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RICHARD DARE'S VENTURE

OR

STRIKING OUT FOR HIMSELF

BY EDWARD STRATEMEYER

Author of Oliver Bright's Search, To Alaska For Gold,
The Last Cruise Of The Spitfire, Shorthand Tom, Etc.

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION.

"Richard Dare's Venture," although a complete story in itself, forms the initial volume of the "Bound to Succeed" Series, a line of books written primarily for boys, but which it would seem not only girls but also persons of mature age have taken up with more or less interest.

The story relates the adventures of a country youth who comes to New York to seek his fortune, just as many country lads have done in the past and many are likely to do in the future. Richard feels that there is nothing for him to do in the sleepy village in which he resides, and that he must "strike out for himself," and he does so, with no cash capital to speak of, but with plenty of true American backbone, and with the firm conviction that if he does his duty as he finds it, and watches his chances, he will be sure to make a place for himself.

Richard finds life in the metropolis no bed of roses, and when he at length gains a footing he is confronted by many a snare and pitfall. But, thanks to the Christian teachings of the best of mothers, and his natural uprightness of character, he escapes these evils, and gives a practical teaching of the Biblical admonition of "returning evil with good."

When the first edition of this work was placed on the market several years ago, the author had hoped that it would receive some notice; but he was hardly prepared for the warm reception which readers and critics alike all over the country accorded it. For this enthusiasm he is profoundly grateful. The street scenes in New York have been particularly commended; the author would add that these are not fictitious, but are taken from life.

EDWARD STRATEMEYER.

NEWARK, N.J., March 1, 1899.

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CHAPTER I.

A SERIOUS ACCIDENT.

"It is high time, mother, that I found something to do. Father seems to be worse, and I'm afraid before long he won't be able to go to work every day. Ever since I finished schooling I've felt like a fish out of water."

And stowing away the remainder of the slice of bread he was eating, Richard Dare leaned back in his chair and gazed inquiringly across the breakfast-table to where his mother stood, ready to clear away the dishes when he had finished his meal.

"I'm sure you have been busy enough, Richard," responded Mrs. Dare fondly. "I am well satisfied with the way you have planted the garden; and no carpenter could have made a neater job of the front fence. You haven't wasted your time."

"Oh, I don't mean that. Fixing up around the house is well enough. But I mean some regular work--some position where I could bring home my weekly wages. I know it would be a big help all around. It takes a heap of money to run a family of three girls and a growing boy."

Mrs. Dare smiled sadly.

"What do you know about that?" she asked. "We all have enough to eat and drink, and our own roof over our heads."

"Yes, but I know that my dear mother sits up sewing sometimes long after we have gone to bed, so that our clothing may be cared for, and I know that she hasn't had a new dress in a year, though she deserves a dozen," added Richard heartily.

"I haven't much use for a new dress--I go out so little," said his mother. "But what kind of work do you wish to get?"

"Oh, anything that pays. I'm not particular, so long as it's honest.

"I'm afraid you will find but few chances in Mossvale. Times are dull here--ever since the hat factory moved away. I guess the stores have all the help they want. You might get a place on one of the farms."

"I don't think any farmer would pay much besides my board," replied the boy. "I've got another plan," he continued, with some hesitation.

"And what is that?"

"To try my luck in New York. There ought to be room enough for me in such a big city."

"New York!" exclaimed Mrs. Dare, in astonishment. "Why, you have never been there in your whole life!"

"I know it, but I've read the papers pretty well, and I wouldn't be afraid but what I could get along first rate."

Mrs. Dare shook her head doubtfully.

"It is almost impossible to get a footing there," she declared. "When we were first married your father struggled hard enough, both there and in Brooklyn, but somehow, he didn't seem to make it go, and so we moved here. Everything rushes in the city, and unless you have some one to speak for you no one will give you a chance."

"I would take the first thing that came to hand, no matter what it paid, and then watch for something better."

