Fred Fearnot's Revenge, or Defeating a Congressman

Hal Standish

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CHAPTER I. FRED FEARNOT, TERRY OLCOTT, DICK DUNCAN AND JOE JENCKS GO UP TO DEDHAM LAKE.

On returning from the West, where Fred Fearnot had rescued Terry Olcott from a party of cattlemen, who were about to lynch him through mistake, he found letters at home from the manager of his little investment up at Dedham Lake that gave him no little uneasiness. The reader will doubtless remember that on a visit in the upper part of the State he had discovered a beautiful lake, covering some three hundred acres, which, through beauty of scenery, purity of water, salubrity of climate and an inexhaustible supply of fish, had tempted him to purchase the property for the purpose of making it a summer resort. The farmers living around the vicinity of the lake had been drawing their supplies of fish from it all their lives. They got the idea into their heads that if it became the property of city people, and a summer resort, their fishing privileges would be cut off. Fred assured them that he had no such intention, but as he was a mere youth, they paid no attention to his statements and undertook to mob him and force him to leave.

Of all fellows in the world, Fred was the last one to submit to a thing of that kind, and the result was several serious fights in which the farmers got the worst of it, on account of Fred's splendid ability to take care of himself. Terry finally went to his assistance, thus enabling him to hold his own. The farmers finally decided to let him alone, and when he left the lake, which was but five miles away from the railroad station at the little country town called Ashton, he left his property in charge of a farmer named Dedham, from whom he had bought the first piece of property on the border of the lake, while a lawyer in Ashton looked after his legal interests. He had sold several lots to wealthy city people, and others were being placed on the market, with a fair prospect of all being sold during the next season.

The letter that gave him the most uneasiness was from his lawyer at Ashton. He stated that the member of the Legislature from that County, at the instance of about two score farmers, living within a radius of eight or ten miles of the lake, had introduced a hill in the Legislature to take from him the right to control the fishing in the lake, and it had come very near being passed, pretty nearly all the members from the rural districts being in favor of it. It had not yet become a law, because the Senate had not acted upon it.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed, on reading the letter, "is it possible a law can be passed in the State of New York taking from one the right to control his own property? I'll ask father about it and get his opinion." and he forthwith laid the letter before Judge Fearnot, who smiled broadly when he read it.

"What's funny about it." he asked.

"Oh, the wisdom of those rural solons," said the judge. "Nearly all the representatives who voted for that bill are either farmers who knew nothing about law whatever, or men who are afraid of the farmers' vote in the rural districts. It can't pass the Senate, because there are too many lawyers in it; and even if it should, the Governor, who is an able lawyer, would veto it."

"Well, I don't know about that, father," said Fred, who knew something about human nature as developed in politicians. "The Governor wants to be re−elected and will probably do anything to make votes."

"Well, if he should approve it," said the judge, "the courts would declare it unconstitutional, because it is glaringly so."

"Yes, but that would give me no end of trouble and put me to no end of expense. I'm going to go up there and have it out with Mr. Carter, the member of the Legislature from that county."

"Well, don't go to having any personal difficulties with him," advised his father.

"No, I don't intend to; but I'll give him some pretty plain talk. He's a very ambitious fellow. I met him up there last season."

"Well, be careful. Simply call his attention to a provision in the Constitution that protects a man's property rights. I'll look it up and mark the clause for you, so you can call his attention to it."

Fred decided that he would communicate with Terry and invite him to go up and spend the fall season with him, and he lost no time in doing so. To his very great delight, Terry Olcott promptly accepted the invitation, and

suggested that as Dick Duncan and Joe Jencks were then at leisure, they might go along, too.

"Great Scott"' exclaimed Fred, as he read Terry's letter, "a dozen wouldn't be any more expense than just a pair of us. I'll write to Dick and Joe at once and tell them of the fine fishing and the splendid shooting we can have when the game season opens. If I could get Tom Travis and Phil Durham to join us, it would make a half dozen of the best all−round boys in the State." He at once wrote to the others, and forty−eight hours later received letters from Dick and Joe accepting his invitation. A day later one came from Tom Travis, down in Baltimore, saying that he would try to join him later on. Phil Durham was in business which he could not leave; hence he could not accept the invitation.

"Well, there'll be four if not five of us," said Fred, "and if I can get Black Mose to go up there again to cook for us, the good times we will have will be so high that others will have to use spy−glasses to see us."

He lost no time in hunting up Black Mose, who had accompanied him and Terry to the Klondike, and was with, them also one season up at Dedham Lake.

"Yes, boss," said Mose, with a broad grin on his ebony countenance,

"I'll go with you anywhere in the whole world, except to dat are Klondike. I don't want to go up dar no more, whar de winters hold on all the year round."

"All right, Mose. I'll leave in a day or two. Get ready."

"I'se ready any time, boss. Just blow your whistle and I'll be dar. Never had such an easy time in my life as when I was up dar last year with you. Is I got to do any butting up dar?" "Oh, I don't know, unless we get up a butting match− between you and some bull just to make fun for the crowd."

"Dat's all right, boss. Just throw his horns off and I'll butt with him," and the big black shook his bullet−head as though he was willing to butt anything that came along.

Fred immediately wired Terry, Dick and Joe, that he would leave Wednesday for Ashton, and that he would pass through Fredonia at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, and on the morning of that day, accompanied by Black Mose, he took the train, at the Grand Central station in New York. When he reached Fredonia he found Terry there ready to board the train. Evelyn was there also to drive the carriage back home. He sprang off the car, caught her hands in his, shook them warmly and half−whispered a few words that made her laugh, blush and look happy.

"Why in the world can't you stop over a day or two?" she asked.

"Business is urgent," he replied. "We are going to get things in shape to have all of you up there again next season, and I'm going to have the front part of your lot planted in flowers."

"Oh, I wish we could all go," she said.

"So do I, but they do say, you know, that absence makes the heart grow fonder. Of course I'll write you two or three times a week and tell you all about how we are enjoying ourselves."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor, and Fred shook her hands again and sprang upon the platform of the car just as it started off.

"What's going on up at the lake, Fred?" Terry asked, as soon as they were seated together.

Fred told him the story of the attempt that was being made to take away from him the right to control the fishing on the lake.

"Oh, thunder!" said Terry, "surely the Legislature wouldn't pass such a bill as that."

"Well, it has passed the House," said Fred, "and fully half of those that voted for it know that the courts will declare it unconstitutional. They don't care anything about that, but the vote makes them solid with the farmers. That's what they're after−playing politics all the time."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" Terry asked. "I'm going to fight it, of course, and the first thing I'll do when reach Ashton, if Carter is there, will be to ridicule him as a lawyer and tell him what I think of him. I made his acquaintance last season up there. He's a tall, lank, slabsided lawyer and politician, who will shake hands with anybody in the world who has a vote. It's perfectly outrageous; the idea of taking away from a man the right to control his own property. I know they'll make the claim that I didn't put the fish in the lake, and that fishing is a natural right. They might just as well say that a man doesn't plant the trees that grow in the forest when he purchases land."

"Of course," said Terry. "I'm surprised that such a bill has passed the House."

"Oh, that doesn't surprise me in the least. These little one− horse politicians who voted for it really expect to have it declared unconstitutional, and, when the courts do so declare it, will say to the farmers: 'Well, we did the

best we could for you.. It isn't our fault. We voted for it in your interest.' And then they'll proceed to claim the farmers' vote in return. Oh, I'm on to the whole gang of them."

At Utica they were joined by Dick Duncan arid Joe Jencks, each carrying a rifle and shotgun.

"Great Scott, boys!" exclaimed Fred, "why the deuce didn't you fetch a cannon along, too?"

"What do you want of the cannon?" Joe asked. "We won't have any Fourth of July again till next summer."

"Who said anything about the Fourth of July? I'm thinking about the elephants and rhinoceroses and the hippopotami we're going to shoot up on the lake."

"Thunder!" exclaimed Joe, "why didn't you tell us that you had such big game up there? I suppose you've got them all in toys and are going to distribute them around through the woods just to make good your claim."

"That's right," laughed Terry. "You dropped on to him the first time."

"Of course I did," said Joe. "I always drop on. If you'll just get a cargo of monkeys, now, and turn them loose in the woods up there, you'll make a big sensation."

"No need of that," retorted Fred. "You'll do for a monkey."

"All right, but don't you make the mistake and try to play any monkey games on us."

It was not a very long ride from Utica up to Ashton, and when the four boys and Black Mose alighted from the train the station agent and the omnibus driver were considerably surprised. They both knew Fred and Terry, but of course had never seen Dick or Joe before. It was a season when visitors were leaving, instead of arriving. except a commercial drummer now and then.

"How are you, Mr. Jones?" sang out Terry to the omnibus driver.

"Howdy do?" responded Jones. "Gwine up to the hotel."

"Yes, of course, if that old bag of bones can pull us up there."

"Well, don't worry about that old horse," retorted the omnibus driver. "He's got something else ill him besides bones. Most of those big lumps you see on him are muscle."

"Well, can he pull all five of us?"

"Of course he kin."

"All right, then; come ahead, boys," and they tossed in their grips and piled into the rickety old omnibus and were driven at once to the Ashton House, where the same landlord and clerk were still presiding.

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed the landlord, "glad to see you boys again!"

"Of course you are," laughed Fred. "Your heart goes pit−a−pat whenever any customer shows up," and he shook hands with the hotel man and introduced Dick and Joe as friends of his, who had come up to wrestle with his bedbugs for a while.

"Sorry," said the landlord, "we haven't got one in the house."

"Oh, that's all right," laughed Dick. "We brought a few up with us and will turn them loose in our beds just for the pleasure of having them wake us up early in the morning."

"No need of that," laughed the landlord, "we can call you up at any hour of the night or morning you please."

"Oh, we don't like to give you any trouble," laughed Dick, who was an incorrigible joker, even on short acquaintance. "We have our bedbugs trained.. They simply wake us up at the appointed time."

When the boys registered at the clerk's desk they ascertained from him that the Welburns were still stopping there and would not leave till the end of the mouth, and that there were several others who couldn't make up their minds to leave before cold weather.

"And, by the way, Fearnot," continued the clerk, "I understand that your lawyer here sold two lots for you to−day out on the lake."

"Glad to hear it," said Fred. "We're going to build up this little town and make a decent city of it. There's been over a dozen people up here from the city this past season, looking at the lots out on the lake, and every one of them stopped here. So you see we are entitled to some consideration. ratio We want good rooms and the very best fare that you can put up."

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed an elderly gentleman, coming up behind Fred and slapping him on. the shoulder. "Back again, eh?"

"Hello, Mr. Welborn!" and Fred wheeled and shook the elderly gentleman's hand. "Glad to see you. Hope Mrs. Welborn and the young ladies are well and happy."

"Thank you," was the reply. "They are all that," and shook hands with Terry.

Dick and Joe were then introduced.

While Mr. Welborn was talking with Terry and the other boys, Fred passed the door of the ladies' parlor and saw the two Welborn sisters in there, with two other young ladies whom he had never seen before. The elder Welborn girl, on seeing him, ran forward to meet him.

"Why, what a pleasure!" she exclaimed. "So glad to see you, Mr. Fearnot! It's been awfully dead here since you and Mr. Olcott went away."

"Thank you," he replied, shaking hands with her, while holding his hat in his left; "I'm really glad to find you ladies still here. Terry and I both were wondering if we would find you here, for it is rather late in the season, you know."

"Yes, so it is. But father is so much in love with the air and water way up here in this part of the State, that it is really a hard task to get him away."

"Well, don't try to get him away yet awhile, and try to make it pleasant for him."

"Oh, he's satisfied all the time," she laughed, "but I'm afraid that you and your friends will go out to the lake and leave us here to amuse ourselves, just as we've been doing for several weeks past.

"That's all right," said he. "It's only five miles out to the lake, and we can place one of the cabins at your disposal. I'm sure we had more fun out there last season that we did in town."

Miss Welborn then introduced him to the other two young ladies, each of whom expressed their gratification at meeting him, saying that the Misses Welborn had spoken often of him to them.

"I feel flattered." he said, "but I call say truthfully in return, that we have spoken often of Miss Welborn and her sister when we were a thousand miles away from here. There are four of us here now, all classmates, who would rather be together alive than buried in the same grave when dead."

"My!" laughed one of the young ladies, "what a queer expression!"

"Oh, we are a queer lot," said Fred.

"Well, you must bring them in after tea and introduce them to us," said Miss Welborn, and that evening, in the Parlor, Fred and the other boys had a Jolly time with the girls.

Of course they sang, played and danced until a late hour.

The next day Fred called on his lawyer, whom he found in his office, and had quite a long talk with him about the lake property.

"I drew up the papers for the sale of two lots yesterday," said the lawyer, "and the parties will begin building next season. One is a gentleman from Philadelphia, and another from New York City."

"Oh, that won't amount to anything. It can't pass the Senate, for its unconstitutionality is apparent to any one, and even if it should, the Governor will veto it."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Fred, "for I think he is willing to run the risk of its being declared unconstitutional by the courts, solely for the effect it will have on a certain class of voters in the backwoods. Is Carter here in Ashton?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm going to have a little seance with him."

CHAPTER II. FRED EXCHANGES HOT WORDS WITH ASSEMBLYMAN CARTER AND THREATENS VENGEANCE.

After leaving the office of his lawyer. Fred called on the Honorable Henry Carter, member of the Legislature from that county, at his office, further down the street. He found him in, and a couple of his political friends with him. The legislator recognized him as soon as he entered the office, rose to his feet and advanced to meet him with a bland smile and extended hand.

"How do you do, Fearnot?" he exclaimed. "I'm really glad to see you."

"Thank you," said Fred, grasping his hand and shaking it. "I was really apprehensive that on seeing me you would be so ashamed that you'd jump out of the window and break a limb. Hence I came in easy like, so as not to surprise you."

"Oh, that's all right," laughed Carter. "Take a seat. I'm really glad to see you."

"Thank you again. I haven't time to sit down. I dropped in to put a question to you, and that is this: If you owned Dedham Lake out there, would you have introduced a bill that would take away from you the right to control it?"

"Well, if I owned it such a bill wouldn't be necessary, for I certainly wouldn't deny any one the privilege of fishing in it."

"Well, I've never denied any one that right myself," said Fred.

"They told me you did," returned Carter.

"Then they lied to you, Sir," and Carter shrugged his shoulders.

"A shrug of the shoulders is no answer, Mr. Carter," said Fred. "I will make you a present of the entire property if you can bring me face to face with the man who can prove that I ever denied the privilege of fishing there to any man."

"Well, dozens of them came to me and said that you had, and it was at their solicitation that I introduced the bill."

