sam did not understand what the man meant by the term "pinched," but under the circumstances he hardly thought it safe to inquire, and the angry burglar continued:

"We'll make ready to get out of this if he isn't back by daylight, an' while there's nothin' else to do you'd better put that stuff under ground, for there's no knowin' now when we'll be able to take it away."

The spade was near at hand ready for use, and while Phil alternately smoked and drank from the bottle, Sam set about burying the plunder.

This man was quite as hard a taskmaster as the one who had just departed, and the boy was forced to work as he had probably never done before, until sufficient of an excavation had been made to conceal the goods.

Under the direction of the burglar Sam covered the different packages with earth; did his best to hide all traces of his work, and when it was so dark that he could no longer see to move about was allowed to rest.

During this time Phil had been drinking and smoking, with the result that he could hardly speak plainly when the task was accomplished, and so intoxicated did he appear to be that Sam thought it safe to eat the food he had concealed.

"Keep on talkin' so's I'll know where you are, or on goes the ropes an' gag again," Phil cried, and the boy obeyed, repeating over and over the same words in order to satisfy his suspicious captor.

After eating a hearty meal, Sam succeeded in mustering sufficient courage to admit of his thinking about attempting to escape.

From the manner in which the burglar spoke he knew it could not be very much longer before the man would be so completely under the influence of liquor as to render him helpless, and he said to himself:

"If I could get the rope around his hands an' legs I'd soon be out of this place."

"What's that you are saying?" Phil cried, angrily.

"Nothin'; I was only doin' as you told me, talkin' so's you'd know where I was."

"I'll save all that trouble," and the man lurched to his feet as he picked up the rope.

"Please don't tie me ag'in," Sam pleaded. "I won't try to git away."

"I'll go bail that you don't after I'm through with you. Put out your hands."

Phil was yet capable of mischief, even though his brain was clouded, and Sam did not dare to disobey.

He suffered himself to be tied without making any remonstrance, and as the burglar staggered to his former resting place, the boy tested the bonds.

Previously he had been lashed in such a manner that it was impossible to move hand or foot, but now he soon realized that he could do both, and the happy thought came that he might free himself with but little difficulty if a favorable opportunity for escape should present itself.

"Now you're fixed," Phil said, half to himself, "an' I may as well take things comfortable till we're certain that that fool of a Jim is settled."

"Are you goin' to leave here to-night?" Sam asked, more for the purpose of learning how far the man was on the road to intoxication than for information.

"If he ain't here by twelve o'clock we'll know the jig is up, an' skip so's to be out of the way before any one can come sneakin' around for the stuff."

"Then if Jim isn't back by that time, an' he keeps on drinkin', I'll take all the chances," Sam said to himself, and from that instant he strained every nerve to learn how nearly the burglar had succeeded in making a worse brute of himself than nature intended.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A FAILURE.

Tired though Teddy was, a long time elapsed after the conclusion of the fakirs' feast before he could close his eyes in slumber.

Now that the excitement of the party had died away, the fact that he was a prisoner, suffered to remain outside the prison only because men of wealth were willing to guarantee he would respond to the call of the court, came into his mind even more vividly than at the time of the arrest, and despite all the words of cheer which had been spoken he really began to believe Uncle Nathan could show plausible proof of his guilt.

Under almost any other circumstances he would have speculated upon what should be done with the large amount of money he had already earned, and rejoiced at the thought that he could supply his mother with what she might need for the present, at all events.

The profits of the cane and knife boards were hardly thought of on this night while the one painful fact stood before him so prominently and menacingly.

His companions had been asleep many hours before slumber visited his eyelids, and so heavy was his heart even while in dreamland that he awoke with the first dawn of day, and aroused the others to the last day's work they would be called upon to do at the Peach Bottom fair during the present season.

"Why is it that you have turned out so early?" Mr. Sweet asked, in a sleepy tone, rising to his feet as the only effectual method of driving the drowsiness from his eyelids.

"I sha'n't feel much like sleeping till I know how the case is coming out," Teddy replied, sadly.

"There is no need to worry with such friends as you have got. Put it right out of your mind until business closes to-night, for there's a big pile of work to be done if you expect to make much money."

"I wish I could," Teddy said, with a long-drawn sigh as he aroused Tim and Dan.

Half an hour later the three boys were eating what it was believed would be their last meal in the very unsatisfactory boarding-house, and Teddy's place of business was the first opened on that morning.

There were no more early visitors; but the fakirs who had been present at the feast on the evening previous gathered around, all appearing very eager to spend money, and trade was as lively as it had been on any other morning.

The crowd bought rings and threw them recklessly until each man had spent considerably more than a dollar, when Teddy suddenly realized that this sudden passion for canes only arose from a desire to aid him. Then he said, decidedly:

"There's no need of you fellows doin' this. I know you want to see me out of the scrape; but I've made a lot of money already, an' don't want to take yours."

"You can't have too much, my boy," one of them said with a laugh, "and we want to see you go away with a pile. Trade has been boomin' for all hands, an' it would be kinder rough if we couldn't have a little fun now the fair is the same as over."

This did not satisfy Teddy, and he continued to expostulate against the generosity; but all to no purpose. The fakirs played until a sufficient number of visitors had arrived to warrant their opening the other booths, and then Tim and Teddy were left alone, Dan having started for the exhibition building some time previous.

Until ten o'clock there was no more than work enough to keep one boy moderately busy, and Teddy experienced a deep sense of relief as Mr. Harvey came up to the stand with a cheery "good morning."

"I hear that your Uncle Nathan succeeded in carrying out his threat," the visitor said, as if speaking about what was a very trifling matter.

"Yes, sir; an' do you think he can send me to prison?"

"Not a bit of it. You are under bail, and I venture to predict that he will not carry it to court, for he has sufficient sense to know it may prove a very expensive job. We sent our men to the barn on the marshes last night."

"What did you find?" Teddy asked, eagerly.

"More than I expected. There were no goods in the building, but some have evidently been buried there, and this fact, together with the evidence that boats have been drawn up on the shore recently, proves your story as to what was seen when you boys followed the two men to be correct."

"The other fellow has run away, I suppose."

"I think he is yet in the immediate vicinity, otherwise Jim would be willing to talk."

"Have you seen him since he was arrested?"

"I have just come from the jail. I told him of the evidence we already had to connect him with the burglary, and that we should push him hard in the interest of you and Hazelton. He understands that there is an opportunity to turn State's witness, but he absolutely refuses to speak on any subject. Therefore I fancy his partner has not yet got away."

"Then there has been no good done in arresting him," Teddy said, mournfully.

"That is where you are making a mistake. I have prepared an affidavit for you and Dan to swear to, and shall endeavor to have a warrant issued at once charging him with burglary, so he can't give us the slip in case he gets clear in the matter of swindling."

"Do you want Dan an' I now?"

"Yes; go after him. I will only keep you ten or fifteen minutes."

Teddy turned to go toward the exhibition buildings, but halted an instant to ask:

"Have you seen my uncle this morning?"

"No, but I shall do so later in the day, and after we have a little conversation I do not think he will be so eager to see you in prison."

The lawyer's confident manner had very much to do with taking the load of sorrow from Teddy's mind, and he looked almost cheerful as he asked of the manager of the Stevens exhibit that Dan be allowed to accompany him, explaining the reason for making the request.