"It might be that you would have luck," said Mrs. Dare reflectively. "I don't like to discourage you. Still--"

"You wouldn't like to see me go away and then fail, is that it?"

"Yes. Failures at the start of life often influence all the after years. Suppose you have a talk with your father about this."

"I thought I'd speak to you first, mother. I wanted to know if you would be willing to let me go."

"If your father thinks it best, I shall be satisfied, Richard. Of course, I will miss you."

"I know that, mother," returned Richard rising. "But then I could come home once in a while. The city is not so very far away."

The plan of "striking out" had been in Richard Dare's mind for several months. The country school at Mossvale had closed for the season early in the spring--so as to allow the farmer boys to do their work, and Richard was satisfied that he had about learned all that Mr. Parsons, the pedagogue, was able or willing to teach, and saw no good reason

for his returning in the fall. He would have liked to continue his studies, but there was only one other institute of learning in the neighborhood--a boarding academy, where the rates for tuition were high, and to this he well knew his parents could not afford to send him.

Mr. Dare was by trade a house painter and decorator. When a young man he had served three years in the army, during the great rebellion, from which he had come away with a bullet in his shoulder, and a strong tendency towards chronic rheumatism. Shortly after he had married, and now, twenty years later, his family included four children, of which Richard, age sixteen, was next to the oldest.

Mr. Dare was a steady, sober man, who disliked excitement, and the quiet plodding along in Mossvale just suited him. He was only a journeyman, and it is doubtful if his ambition had ever risen beyond his present station. By frugality he and his wife had saved enough to buy a half acre of land in this pretty New Jersey village, on which they had erected a neat cottage, and here apparently John Dare was content to spend the remainder of his life.

But Richard Dare partook of but little of his father's retiring disposition. He was a bright, active boy, with a clear heart and brain, and he longed to get at some work where energy would be the road to success. His comprehension was rapid, and beneath an outwardly calm spirit, lurked the fire of a youth well trained to grapple with noble purposes and bring them to a successful issue.

Richard's desire to go to the metropolis was a natural one. There was nothing in quiet Mossvale to entice any one with push to remain there. The entire population of the district did not number three hundred people, and the only business places were three general stores, a blacksmith shop and a cross-roads hotel.

A number of years previous, Mr. Dixon Maillard, a rich man from Newark, had endeavored to boom the village by starting a hat factory there, then trying to make his employees buy houses and lots from him on the installment plan, but this scheme had fallen flat, and the factory plant was removed to a more promising locality.

The Dare cottage stood some little distance from the village center. As Mrs. Dare had said, Richard had the garden in excellent condition, not only the larger portion devoted to the vegetables and small fruits, but also the front part, in which were planted a great variety of flowers in which his mother took keen delight.

"Is father coming home to dinner to-day?" asked Richard, a little later on, as he entered the kitchen with a pail of water which Nancy, the oldest of his three sisters, had asked him to draw from the well.

"I guess not," replied the girl. "His rheumatism hurt him so much he said he might not be able to walk from Dr. Melvin's new house."

"Ma put up his dinner," put in Grace, the second oldest.

"Then he won't be back," returned Richard, somewhat disappointed, for he had been calculating on broaching the subject of going to New York to his father after the midday meal.

"He said his shoulder hurt him awfully last night," added Grace. "I heard him tell ma he could almost feel the bullet worrying him in the flesh."

"It's mighty queer he doesn't get a pension," said Nancy. "I'm sure he deserves one. Didn't he ever apply, Dick? I read in a Philadelphia paper the other day about a man getting sixteen dollars a month allowed, and a whole lot of back pay--more than two or three thousand dollars!"

"Two or three thousand dollars!" cried Grace. "Oh, Nancy, it's a fortune!"

"But it's true, every word."

"I believe father has tried," replied Richard. "But it seems that he must have witnesses to prove his identity, and all that--"

"And can't he get them?" asked Grace, eagerly.