"Very well, then," said Fred. "We won't discuss that part of it, but I repeat that they lied to you. My lawyer and Mr. Dedham can show written instructions from me to permit any one to fish in the lake who wants to do so. These instructions were dated and left in their hands when I went away last season. But that isn't the question at all. You are a lawyer and know full well that the bill is not only unconstitutional, but is a direct and outrageous assault upon the rights of private property."

"That is a question for the courts to decide," replied Carter.

"Yes, if it becomes a law, it will be a question for the courts to decide. But I'd like to have you answer the question, as a lawyer, whether or not it is unconstitutional and an outrageous assault upon private right."

"I don't care to give an opinion," was, the reply.

"Oh, I'm willing to pay for your legal opinion," said Fred, pulling, a roll of bills from his pocket. "I'll give you fifty dollars for your opinion as a lawyer, not as a politician."

Carter turned white in the face and his eyes gleamed, for the question put him in an extremely uncomfortable position for if he decided as a lawyer, it would he damaging to him, as a politician, and if his opinion was against the constitutionality of it, it would hurt him with his constituents.

"I'll be your client for just five minutes," said Fred, "and I'm willing to pay cash on the spot for your opinion as a lawyer."

"I understand that Mr. Watson is your lawyer," was the evasive reply.

"Oh, yes, I have his opinion and have paid for it, but I've read somewhere in the Good Book, I believe, that there's wisdom in the counsels of many. I think you will find it in the Proverbs of Solomon."

Carter's two politicial friends were standing by and listening, and they, too, recognized the position the young man had placed him in. If he should admit that he had deliberately introduced a bill that he believed to be unconstitutional and was in assault upon the rights of private property, he would practically ruin himself as a

politician.

"I'm ready for your opinion, sir," said Fred, extending a little roll of bills, amounting to fifty dollars, toward him.

"Get out of my office, sir!" exclaimed Carter, giving way to his anger. "I don't wish to have anything to do with yon, sir."

"Surely you don't mean that," said Fred.

"Yes, I do. You have come up here and made no end of trouble among quiet, peaceable people by threatening to deprive them of the privilege they have enjoyed all their lives."

"I deny that I've ever made any such threats," said Fred, and I'd like to employ you as counsel to prosecute any man for defamation of character, who has made any such charge against me."

"I don't wish to have you for a client," said the lawyer. "I don't want your money, but do want you to leave my office and never enter it again."

"Very well, Mr. Carter, I've never made any threats against anybody in this county, but I'm going to make one to you."

"Oh, I care nothing for your threats. Get out!"

"Wait till you hear me,' said Fred. "I'm going to camp on your trail, and before I get through with you, you'll do as Captain Scott's coon did, and say that if I won't shoot you'll come down."

"What!" exclaimed Carter, "do you threaten to shoot me?"

"Oh, no," laughed Fred. "Perhaps I'd better tell you the little story. I see you don't understand me. Captain Scott was a famous hunter in Kentucky, years ago, before you and I were born. And such was his reputation as a marksman that even the game in the woods heard of it, and one day his dog had treed a coon who took refuge in one of the highest trees in the forest. The coon kept his eye on him, as he saw him peering around to get a glimpse of him. When the captain had located him in the branches and was about to fire, the coon sang out to him: 'Is that you, Captain Scott?' 'Yes,' said the captain. 'Well, don't shoot. I'll come down.'"

The two men in the office laughed heartily at the story, but Carter looked grim and determined.

"Well, what do you mean by that." the latter asked.

"I mean that I'm going to follow you up and have my revenge for this cowardly assault upon my private rights, which also is an attack upon the rights of every property holder in the State of New York, and if you are ever up again for office in this county, or any part of this State, I'll wear the bark off of every stump in the district showing you up to the people."

"Oh, that's all right," said Carter, waving his hand contemptuously toward him. "If that's all you have to say, get out now."

"All right, Sir. I'll get out. Good−day," and with that Fred turned and left the office, going back to his hotel.

There he found Lawyer Watson waiting for him, anxious to hear the result of his interview with the member of the Legislature. Fred told him just what passed between himself and Carter.

"I expected it," said Watson, "but you shoved him into a pretty tight corner when you offered to pay for his opinion as a lawyer, for that's where you had him."

"Yes, that's what I knew," said Fred, "but I'm going to keep my eye on him. I'm something of a politician myself, though I never meddle with politics. He belongs to the political party to which my party is opposed, but all the same, if he comes up for office again, in this county, where I am a taxpayer, I'm going to do just as I threatened,, to camp on his trail. If you'll ask my friend, Olcott, about it, he'll tell you that I'm a fighter from the headwaters of Wildcat Creek."

"I don't need to ask him," laughed Watson, "for your fight with the farmers out there at the lake last season is proof enough, and I think you will have an opportunity, to open your batteries on him sooner than you expect."

"How so?" Fred asked.

"Why, he's the candidate for nomination for Congress from this district, and has already secured the support of delegates of half the counties that make up this district, and the probabilities are that he'll got the nomination."

"Great Scott! I'd give several hundred dollars to bring about his nomination."

"Oh. well. If he gets it, he'll be elected," said Watson. "because his party has a large majority in the district−nearly two thousand."

"It makes no difference," said Fred. "I'll built around for some good man inside of his own party to run

independently against him, and then take the stump for him."

"The deuce! Can you make a speech?"

"Well, I don't know whether I can or not. I've been accused several times of making speeches. I have talked to large audiences several times, and I know that I'm not afraid to face them. But if he gets that nomination you'll see the fur fly all over this district, and if I don't beat him I'll worry him some as the boy said when another asked him if he expected to catch that jaybird by climbing the tree after him, and he remarked that if he didn't catch him he'd worry him some, anyway. When does the convention meet?"

"Why, it's to meet next week."

"All right; I'm just in time then. I'll have some fun with Mr. Carter, and don't you forget it. I've been very fortunate in speculations lately, and while I haven't got a barrel to tap, I can foot a good many bills without their making me tired."

"Well, let me tell you, my dear boy," said Watson, "if you down Carter it will be a mighty big thing, for you.."

"Well, don't say a word about it to any one until after the nomination," said Fred. "I'm not after anything for myself, except revenge. One of Shakespeare's characters said that revenge was sweet. I'm not vindictive at all, but when, I come across a cold−blooded, white−livered sort of a chap like Carter, who would deliberately seek to trample upon the rights of private property solely to gain votes among a certain class of ignorant people, I confess to a considerable feeling of vindictiveness. He presumed on my youth and ordered me out of his office two or three times this morning, in a very insolent manner. There were two friends of his present, and I presume it will become the common town talk."

"Yes," said Watson, "it will be a sweet morsel. Everybody will be talking about it, and the farmers out beyond the lake will chuckle gleefully."

"Let them chuckle," said Fred. "They'll have something to chuckle about before the millennium comes."

He spent considerable time with Watson, talking over the legal business connected with the sale of the building lot out at the lake and when the lawyer left, there were quite a number of villagers at the hotel, who called to make inquiry about the story they had heard, that Carter had ordered Fearnot out of his office.

"Say, Fred," Terry asked, as soon as Watson had left, "they say you had a ruction with Carter in his office, and that he fired you out."

"No, he didn't fire me out, but he ordered me to leave."

"Well, did you do it."

"Of course I did. You don't suppose I'd stay in a man's office, which is his own private property, against his wishes do you?"

"Well, didn't you smash him before you left?"

"No, I told him I'd see him later and now you just wait, old man. They say he's going to get the nomination for Congress next week, and if he does, you'll find me on the stump whooping it up till the very stones scattered around on the ground jump and join in the racket, for the full that is in it."

"Good, good." said Terry. "I know what you can do in that line, old man. I'll get up torchlight processions, while you do the spouting, and we'll have more fun than we have yet stirred up anywhere on the face of the earth."

"Well, let's go out to file take," said Fred. "Where are Joe and Dick?"

"Well, you couldn't guess," answered Terry.

"Yes, I can, but I don't know whether I'd hit it right or not. Where are they?"

"They've been in the parlor talking to those girls ever since they left the breakfast table, and I'm blessed if I don't believe are both stuck. I've tried to call them out several times but they won't come, and the girls try to draw me in. You see the native youths around here don't have any standing with the girls from the cities, and when a good−looking fellow comes along, they fairly freeze to him."

"Look here, Fearnot," said Mr. Welborn, rushing up to where Fred and Terry were standing, "they tell me you've had a row with Lawyer Carter. What was it about?"

"Oh, we had some words about that bill that he introduced into the Legislature to deprive me of the control of my property out at the lake."

"O, I heard about that," said the old gentleman. "It was an outrage, but such a bill can never become a law in this State."

"Well, I don't believe it can either, but that doesn't relieve him of his rascally intention. I gave him some pretty

plain talk, and he ordered me out of his office, but that doesn't end it, for I intend to even up things with him before I stop."

"Well, he seems to be a pretty popular fellow here," remarked Welborn.

"Yes, people seem to be afraid of him, but that doesn't apply to me. When I get through with him he'll look like thirty cents."

A team was ordered from the hotel stable, and the four boys. with Black Mose prepared to drive out to the lake. But a stream of villagers kept coming along. inquiring about the difficulty between the young New Yorker and the Asemblyman and several times Fred spoke of him in such uncomplimentary terms that some of the busybodies hastened to acquaint the Assemblyman with what he had said.

"Oh, he's nothing but a boy," laughed Carter. "This is a free country. Let him talk as much as he wants to. It doesn't hurt anybody; but if he becomes too impudent I'll give him a thrashing."

"You can't do it," said a bystander, who belonged to another party. "He can lick you with one hand in his pocket."

"Oh, I guess not."

"I guess so," said the other. "You seem to forget that he's licked a half−dozen farmers, and that all by himself, and an Assemblyman, like you, wouldn't be more than a bedbug for him."

The bystanders laughed, and Carter remarked that he didn't pretend to be a fighter and didn't expect to have any fights.

"Well, then," retorted the other, "don't threaten to thrash him, for he might come around to see you, to give you a chance to do it. He's a mighty bad boy."

The boys drove out to the lake, where they took Farmer Dedham and his family somewhat by surprise. They found the two log cabins, however, fit perfect order ready for their occupation. The farmer's wife and two daughters had taken admirable care of them. The girls hastened to put on their best dresses when they heard that four young men had come out to spend some time, and a half−hour later, when they appeared, they were two as fine−looking, buxom lasses as could be found in the county. Fred and Terry gave them a hearty greeting and introduced Dick and Joe.

"Now, look here, girls," said Terry. " These two friends of ours are susceptible young cusses, both heart−whole and fancy free. Their mothers have entrusted them to our care and if you go to letting them fall in love with you, it will make trouble for us.

"Say!" exclaimed Dick, "you're making touble for yourself, now, for if you don't let up on that sort of' talk, I'll throw you into the water out there, for I won't let anybody but the girl I fall in love with have anything to do with my love affairs."

The girls laughed heartily at Terry's speech, and the elder one remarked that she thought Mr. Duncan was right.

"Of course I am," said Dick. "That rascal, Terry, is engaged to a girl down in Fredonia, so that shuts him out."

"Well, I thought as much." said the younger of the two sisters. "and I guess I know who it is. It's the young lady who was up here last season."

"Yes, that's the one," said Dick.

"You don't kow anything about it," put in Terry.

"Well, let up on that." said Fred. "If you and Joe want to fall in love with these girls, it's you affair and not Terry's or mine. The girls are all right, and I know that you two fellows are; and if Terry says anything to the contrary, we can very soon put him in a strait− jacket. How have you all been since we left here, Mrs. Dedham?"

"We've all been well," said the mother, "but we were not expecting you all here before next spring."

"No," said Fred, "I didn't expect to come up, but I found myself with plenty of leisure time, so we agreed to come in for a few weeks' hunting and fishing and enjoy the fine climate."

"Oh, you're. going to stay several weeks, then."

"Yes, unless you get tired of us and tell us to leave. Hello! here comes Billy and the old man," and he shook hands, with the father and son as they came up.

"Billy, my boy." Fred continued. "if you can scare up any bait around the place, we'll have some fish for dinner."

"All right," replied the youth. "I'll have the bait ready by the time you get your tackle up."

CHAPTER III. FRED BEGINS A FIGHT ON THE WOULD−BE CONGRESSMAN.

The boys went out on the lake in two boats, and Dick and Joe were astonished at the number and quality of the fish they caught. They both became wildly enthusiastic over the sport, as Well is the beautiful scenery that greeted them as far as they could see.

"By George, Fred!" exclaimed Dick. "I've got a pretty plump little bank account down home. I'm strongly tempted to buy a lot up here myself and build a log cabin on it, where I can come up and camp and enjoy the fishing."

"That's all right, old man," said Fred. "You'll find it a good investment, for in less than a year the value of these lots will be doubled; but whether you buy or not, you can come up here and take possession of my cabin any time you please, whether I am here or not. Terry has bought a lot; so has Evelyn, and nearly twenty have already been sold to wealthy families. It's going to be the prettiest summer resort in the whole State."

"Then I'll take one of them," said Dick.

"That's right," laughed Terry, "and if you should happen to fall in love with one of the girls back there in that old house, you'll find that a splendid investment, too."

"Why, has she got any money?" Dick asked.

"No, not much; if the old man should die there'd be only about a couple of thousand dollars apiece for them; but they're splendid housekeepers, healthy, good−natured and as strong as wood−choppers."

Just then Dick got a fish on his hook that required all of his, skill to land, and when he got the prize into the boat, Fred suggested that they go ashore and turn the catch over to Black Mose to prepare for dinner.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed Joe, "why do you want to quit fishing when they bite this way?"

"Why, they bite all the year round here," laughed Terry. "You can catch five hundred between this and sunset. But what's the use? What can you do with them? It's really a crime to catch them and throw them away. You can get used to it after a while. You can come out a little before sunset and catch enough for supper, get up a little before sunrise and catch enough for breakfast; and then at noon; three times a day, as long as you please."

"Thunder! don't you eat anything out here but fish?"

"Oh, yes, but I was just telling you how you could get as much as you wanted. We've got plenty of other provisions on hand, and there's game in the woods."

They spent the afternoon settling down in their quarters, talking over proposed improvements on the place, and the possibilities of the future. Fred and Terry had many stories to tell Dick and Joe of their adventures with a lot of ignorant settlers in the great woods back of the lake, and of the attempt that had been made to produce the impression that the place was haunted.

"Yes, I remember that." laughed Dick. "Terry told we about it, but you broke it up just in time."

"You bet we did," laughed Terry, "and they've given us no trouble since then."

The next day a couple of farmers driving by, stopped in their wagon to talk with the boys. They were a hard−headed pair of old fellows, and one of them asked Fred if he, had heard about the new law that was going to be passed to give everybody the right to fish in the lake that wanted to.

"Yes," said Fred, "I heard about it. It will never become a law."

"Oh, yes, it will," chuckled the old fellow. "Carter says it's sure to be a law."