"Of course he can go," the gentleman replied, readily. "Trade won't be so good to-day but that he can be spared as well as not, and even if it was rushing, he should have permission to leave."

When the boys were at the cane-board once more Mr. Harvey hurried them away to the magistrate's office, and there a long document was read, which described in detail all they had seen on the day when Sam first gave an exhibition of his skill as a detective.

They marveled not a little that the lawyer should have remembered so well every trifling incident. Nothing, however apparently unimportant, had escaped him, and, as Dan said:

"It is written down better than if he had really been with us."

This document was sworn to and signed by both, after which Mr. Harvey told them that they might return to work, adding as he turned to Teddy:

"The man who has been arrested on your complaint will have a hearing to-morrow, and it is absolutely necessary you should be at this office as early as nine o'clock. I don't know whether Dan will be allowed to tell what he has heard Sam say regarding the matter, but he had better come with you."

"I'll be on hand," the young fakir replied. "Do you know when I'm to be tried?"

"That case won't come up for some time in view of the evidence your lawyer is collecting," the 'Squire said.

"Don't worry about it, for I think the real burglars will soon be caught."

"An' does Mr. Hazelton have to stay in jail all the time?"

"There is no other way out of it, since he hasn't got friends who can go bail for him."

Teddy wanted very much to ask permission to see the prisoner, but inasmuch as he was accused of being equally guilty with the fakir it hardly seemed just the proper thing to make the request, and he left the office, followed by Dan, who said, as they gained the open air:

"You ain't goin' to have half so much trouble as you think, Teddy. Anybody can see that even the 'Squire is on your side, although he did issue the warrant, an' the proof must be mighty strong to make any of 'em believe you did anything against the old miser. But this keeps us here on the grounds another day, doesn't it?"

"Yes, an' if Mr. Sweet packs up his tent to-night, we'll have to hunt for a place to sleep in the village."

"That don't worry me very much. I've made a good week's work out of the fair, an' can afford to spend a little money."

"I shall pay all the bills, of course," Teddy replied, quickly. "It wouldn't be any more'n right because you are goin' to stay to help me."

Dan was quite positive he would pay his own bills, and his companion equally certain he should not; but there was little chance for discussion, since they had arrived opposite the grand stand by this time, and were hailed by Deacon Jones, who looked as if he considered himself the one important personage on the grounds as he said:

"I want both of you boys to be here at exactly two o'clock. Don't fail to come, no matter how much business you may have on hand."

"What's the matter?" Teddy asked, immediately thinking some new trouble threatened him.

"There will be plenty of time for explanation after you get here," was the mysterious reply, and then the deacon signified that the interview was at an end by turning to speak with some gentlemen who had been watching the boys closely.

"What do you suppose is up now?" Teddy asked with a sigh, and Dan replied, mournfully:

"I'm sure I don't know," but in his own mind he was convinced that the deacon intended to surrender the boy whose surety he had appeared willing to become on the evening previous.

Teddy was so disturbed by dismal forebodings that Dan was very careful to hide his suspicions, since it could do only harm to discuss them, and the two parted, feeling as if Uncle Nathan had outwitted Mr. Harvey.

On retuning to his place of business Teddy did not have the heart to wait upon the customers, and after telling Tim what had been said to him, he added:

"I can't work; it's no use to try. There must have been something new come up, an' I won't be able to show that I'm innocent of robbing the store."

Dan could give him no consolation, for he also felt that matters were approaching a dangerous crisis, and he simply said:

"Loaf around, old fellow, an' I'll look out for the work here. Try to put it out of your mind, for things won't be made better by worryin' over 'em."

Just at this moment Teddy's mother arrived. She had heard all the particulars concerning the arrest and subsequent release, therefore began at once to sympathize with her son.

"Then you know what the deacon is goin' to do?" Teddy asked.

This was something of which Mrs. Hargreaves was ignorant, but upon being told, appeared even more distressed than her son, thus increasing instead of lightening his troubles.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TESTIMONIAL.

It was impossible for Teddy to follow Tim's advice to "loaf around."

His heart was so full of sorrow that his greatest desire was to go where those who might believe he had been a partner of the burglars could not see him; but since that was impossible, if he intended to obey the deacon's injunctions and present himself at the grand stand at the specified time, the next best thing was to remain behind the booth where his mother tried her best to cheer him.

"It can't be possible that anything to your disadvantage has occurred, Teddy," she said as she held his hand for mutual sympathy. "Mr. Reaves would have sent me word at once if that had happened."

"Perhaps he doesn't know about it. Uncle Nathan may have been talking with the deacon again, an' turned him against me."

"I don't believe it would be possible for him to do such a thing. His reputation is not so good that people could put faith in all he says, more especially in regard to this case."

"Then if he didn't do it some one else has, an' that makes it all the worse," Teddy replied, as he tried to force back the tears.

At this moment the sorrowing ones were startled by hearing the voice of the man whom they had every reason to call their enemy, and an instant later Uncle Nathan stood before them.

"Well," he said in what sounded more like a snarl than anything else, "you see the old skinflint did jest what he promised, an' he'll see to it that the deacon don't stay on your bail very long unless I get my rights."

"What do you mean by your rights?" Mrs. Hargreaves asked.

"I lent this ungrateful boy the money to start him in a business where he's made more in a week than I ever could in a year. Then he helped people to rob me, an' after all that I made what any man must call a fair offer. See how much I've lost by him, an' then think of my offerin' to straighten everything out by goin' in as his partner."

"Why didn't you do this before the fair opened?"

"I couldn't tell how it would turn out," the old man began, and then realizing that he was admitting something to his discredit, he added, quickly, "I mean I hadn't lost my money then, an' never suspected how he would wrong me."

It seemed as if these last words drove Teddy to desperation, and he no longer-remembered the respect due to age.

"Look here," he cried, angrily, rising, and standing directly in front of Uncle Nathan, "if you believe I'm a burglar, you can't want to be my partner. It was only after the fact of my having made considerable money was known that you offered any trade. If the venture had been a losing one you are the last person who would have taken hold of it. Now I'm under arrest on a charge made by you, who know I am innocent, an' we'll put an end to all this talk. Don't come where my mother and I am; do the very worst you can, an' some day I'll have my innings."

"You threaten, eh?"

"That's exactly what I'm doing. I have leased this piece of ground until to-morrow, and warn you that it'll be mighty uncomfortable if you show your nose here again. Go now an' go quick!"

"That's right, Teddy," Tim shouted in a tone of delight from the opposite side of the booth. "Give it to him hot, an' I'll do my share. If you don't want to tackle the job till after the trial, say the word an' I'll sail in, for it gives me a pain to see him around."

Teddy made no reply to this generous offer; but Uncle Nathan stepped back very quickly as if fearing an immediate attack.

"You won't be so bold to-morrow," he snarled, shaking his fist in impotent rage, and then he disappeared from view amid the crowd that had begun to gather.

Both Teddy and his clerk thought it very singular that business should be so good on this day, when the majority of the other fakirs were comparatively idle, and also in view of what had been said against the proprietor of the cane-

board.