"I believe not. All his old comrades are either dead or scattered, and he hasn't a single address."

"Did he ever hunt for any of them?"

"I think he wrote two or three letters, but that's all. You know how father is."

"I just guess I wouldn't let it rest there!" declared Grace, diving into the bread batter with a vim. "I'd advertise in the papers, and turn the whole country upside down before I'd give up!"

"Well, father looks at it as a kind of charity, anyway," explained Richard. "And he doesn't care much to accept it so long as he is able to work."

"Yes, but, Dick, if he's entitled to it by law, don't you think he ought to take it?"

"He has certainly lost many a day's work on account of his failing, Nancy. He ought to get something for that."

"Then why don't you speak to him about it?" asked Grace. "He'll listen to you quicker than he will to any of us."

"Perhaps I will. Maybe he will give me a list of those who knew him in the army, and then I can start a grand search, as you suggested. But I've got a little plan of my own to carry out first, and I want

you girls to help me."

"What plan?" asked Nancy; and Grace ceased her bread-making to listen to what her brother might have to say.

"I'm thinking of going to New York, and I--"

"New York!" both girls ejaculated. They would have been no more astonished had he said Paris or Pekin. "Why, Dick, what put that idea into your head?" continued Nancy.

"Take me along if you go," added Grace.

"Nobody but myself put it into my head, Nan," replied Richard, "and I won't be able to take anybody along, Grace."

"Going to make your fortune?" queried the younger girl.

"You'll get lost," put in the other.

"Nonsense! catch Dick getting lost!" cried Grace indignantly. "Didn't he bring us all safe through Baker's woods last fall, when we were nutting?"

"Baker's woods isn't New York city," replied her elder sister. "Hundreds of streets and millions of people! He'd have to keep his eyes wide open and his wits about him."

"And that is just what I would do!" broke in Richard. "You don't suppose I'd stand around like a gawk, staring at people!"

"But is it for fortune?" repeated Grace, freeing her hands from the dough and coming up close.

"Yes, it's for fortune, if that's what you call it," said Richard bluntly. "I'm tired of Mossvale, and I'm going to strike out, that is if I can get consent. I've spoken to mother about it already, and if--"

A heavy knock on the back stoop caused Richard to stop speaking. Going to the door, he was confronted by Nicholas Boswell, a young farmer who lived a short distance down the road.

"Hello, Nick!" exclaimed Richard. "That you? Come in!"

Nicholas Boswell was pale, and his face showed a troubled expression. For several seconds he seemed hardly able to speak.

"No, thank'ee, Dick," he said at last. "I come to tell you that--" and here his eyes roved over to Nancy and Grace, and he stopped short.

"What?" asked the boy. "You ain't sick, are you?" he continued, noticing the unusual pallor on the other's countenance.

"Oh, no, _I_ ain't sick," replied Boswell. "I never get sick. I was never sick in my life--'cepting when I was a babby. But I--that is--there's a man--some men wants to see you," he faltered.

"To see me! Where?"

"They are down the road aways. I'll show you."

"What do they want?"

"Come on--never mind asking questions," closing one eye and bobbing his head, as if he did not wish the girls to hear more.

"All right," returned Richard, and closing the door he followed Boswell up the lane to the road.

"Accidents is bad things, Dick," began the young farmer, as they drew away from the house. "But they will happen, you know--they will happen."

"What do you mean?" asked the boy quickly. "Who's had an accident?"

"Well, you see a man with the rheumatism ain't so sure of his footing as is one who ain't got no such affliction."

"And my father?" began Richard, his heart jumping suddenly into his throat.

"Your father as a painter often climbed long, limbery ladders as he hadn't oughter," continued Boswell soberly.

"Is he--is he _dead_?" gasped the boy, standing stock-still.

"No, oh, _no_!" exclaimed the young farmer. "But he had an awful fall, and he's pretty bad. I thought I'd tell you first, 'cause it might shock your mother."