"Well it might pass the Legislature," said Fred, "but the Legislature can't make a law that interferes with the right of private property, that will stand for a moment before the courts, if it were to pass a law giving everybody the right to go into your orchard and take fruit, without your consent, the courts would very quickly declare it unconstitutional. I haven't denied to any one the privilege of fishing here, except to those fellows who came here with clubs to run me off. They never shall fish in it again."

The two old farmers drove on to town, and in the afternoon, when they came back, they were chucklin over the news they had picked up to the effect that Assemblyman Carter had ordered Fearnot out of his office, and they

couldn't resist the temptation to stop and speak to him about it.

"Oh, yes," said Fred, "he did and like a good, law−abiding citizen, I recognized his right to order me out. I have the right to order anybody off of this property, just as he had to order me out of his office; or you to order any one off of your farm. So you see I recognized the same right that I claimed for myself."

That put a different face on it. But one of the farmers asked what Carter had ordered him out of his office for.

"Oh, we were talking about that bill he has introduced in the Assembly and he got mad because I offered him fifty dollars for his opinion of it as a lawyer and not as a politician."

"Gosh! I didn't hear that," said the farmer.

"No, of course not. You probably heard only his side of it. He knew it was unconstitutional, and that it couldn't stand before the courts, and I pulled fifty dollars out of my pocket, shoved it at him and told him I would give it to him for his opinion as to the contitutionality of it."

"And he wouldn't take it?" the farmer asked.

"No, for it would ruin his reputation as a lawyer if he said it was constitutional, because every man with a thimbleful of brains knows that it isn't, and he dared not say that it was unconstitutional, for fear that he'd make you fellows around here angry with him. You see, my father down in New York City, is a very prominent lawyer himself, and he merely laughed when he read the bill that, Carter had introduced in the Assembly."

"He's a big lawyer, eh?" the farmer asked.

"Oh, yes, they call him a big lawyer. Any lawyer is a big one whose practise is worth fifty thousand dollars a year."

"Gosh!" exclaimed the farmer, "does he make fifty thousand dollars a year?"

"Yes," said Fred, "and there are lawyers there who make three times as much."

"Then what in the name of common sense are you buying up property way up here in the backwoods for, if you've got all that money?"

"Why, for the good air, the pure water and the fine fishing, and the sweet companionship of you farmers. You don't know how much in love with you fellows I am. If I hadn't been so much in love with all of you, I would have gone away last when those fellows tackled me with clubs."

"Well, I wouldn't stay with people who didn't want me?"

"Oh, you don't know what you'd do, if you fell in love with a whole crowd of people."

"Gosh! but you're a queer one," said the elder of the two farmers.

"No, not at all. I wanted to stay up here just because all you people are queer. We haven't any queer people down in New York City."

"Gosh! I hear you've got more rascals down there than in all the rest of the world," said another farmer. "They're up to all kinds of swindling schemes, and when they catch a fellow down there from the country, they rob him of every cent of money he has."

"Well is that any worse than you fellows tried to do with me last summer, when you came down here a dozen at once, with clubs in your hands. I suppose you didn't think about that at all? If I had pushed the law on you, there would have been fifteen to twenty people sent from this neighborhood to the State prison, and after you failed to run me out with clubs, you've got your rascally Assemblyman to try to pass a law to take away from me the control of the property that I paid in cold, hard cash for. I think our burglars and pickpockets are saints compared with such people."

Terry, Dick and Joe were chuckling at the rasping sermon Fred preached to the old farmers as they sat in the wagon, and the latter, unable to stand it any longer, drove off without good−by.

"You see how it is," laughed Fred, turning to Dick and Joe, as the farmers drove away, "People in different sections of the country have different ideas about the right or wrong of things. Those old fellows actually believed it was right to come down here with clubs and drive me away. Some three or four years ago they attacked an old gentleman who wanted to buy the property here, and gave him such a fright that he never showed up in the county again. But they struck a snag when they struck this boy."

"You bet they did," laughed Terry, "and they struck two snags when I came up to help him."

Several days passed, when a party of guests came out from the hotel to spend the day with the boys at the lake, and of course the latter entertained them royally. The Welborn family and two other young ladies from the hotel were among them.

"What's the matter with you all stopping out here for a week?" Fred asked. "Here's an extra cabin at your disposal, with two beds and a dining−room in it, and there are two extra rooms up at the farmhouse that you can have; an of course Mrs. Welborn can chaperon the young ladies while Mr. Welborn can stroll around, do a little fishing and gunning, smoking his pipe, taking his daily nap and enjoying himself just according to his own sweet will."

"I'm afraid it would be too much trouble for you," said Mrs. Welborn.

"On the contrary," said Fred. "it would be no trouble at all. We won't have to do a bit of extra work, and would have the pleasure of your company. The lake and the woods are full of fish and game, and in my estimation the water and air are the best to be had anywhere on the continent."

"Well, but we have our rooms at the hotel."

"Give them up," said Fred. "Let Mr. Welborn drive back, settle the bill, bring your trunks out, and camp here till you get ready to go home, and you won't have a cent to pay."

"Well, I'll leave it to the ladies." said Welborn, who was secretly eager to accept the invitation, as it made a difference of fifty or sixty dollars a week to him financially. Besides they were all tired of the fare at the hotel.

They finally agreed to it, and later in the afternoon Welborn returned alone to town, to come back the next day with the trunks of the party. The two Dedham girls were not pleased with the arrangement at all, as the presence of four pretty city girls greatly interfered with their enjoyment of the company of the four boys, but of course they could not say anything, as the family received rent for the two rooms that had been taken for the accommodation of the visitors.

Of course they had a jolly time. It was fishing and hunting every day, and dancing or singing to Black Mose's banjo or violin in the evening. Other visitors came out from town nearly every day, and it was a continuous picnic for the boys. At last the convention met in a neighboring county to make a nomination of the candidate for Congress, and as Fred had expected an hoped, Assemblyman Carter recieved the nomination.

"Oh, glory!" exclaimed Fred, "won't I have fun with that fellow now! I am going to make life a burden to him. His party has about two thousand majority in the district, and to that extent he has an advantage; but I've got points on him from which I can overwhelm him with ridicule, which is something but few men can stand. For the next four weeks I'll be the busiest boy in the whole State."

"Why, are you going to leave here?" Mr. Welborn asked. "I'll be away a good deal of my time, but the other fellows will be here, and I want you and the ladies to stay right here. Everything on the place is at your disposal, and if anything is wanted from town, Terry will order it. Of course I shall stop here just as much as I can, and it may be that part of the time I shall want Terry to go with me, but don't think of leaving until you are ready to return to your own home; and next season, while your own cottage is building, take possession of that one alongside of mine and spend the season here. But about that we can talk later. I'm going into Ashton tomorrow, and may be gone two or three days."

The next morning Fred went into town and had a long consultation with Lawyer Watson.

"Now, see here," said Fred, "you are pretty well acquainted throughout this district, and you belong to the same party that Carter does. Of course you don't care the snap of your finger about Carter, and you have no political aspirations yourself. I want you to give me the name of some bright young fellow in the district who can be persuaded to run as an independent candidate and divide Carter's vote."

"I don't know where I can find one," said Watson, "for he couldn't be elected and it would take a lot of money."

"I'll furnish every dollar of the money," said Fred. "It shan't cost the candidate a single penny, and I'll stump the district and bring in other speakers, too."

"Well, upon what sort of platform can an independent candidate run against him?"

"Why, I don't want anything better than that bill of his introduced in the Assembly. It's such an outrageous attack upon the rights of private property that, were it properly prsented, hundreds if not thousands of formers could be turned against him."

"Well, I know a struggling young lawyer over at Springdale, a little village in the next county, who is about twenty−five years of age, who studied law while he was teaching school, and supported at the same time a widowed mother and a sister. He's a bright fellow, and a really good speaker. But whether you could persuade him to make an independent fight against Carter is more than I can say."

"Does he belong to Carter's party?" Fred asked.

"Yes; but I don't think he's ever been much of a partisan."

"Has he got a clean record?"

"Yes; not a word can be said about his character."

"Are you well acquainted with him?"

"Yes, I've known him all his life. In fact, he's a distant relative of mine. I was the first one to suggest to him that he study law, for I know his ability."

"Very good. How far is it to Springdale?"

"Twenty−five miles from here," said Watson. "Drive over with me, then, at once," said Fred.

Watson hesitated for a few moments, and Fred added:

"I'll pay you well for your time. I'm in this thing now to fight it right up to the breastworks."

"All right, I'll go." said Watson, and they went around to the livery stable, procured a buckboard and a splendid horse, and half an hour later they were off for Springdale.

They reached there late In the afternoon, put up at a little hotel, the only one in the place, for the village numbered only about eight hundred in population. Watson at once sent for Chapman, the young lawyer, and he at once came to the hotel to see him. There he introduced him to Fred as a friend and client of his, who had invested a good deal of money in and around Dedham Lake.

Fred soon discovered, that young Chapman was a bright young fellow, with a great fund of good, common, horse sense, and he proceeded at once to explain to him the nature of his business with him, saying:

"I want you to announce yourself as an independent candidate for Congress in this district, against Carter, or anybody else."

"Why, my dear sir," said Chapman, "I'm not able to pay the expenses of a race for constable in this township."

"Don't worry about the expenses. I'm willing to put up every dollar of the money that's required forexpenses. It shall not cost you a cent, and, above all that, I 'll pay you fifty dollars a week to compensate you for the neglect of your business during the campaign. There are no politics in it whatever. It is simplya personal fight between Carter and myself. Were I old enough and a citizen of the district, I would make the race myself. he introduced a bill in the Legislature which is an outrageous assaut upon the right of private property, and every owner of an acre of land in the district will be interested in it."

So eloquently did Fred argue the matter with young Chapman and presented the ease to him so logically that he admitted he was strongly tempted to make the announcement of his candidacy.

"But I can see no chance of an election," he finally remarked.

"No," said Fred, "I don't expect to see you elected, but I do expect to see Carter beaten. But it will give you a reputation throughout the district that will make your future extremely bright. You want to make it solely upon one point, and that is the utter unfitness of any man to be a legislator or a lawmaker, who would introduce a bill into a legislative body that is so utterly outrageous and such a violent assault upon the natural and acquired rights of property owners. I'm a pretty good speaker myself, and I'll hire others to help you make the fight."

"I'll do it," said Chapman. "I've nothing to lose and everything to gain."

"That's the way to look at it," said Fred. "I'll sit down right here and help you compile the letter in which you announce your candidacy, and then you can call, upon your personnal friends and have them help you push it."

"Write the letter yourself," suggested Chapman. "for I think you are better posted on that particular question than I am."

CHAPTER IV. FRED BEGINS A WONDERFUL FIGHT FOR REVENGE.

Fred sat down at a small table in the room and proceeded to write a short, sharp address to the voters of the Congressional district, announcing the candidacy of George Chapman for a seat in the National Congress. It proceeded to state who he was, his age, family, occupation, winding up with a statement of his reasons for opposing the election of Henry Carter, who had just been nominated by one of the great political parties. The iniquitous bill, that Carter had fathered in the State Assembly was cited as a positive proof of his utter unfitness to be a lawmaker; it. was a violation of every principle of the rights of an American citizen, as a property owner, and the election of such men to be the lawmakers of the nation threatened the property interests of every citizen. He claimed that it was an insult to the intelligence of the people of the district to present such a candidate to them for their suffrages.

When he had finished it Fred took it up, and, looking at Watson and Chapman asked, "How will this do?" and he proceeded to read it.

Both of them were astonished, as they listened, for its diction was perfect, eloquent, persuasive, and its logic irresistible.

"That's a fine thing, Fearnot," said Watson. "It puts the whole question in a nutshell and places Carter in an exceedingly embarrassing position. He will be forced either to defend or go back on his position as an Assemblyman, and in either case he will be on the defensive, which is always an awkward position for a candidate to occupy before the people."

"Yes," said Fred, "he'll laugh at it at first and probably try to ignore it, but we've got to force him to face the music, and when he attempts to explain he'll get himself tangled up, like a kitten playing with a spool of thread.

"Now, Mr. Chapman," he continued, turning to the young lawyer, "you must work day and night. Get personal friends of yours to go to the different counties in the district to work up clubs, and have them supplied with copies of this letter. I'll have ten or twenty thousand copies of it printed. Of course you must exercise judgment in selecting the friends who will open the fight for you. As this is a practical age, tell each one of them that you'll pay expenses and twenty−five dollars a week besides, for their time. Keep posted as to every dollar of expense incurred, and every bill shall be paid promptly. Get you a good horse and buggy to go to every point where you think you can make by it. Say little about politics: just make it a personal fight against Carter and his utter unfitness to be a lawmaker. Boldly offer a reward for any reputable lawyer who will pronounce that bill of his to be either right or constitustional; and make the claim boldly that he himself knew that it was unconstitutional, but had done it to gain votes from a certain class of ignorant people living in the vicinity of Dedham Lake; and that the man who would attempt such an outrageous attack upon private property, to gain votes, was the man to elect to stay at home."

Fred left a considerable sum of money with young Chapman, and returned the next morning to Ashton with Watson. When he reached the town he found Carter's political friends making preparations for a demonstration that evening. There was a big crowd and Carter made a very plausible speech and considerable enthusiasm was developed. Another lawyer also spoke, lauding Carter as a rising statesman, who would be an honor to the district when he took his seat in the hall of the National Congress. Fred was present, listening to everything that was said and making notes.

Suddenly he called out to the speaker:

"Tell us something about the Carter bill."

The speaker paid no attention to the request, but went on with his eulogistic declaration, and Fred again propounded the question. The speaker ignored it and those of the opposite political party began to laugh at and jeer him.

"Why don't you answer the question?" one of them asked. And then Carter's friends began to hiss and demand order, but his opponents saw that they had him in a tight place, and jeered and hissed back, until for a time it looked as though some of them would come to blows.

The meeting finally broke up with considerable disorder and the next morning a great deal of angry talk was indulged in, and at the hotel a prominent citizen, one of Carter's supporters, tackled Fred about it.

"What right have you to bother with an election in this district, not being a voter?"

"Just as much right as you have, sir," he replied. "I'm a taxpayer here, and I don't know whether you are or not."

"Yes, I am," said the citizen. "I was paying taxes here before you were born."

"Then you own real estate?"

"Yes, a good lot of it."

"Then tell me what you think about the Carter bill."

"Oh, hang the Carter bill!" exclaimed the citizen. "That has nothing to do with a national election."

"Yes, but it has a great deal to do with Carter," retorted Fred, "and instead of hanging the bill the bill will hang him; for it is reasonable to presume that he won't have any more sense as a Congressman than he had as an Assemblyman, nor any more honesty."

"Do you mean to say he's not an honest man?" the citizen asked.

"Certainly I do. He's a political freebooter. He would vote for a law that would take from you and me any natural rights that we now possess, were it worth anything to him to do so.