Yet the people gathered around by scores, all intent on patronizing the boys, and at the same time embracing every opportunity to display their good will.

Teddy and his mother remained partially screened from the gaze of the curious until nearly two o'clock, when Dan, looking decidedly troubled, arrived.

"I suppose we've got to go to the grand stand an' find out what the deacon wants," he said, mournfully. "My boss told me that we must be there on time, an' we might as well start."

"I want to have it over as soon as possible," Teddy replied. "Nothin' that comes can be any worse than waitin' here thinkin' of what may happen."

The two boys walked either side of Mrs. Hargreaves as they went to meet the deacon, and it seemed very much as if the majority of the people present knew what was about to occur, for the sad-visaged party was followed by crowds of the visitors as they walked steadily onward.

It was exactly two o'clock when they arrived at the stairway leading to the grand stand, and there they were met by the leader of the band from the Run, who said with a mysterious manner as he opened a gate leading to the track in front of the judges' stand:

"You are to come this way."

"Where's the deacon?" Teddy asked.

"Waiting for you."

Without further explanation the musician led the three to a spot where all could see them, and to the intense surprise of the sorrowful-looking party, the throng assembled on the benches greeted them with the most hearty applause.

"You are to come with me, Mrs. Hargreaves," the conductor said, as he escorted her to one of the front seats, and Teddy and Dan stood as if stupefied, gazing in dismay at the sea of faces in front of them.

Before the boys had sufficiently recovered from their bewilderment to be able to speculate upon what was to happen Deacon Jones came down the steps until he reached a place where all could see him and there began a speech which caused at least two of that assemblage to gaze at him in open-mouthed astonishment.

The manager of the fair did not intend to neglect any opportunity of making himself conspicuous, and he delivered an eloquent address, looking first at the boys and then at the audience, which cannot be given here because of lack of space.

He first explained to the spectators that Teddy had taken upon himself the business of fakir simply that he might aid his widowed mother. Then he detailed the loss of the fifteen dollars, and finally broached the one important matter, that of the scene on the creek, when the three women were rescued from drowning.

By this time the cheeks of Teddy and Dan were flaming red, and if he had been charging them with the most atrocious crimes they could not have looked more guilty or uncomfortable.

"As you all know," he said, in conclusion, "we have met here to see bravery and a spirit of self-sacrifice rewarded. On behalf of the ladies whose lives were saved by these little heroes I am about to present Edward Hargreaves and Daniel Summers with one hundred dollars each. In addition to that amount the managers of the fair and several gentlemen who do not care to have their names made public, have made up a purse of one hundred and eighty dollars to be divided equally between them. It is most gratifying to me that I have been selected as the instrument through whom this testimonial is presented, and in behalf of my brother officers as well as myself I will state that these brave boys have the freedom of the grounds whenever the Peach Bottom fair is open."

As he concluded, the deacon walked with a majestic bearing down to the bewildered boys, presented each with a well-filled pocketbook and then waved his hand as a signal for the band, every member of which did his best to make the music heard above the rounds of applause intended for the blushing fakirs.

In the meantime the people came down from the benches to congratulate the life-savers, and for fully an hour the two were forced to remain there listening to words of praise which they felt were not warranted by their exploit on the creek.

Among the most welcome of these enthusiastic visitors was Jacob Sweet, and he said, heartily:

"I heard of this little performance jest in time to get here before that long-winded speech was begun; but what pleases

me the most is that I was ahead of the whole gang, an' started our little blow-out when it wasn't known you had so many friends. I'll see you to-night, of course, an' I must go now, for the bouncer has been around tellin' that you've been sleepin' in my tent, an' I count on a good payin' crowd this afternoon."

It was considerably past three o'clock when the boys and Mrs. Hargreaves returned to the cane-board, looking very much different than when they left it, and Tim cried as they came up:

"I've heard all about it, an' what I want to know is, where was old Nathan while that speechifyin' was goin' on?"

"I saw him when we first arrived," Mrs. Hargreaves replied, "but he left a few moments later, although I have no doubt that he remained where he could hear all that was said without being seen."

"That's where he was wise. It wouldn't be very pleasant for him to show himself now, 'cause everybody is down on him after what the deacon said."

Dan was obliged to return to his duties, and he whispered to Teddy before leaving:

"I tell you what it is, old feller, this has been a reg'lar puddin' for us, an' I'd give a good deal to see another jest like it."

"You're all right, but I expect after this Uncle Nathan will be so mad he'll make me a pile of trouble."

"Don't worry about that; his claws are cut now. I'll be back in time to go to supper."

When he departed Teddy had an opportunity to say a few words to his mother before she returned home on the stage, which was advertised to leave at four o'clock, and while he did this all thought of being under arrest was put far from his mind because of the joy at what he was now able to perform.

"Never mind what happens to me," he whispered. "I've now got nearly money enough to pay off all we owe, an' it has been earned honestly, too, although I believe they paid a big price for what Dan an' I did on the creek."

"I'm thinking more of the praise you earned than the money, Teddy. It was very sweet to hear the deacon say so much to you before all those people."

"Then both of us will be awfully jolly to-night, an' to-morrow I'll be home, an' bring Dan with me."

"Invite him to stay just as long as he wishes, and I will have a nice supper ready when the last stage arrives."

Teddy gave his mother nearly all the money he had, including the "testimonial," and as she walked away he said to Tim:

"I'm willin' to be arrested, an' put into jail a good many days for the sake of being able to help her as I can do now."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TRIAL.

It was only natural that both Teddy and Dan should feel highly elated after this public expression of admiration which culminated in the presentation of the purse, but they immediately returned to attend to their several duties when the ceremonies were finished.

Dan went back to the exhibition as if he had done nothing worth remembering, and in less than half an hour from the time the deacon concluded his flowery speech it would have required a very ardent student of humanity to discover that anything out of the natural course of events had taken place.

At the cane-board Teddy waited upon his customers as before, and without the slightest sign of having been honored by the magnates of the fair, while Dan fired at the target as if he had been a boy with no other claim upon the public's attention than his ability to hit a mark.

Yet it must be confessed that both experienced a very pleasing sense of having satisfied the public, and each, in his own peculiar way, knew he had risen a little above the average boy.

There can be no question that any one placed in the same position must have felt gratified by the many expressions of friendship and good-will with which these two were literally overwhelmed, and it would have been more than could be expected of human nature had they remained unmoved under the extravagant flattery which was showered upon them immediately after the close of Deacon Jones' speech.

Although there was not quite as much money flowing into the box as on the day previous, Teddy was more than pleased with the receipts, because every penny seemed to express just such an amount of good-will.

Until nearly nightfall he remained at the booth, answering questions upon the same subject till it seemed to have been worn threadbare, and then, however great his desire to earn money, he felt a positive sense of relief that his connection with the Peach Bottom fair had finally come to an end.

"This is the last time you an' I will pack up the stuff," he said to Tim as they put into condition for removal the cane and knife boards. "I promised to give you all that was left, and you're more than welcome to it."

"But you surely don't mean to give me the whole lot," Tim cried in surprise.

"That's exactly what I'm going to do, and I sincerely hope when you make a stand you'll meet with the same good friends I have here."

"I can't take these things unless you'll allow me to pay something toward what they cost."

"Look here, Tim," Teddy said, earnestly, "you have shown yourself to be a friend of mine, an' every cent that has come in here you've accounted for. Now, whatever may happen, I'm through bein' a fakir; but if you want to follow the business, I can only hope you'll come out all right. We'll carry this to Mr. Sweet's tent, an' I'll only be so much the better pleased, and in case you don't, I'm bound to help you in every way. Besides, I promised to pay a certain percentage on the profits; that is yet to be settled."

"It never will be," Tim replied in the most decided tone. "If I take these goods I've got more than a fair share, an' won't listen to anything else."

"Very well, we'll leave it that way. You now own everything, an' I owe you lots of good-will."

On this basis the remnants of the two boards were packed up for removal, and when they were about to take the goods to Mr. Sweet's tent Dan arrived.

"How much business did you do to-day?" he asked.

Teddy delayed sufficiently long to count the receipts, and then replied:

"Forty-one dollars and fifteen cents. That gives Tim four-eleven, an' I get more than would have been the case but for the testimonial this afternoon. The folks crowded around to see me, rather than to get the canes, an' so business has picked up better than any one expected."

"It don't make any difference how the money came in so long as you have got it," Dan replied, philosophically, "an' now the question is what are we to do for supper, since we paid our bill at the boarding-house this afternoon?"

"Have you got any idea?"

"Of course, or else I wouldn't have asked the question. Let's invite Mr. Sweet, the bouncer, and the clown to some restaurant down town, an' try to give them as good a time as we had last night."

This proposition met with Teddy's approval, and the party was made up as he suggested, the cost being divided between the two boys who had been the recipients of the public testimonial.

Not until a late hour in the evening did these festivities come to an end, and then the party retired to the museum tent, where they remained undisturbed until the present season of the Peach Bottom fair had come to an end.

It was an unusually late hour for fakirs to arise when Mr. Sweet awakened the boys as he said:

"Turn out now, lads, an' get your stuff ready for removal. I'm sorry to part company, but we can't stay here forever, an' the museum must be forty miles the other side of Waterville by Monday morning."

Dan had completed and been paid for his work with the Stevens Company, therefore he had nothing to do; Teddy no longer claimed any interest in the canes and knives left over from the week's work; consequently he was free to go where he pleased, and Tim had his goods in such a condition that they could be removed at any moment, which prevented him from feeling any anxiety regarding the future.

Thus it was that all three of the boys were at liberty to assist the proprietor of the museum, and this they did with a will until the arrival of Lawyer Harvey caused them to think of what had almost been forgotten in the bustle and confusion of breaking camp.

"We are due at the 'Squire's office at nine o'clock, and it is time you boys were getting over that way," he said, briskly; "our case won't come up to-day, but it has been decided to give Hazelton a hearing, and I am very much afraid he's going to get the worst of it."

"What do you mean?" Teddy asked, anxiously.

"Well, you see I have not been able to get any information in addition to what you boys furnished, and there seems little doubt that the 'Squire must perforce bind him over for trial. The fact that he has deliberately swindled so many people will work against him, and we can do very little to save him."

"What will be the result of his being bound over?" Teddy asked.

"He must remain in jail, unless he can get bail, until next fall."

"But that in itself will be a terrible punishment."

"True; yet it cannot be avoided. If he had worked honestly the case would be different; but now he will be fortunate even to get out in the fall."

"Yet Uncle Nathan says I am equally guilty."

"We can easily show you had nothing to do with the robbery, and that is our only care this morning."

"What about Long Jim?"

"He remains silent, refusing to answer the simplest questions, and unless he speaks Hazelton must be bound over; the 'Squire can pursue no other course."

Believing as they did that Hazelton was innocent of the charge upon which he had been arrested, both Teddy and Dan felt it was a great hardship for the fakir to remain so long in prison; but since it was beyond their power to give him any relief, neither expressed an opinion other than has been recorded.

Mr. Harvey had come for them to accompany him to the Squire's office, and since there was nothing to detain them they set out, after first bidding Mr. Sweet a cordial 'goodby, for he had announced his intention of leaving Peach Bottom on the noon train.

"I shall see one or both of you at some time in the future," he said, with considerable feeling, "an' there'll be no complaint to make if I never fall in with worse boys."

The bouncer and the clown also had something to say in the form of an adieu, and when the boys left the proprietor of the alleged wonderful museum it was like parting with an old friend, for he had shown himself to be a "very present help in time of trouble."

Tim did not propose to start for the Run until his companions had concluded their business; his goods were packed ready for removal, and there was nothing better for him to do than accompany them to the court-room where it seemed as if all they might say would result only in a long term of imprisonment for Hazelton before he could be tried on the baseless charge brought against him, simply because of the disreputable business in which he was engaged.

Mr. Harvey had little or nothing to say during the walk to the 'Squire's office, and arriving there the jewelry fakir was seen looking thoroughly despondent.

"Can I speak with him?" Teddy asked the lawyer. "What do you want to say?"

"Nothing in particular, except to tell him how bad I feel because we could do nothing to clear him."

"Very well; but do not talk long, for it may prejudice your own case. The people whom he has swindled are here to see that some form of punishment is meted out to him, and it can do you no good to be seen acting as a consoler."

This possibility troubled Teddy very little since he was confident of his own innocence, and he approached the prisoner as he said:

"I wish I could do something, Mr. Hazelton, to prove you as innocent as I believe you to be."

"There's no need of that, my boy. I've put you in a hole already, and you've done more for me than some others who call themselves friends."

"I know it was Long Jim who committed the burglary; but how can it be proven now?"

"There was only one way, and that was to catch the real thieves with their plunder. Mr. Harvey tells me his attempt was a failure, an' it wouldn't surprise me if I was not only remanded for trial, but received a sentence for something of which I am absolutely innocent. I don't profess to be very good, my boy, as you may understand after seeing me work on the fair grounds; but I never yet descended to do such things as I am charged with now."

"I am certain of that," and Teddy pressed the prisoner's hand in token of friendship, "and only wish it was possible to aid you."

"You have already done more than my partners did," was the grateful reply, and then further conversation was prevented as the 'Squire called the assembly to order.

It was not a regular court of law; but one would have thought it the most dignified judicial body in the country had he seen the air with which the 'Squire took his seat at the head of the long table as he called the case.

"That settles Hazelton," Dan whispered as Teddy left the prisoner and rejoined his friends. "Somebody has got to suffer in order to make the law come out square, an' he's the feller what'll have to stand the brunt of everything."

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN ARRIVAL.

Lawyer Harvey did not neglect anything which might work to the advantage of his client; but in the face of the evidence his efforts appeared to be in vain.

Uncle Nathan, who arrived just as the case was called, swore to the fact that Hazelton had been in his store on the Sunday afternoon prior to the robbery, and that he had told the prisoner of his keeping large amounts of money in the building, because of the difficulty and expense of sending the cash to the Waterville bank.

He also testified that Hazelton seemed unusually interested in everything pertaining to the store, and asked many questions relative to his (the witness') habits, such as the time when business usually began, how late he remained in the building at night, as well as several other things which now seemed as if the information had been sought simply for the purpose of knowing when would be the safest time to commit the crime.

"How much did you lose?" Mr. Harvey asked.