"He introduced that bill to get the votes of those fellows around Dedham Lake."

"Well, there's no danger of the bill ever becoming a law," said Carter's friend.

"No, I don't think so either; but is Carter to blame for that? It doesn't relieve me from the responsibliity. And now let me tell you that Mr. Carter has got the fight of his life on his hands. His party has about two thousand majority in the district, but there are honest men enough in his party to defeat him."

"Why, you don't know what you are talking about, Fearnot. He'll have a walkover. If I were a betting man I would bet ten to one that he would be elected."

"Well," said Fred, "I'll put up one thousand dollars at such odds as that, and will pay you another thousand if you can find a man to cover it."

"Surely you don't mean that?" the man asked.

"Yes, I do. I'll deposit the money in the bank here, at the odds you mention and pay you another thousand if you'll get it covered. I'll do even better than that. If you can persuade any of Carter's friends to cover it, I'll give you two thousand dollars."

"All right, I'll do it," said the man. "Our people up here don't have much money lying around loose, but a lot of us can make it up, I guess."

"All right." said Fred. "Let them make it up, and I'll deposit two thousand dollars extra with a written agreement to pay it to you if Carter is elected. So you needn't take my word at all. I'm a minor, you know."

"Is it possible that you really believe that Carter can be beaten?"

"Yes," said Fred, "and I'm betting solely upon the honesty and horse sense of the average citizen. That bill of his is going to lose him in average of from one to three hundred votes in each county in the district."

"I don't believe it will lose him ten votes in the whole district. I'm going to vote for him, and I think I'm just about as honest as anybody else."

"Really, now," laughed Fred, "do you think you are honest?"

The man flushed up and asked Fred if he meant to insult him.

"Oh. no, nothing personal; but you spoke of your honesty, and of course that gives me the right to take it up. You say you're going to vote for him."

"Yes, I am not only going to vote for him, but I'm going work for him."

"Very well, now; let me put a question to you. If you owned Dedham Lake and the property around it would you vote for him in view of that bill which was aimed at that piece of property, to take away from the owner of it the right to control it as he saw fit?"

"Yes, I would." said Fred, "you must excuse me if I tell you frankly that I don't believe you. I think your partisanship has warped your judgment and bottled up your conscience. Hence I won't discuss it with you, but will go right over to the bank, oviiere I've got a little wad of money, and put up the thousand dollars for you and your friends to cover," and he left the hotel, went to the bank, where he drew a check for three thousand dollars, one thousand of which he placed with the cashier as a stakeholder, to be covered at odds of ten to one. Then he left

with him two thousand dollars to be paid to any man who would succeed in persuading any friends of Carter to cover the bet.

It turned out that the cashier himself was one of carter's political supporters, and he remarked to Fred:

"You are throwing your money away, Mr. Fearnot."

"All right, if you think it's thrown away, just pick it up," he retorted.

"I'm not a betting man," replied the cashier.

"Well, persuade some of your friends to do it, then."

"No, I wouldn't persuade a friend to do a thing that I wouldn't do myself. I have conscientious scruples about such things."

"Yet you have no conscientious scruples about voting for a man who attempts to pass a law to take from another the control of his own private property, eh? How about that little verse that hints about a man's straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel? You will find that the conscientious scruples of honest men in this district are going to make them vote for Mr. Carter to stay at home, instead of going to Washington."

"I guess you don't know much about politics," said the cashier, with a smile.

"No, not much. I'm banking on the honesty of the average citizen."

"Well, now, don't you go about questioning the honesty of people, or you'll get yourself into trouble."

"Oh, I don't mind the trouble. I'm into this thing to make trouble for Carter. I may get a pair of black eyes, but you want to take a peck at him the next day after the election."

"Oh, he'll be all right," said the cashier. "His party is too strong in this district for him to be beaten."

"You had better put it this way," suggested Fred, "that there are not enough honest men in the district to beat him."

"No, I'll leave you to do that sort of foolish talk," retorted the cashier.

"I'm going to, and to do plenty of it, too. Of course, if anybody comes here to make inquiries about this money I've put up, you'll answer their question, will you not?"

"Oh, yes, I'll tell them the money is here, and that the bank will hold it and turn it over to the winners the next day after the election." Fred returned to the hotel where the landlord asked him if he really had made such a bet.

"Yes," said Fred. "I've just returned from the bank, where I put up the money as I said I would."

"Well, I'm going to vote against Carter," said the landlord, "for I don't belong to his party. But I'll tell you, you're going to lose your money."

"Well, don't you bet I will. You just wait a while and see how things are going. You'll be astonished."

"Well, Crenshaw is hurrying around among his friends to get them to cover your bet."

"I hope he'll succeed," laughed Fred, "for it will be a dead sure thing for him, no matter which way the election goes, for I've offered him two thousand dollars to get his friends to cover it."

"Thunder!"exclaimed the landlord, "why didn't you give me that chance?"

"Didn't know that you wanted it. I'll put up another one for you if you think you can get his friends to do it."

"Oh, it's too late now. It would hurt my own party if I did."

A few days later Chapman's letter was published in all the opposition papers in the district, and some of Carter's newspaper supporters published it also; and all of his friends laughed heartily at what they called the presumption of the young Springdale lawyer. But a week later the opposition lawyers began publishing the fact that a great many of Carter's friends were showing sigins of disaffection, and that some had come out boldly for the young Springdale lawyer, saying that he was right and that Carter was not a fit man to be a membeer of even a township school board, much less a Congressman. Finally the announcement was made that Chapman would address the citizens of Ashton on the following Wednesday night, and of course there was great curiosity to hear him. He had spoken in the town but once, and that was in a case, in court. when he mde a good impression as a young lawyer.

Of course every member of the opposition party turned out to swell the meeting to respectable proportions. Notwithstanding they had a candidate of their own in the field they were willing to help along anything that would hurt Carter.

On the other hand, all of Carter's friends showed up at the meeting to hear what the young independent candidate would say against him. He made a splendid speech, for Fred had posted him on the points, and had obtained the opinions of several eminent lawyers in the State on the constitutionality of the Carter bill, and they

were read to the meeting. He made a fine impression, for he had taken particular pains to prepare a good speech, and as he had a fine delivery and a good voice, he won many friends.

When he finished and sat down there were loud calls for Fearnot, and. as, everybody in the audience knew that Carter had once ordered him out of his office, there was great curiosity to hear what he had to say, and the surprise that awaited them was really a startling one. Before he had been speaking five minutes every one in the audience recognized the fact that he was a splendid orator, and the wittiest one they had ever listened to. He ridiculed Carter as a lawmaker so mercilessly that the would−be Congressman's supporters fairly squirmed ill their seats. Then his denunciation of his assault upon the rights of private property was, scathing, and he declared that his nomination was an insult to every honest man in the district.

"I offered him fifty dollars in his office," he exclaimed, "for his opinion on the bill as a lawyer, not as a politician, and he hadn't the moral courage to take the money and give the opinion, although fifty dollar fees don't often come his way. Just now he would rather have votes, than money, and the next day after the election will find himself without either."

He went on depleting to every property holder present the danger of such laws upon the statute books of the State, from men who legislate for political purposes rather than for the good of the people. He then told the audience what he had found out about George Chapman, who was fighting the battle for honesty.

"His father died ten years ago," he said, "leaving upon his young shoulders the support of a widowed mother and a sister younger than himself. He was at school then, but left immediately and went to work to keep the wolf away from the door, and during the next five years the light of a little lamp could he seen from the window of a room in his cottage home till long, after midnight. He was studying to fit himself as a teacher that he might earn money for the support of his mother and sister. Think of it, fellow citizens, of that tremendous struggle of a youth from his sixteenth to his twenty−first birthday! Not once did he go to any social gathering to dance and frolic, such as you and I indulged in, for he realized the responsibility restIng upon him as well as a man twenty years older would have done. At last he submitted himself before the Board of Education and they found him competent to teach' in the district school. They granted him a license and certificate, and the school that he taught was declared by the County Superintendent to be the best in the county. Again the light of that lamp sent its rays through his attic window upon the dark shadows of the night, whlst others slept. Now he was studying law. He read deeply and thought still deeper and in due time, when he applied for admission to the bar, the committee that examined him, and the judge on the bench, declared him well equipped to practice in all the courts of law and equity in the great State of New York; and, fellow citizens, his knowledge of law is very different from that of his distinguished opponent. It is deeper, higher and wider; and, better still, his moral nature would revolt at an attempt to invade the private rights of his fellow countrymen through forms of law, that gain might come to him. He's an honest man, who would carry his honesty with him in the halls of legislation. You may call him young and inexperienced, but honesty is always innate. He is twenty−five years of age, and that means twenty− five years of honesty. Carter is forty−two years old, and that means fortytwo years of what? Let that infamous bill of his speak for him. Will any man dare call him honest? Those who requested him to Introduce that bill sought by force of arms, clubs and guns to take possession of another man's property, and, failing to do so, went to him for assistance, and he, in his capacity as a legislator, sought to enable them to steal, through forms of law, that which they could not steal by stealth or force, and now he is asking you to extend his field of usefulness in that direction. He is the man to delight the heart of the burglar, the pickpocket and the horse thief."

CHAPTER V. FRED CHALLENGES CARTER AND CREATES A GREAT SENSATION.

Fred's speech created a tremendous sensation in Ashton. In the first place, the people were astonished in his oratorical abilities; and in the second, the political friends of Carter were dismayed by the terrific attack and evident effect of it upon the audience There wasn't one among them but who saw the danger menacing him and their party. They had never regarded the bill he had introduced into the Legislature seriously, but young Fearnot had placed it before the people in such a light as to make every property owner feel that his property rights were in danger; and then again, his sarcastic cuts and flings at their candidate's political honesty and the splendid eulogy uttered over the personal character of young Chapman was a masterly thing in its way.

Everybody, old or young, felt an almost irresistible desire to help along the struggling young lawyer, who had so bravely fought the battle for bread for his widowed mother and sister.

When the meeting broke up the, men asked each other:

"Well, what do you think of it?" and the women all exclaimed:

"What a splendid speaker he is! What a horrid man Carter must be! If I were a man I'd vote for Chapman."

Carter's friends got together in groups and discussed Fearnot's speech, shaking their heads and looking solemn.

"You've got to call off that fellow, Fearnot," said one of Carter's heelers.

"How are you going to do it?" another one asked.

"Break up the meeting wherever he goes," suggested the heeler.

"The very worst thing that could be done," remarked an old veteran of many political campaigns. "For whenever you try to interfere with fair play you get the worst of it. He's going to hurt us badly, for as a speaker he can just knock spots out of Carter, or any man we have in our party."

"Oh, well," said another, "all we've got to do is to raise money and buy off Chapman. Give him a thousand dollars and he'll come down and get out of the race."

"I don't believe it," said another. "If he's the sort of a man that Fearnot has described him to be, ten thousand dollars wouldn't get him out."

Up in Carter's office there was a consultation of his friends and advisers that lasted until beyond midnight. Those of them who had heard Fearnot's speech gave it as their opinion that probably half a hundred votes had been lost to their party that night.

"I'll tell you, Henry," said one of them, addressing Carter, "You can't laugh down Chapman, for that fellow, Fearnot, is going to rally a big crowd to support him. That confounded bill of yours will play the deuce with you. He actually frightened me to−night by his description of the possibilities of wrong that can be perpetrated under it; and something must be done to counteract it or we'll lose a big slice of our regular party vote. We would lose many even if that confounded bill was out of the way. A natural desire to help along a clean−cut young fellow, like Chapman, will gain him many votes, and the way Fearnot describes his boyish struggles from the time he was fifteen years old, to support his mother and sister, while studying himself to be a school teacher, drew tears from many in the audience and aroused enthusiastic admiration throughout the whole house. I saw scores of our own party wildly cheering him, while the women and girls were completely captured; and, do you know, they have tremendous influence in a campaign like this."

Carter was white with rage, as he listened to the reports of the speeches that had been made that evening, for he recognized the fact that the young New Yorker whom he had so insolently ordered out of his office was an enemy not to be despised.

"Confound the fellow!" he exclaimed, "if he were of age I'd horsewhip him for characterizing me in that way in a public speech."

"Yes, but that won't do," said one of his friends; "he's a bright boy, and any violence shown him would make him all the stronger and more popular. It was a tremendous hit when he said that he had offered you fifty dollars

for your opinion of that bill as a lawyer, not as a politician, and that you hadn't the courage to give it. Altogether he placed you in mighty bad light."

"Oh, well," said Carter, "men who have been voting our ticket all their lives will keep on doing so. He may turn the heads of a few, but it won't amount to anything. All this wild enthusiasm is simply the appreciation of a boy's cheek and grit, but when they come up to the polls to vote, they'll vote as they've been doing all along."

"Well, you don't want to trust to that," advised one of his counselors.

"You must get Chapman out of the race. We've either got to pay him so much cold cash to withdraw, or else promise him a position that will compensate him."

But where will he get the money to put up a fight?" Carter asked. Several of them shrugged their shoulders as much as to say: "I don't know."

"Well, I can tell you," said one. "I heard it from pretty good authority that Fearnot had said that he would put up ten thousand dollars in cold cash to see Chapman through till the sun went down on the day of election."

"He can't do it," said Carter, shaking his head.

"Oh, that's all nonsense. He's the son of a very wealthy lawyer, said to be worth a million, and he's made nearly ten thousand dollars off of the lots out at Dedham Lake already. We know something about him as a fighter, and we've got to fight him right straight along till the polls close."

"Well, what's to be done?" another asked.

"Raise a thousand dollars and let some one offer it to Chapman to get out of the race," was suggested, and in less than thirty minutes the money was subscribed there in Carter's office, and a shrewd old wire−pulling politician was given charge of it.

"Now, gentlemen," said the old wire−puller, "keep your in mouths shut about this. Don't say a word even to your best friends about it; and in talking about the speeches that were made to−night at the ball, compliment both of the young men; speak of them in terms of praise, but laugh at the idea of its hurting our candidate. We will give them a few more days for the purpose of watching the effect of his candidacy upon our people."

The meeting then broke up.

The next day some of Carter's staunchest friends and supporters were compelled to admit that the meeting of the night before was somewhat damaging to Carter, but not enough to do him any harm.

"The great trouble," said one of them, "will be with the women. My wife and two daughters went to bed last night hurrahing for Chapman and Fearnot. The fact is, the two boys just captured the women. Naturally all the girls prefer a handsome young man, and Fearnot won the heart of every mother who heard him; and I'll tell you that when a mother hears of a boy standing by his widowed mother, as Chapman has done, she'll pray for his success in anything he undertakes. Women don't know anything about politics. Everything is sentiment with them."

At the hotel where young Chapman was stopping, there was a big crowd all the morning congratulating him and Fearnot. Of course the great majority of them were old political opponents of Carter and his party, yet there were many of the latter who frankly offered their support to the young lawyer. One old farmer went to him, who had been voting Carter's party ticket for forty years, extended his hand to him and said:

"Young man, when I was your age I had the same struggle that you've had and I'm going to stand by you; and the old woman at home says she'll lick our boys if they don't do so too. I've got a good farm and as long as I live I want to have complete control of it, and won't support any man who tries to take away from me any of my right to do so."

Nearly everybody in the town had a copy of Chapman address to the voters of the district, and they read it over carefully, some of them twice and three times, and they could see nothing in it to offend their political ideas. Everything hinged upon the fitness of the author of the Carter bill to be a Congressman, and during the speeches the night before not a word of polities was uttered. It was simply a question of right and wrong and one personality pitted against the other.

On going to the postoffice about noon Fred met Carter face to face on the street and looked up at him, smiled and said:

"Good−morning, Mr. Carter."

"Good−morning, Mr. Fearnot," returned the candidate.

"Did you hear my whoop last night?" Fred asked.

"No; I'll begin whooping in a few days myself."

"All right," said Fred. "If you'll join me in a series of joint debates in every county in the district, I'll agree to pay your expenses."

"Thank you for the offer," said Carter. "I'll think about it."

Nearly a score of people heard the challenge, and it flew through the town like wildfire. A number of Carter's friends got around him, urging him not to accept it.

"He'll ruin you, if you do," said one. "he can outtalk anything you ever heard in your life."

"Oh, I had no intention of accepting it, and it would be extremely undignified for a man of my age to debate with one not yet old enough to vote."

"Of course, of course," chorused several of his friends.

Fred and Chapman were indefatigable workers. All the afternoon and until midnight they were engaged in organizing committees and workers: and appointments for meetings in every county in the district were sent out, and thus they got in the first appointments in the campaign. It required money, but Fred put it up promptly and everything went along smoothly.

On the morning of the second day the old politician to whom was delegated the task of trying to get Chapman out of the race, called on him, and with a smooth, oily tongue proceeded to tell him how he was ruining the party to which he belonged.

"We've had our eyes on you for two years past," said the old fellow, "and were waiting for the right time to come to put you forward as one of our standard−bearers, but now you are deliberately committing political suicide. The party will take care of you if you will put a stop to this thing before it goes any farther, and if a thousand dollars in cold cash can compensate you for what trouble you've already been to, I'm ready to hand it over to you. It's for the sake of the party, understand."

"Why, it's for the sake of the party that I'm fighting," said Chapman. "Putting up such men as Carter will ruin the party, for it will accustom our people to voting for dishonest and tricky politicians. Ten thousand dollars would not put in me out of the race."

"You're a very foolish young man, Mr. Chapman," said the other.

"I'd rather be foolish than dishonest, sir," said Chapman.

"Oh. come now, you don't mean to charge dishonesty upon the great body of your party do you?"

"Yes, sir. I mean to make the charge that every man who votes for Carter is voting for a dishonest man, and indirectly giving his sanction to a measure that is dishonest on the face of it and I know that you, sir, yourself, would be fighting Carter to−day, if that bill was aimed at you, as it was aimed at the owner of Dedham Lake. You may deny it, several of Carter's friends have already denied it, but I wouldn't believe any man on his oath who would say that he approves the bill to deprive himself of his free control of his own property."

"That is pretty strong language," said the politician.

"Of course it is. It's simply plain speaking, for if you now were to place your hands upon the Bible and swear that you would approve of a bill that would take from you the control of your property, I would all the rest of my days believe that you had perjured yourself. I know in my very soul that you don't approve of it, and yet, for the sake of party, you are going to approve of the man who is the author of such a bill."

"Oh, well we won't discuss that," said the politician, who had the hide of a rhinoceros and a conscience about as tender as that of a hyena, where politics was concerned. "How came you to enter the fight, anyway?"

Chapman was frank.

"I was persuaded to do so by Fred Fearnot, at whom the bill was aimed, but not until he had convinced me that the author of the bill was a dangerous man to be sent to any legislative body; and, that there may be no misunderstanding about it, I will tell you further that he is paying every expense of my candidacy. You may call me Fearnot's candidate, or anything, else you please, but I am going to stand up a protest against such a man as Carter being sent to Congress from this district."

"That's all very well. If Carter is defeated it's the other party who will carry the district, not you."

"That may be," admitted Chapman, "but the candidate or the other party is an honest man. I don't care anything about the politics. We want honest lawmakers. There is far more danger to the people in the election of such man as Carter than in the defeat of our party. Republics have been destroyed in ages past solely by the corruption of officials."

The politician went away, satisfied that nothing could be done with Chapman, and he proceeded to make all the capital he could by saying the latter had frankly admitted to him that Fearnot paying all the expenses of his candidacy. Of course that didn't hurt him at all, for everybody knew that he was is poor as a church mouse, and it was no reflection upon him whatever that Fearnot was putting up the money.

There was a little town about eight miles out from Ashton, containing about five hundred inhabitants, called Pelham, and it was a rich farming region all around; but the political complexion of the community was decidedly in favor of Carter's party. It was the first place outside of Ashton where Fearnot and Chapman were billed to speak. Carter's friends threatened to break up the meeting, and news to that effect was brought into Ashton.

"Just what we want them to try," said Fred. "I've sent down to Utica for a brass band, and I guess we'll have friends enough here, in Ashton, to go out with us and have a regular Donnybrook Fair, if Carter's friends so desire, but I don't think we'll have any trouble whatever, for we abuse nobody at all, and the right of free speech is one which I, for one, will fight for with clubs, pistols or bowie− knives. They tell me I made it very hot for Carter the other night, but his friends will think that is simply a dish of ice−cream, compared to what he will get to−morrow night out there."

In anticipation of trouble, or very great excitement, at least a couple of hundred people went out from Ashton, to attend the meeting at Pelham. Of course the majority of them were the old political opponents of Carter's party, for they were doing their best to encourage Chapman's candidacy. When they reached the little station, and the crowd left the train to march to the hall, with the brass band at their head, some twenty or thirty young fellows attempted to break up the procession by throwing stones and hooting. Fred very promptly threatened to prosecute every one who attempted to disturb a public meeting. He was greeted with a shower of stones, one of which struck him on the forehead, cutting a gash that caused the blood to stream down over his face. He held his handkerchief to the wound, while the men in his party charged on the rioters and very promptly dispersed them, after which they went to the hall, where they found it jammed with men and women. Chapman at once proceeded to make the same speech that he had delivered in Ashton. He made a fine impression as an earnest, honest young man. After him came Fred, who, before uttering a word, displayed his handkerchief which was saturated with blood from the wound on his forehead.

There was much excitement.

"Ladies and gentlemen," said he, "I exhibit to you some of the blood I have shed thus early in this campaign, in defense of the right of free speech. Those who stoned us to−night the way to this way to this hall are not so much to blame for what they did as their leader, who set the example to them. When Assemblyman Carter introduced his infamous bill in the Assembly of this State, to take from a man the right to control his own property, he gave voice to the spirit that brought about this attack on free speech in the street of you beautiful little village to−night; and I am here to ask you to place the seal of your condemnation upon his attack upon the rights of private property and the right of free speech," and from that he passed into the most scathing, burning, eloquent denunciations of Carter and his rascally course that had ever been heard in that part of the State.

He portrayed like a living, vivid picture the danger of such lawmakers being sent to the hall of legislation, bringing home to every property owner the peril that menaced his home and property.

"We are not here," he continued, "to utter one word about politics. It is a battle for honor and honesty, and no man can claim to be honest while voting for a rascal, and those who threw stones at us to−night have made all assault upon the dearest right of American citizenship, the right of free speech. And I denounce every man and boy of them as infamous cowards who singly would not face one of our number in this hall to−night. Now, in place of such a man as Carter, we present to you one who is the very embodiment of honor and honesty," and then for the next twenty minutes he told the story of Chapmans' life and his struggles to educate himself as a teacher, then as a lawyer, interspersing it with stories that had the audience roaring with laugher at one time, and at another almost shedding tears. He completely won the crowd.

CHAPTER VI. THE FIGHT GROWS HOT AND FRED IS IN THE THICKEST OF IT.

Fred's second speech created a far greater sensation than the first one, and the effect of it was really marvelous. The exhibition of his blood−stained handkerchief to the audience was truly dramatic, and he swept his auditors off their feet with his fiery eloquence and logical reasoning. The indignation of citizens was freely expressed on all sides. Those who had taken part in stoning the procession slunk away from the hall.

When Fred sat down and the great tumult of applause that followed had subsided, an old farmer rose to his feet and said that he had three times voted for Carter for the Assembly, but that now he intended to vote for Chapman for Congress and urge his friends to do so. That provoked another great outburst of applause, and the old man continued:

"It isn't a question of party politics. It's one of common sense, honesty and decency, and I propose that right here we organize a club in the interests of this, young man, who has struggled to support a mother and sister, while at the same time educating himself."

"So do I," sang out scores of voices in the crowd, and in less than twenty minutes over two score of names had been handed up, every one of whom had been Carter's supporters in former elections as ready to form a club.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," said Fred, "The success of this meeting has exceeded our most sanguine expectations, and in return for your kindness, I want to extend my invitation to every man, woman and child in this audience to a big fish fry at Dedham Lake. There are millions of fish there, and I'll have fifty thousand of them caught to feed you, if necessary. Just set the day and everything shall be provided for your comfort."

The crowd cheered.

"Furthermore," he continued, "whenever you want a good day's fishing go to Dedham Lake for it. It's my property, and I am going to invite my friends to come and fish whenever they please. But if a man says he will come and fish there against my consent, he is the same as a thief and robber, just as he would be if he went over into your watermelon patches and your orchards without your permission."

Again they cheered him until the very walls trembled.

"Now, I've made a speech already to−night, and I ought to stop, but I see so many pretty faces before me, among the mothers and daughters of Pelham, that I am constrained to pay my respects to them particularly," and his eulogy of woman and her loving influences was like a poem.

The great audience was held spellbound, He ended with a song full of sentiment and pathos. His clear, baritone voice thoroughly well trained, completed his work for the evening making every one who beard him his personal friend, regard less of party lines.

When the meeting was dismissed, scores of women, young and old, crowded around him to shake hands with him. They surrounded Chapman, too, who blushed like a schoolgirl.

Said one of the old mothers:

"The boy who stands by his mother is the one to be trusted. We are going to work and pray for your success, young man."

Chapman was astonished. When he started out in the campaign he was apprehensive that party lines would be drawn so closely he would find but few supporters, but here in the second meeting it looked as though every voter in the house was for him. Scores of men who had supported Carter's party all their lives frankly declared that they were going to oppose their own party and support Chapman, and as for the women, young and old, they seemed to be unanimously in favor of his election; and Fred's song had settled the question with every marriageable girl in the house.

"Say, Fearnot," an old citizen asked, "you bought Dedham Lake. Are you going to settle down and be a citizen of the county?"

"I may," he laughed. "If I find the people all over the county as kindly disposed to me as you are to−night, I don't see how I can resist the temptation."

"Well, if you do we'll send you to the Assembly, to congress, and then make you Governor. Come up here and grow with us."

Headed by the brass band, the crowd from Ashton marched back to the railroad station, followed by nearly everybody in the village; and when the train started off the villagers cheered them at the top of their lungs.

"Look here, Chapman," said Fred, as he took a seat by his side in the car, "hanged if it don't look like an election."

"Well, I confess that I am surprised," returned Chapman. "I never saw an audience so thoroughly captured in my life as that one to−night was."

"Well, I told Carter two weeks ago that I intended to camp on his train, when he ordered me out of his office. The next thing will be to try to buy you off."

"They've, tried that already," said Chapman. "I was offered one thousand dollars day before yesterday, to withdraw from the field."

"Great Scott! man, why didn't you tell that to−night?"

"Didn't think of it," he laughed.

"Well, don't forget it again. It means a great deal. I wouldn't like a thousand dollars myself for this bloody handkerchief of mine. I'm going to exhibit it at every meeting in the district."

The next morning Fred was surprised when he heard that the one−thousand−dollar bet he had put up had been covered by friends of Carter, and Crenshaw had made two thousand dollars in persuading them to do it.

"That's all right," said Fred, when Crenshaw himself told him about it. "I'll put up another thousand at the same odds and pay you the same commission."

"I'm afraid I couldn't work it," was the reply. "It was pretty hard work to drum up those that I did."

"Well, you've got a safe thing of it, anyway," said Fred. "No matter which wins, you are two thousand dollars in."

"Yes, it's the best luck I've had in years; never picked up two thousand dollars so easy in my life. I hear you had a big meeting at Pelham last night."

"Oh, you ought to have been there," said Fred. "We just captured the whole town. They tried to break up the meeting by stoning us on the way from the train to the hall, and here's where a stone struck me," and he took off his hat and exhibited the wound on his forehead.

"Well, I'm sorry for that," said Crenshaw.

"Well, I'm not," said Fred. "It will cost Carter one hundred votes in Pelham. Do you see this handkerchief?" and he exhibited his blood−stained handkerchief, saying, "You ought to have heard the indignation of the audience, when I exhibited that handkerchief to them last night," and he took a special delight in torturing Carter's supporter with a recital of the incidents of the evening.

Crenshaw went away looking rather serious and at once hunted up Carter to tell him about what he had heard. Carter had already heard it and was still pretending to be unconcerned, but later in the day he heard from one of his friends, at Pelham, that fully one−half of the old party voters had gone over to the support of Chapman, and suggested that if something was not done to counteract the impression made by Fearnot and Chapman at the meeting there the night before the town would go against him.

Carter and his friends began to hustle. He promptly wrote out and published an appeal to his supporters in the district, not to interfere with any Chapman meetings, but to recognize the right of free speech everywhere and to pay no attention to assaults made upon his character, which was too well−known to his friends and neighbors for any injury to result to him. He urged them to fight for the principles of their party and not upon any personal grounds.

Chapman immediately followed it with an appeal to the honesty of the people or the district, and calling attention to the infamous Carter bill as the stamp upon the character of its author. Of course Fred wrote it, and its keen, cutting, sentences were, effective to a marked degree.

Fred and Chapman were about to take the train for the next county, when a friend of Carter's came to Fred to give him warning that any further attacks upon Carter's personal character would result in his arrest for defamation of character.

"Good, good," said he, "that will add greatly to the hilarity of the canvass. I'm going to continue the fight upon the line that I've started it on. I've been very careful to touch only upon his political actions, and those I'm going to

continue to denounce as infamous, dishonest and cowardly; and if I am arrested for doing so, and he fails to make out a case against me, I'll proceed against him for malicious prosecution. Tell Mr. Carter that I'm camping on his trail, and he has made one so broad and plain that a blind man can follow it."