"I don't know for certain; but I stand willin' to give fifty dollars if the goods can be recovered, an' if my nephew would tell all he knows----"

"That will do, Mr. Hargreaves," the lawyer said, sharply. "Teddy is not under examination, and until he is we do not care to hear your opinion concerning him."

"I reckon I can tell what I want to, can't I, 'Squire?"

"You must confine yourself to this particular case. As to whether there is sufficient evidence to bind the prisoner over does not concern the charge against your nephew, at least not to the extent of your telling what you think."

"I thought, perhaps, if he heard me say I'd give fifty dollars to know where the goods were, an' knew I'd swear to it, he might confess, for he has shown himself to be powerful fond of a dollar."

"That appears to be a peculiarity of some of his relatives," Mr. Harvey said, dryly, and at this remark the spectators laughed heartily, while the old man growled:

"I didn't come here to be told that I was a miser; but it seems even men who call themselves gentlemen think sich things are all right."

"If you have no other evidence to give we will not detain you," the lawyer said, sharply; and as Uncle Nathan returned to his chair near the door the proprietor of the hotel at the Run was called upon to testify.

What he said was in favor of the prisoner rather than otherwise.

He swore to the fact that the prisoner spent the night on which the burglary was committed at his house; that he pretended to retire at an early hour, and started for Peach Bottom on the first stage.

Under Mr. Harvey's skillful cross-examination the landlord admitted that unless a man got out of the window he could not have left the house without the knowledge of the watchman, who kept the keys and remained in the office all night. It was also shown that Hazelton brought and carried away with him, so far as was known at the hotel, nothing but a small traveling satchel.

Then several people from the Run were called to prove that the fakir was really in the town on this particular Sunday, and the driver of the stage testified that the prisoner rode with him the entire distance to Peach Bottom. The landlord of the hotel where Hazelton boarded during the fair week, or so much of it as he was at liberty, swore to the fact that the prisoner had never brought any quantity of baggage to his house, and appeared to be very regular in his habits. So far as he (the landlord) knew, the fakir remained in his room nearly all the time, except while on the exhibition grounds.

This ended the testimony, and Mr. Harvey argued that there was really no evidence to connect the prisoner with the crime.

"That he conducted a game which could hardly be called honest is admitted," he said; "but it has nothing to do with the case. Prejudice should not be allowed to take the place of facts, and I insist that my client be released."

"I reckon there's sufficient ground for suspicion," the 'Squire replied, "an' I don't see any other way out of it. A jury must decide, an' I shall hold him in the sum of three thousand----"

At this moment the dignity of the court received a severe shock, as a most unseemly disturbance suddenly occurred at the door, and the 'Squire paused to learn who was so bold as to disturb the representative of the law at the very instant when he was delivering an opinion.

"It's nobody but a boy," Uncle Nathan replied as he held the door firmly closed, while the would-be visitor kicked so vigorously as to threaten the destruction of the panels.

"Bring him in here, an' we'll see whether such a row can be kicked up in a court of law with impunity."

"Better let me throw him into the street," Uncle Nathan snarled.

"Mr. Constable, bring that boy before me," the 'Squire said, sternly, and an instant later, to the consternation of all those who had seen him, the boy who was supposed to have been drowned two days before entered, looking decidedly the worse for having existed so long without water and soap.

"Why, it's Sam, an' he ain't dead!" Teddy cried as he rose to his feet.

"Of course I ain't; but it wouldn't been many days before I turned into a corpse if I hadn't got away from them thieves," the amateur detective replied.

"Who are you, an' what do you want here?" the 'Squire asked, sternly, as he rapped on the table for the spectators to remain silent.

"Why, I'm Sam Balderston, the feller who come to the fair to work for the Davis Boat an' Oar Company of Detroit, an' if what Long Jim told me was true, folks have been tryin' to find me in the creek."

"This is the boy who was reported to have been drowned on the day when those lads," here the lawyer pointed to Teddy and Dan, "claim to have seen two men carrying goods into an old barn on the marshes. I fancy he can give us information relative to the true burglars."

"You bet I can," and now that he was the central figure in the scene, all Sam's old assurance returned. "If you mean the fellers what broke into Teddy's uncle's store, I can flash one of them up. The other come to the fair an' didn't get back, so Phil thought he was arrested."

"Who do you mean by the other fellow?" Mr. Harvey asked.

"Why, Long Jim, the same man what swindled Teddy out of his fifteen dollars at Waterville."

"Have you been with him since your disappearance?"

"Most of the time he hung around, an' then ag'in Phil was there."

"Who is Phil?"

"Long Jim's partner. They've got a slat of stuff what has been stole 'round here, an' I know where all of it is."

"Tell the 'Squire the whole story."

This was Sam's opportunity, and, in order to cover himself with glory, he slaughtered the truth in the most shocking manner.

"Well," he said, in a consequential way, "when Dan an' me an' Teddy saw the thieves carryin' stuff down to that old barn I wanted to rush in an' arrest both; but the other fellows was scared an' come ashore to talk with Hazelton so's he'd tell 'em what to do. Then I jes' made up my mind to carry on the job myself, an' went back."

"Where?" the 'Squire asked.

"To the barn to get the stuff. While I was diggin' it up the men come back, an' the minute they saw who was on their trail they got frightened."

"And who was on their trail?" the 'Squire interrupted.

"Why, me, of course. They rushed in, an' I had the awfulest row; but it was two to one, an' so I got the worst of it. They had to work mighty hard before gettin' me tired, an' then all the stuff was dug up an' put in the boat. My craft was upset an' sent adrift, so's to make it look as if I was dead, an' we went down the creek six or seven miles, where we hid in the woods. Phil came back here after more goods what had been stolen, an' they was goin' to skip the country, when there was a big row, an' Long Jim allowed he'd come to the fair once more. Phil was mad, an' got pretty drunk, an' after that I had my innings. I turned to an' lashed him up same's I'd been; but we had an' awful fight. It takes more'n one man

to git away with me."

"Where is this fellow now?" the 'Squire interrupted again.

"Down the creek, tied up so's he can't hardly breathe, an' he must be pretty near sober by this time."

"If he was very drunk I do not understand how he could have fought so hard."

"Well, he did; but I got the best of him, an' what's more, I know where all the stuff that's been stolen is hid."

"Mr. Constable, bring into court the prisoner who is charged with swindling, and let us see if this extraordinary boy can identify him," the 'Squire said, with an unusual amount of dignity.

"If it's Long Jim, you bet I can," Sam said, as he turned toward the spectators that they might have a good opportunity of seeing such a wonderful detective as he claimed to be.

Teddy and Dan could hardly control their impatience to speak privately with Sam. As a matter of course, they understood that he was embellishing the story, and both were eager to make him tell the exact truth.

Just at that moment, however, Sam had no time to spend on ordinary boys. He had come out of a bad scrape with apparently flying colors, and intended to enjoy his triumph to the utmost before sinking back to his rightful plane.

The jail was near at hand, and Sam had not exhibited himself as much as he desired when Long Jim was brought in.

On seeing the boy the burglar gave a start of surprise, and allowed the incriminating question to escape his lips:

"Has Phil been pinched, too?"