"I think you will find it to your interest to drop personalities," suggested the politician.

"I'm not dealing in personalities, I'm dealing with records," Fred replied; "and, besides, I don't think you are quite the man to give me any advice that is conducive to my interest. It's to my interest to defeat Mr. Carter, and I don't think you're disposed to show me how to do it," and with that he entered the car, along with Chapman, and was soon whirling along in the direction of the next county, where they were to attend a great meeting that evening, in the bustling little town of Homer.

On the way there the two exchanged views as to certain matters that should be discussed in the speeches that night.

"You must be sure to make mention, and give the name of the man who offered you one thousand dollars to withdraw from the canvass." said Fred.

"Yes, I will; but he will flatly deny it."

"Well, let him do so. Your reputation for veracity is just as good as his, I guess."

"Oh, yes, but I dislike very much to raise a question of veracity with an old citizen like him."

"Well, in this fight, neither age, color nor previous condition are to be considered," laughed Fred.

"Very true. When we reach Homer I'm going to be subjected to a very unpleasant interview with an old uncle of my mother. He is an old partisan of Carter, and he wrote my mother a letter about my candidacy, asking her if I had gone crazy, or had proved a traitor to the teachings of my father."

"Well, just introduce me to him," laughed Fred.

"All right, but you want to be careful with him. He is a very irascible man, and about seventy years of age."

"Oh, I'll be kind to him. Don't worry about that."

When they reached Homer there were quite a number of people at the little station, brought there by curiosity to see the boy who was making a fight on Carter, for the papers had said a good deal about him and the fact that he had been wounded by a stone at Pelham had created quite a sensation. There were two men there who had declared themselves as Chapman men, and one of them stepped up and asked:

"Are you Mr. Chapman?"

"Yes," said the lawyer.

"Well, my name is Williams, and this is Mr. Crane." and he introduced another.

"Glad to know you, gentlemen," said Chapman, shaking hands with them. "I heard before I left Ashton that you were friends of mine in this fight. This is Mr. Fearnot."

"Ah, this is the boy," said Williams, shaking Fred's hand in a vigorous manner and looking him over from head to feet. "You seem to be a pretty hard one to down."

"Yes," laughed Fred, "I haven't been downed yet, although the other fellows have begun throwing stones."

"Is it really true that you were hit?" Williams asked.

"Yes," he replied, removing his hat and exhibiting the wound on the upper left side of his forehead. "That speaks for itself, doesn't it? The stone came rather glancing, or the blow might have proved fatal."

"Why didn't you have the fellow arrested?"

"Because I couldn't swear to his identity, didn't see him when he threw it. But really I'm really glad I got it. It's worth a thousand votes to Chapman. What sort of a crowd are we going to have to−night?"

"We'll have a big one, for there is great curiosity in both parties to hear you; but Carter's friends are angry at Chapman for trying to split the party."

They went to the hotel, where quite a number of citizens called on them, the majority being the political opponents of Carter who, of course, were anxious to encourage Chapman's candidacy. In fact some of them were willing to contribute financially to his campaign fund.

About in hour after their arrival, Chapman's great−uncle, a well− to−do old citizen of the place, who owned quite a large farm out in the country, called at the hotel to see him.

"Glad to see you, Uncle John," said Chapman, as he shook the old gentleman's hand.

"Well, I'm sorry to see you behaving so badly. What's the matter with you, anyway?" and the old man looked as though he wanted to drag him across his knee and spank him.

"Why there's nothing the matter with me, Uncle John. I'm all right."

"You're all wrong," said the old man. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You've gone squarely back on the teachings of your father."

"There's where you are wrong, Uncle John," said Chapman, very pleasantly. "My father taught me to be honest at all times and under all circumstances, and that's the whole secret of my candidacy."

"Tut, tut; you're crazy."

"Well, maybe I am. Uncle John," he laughed. "There are a good many people in this district going crazy, then, and I guess they'll manage to keep out of the insane asylum."

"You don't expect to be elected, do you?" the old man asked.

"Well, I'm making friends so fast I really don't know what to expect. I want you to come out to the meeting to−night and hear my friend Fearnot, and, by the way, let me introduce him to you," and he called Fred and introduced him to the old gentleman, who at first seemed disposed to refuse to shake hands with him.

"You are the young man who has persuaded my nephew here to go wrong," he said.

"Well, if You've got, that idea in your head all I can do is to invite you to come out to the meeting to−night and hear my side of the question. You know there are always two sides to every question,"

"Oh, yes, there's a right side and a wrong side," retorted the old man, "and you've succeeded in getting George on the wrong side."

"Well, come out and hear him to−night. He's a fine speaker," said Fred, in a very pleasant tone of voice.

"Oh, I don't want to hear either one of you."

"Oh, that isn't the way to do," laughed Fred. "Haven't you head all our life that the man who is afraid to hear the other side is extremely doubtful about whether his side is right or not? If you are quite sure that you are right you wouldn't be afraid to bear the other side. If a man can't give a reason for the faith that in him, the sooner he gets rid of that faith the better it will be for him."

"See here, young man, I was a grandfather before you were born, and have been voting for upward of fifty years; so you can't tell me anything about my political duties."

"I wouldn't attempt to do so, Sir," replied Fred. "What George and I are going to talk about to−night is our own political duties, find ask those who agree With us to join in and help in the fight. You see, when a man has heard both sides of a question he is better able to make up his own mind clearly than if he only heard one side. It seems to me that you should be proud of your nephew and try to push him along in the world, for he is making a brilliant mark in this fight, and if he isn't elected the people in the district will at least know him and respect him."

"Respect him! Why, they're mad enough to thrash him, and he ought to be thrashed!" blurted out the old man.

"Oh, he's a little too old to be thrashed now," laughed Fred. "This is a free country, you know and everbody who wants to can be a candidate for any office in the gift of the people, and every man is at liberty to vote for or against him."

"But a man has no right to injure his party."

"Yes, he has, sir," asserted Fred pluckily. "Every man has a right to smash his party, if he thinks it's going wrong,"

"But a young man like George has no right to set his judgment up against all of his party friends."

"There you're wrong again," said Fred. "A man has a right to be guided by his own conscience, and the consciences of ten thousand men are no guide for another, if his own conscience is not satisfied. We all claim the right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience, and the same rule should apply In politics. The man who thinks of nothing else but his party, taking no thought for his country, is a very poor citizen, no matter if he's been voting a hundred years. Mr. Carter is an unfit man to represent this or any other district in Congress, and we are going to defeat him. He introduced a bill in the Assembly to take from a man the right to control his own property, and I'm in favor of taking away from any man who favors such a law the right to vote even for they are dangerous to the community."

CHAPTER VII. FRED HAS A FIGHT WITH AND CONVERTS A BULLY.

Chapman's uncle was a very pugnacious old fellow, who said a great many very snappy, rasping things to him and Fred, and finally went away, refusing to promise that he would be present at the meeting.

"He's a pretty hard−headed old chap, George," said Fred, after the old man left.

"Yes, he's a close, stingy, hard−headed old fellow, owns a great deal of property and is said to have a lot of money in bank. Yet he never assisted mother to the extent of a penny, notwithstanding she is the only daughter of his only sister. So far as I am concerned, I don't care two cents for his opinion. I don't think he knows what he is voting for half the time, but just goes it blindly, because it's his party. But I'm inclined to think that he'll be present to−night for he has a great deal of curiosity, which will force him to show up at the meeting."

During the afternoon quite a number of young men came in, to make the acquaintance of Fearnot and Chapman, and they all went away very much pleased with them personally. The simple fact that Fearnot was still a youth, not old enough to vote, naturally excited the sympathies of all the young people of both sexes in town. Chapman was twenty−five years of age just old enough to be a Congressman, if he should be elected, and it was gradually becoming a fight of the young men against the old ones.

There was a very large hall in the town, and at least a half hour before the meeting was called to order it was fairly jammed with hundreds unable to get in. Fred, on hearing that there were several hundred outside, had the chairman of the meeting announce that after the meeting he would address the outsiders from the steps of the hotel. Then Chapman was introduced, and he made his third speech in the campaign. It was a decided improvement upon the other two, and made a profound impression. He startled the audience by saying that he had been offered one thousand dollars in cash by Carter's friends to withdraw from the race, and gave the name of the man who had offered the money.

"It shows the depth to which the managers of the party have descended, when they try to remove a stumbling block by corrupt methods. I told him that ten thousand dollars would not influence me to withdraw front the race, as I was trying to save the district from the disgrace of being represented in the halls of the national Congress by the author of the infamous Carter bill."

When Chapman finished, Fred followed him, and made perhaps the best speech of his life. It was a splendid audience, and the profound attention he received seemed to him with a stream of lofty eloquence. He gave vent to his honest indignation at the attempt of Carter, while a member of the Assembly, to take from him the control of his own property.

"And, fellow citizens," he added, "whatever can be done to one under the forms of law, can be done to every citizen in the State. It is not only dishonest, but dangerous to every property holder in the State. It was not only unconstitutional, but it was disgraceful to the fair fame of the people whom he was sent to the Assembly to represent. His nomination was an insult to the intelligence and honesty of the entire district," and then he branched off into a eulogy of the character of George Chapman, which aroused the highest enthusiasm, and when he described his boyish struggles for the support of his mother and sister and an education for himself, men and women shed tears.

"He is an honor to the name his father bore," he asserted.

"He is honoring the teachings of his father in his fight for honesty and decency, and you have heard him to−night as a pleader in the cause of right and justice and can well imagine the brilliant future in store for him. He is emphatically the embodiment of a self−made man. He is an improvement upon his ancestors, as every one should be. The world moves and men should move with it. His great−uncle called on him at the hotel this afternoon and told him that he ought to thrashed for trying to be an honest, decent man."

"That's a lie!" blurted out Uncle John, in the distance. "I didn't say no such thing."

The interruption created intense excitement, and when order was restored Fred explained that such was not the old man's language, for he said that he ought to be thrashed for trying to bring about a split in his party.

"That's what I said," put in the old man, "and I say it again," whereupon there was a great cheering and hissing

from the friends of both sides.

Then Fred pitched into the old man, quoted Scripture at him, ridiculed his pretensions to honesty in his old age, and told,anecdote after anecdote to illustrate his point, that, while it set the audience in a roar of laughter, exasperated the old man in the highest degree, who blurted out that both of them ought to be spanked and sent to bed.

"Yes," said Fred, "I don't doubt that you think so, or that you would do so if you could. Now, look at this," he continued, drawing his blood−stained handkerchief from his pocket and exhibiting it to the audience. "It was men like you, at Pelham the other night, who threw stones at us to break up the meeting. Here is a wound on my head and the blood to show what I have suffered in the cause of free speech. You can't give a reason for the faith that is in you, and you stand ready to break the heads of those who don't agree with you. It is such men as you, sir, that are clogs upon the progress of our great country. Your man, Carter, has tried to do that under the forms of law which could not be done by force. Every burglar in the district will vote for him every chicken thief, every horse thief. Because, if his ideas become embodied in statutory laws, they can go and take things without being punished for it. If Uncle John over there was to catch intruders pilfering fruit from his farm he would start the dogs on them, or swear out warrants for their arrest; yet, at the same time, he is going to vote for a man who is trying to give them the right to go in and rob him without molestation. They tell me he is a member of the church, and has the reputation of being an honest man, and I've no doubt he is in matters of business, but in politics he locks up his conscience and votes for his party, right or wrong."

Then, is he had done in the previous meetings he proceeded to address himself to the wives and mothers present, about training up their boys to be as honest on election day as any other day in the year.

"And, as for the old men," he added, "a great many of them are a source of more trouble to their wives and mothers than the young ones are. The old boy is the source of as much trouble as the young one, and as often goes wrong. Many a night," he added, "have the wives and mothers in this audience lain awake, waiting for the old man to come home, and when he came he had a plausible story on his tongue and a suspicious odor on his breath. Oh, yes, It isn't the boys altogether who go wrong, as every wife and mother here knows. Nearly every father present has perhaps called his boy a fool at some time In his life, but I have read somewhere of a wise man saving that there was no fool like an old fool."

He kept the audience roaring with laughter while depicting the follies and shortcomings of the average man, who kept on sowing wild oats until he became too old to reap them, finally dropping into his grave, leaving the harvest to be gathered by his descendants.

"Yet he is always slinking his gray hairs at the rising generation and preaching at the boys. Now, here are two of us," he added, "one of us not yet old enough to vote, fighting the battle for honesty and decency while old men are scoring us. I beseech you mothers in the audience to take the old man in hand. Talk to him; make him look at his reflection in the mirror, and say whether or not it is possible for a man to be honest in politics and honest in everything else."

It was a tremendous thrashing for Carter's supporters, and his anecdotes and keen wit made the entire performance better than a circus, while at times his eloquence thrilled his bearers until they sat spellbound under the sound of his voice.

As on the occasion of the other meeting, more than a hundred people, crowded around them to shake hands with them and more than a score assured Chapman they would support him.

"Then form a club here before you leave the hall," suggested Chapman, "and we will come back here for another meeting before the campaign ends."

While Fred was talking with the people around him, a stalwart fellow, some thirty years of age, pushed his way through the crowd and confronted him.

"See here, Fearnot," he said, "you have as good as accused us, who are supporting Carter, of being burglars, thieves and pickpockets."

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did nothing of the kind," said Fred. "I said that the law that Carter has tried to have passed by the Assembly would receive the support of every burglar, thief and pickpocket in the district, as it would give them the right to go upon another man's property ad take things from it without his consent."

"Well, that means the same thing, don't it?"

"No. If this man is a thief and that one over there is an honest man, both supporting Carter, and I make

mention of the fact, that the thief is supporting him, it doesn't necessarily call the honest man a thief also."

"Well, I think it does," said the fellow.

"Very well; you're entitled to your opinion and I'm entitled to mine. It's your misfortune if you're not able to distinguish between right and wrong."

"Do you mean to say that I'm not able to distinguish between right and wrong."

"Oh, no; I simply remarked that if you couldn't, it was your misfortune. You seem to be spoiling for a fight. If that's what you want, I'm willing to accommodate you right here."

"That suits me," said the fellow, proceeding to pull off his coat.

"Oh, thunder!" exclaimed a dozen others, who were standing around, "put him out, put him out!" and they rushed at the intruder who fought like a tiger to avoid being put out of the hall.

All the women had retired, and there were perhaps fifty or seventy−five people still in the hall. Fred saw that the man was strong as a mule, very pugnacious, but with very little knowledge about the art of using his strength. He begged the crowd to let the fellow loose, and they did so.

"You can't put me out," boasted the bully. "I can lick any two of you."

"Well, look here, now," laughed Fred. "It's a pity to see a good−looking fellow like you spoiling for a fight. I want to make a bargain with you. You say you can lick any two men in this crowd?"

"Yes, I can."

"Well, then, I'm here to−night to make converts for my friend, Chapman, and I'll make this sort of a bargain with you, that if you can lick me, and do so, I'll get Chapman to withdraw from the race and both of us will take the stump for Carter. If, on the other hand, I lick you, you are to whoop it up for Chapman, not only vote for him, but work for him."

"I'll do it," said the fellow.

"All right," said Fred, "if you lick me, I'll make a speech for Carter in this hall to−morrow night, and take back everything I've said against him. Will some of you lock the front doors there to keep out the crowd?"

While some of them went to fasten the doors, others tried to dissuade Fred from what they thought was a rash undertaking.

"He's the bully of the county." said one. "You won't have the ghost of a chance with him."

"Wait about five minutes." said Fred. "The only thing I'm doubtful about is whether or not he'll keep his word and support Chapman if I thrash him."

"Oh, he'll keep his word; but I tell you, you can't do it."

"Well, wait and see," and with that Fred removed his coat and cuffs, handing his watch and chain to Chapman to hold for him, and they went at it.

The bully was under the impression that he had a soft snap, but in about one minute he was feeling like the fellow that was wondering why it was that he couldn't catch a hornet in his hand and hold him. He was unable to get in a blow, but kept making rushes to clinch with Fred in order to exercise his brute strength upon him, but he was invariably met with a stunning blow that sent him staggering back.

Finally he wanted to quit, or at least he ceased to make attacks, whereupon Fred rushed in to force the fighting, knocking him all around that corner of the ball. The fellow finally picked up a chair and raised it above his head. Fred stepped back and picked up a chair himself saying:

"I would prefer to have it out with nature's weapons, but if you want to have your head cracked with any other kind of weapon, I'll do it for you."

Of course the bystanders protested, and called the bully a coward.

"He's a prize−fighter," said the bully.

"Not a bit of it, only when I am up against prizes like you. You are an easy thing, and you've got to keep your promise, or your friends will have to take you out of here on a shutter," and he rushed at him, got him in a corner and rained blows upon his solar plexus until he sank down unconscious on the floor.

It took him nearly five minutes to come to. Then he staggered to his feet, sat down on a chair, and Fred asked him:

"Well, how about it? Are you going to vote for Chapman?"

"No." he growled, and Fred knocked him off the chair quick as a flash. Some of his friends interfered.

"Stand off, now," said Fred, "you heard the agreement. He's got to say 'enough' before I let up on him, and if

he doesn't keep his word afterward, that's his fault and not mine and with that he began making demonstrations again, when the bully said:

"Hold on. I've got enough."

"All right," said Fred; "now let's see if you're man enough to keep your word. I knew I could lick you, because I saw that you are like a great many other fellows who don't know how to use their strength. If you'll come up to Dedham Lake some time, after the election, I'll give you a few lessons in the art of knocking the other fellow out. It's altogether in knowing how to do it," and with that he left the hall with Chapman and a crowd of fellows who looked upon him as a marvel intellectually and physically.

When he reached the hotel he found a big crowd of outsiders who had not been able to get into the hall waiting for him.

"Great Scott!" he said to Chapman, "I forgot all about these fellows here. I promised to speak to them from the steps of the hotel."

"Well, you'll have to do it," remarked Chapman, who at once proceeded to address the crowd of about two hundred.

He didn't make a long speech, and Fred followed him in a talk of about twenty minutes that kept the crowd in a roar of laughter all the time. It was a harvest for the hotel, for all the evening there was a crowd in the barroom.

By the time that Fred had finished speaking the crowd had the news of his fight with the bully up at the hotel, and of course it gave him a wonderful reputation with the younger portion of the crowd. They hurrahed and cheered for help long after he finished talking. Williams and Crane, the original Chapman men of the town, were earnest in their expressions of belief that from fifty to a hundred votes had been made by the meeting, and that the managers of Carter's campaign in the town were very much worried.

"Were they at the meeting?" Fred asked.

"Yes. and I heard one of them say that the Carter bill would hurt the party a great deal in the district, but that the convention which nominated him had not endorsed it or assumed responsibility for it."

"No," said Fred, "but they did endorse him as a statesman and a wise legislator, and that's even worse than endorsing the hill. You'll have to work hard, and I want the secretary of the club that you organized to get the name of every man who has left Carter's party in this town and is going to support Chapman. I want you to send their names to either Chapman or myself, because we want to know, upon what to base our calculations. We don't want to be guessing in the dark."

"All right," said Williams, "you shall have their names inside of a week, but very great pressure is going to be brought to bear upon them to stand by the party and its nominee."

"Yes, I know that. It's more apt to have its effect upon the old voters than upon the young ones. The old fellows have been running this thing for a long time, and now it's time for the boys to take a hand in it the first voters."

The next morning the news of Fred's encounter with the bully was the sole topic of conversation in the town, except among the women. The latter talked of nothing else but the splendid speeches they had heard and of their earnest desire to see such a man as Chapman elected. The girls said that such men make the best husbands, while the elderly ladies remarked that boys who toiled to support their mothers and sisters, while educating themselves, were very scarce, and that whenever one was found, nothing was too good for him. The women in the families of the most ardent partisans of Carter were outspoken in their preferences for the young independent candidate, and it was soon known in Homer that if the women were permitted to vote Carter wouldn't be in it with Chapman.

CHAPTER VIII. FRED CONTINUES TO FOLLOW UP HIS REVENGE AND MAKE IT HOT FOR CARTER.

About noon the next day, while Fred and Chapman were preparing to drive out into another town in the county, Terry Olcott suddenly appeared at the hotel.

"Why, hello, Terry," Fred exclaimed, "what the deuce are you doing here?"

"Oh, I heard you were having a riot at every place, so I same down to take a hand in it," said Terry. "We got it out at the lake that you had been mobbed at Pelham, your head split open with a stone, and that you had lost a gallon of, blood. I couldn't stand it any longer, so I told Dick and Joe to run the place, with Mr. and Mrs. Welborn in charge, until we came back."

"Well, are they satisfied, and will they stay there?" Fred asked. "Oh, yes, they're having a high old time. It Isn't costing Welborn anything, so you'll be apt to find him there when you return after the election. The young ladies, however, were very much exercised over the news, and made me promise to write back and tell them all about what had occurred. I see you've got a pretty bad bruise on your forehead, so I take it as true that you have had a scrimmage."

"Yes, I've had two of them," laughed Fred. "I had one last night here that would have made you supremely happy to look on and see to a finish. A crowd did throw stones at us at Pelham, and that's where I got the blow on the head. I'm glad, though, to have you along."

"Where's your man, Chapman?" Terry asked.

"He's out talking with some of his newly made friends. He'll be in a few minutes."

"What sort of a candidate does he make?"

"He's a good one. Every speech he makes is an improvement on the previous one, and he makes a fine impression."

"Well, what's going to be the result of all this, Fred?"

"I don't know yet. "It's rather early to be making predictions; but we've got Carter badly frightened, and I guess in another week we'll have him on the run."

"Well, I heard this morning at Ashton that some of his friends were considerably worried."

"Of course they are, but they are not worried anywhere until after we hold a meeting. When we came here yesterday morning they were all laughing at us, and there were only two men who had the courage to say that they would support Chapman. Now I hear that we made between fifty and a hundred votes last night. But here comes Chapman now," and as the young lawyer came in, Fred introduced him to Terry as his old classmate and chum, who had been with him in many a tight place.

Chapman of course gave him a cordial greeting, and seemed to be very much pleased at the idea of having him accompany him and Fred in their tour through the district.

"Can you make a speech?" he asked of Terry.

"No," was the reply.

"Yes, he can," asserted Fred, "and if he had been along with us last night, we'd have made him address that outside crowd. He's a fighter from away back, too, and had he been with us at Pelham the doctors would have had some work to do."

"Well, if he's any better than you are," laughed Chapman, "he'll be quite an acquisition to our party."

"Well, I'm not fond of a fight," said Terry, "but had I been along when they commenced throwing stones, I would have given some of them the benefit of my experience as a baseball thrower. Where do you fellows hold your next meeting?"

"At a little town seven miles out in the country here," said Chapman, "and I believe twelve or fifteen wagonloads will go out from town here." "Then you'll have a big crowd, eh?"

"Yes, but they say that Carter's party friends outnumber the others three to one in that township."

"Any danger of trouble?"

"I don't know. He's sent word to his friends throughout the district not to interfere with any meeting, but to recognize the right of free speech, and it's very likely that they will follow his advice."

"Well, those who are going out from town with you, are they going to vote for Chapman?" Terry asked.

"No, not all of them. The majority of them belong to the other party, who've always opposed Carter, but I've been told there are about thirty or forty of his former supporters who are now with us and are going out to help us whoop it up. There's one thing about it, though, old man, if the women could vote Carter wouldn't be in it at all. They just flop right over to our banner at every meeting, and the best way to fight us would be for Carter's side to keep their women away, but they don't seem to know it."

"Well, but they can't vote," said Terry.

"Very true, but they have a great influence, and if I have any time to spare, after going through each county in the district, I want to get up a great women's mass−meeting."

Someone came in just then and reported that the wagons were ready for the crowd that was going out, and Fred, Terry and Chapman at once went out and climbed into a wagon containing five or six other young fellows, four of whom were supporters of Carter, but before they reached the end of the trip Fred and Terry had won them completely by their songs, stories and jokes, and the natural affinity of the average young man for a young candidate.

When they reached the place they found such a great crowd that had come in from the surrounding country that the little hall would hold hardly one−half of them. So it was decided that two meetings should be held, one at the little town hall and the other at the ballroom of the hotel. While Chapman addressed one, Fred was talking to the other, and they changed about, so as not to keep either audience waiting longer than ten minutes. As at the former meetings, Fred completely won all the women in both audiences by his splendid eulogy of the young candidate and the story of his boyish struggle, something that Chapman himself could not do, as it would have been in bad taste.

The result of the meeting was extremely alarming to Carter's friends. Several of hiss old supporters told Fred, after the meeting, that they believed he was right, and couldn't blame him for making the fight against the author of the Carter bill.

"Of course you can't blame me," he replied. "The bill was aimed at me, not that it had anything against me, but simply to gain some thirty or forty votes of people living in the vicinity of Dedham Lake. They were afraid that when the city people built cottages there, their fishing privileges would be cut off. They wouldn't take my word for it, but wanted the privilege secured to them, regardless of the right, of property owners. If the people of this district, or any other district in the State, approve of that sort of thing, no man's control of his property is assured to him. Every man is entitled to the benefit of his own labor, and if you earn money and buy property, the law should protect you in absolute control of it. That's the whole sum of my opposition to Carter."

"Well, we heard over here that you were making a fight on him just out of spite, because he ordered you out of his office one day."

"Well, he did order me out of his office. But that isn't why I'm making the fight on him. He had the right to order me out of his office, but he's trying to take from me the right to order anybody off my property. That's what I'm fighting about, and if it's right to take it from me, it's right to take it from you or any other man. I'm like the darky who was bitten by a dog. When he went to the owner of the animal and complained about it, the man told him he needn't worry, that the dog wasn't mad. 'What right has he got to be mad?' the darky asked. 'It's me that's mad.'"

The old fellow laughed and said he thought that was a good story.

"Yes," said Fred, "and it just fits the case."

The entire party returned to the town that night, in the wagons, singing songs all the way back, and all the young men who had gone out with them were unanimous in their verdict that Fearnot and Chapman were good fellows.

Over in the next county Fred and Chapman were billed to speak at a meeting on the night after one held by the friends of Carter. The candidate himself had addressed the meeting on the old party lines, but never uttered one word about the now famous Carter bill which he had introduced into the Legislature, nor did he even mention the candidacy of Chapman, except when a voice in the crowd asked him about it.

"Oh, that's a boys' racket," he replied. "Fearnot is paying Chapman's expenses, and instead of doing like other

boys, waiting till election night to have their bonfires, they want to play politics and have a candidate, and make believe they are the real thing. Let the boys amuse themselves."

Of course his remarks were reported to Fred and Chapman, and that night, before a crowded house, Fred took it up and kept the crowd in a roar, telling about the frolic they were having and how Carter's friends had raised a thousand dollars to try to buy them off and put a stop to the fun.

"He feels very much like a certain John Smith," said Fred, "who was looking very sober one morning. His wife asked him if he had been playing poker with Mr. Perkins again. 'No,' he answered, 'Mr. Perkins has been playing with me.' And that's just what we are doing with Mr. Carter. We're having no end of fun with him, and we're looking every day for his friends to raise the offer to two thousand dollars. We're not trying to strike him for anything at all, except to see that he's not elected to Congress. We've got all the money we want to see the thing through. We are not going to buy any votes, and while Mr. Carter's friends have offered Chapman one thousand dollars to get out of the race, we wouldn't give Mr. Carter one thousand cents to retire from it. We are working on the belief that there are honest men enough in this district to vote for a dishonest man to stay at home. Some of Carter's friends have taken offense at my use of the word dishonest, as applied to him, and they have protested against it. I do not mean to charge that he is dishonest in the sense, that he would steal a chicken from your henhouse, or a bushel of corn from your cribs at night, but I do say, in the presence of the whole district, that the Carter bill was infamously dishonest, and stamps its author as a dishonest political trickster, for whom any decent man should be ashamed to vote."

Then he took up Carter's speech of the night before, which had been pretty freely reported to him, and tore it all to pieces, after which he turned to the women and paid such a glowing tribute to their influence in every walk of life as to completely will them, and then wound up with a sentimental song that completely captured the whole house. He knew that when the news went out ahead that he not only made a good speech, but sang a good song, it would draw full houses, and that was what he wanted. The next day the paper in that town, which was being run in Carter's interest, contained a very fair report of the meeting and of the two speeches, and frankly admitted that its candidate had received a hard blow.

"Young Fearnot," it added, "may not be a politician, and we are told that he is not yet of legal age, but he can give our candidate and his party managers points out how to run a campaign. He not only draws a big crowd, but knows how to handle it and hold it to the last moment. He is a fine speaker, a good singer, and can come about as near making his hearers politically color blind as any one we ever listened to."

"Great Scott!" laughed Fred, when he read it, "that's the best thing I've heard yet. It's an admission that I didn't look for, and it makes me more hopeful than anything that I've seen, read or heard. I want to cut that out and keep it."

Over in the next town they were most agreeably surprised to find the Welborn party waiting at the hotel to see them. They had driven across from Dedham Lake early that morning.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Welborn," said Fred. "It's an unexpected pleasure."

"Well, the girls said they wanted to hear you, so we drove over this morning and will return to−morrow. I hear that you've been having a pretty rough time of it."