"I took care of that business, an' we'll bring him in some time to-day. Say, what about that awful lickin' you was goin' to give me?"

"I'll cut your throat before this job is finished," was the angry reply, and there was no longer any necessity of asking Sam if he recognized the prisoner.

"You say you can show us the stolen goods, and the other burglar is where the officers can get him?" Mr. Harvey asked.

"That's just what I can do," Sam replied, proudly.

"Then you will have earned fifty dollars, for Mr. Hargreaves has promised, even sworn, that he will pay that amount for the return of his property," Mr. Harvey continued.

"He might as well give me the money now, for I'm ready to turn the stuff up, an' when there's more big detective work to be done, come to me."

"I don't know about payin' any reward till I'm certain the little villain isn't one of the thieves himself, an' is doin' this to swindle me," Uncle Nathan cried, quickly.

"He shall have the reward if the story is true," the 'Squire replied. "You can't go back on what you've sworn to, an' must pay up. Mr. Constable, get two or three men an' go with this boy. Don't lose sight of him for a minute until he has given all the information in his power."

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN CONCLUSION.

Sam was led away before either Teddy or Dan could speak privately with him; but they went at once to congratulate Hazelton on his apparently happy escape, and, in response to Mr. Harvey's request, the 'Squire said:

"The prisoner can remain here, or in your custody, until the party returns. If the boy has told the truth there is nothing for me to do but discharge him, and I am really glad that he has come out so fortunately."

"Don't think I'll ever forget what you've done for me," Hazelton whispered to Teddy.

"But it isn't me at all. Sam seems to have fixed everything."

"I've got an idea that I know pretty near the truth of the whole story, never mind how he tells it. At all events, we've no reason to complain, for if the goods and the other burglar are found, we are out of our trouble. Your uncle's charges can't hold after that."

It was, as Teddy now realized for the first time, a happy conclusion to the troubles of both, and his heart was lighter than it had been at any time since the accusation was made.

There was no question that those who had gone with Sam would be absent several hours, and the little party in the court-room had more time at their disposal than could well be occupied by the discussion of their affairs.

After the different phases of the case had been gone over in detail, Hazelton asked Teddy:

"How did you come out at the fair?"

"I haven't figured up; but I know I've made a good deal, an' it must be almost enough, countin' the money Deacon Jones gave us, to pay the debt on the place."

Until this moment Teddy had had so much on his mind that the principal cause of his turning fakir was absent from his mind; but now, with nothing better to do, he began to count up the week's work, announcing the result a few moments later by saying:

"I took in two hundred an' fifty-two dollars an' fifty cents during the week. Out of that must come the money I lost at Waterville, what I paid Uncle Nathan, the privilege, the money I paid Mr. Reaves for the stock, Tim's wages, an' my board. That leaves one hundred an' forty-five dollars an' ninety-eight cents. With what came in from the testimonial I'll have enough to pay off the debt on the house, an' pretty near eight dollars for myself, which is what I call a big week's work."

"I'm glad you have made it," Hazelton replied, heartily. "There is a little matter between you an' I which yet remains to be settled, and when that has been done you should be considerably better off."

"I don't want you to do a thing," Teddy said, quickly. "So many people have helped me since the fair opened that it seems as if I was nothing more or less than a beggar."

"You come very far from deserving that title," the fakir replied, and then the entrance of Mr. Reaves interrupted the conversation. After talking with the lawyer, the merchant said to Teddy:

"I am more than pleased to learn that you will be freed from all your troubles in a short time. Next week I shall be in need of a clerk, and if you wish to take the situation it shall be left open until you are ready to go to work. The wages are six dollars a week for the first year, with an increase as soon as you can earn it, and I will really be pleased to have you in my employ."

"I'd like to come," Teddy replied; "but it don't seem just right to leave mother."

"There is no necessity of doing so. You can ride back and forth on the stage, unless your mother should decide, as I think she will eventually, to make her home in Waterville."

"If she approves of the plan I'll come to work next week."

"Make it two weeks, so that there'll be plenty of time to arrange matters, and I will expect you," the merchant replied in a tone which showed that he was more than satisfied with the arrangement. "I only came over to see if you needed any assistance; but Mr. Harvey says you'll soon be free from the charge your uncle made, therefore I will go back at once."

About an hour after the merchant departed Sam and the constables returned with Phil and the stolen goods.

The amateur detective was in the best possible spirits, and now that the burglar had been apprehended through his assistance the boy felt absolutely certain he was the greatest detective in the country.

As a matter of course, there was nothing the 'Squire could do save discharge Hazelton from custody, and after Mr. Harvey had given his word that he would take care Sam should appear when wanted as a witness, the boy rejoined his friends, saying as he did so:

"If you fellers had done as I wanted you'd be way up now, the same as I am. Of course, I don't blame you for being afraid; but when you go out on such work the only way is to hold on."

"I wonder how long you'd have held on if the men hadn't made you stay with them?" Dan asked.

"Who told you that?" Sam said. "If I staid, it was because I knowed it wouldn't be long until I got the upper hand of the gang, an I've done it."

Before the party separated, and while Uncle Nathan was identifying the goods which had been stolen from him, Mr. Harvey insisted that the reward should be paid, and although it was very much like drawing a tooth, the old man was finally induced to make his word good.

"It's a pile of money, but I earned it," Sam said, as he tucked Uncle Nathan's grudgingly bestowed cash in his trousers pocket. "There ain't many 'round this part of the country who could have done what I did, an' it's only right detectives should be well paid."

Then, with many protestations of friendship, the lawyer started for home, after returning to Hazelton the money which Teddy had given Mr. Reaves for safekeeping, and the fakir said as he walked out of the court-room with the four boys:

"Now, I want you to come with me, until my business is settled, and then I'll shake the dust of Peach Bottom from my feet in the shortest possible time."

Not understanding what he meant, the boys accompanied him to the nearest jewelry store, and there he bought two silver watches, which he presented to Teddy and Dan, as he said:

"These are only to remind you that I am grateful for what has been done. It isn't much of a present; but it will suffice to show I'm not ungrateful. Some time in the future I may meet you again, and then the full debt shall be paid if I'm solid enough to do it."

He was gone almost before the astonished boys could thank him, and with his departure this story should properly be concluded, since Teddy has made his last appearance as a fakir.

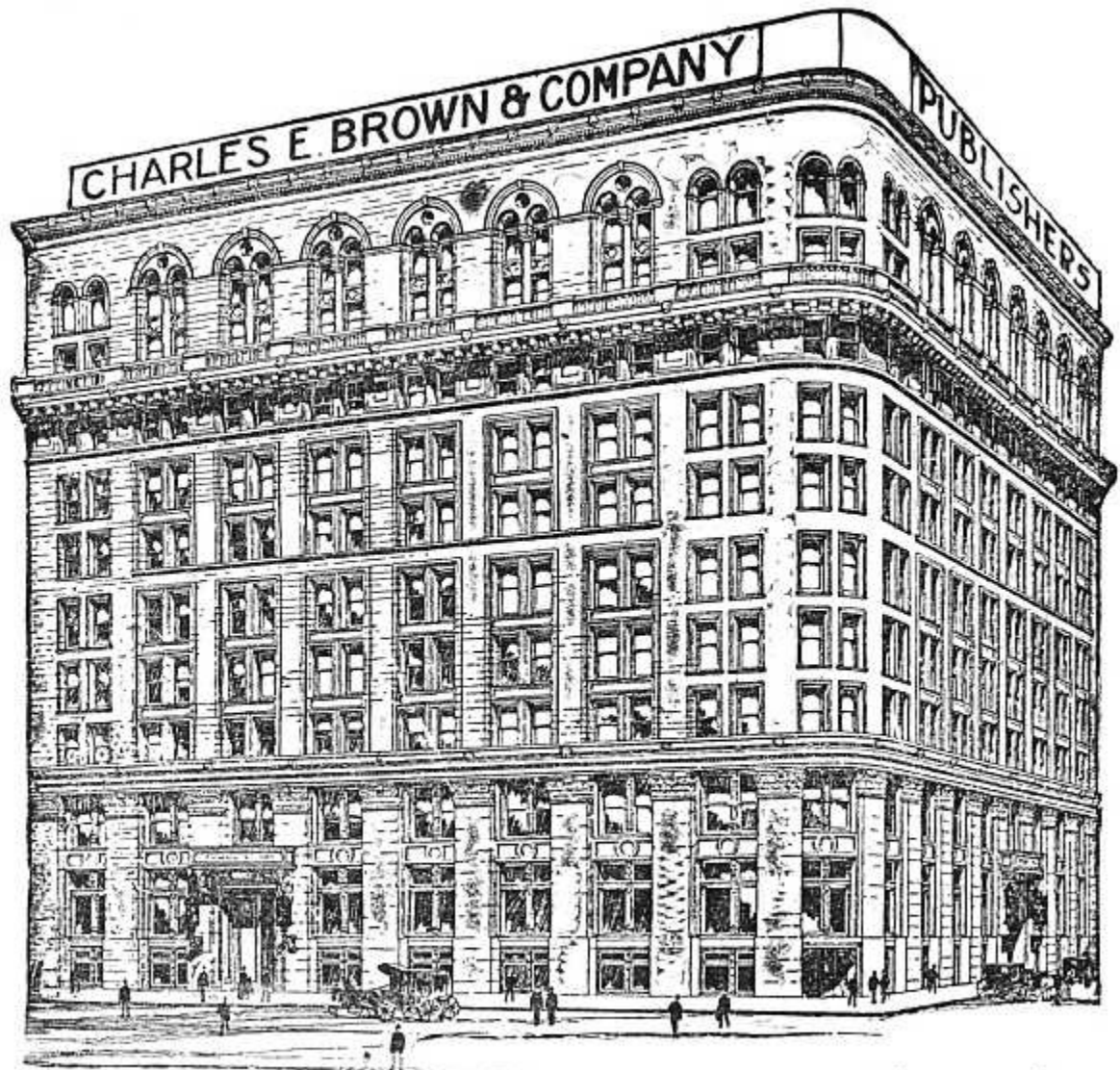
A few more words, and "the end" shall be written.

Sam, still believing himself especially designed for a detective, is yet displaying his "style" as an oarsman in the employ of the Davis Boat and Oar Company, and he believes he has guessed the weight of the yacht which is so soon to be given away.

Dan accepted an offer from Mr. Reaves last week, and he and Teddy are learning the same business, both looking forward to the time when they shall own a store equally as large.

Uncle Nathan is still at the Run, but his trade has decreased very materially, and Hazelton has not been seen since the day he left Peach Bottom; but it is quite possible that when the fair opens this season all the fakirs may again meet the country boy who made such a successful venture at the country fair.

[THE END.]