"Well, you might call it so, but we think that we're having a deal of fun," and he went into the parlor to see the young ladies. He took Chapman in with him, and they spent a pleasant half hour in their company. Then they went out to see what they could pick up concerning the sentiment of the people in the place. They found everybody non− committal, but waiting to attend the meeting in the evening, and it was a great crowd which met them at the hall. The greater the crowd the more inspired Fred seemed to be in his impassioned speech denouncing Carter, his methods and ideas of government. Again he won the female portion of his audience, and as several had asked him if he was going to sing, he of course did so, because he saw that it was expected. He seemed to captivate every one of his hearers, and when he returned to the hotel the ladies of the Welborn party were enthusiastic in their praises of his speech.

The next morning, after breakfast, a young lawyer, some twenty−eight years of age, called on Chapman and offered big services as a speaker in his interests, saying that he had in two previous campaigns stumped the county for Carter's party, but that his and Fearnot's speech of the night before had convinced him that Carter was not the man for the party to elect his name was Granger, and the landlord assured Chapman that he was a man of clean character.

CHAPTER VIII. FRED CONTINUES TO FOLLOW UP HIS REVENGE AND MAKE IT HOT FOR CARTER.

Chapman gratefully accepted his offer, and Fred asked him about the financial part of the arrangement.

"I don't want a cent," said he, "except for actual expenses incurred, all itemized account of which I will render weekly."

"Good, good," said Fred; "you are a man after my own heart. Just look after the meetings in this county, and whatever expenses are incurred In the way of printing, or anything else necessary to the success of the meeting, audit the bills, mark them 0. K., and send them to me, and there will be no delay in forwarding you a check."

The news of Granger's defection carried consternation into the ranks of Carter's supporters, and it was telegraphed all over the district. Within forty−eight hours all attempt was made to buy him off, but, like Chapman, he spurned the offer. Fred and his party made a dash for the next county, and again their meeting was close on the heels of the Carter supporters, which was held there the night before, and again Fred and Chapman made an onslaught upon him that really had no politics in it other than the charge of his unfitness for the position for which he was a candidate. The Carter bill was the theme of discussion, and the long train of evils that would naturally flow from that sort of special legislation.

More than on any other occasion Fred indulged in wit and repartee that kept the audience in a roar of laughter all the time. Then he changed suddenly, like the wind blowing from another quarter, and soon tears glistened in the eyes of a score of people as he drew the vivid picture of a manly youth studying through the silent midnight hours to educate himself, while toiling through daylight to support his widowed mother and sister. He threw a deal of pathos into it, and in that particular line he was a past master. He finished his speech and sat down, forgetting all about his song, and a great shout went up from the audience:

"Song! Song!"

"Excuse me," he said; "I forgot that, and to show you that I didn't mean to slight you, I will sing two songs for you," and he did so, to the great delight of every one present.

"Say, Terry," said he, looking back upon the platform behind him, "come up here and sing with me a third song," and as Terry stood up by his side they sang Robert Burns' famous song, "A Man's a Man for a That." The song had probably never been heard in that town before and it seemed as though it was applied to the poor, struggling lawyer who was before them for their suffrages, and a storm of applause greeted it.

That wound up the meeting, and a reception followed in the hall. Everybody, regardless of party prejudices, wanted to shake hands with the young fellows who were making such a plucky fight.

The next day Fred saw it announced in one of Carter's party papers that the candidate had made in explanation about the bill that he had introduced into the Assembly concerning the fishing in Dedham Lake. He stated that he had introduced it at the instance of some fifty people living in the vicinity of the lake, who had told him that the original owner of the property had given them a perpetual right to fish there, and the thought never occurred to him that the measure would be objected to, or that it was unconstitutional.

"We all know." he said, "that the right to fish in navigable streams cannot be questioned any more than the right of navigation. A navigable stream belongs to the State, while the unnavigable ones belong to the owners of the properties through which they flow, and I had that idea in my mind when I framed the bill, but I made the mistake of classing the lake as a navigable stream, and deeply regret my having had anything to do with it.

CHAPTER IX. CONCLUSION

Fred was highly elated when he read Carter's explanation and apology for the infamous Carter bill.

"It's a tremendous club," be exclaimed, "It may satisfy some of his followers, but I can read it to the audiences and show, by his own admission, that as a lawmaker he is a dead failure. He frankly admits that he had trained and introduced a bill without giving due thought to it, placing in jeopardy the right of a taxpayer to have, control of his own property; and, worse still, he makes the unconscious admission that he had placed a little hike covering about three hundred acres, in the same category with navigable streams, and yet he is asking the people to make him one of the lawmakers for the United States."

He cut out the article, and at the next meeting, in the fourth county, he had a tremendous lot of fun with Carter. His ridicule convulsed the audience and his sarcastic comments on his abilities as a lawmaker were simply scorching. his entire speech almost was devoted to sarcasm and ridicule, except where the depicted Chapman's career from the time that his father died up to the present moment, and his description was so eloquently pathetic as to bring tears to the eyes of many.

Carter's explanation hurt him even more than his silence had done, and now, during the last week of his campaign, his friends were really alarmed from one end of the district to the other. All sorts of inducements to withdraw were offered Chapman, and, on his spurning them, several reckless partisans undertook to remove Fred Fearnot from the canvass. They intended to stop him as he and Chapman drove from one town to another in a buggy and give him such a beating as to force him to retire for repairs for the rest of the campaign. Fortunately for Fred, however, they drove out in a two−seated vehicle and terry Olcott was with him.

They were held up by four men with masks on their faces as they were driving through a densely wooded section of the country.

"Hello!" exclaimed Chapman, "we are hold up by highwaymen."

"What do you fellows want?" Fred asked.

"We want you and your money, too," replied one of the men.

"Well, you can't have either," said Fred, who heard the click of Terry's revolver on the seat behind him.

"Oh, I guess we can," retorted the would−be highwayman presenting a revolver at Fred and ordering him to alight on pain of death.

The next moment Terry, blazed away at the fellow, hitting him in the right shoulder, causing him to drop his revolver. Then he began firing at the other three, all of whom took to the woods, in fear of their lives.

"Well, what would you have done if Olcott hadn't been armed?" asked Chapman.

"Why, I would have done the shooting myself."

"The deuce! I didn't know that you were armed."

"The thunder you didn't! Are you making this campaign without a weapon in your pocket?"

"Yes, I never carried a weapon in my life."

"Well, you'll learn as you grow older, I guess," laughed Fred. "It's against the law to carry concealed weapons, but a man is justified in doing so under certain circumstances. Olcott and I own a ranch out West, where we frequently have to stand off cattle thieves, road agents and redskins, and we are both alive to−day simply because we had our little guns handy."

"But you didn't expect anything of the kind in this part of the world, did you?"

"No, but I knew there was considerable feeling excited, and that we were liable to be attacked at any time by half−drunken fools, so we are always prepared for an emergency. Under no circumstances would we draw unless weapons were drawn by the other side. You noticed my fight at Homer with the bully. He was nearly double my size and weight, I drew no weapon and only took up the chair after he had seized one. I would actually submit to a beating before drawing, unless the other fellow drew, or a third party mixed in with it. It's always best to be prepared for any danger that may turn up."

"Well. I confess that I'm glad that Olcott was armed, but I'm more astonished to find highwaymen in this part

of the country."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said Fred, "I don't believe they were highwaymen."

"The deuce you don't!"

"No, I don't. In the first place, they were not dressed like highwaymen, and in the second place, their actions showed that they were novice in holding up people. Had they been regular highwaymen they would have got the drop on us, and Terry would not have been able to draw without being bowled over himself."

"Well, what do you think they were, then?"

"I think they were simply friends of Carter, who came out here to prevent us from reaching the meeting to−night."

"Surely you don't mean that, do you, Fearnot?"

"Yes, I do. They thought that we'd be frightened nearly to death and − would leap out of the vehicle, drop down on our knees and beg for our lives, but they got a great deal more than they bargained for."

"Yes," said Terry, "that first fellow was hit in the shoulder and he let his revolver fall to the ground and it's lying there yet."

"Why the deuce didn't you got it?" Fred asked. "It might be a clue to the identify of the fellow."

"Well, you drove off too soon."

They reached the town and the story was told at the hotel that they had been held up by four men wearing masks on their faces, some five or six miles out of town, and that two of them had been shot.

In less than half an hour two men in two buggies were seen driving rapidly out of town in the direction that Fred and Chapman had come, and they were ardent Carter men, too.

Of course the boys didn't hint that the Carter men had anything to do with it, for it would have been foolish to make such a charge.

The meeting there was a great success, notwithstanding quite a number of Carter men hissed Chapman while he was speaking. They tried it on Fred, and he soon shut them up by saying that a wise man of Greece had once said that there were but three things that hissed−−geese, serpents and fools.

"To which class do you belong, my friends?"

The question set the audience in a roar at the expense of the hissers, and they kept silent after that.

Again he and Terry sang for the audience at the conclusion of the speeches, and altogether the meeting was as successful as any they had held during the canvass. Early the next day they started out to drive to the next town for they were in a part of the district where there were no railroads. They had scarcely reached the town when they received a telegram that two well−known Carter men had been brought in wounded by pistol shots, but they claimed that the shooting was accidental. Fred immediately telegraphed back, asking that an investigation be made, and have them forced to tell the truth about it.

Late in the afternoon a big, burly fellow appeared at the hotel a little the worse for liquor and began a most outrageous abuse of Fearnot and Chapman.

Terry was mildly guying him, whereupon the bully struck at him, knocking his hat from his head. Quick as a flash Terry was giving him an exhibition of his skill as a boxer. He knocked him down the first blow, before the fellow really I dreamed that Terry was fighting at all. Then as fast as he attempted to get up, Terry would give him one on first one side and then the other of his neck, until at last he lay down and looked hopelessly up at him. The others, stood around and laughed, for it appeared so ridiculous to them that a youth like Olcott should get the best of the would−be bully. The fellow got up looked suspiciously at Terry and started off without uttering another word. As he did so Terry flapped his arms against his sides and crowed like a cock, which set the crowd into a roar of laughter.

"Say," called Terry, "are you a Carter man?"

"Yes. I am, and I'm proud of it," was the reply.

"Well, I thought you were. You look like one and you can't fight any better than one."

"See here," sang out another one in the crowd who had run up when they beard that a fight was going on there, "do you mean to say that a Carter man can't fight?"

"Well, not exactly that," said Terry, "but I haven't run across one yet that could put up a fight that might really be called one."

"Well, I'm a Carter man," said the other, "and can give you all the fighting you want."

"Well, I'm not spoiling for a fight," said Terry. "I'm a Chapman man, not old enough to vote, and I don't want to fight unless I can make a vote for him. If you lick me I'll whoop it up for Carter, and if I lick you, you're to work for and vote for my man."

"I'm your man," said the other, throwing off his coat.

Terry threw off his coat also and found that the other fellow was like the average countryman, who believes in clinching and throwing his man the moment be gets into a fight. But he stood him off and downed him four times.

"What's the matter with you?" Terry asked.

"I don't know, unless I've got too big a dose of Chapman."

"Well, just hurrah for Chapman and you'll feel better," laughed Terry, and, to the astonishment of the bystanders, he walked up to Terry, extended his hand and yelled out:

"Hurrah for Chapman!"

The incident created a great deal of amusement, as well as something of a sensation, and the report went around the town that Chapman had a prize−fighter along with him, who had knocked out two of Carter's men down at the hotel. Of course that struck the sporting blood of the whole town and at the meeting that night Terry attracted as much attention as Chapman or Fearnot, and when they saw that he was not going to speak, loud and continuous calls were made for him. He got up, advanced to the platform laying his left arm on the muscles of his right arm, and, waving his fist up and down, as if to see whether or not the arm was all right, looked at the crowd that had been calling for him and said:

"Now, you fellows shut up. I won't make a speech, but I'll sing you a song," and he did, to the infinite delight of the crowd, after which the meeting broke up.

There were only two other counties in the district to be visited, and at each one the meeting was successful. Then they started back to wind up at Ashton. The Carter people held no meeting, as they were too busy preparing for the contest on the morrow. Carter was in the town, consulting with his managers in his office, only two blocks away from where the Chapman meeting was being held. The news was brought to him that Fearnot was roasting him unmercifully and that his own friends were thoroughly disgusted, not to say alarmed.

"There's nothing to be alarmed about," he said. "He may reduce our majority a few hundred, but we'll win out easily."

At the meeting, Fred, in winding up his speech, frankly stated to the audience that while he was fighting for the rights of the people to control their own property, he was also fighting for the rights the people to control thier own property, he was also fighting for revenge for the assault that had been made upon him personally by Carter.

"And I am satisfied with my work," he added, "for by midnight to−morrow you will hear the news that Carter is defeated. We have met thousands of honest people in the district and are satisfied that more than one thousand of them will vote against him, and that will defeat him. It is possible that two thousand may vote against him. I do not hope for the election of my friend here, for I never expected it. But he has made a splendid fight to save the honor of this district, and for that all decent men and women should be grateful to him."

The next day the battle of the ballots opened, and all day long Fred and Terry watched the number of people that applied to Chapman's workers at the polls for tickets. They were astonished at their number and kept tally. That night a big crowd gathered around the headquarters of each side, waiting for the returns from other towns and counties. At Ashton Carter's vote had been cut down one−third, right in his own home, and it made him sick. Later on in the evening, when the news began to come in from other counties, it was seen that the splendid fight made by Fred and Chapman, while not a winning one for the latter, was a terrible defeat for Carter. Chapman polled over three thousand votes, which, of course, elected the candidate of the other political party by a very large plurality. His supporters, of course, were jubilant, for it was the first time in many years they had elected a Congressman. They had a great jubilation, and Fred spoke to nearly a thousand of them, congratulating them on the election of a decent man to represent them in the national Congress.

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart," he exclaimed, "for helping me to my revenge! They are putting out the lights over in Carter's headquarters, I see. Let us hope that his political light is being doused forever and that he and the infamous bill hearing his name will ever be regarded as the only stain upon the people of this district, for, as your representative, the county was in some measure responsible for his actions as a legislator. Be it said to your credit that you have repudiated him and his disreputable methods. On the day he ordered me out of his office I promised him to camp on his trail, and the smoke of my campfires ascended from every county in the district. In

the language of the savage redskin, I might boast that I have his scalp at my belt. He has evidently been laboring under the impression that, because I was a boy, not old enough to vote, and a comparative stranger in your midst, my camping on his trail wouldn't amount to anything. If it did not detract from the dignity and sweetness of my revenge, I would go over to his headquarters, before he slips away in the darkness, and sing him a little song. It might not be a new one to him, and perhaps it would not be at all soothing to his nerves, but it would fit the occasion as appropriately as a gumdrop fits the mouth of our girl friends. But, as darkness now reigns in the headquarters down the street, I will sing one verse of the song to you. Here it is," and, clearing his throat, he began singing:

"The June−bug has the wings of gold,
The lightning−bug the flame;
The bedbug has no wings at all,
But he gets there just the same."