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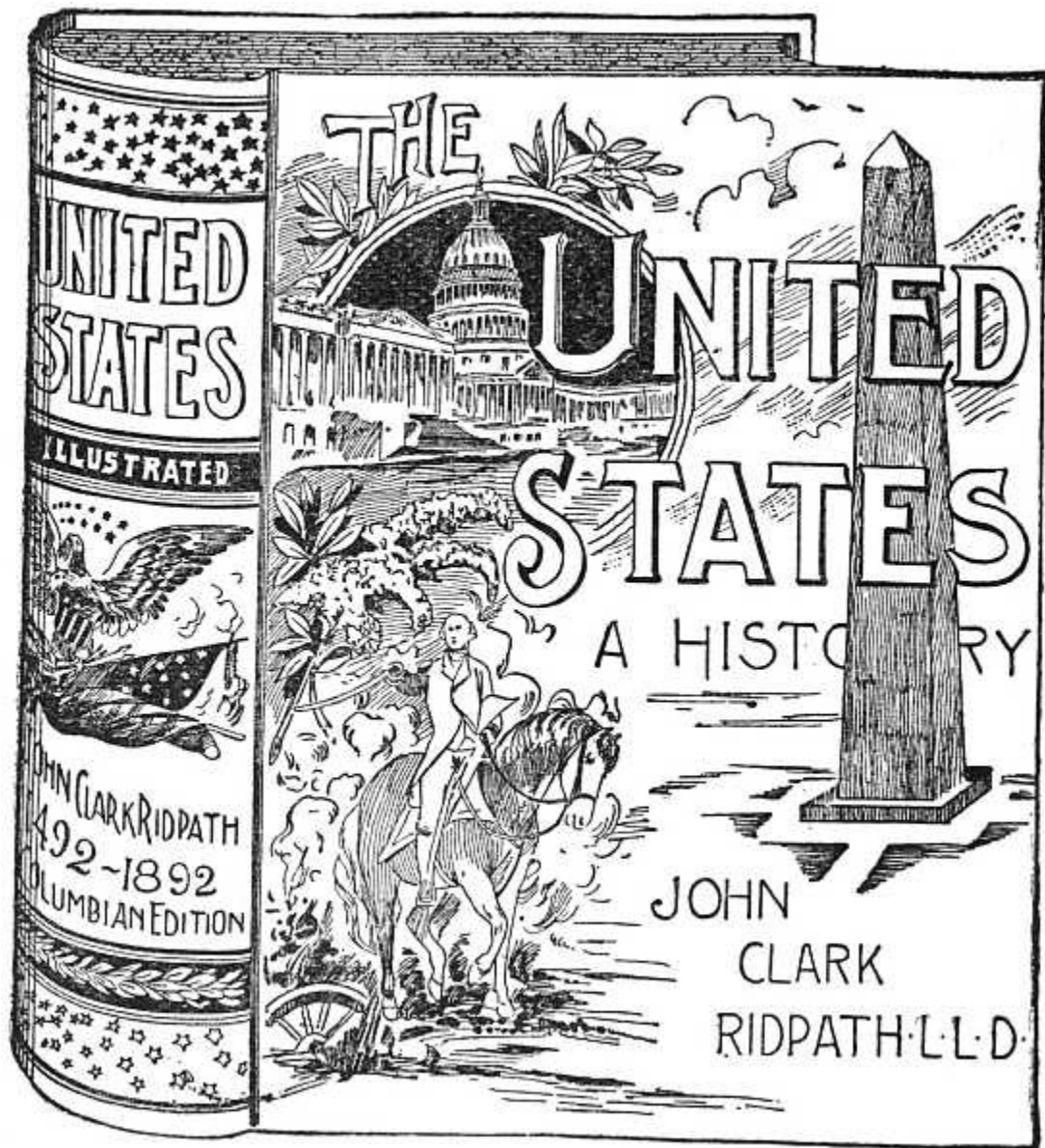
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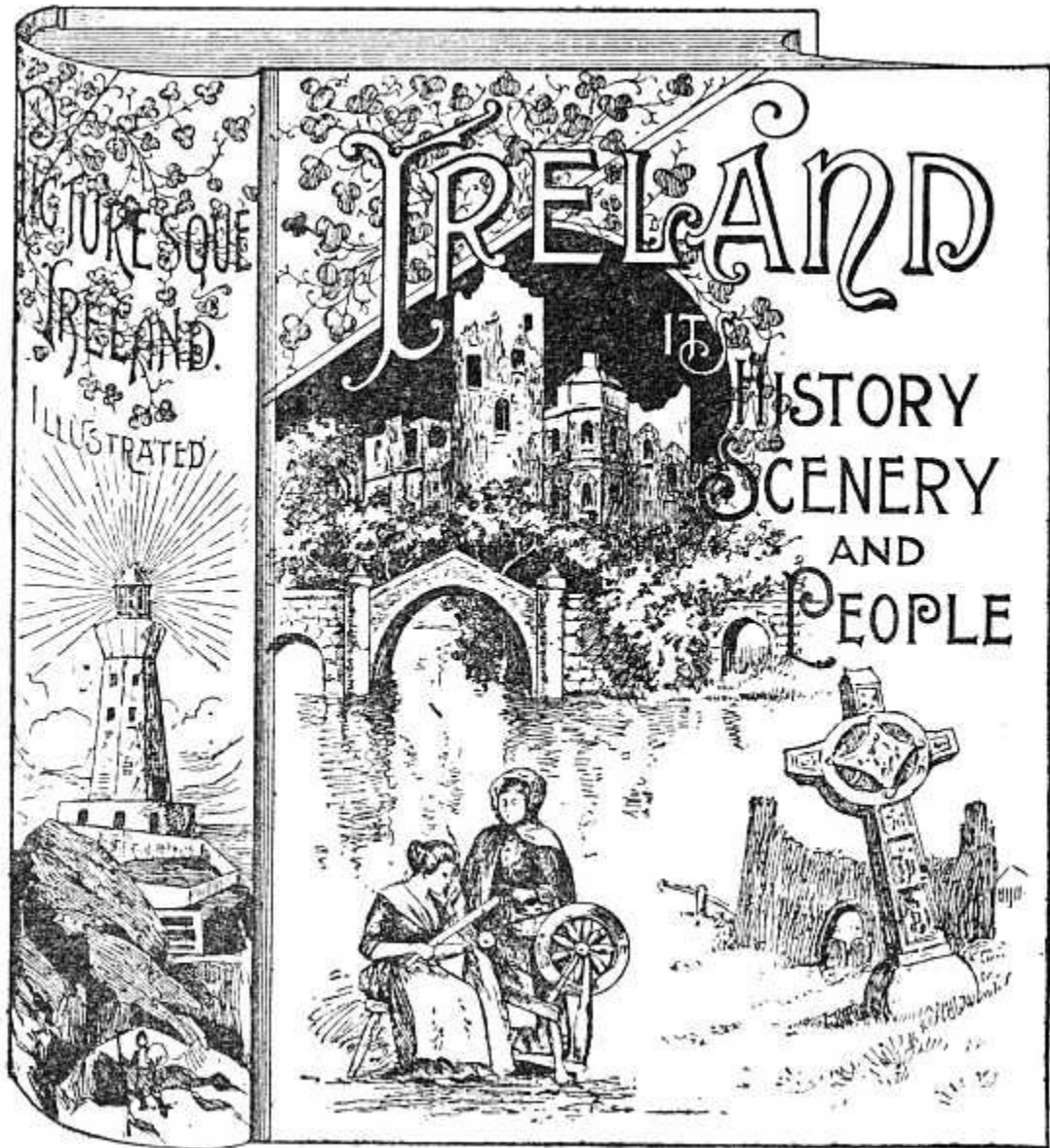
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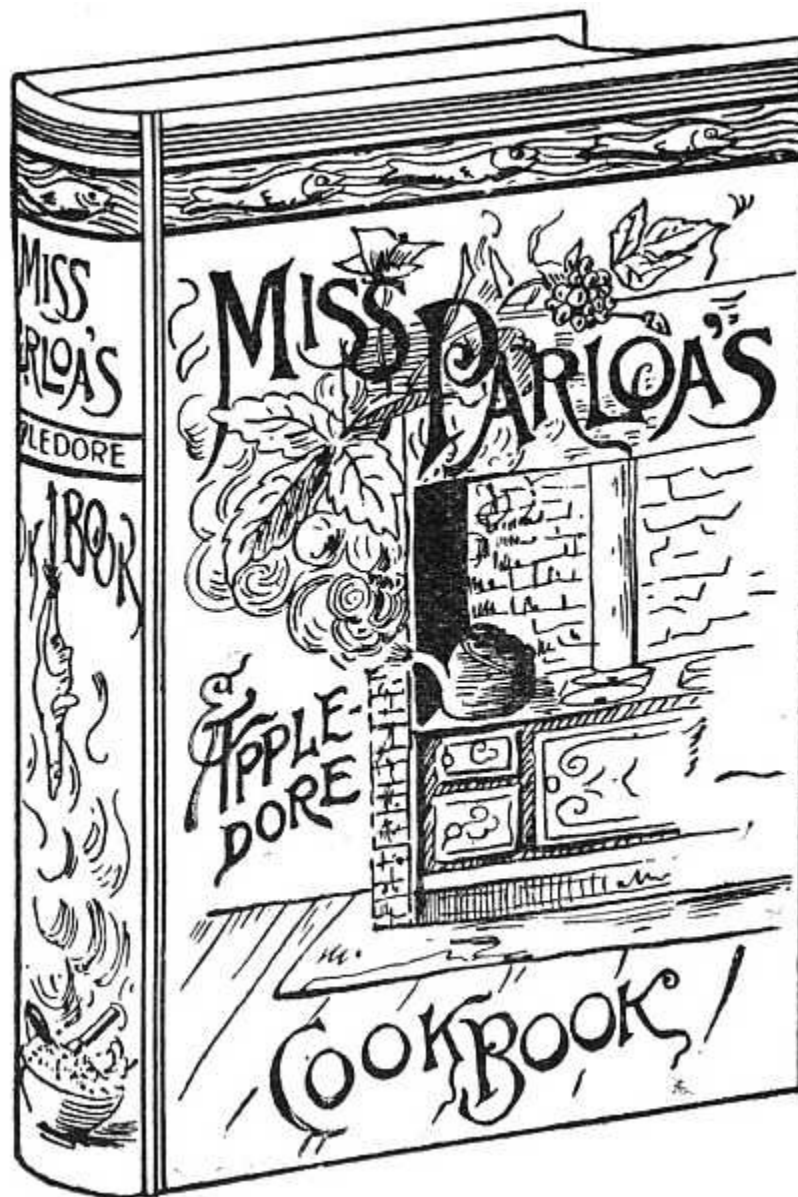
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