"Where is he?"

"The men is bringing him up the road. Here they come now. You'd better go back, and kinder break the news to the folks. I'm terribly gritty--as gritty as any man--but I can't do that!"

Richard did not hear the last words. Trembling from head to foot, he sped up the road to meet four men, carrying a rude stretcher between them and slowly approaching.

CHAPTER II.

BITTER MOMENTS.

The serious accident that had befallen Mr. Dare was in reality a very simple one. The ladder that he had been ascending was covered with early morning dew, and when near the top his foot had slipped, and, being unable, on account of his rheumatism, to catch a quick hold, he had fallen on his side to the ground. No one had seen his fall, and he lay unconscious for full ten minutes before a fellow workman, who had been busy on the other side of the building, discovered him and summoned assistance.

The five or six men that were soon gathered did what they could to bring him to consciousness, but without success. One of them ran off to hunt up the doctor, and then the others took a door that had not yet been hung in the new house, and, fastening a heavy strip at either end for handles, covered it with their coats, and placed the wounded man upon it.

None of the men cared to face Mrs. Dare with such painful news, and it was only after repeated urging that Nicholas Boswell had been induced to go on ahead.

"My father, my poor father!" was all Richard could say, as he gazed at the motionless form upon the litter.

[Illustration: "My father, my poor father!"]

"Reckon he's hurt pretty bad," said Sandy Stone, a mason, who had been the first to be called to the scene of the accident. "'Tain't outside so much as it's in. Wait till we get him home."

For Richard was bending over his father, and trying his best to do something that would help the unconscious sufferer.

"Did you send for the doctor?"

"Yes; sent for Dr. Melvin first thing," replied one of the others, "But we don't know where he is."

"I think he is over at old Mrs. Brown's," returned the boy. "I saw him walking that way a while ago."

"I'll go and see," put in Nicholas Boswell. "Meanwhile you'd better go and tell your mother."

"My mother! what will she say? And Nancy and Grace and baby Madge! Oh, it's dreadful!" broke out Richard. "I'm sure none of them can stand it."

"I'll send my wife over soon as I can," said Sandy Stone. "She's as good as a doctor, and can quiet your mother, too. Be a brave boy, Dick, and go and tell her. It will be easier, coming from you, than it would from any of us."

So Richard returned to the house. His mother was dusting in the parlor, and going straight to her he said:

"Mother, the men are bringing father home. He slipped on the ladder and got hurt pretty badly. You had better get a bed ready for him, and some bandages, because he's got a cut or two on his head," and then, as the mother's breast began to heave: "Don't worry, mother; it may not be near as bad as we believe it is."

It was over in a moment, and when the men arrived Mrs. Dare was as calm as any of them.

In the cottage one of the bedrooms was situated upon the lower floor, and to this Mr. Dare was carried, and laid down as tenderly as these men were able to do such an unaccustomed task. He drew a deep breath when his head touched the pillow, and an instant later opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" were his first words.

"Home, John," replied his wife. "You had a fall, and--"

"Yes, I remember. Oh, how my side hurts!"

"Lie still. The doctor will soon be here. Would you like a drink?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Dare gave him some water, but he only drank a little, and then began to cough.

"It's inside!" he gasped. "My ribs are broken, I think."

Richard comforted his sisters as best he could. It was not long before Dr. Melvin arrived, and his coming inspired the little household with hope.

"Is it very serious?" asked Richard, after an examination into his father's condition had been made.

"I cannot tell yet. Two of his ribs are dislocated, but I dare not touch them until I find out the extent of his other internal injuries," replied the doctor. "He must keep quiet, and every ten minutes give him a tablespoonful of this mixture."

But, though Dr. Melvin gave these directions, it was fully an hour before he left, and then he promised to return late in the afternoon.

The whole family were gathered in the sick chamber, baby Madge, three years old, sitting on Richard's knee. Nancy and Grace had been frightened into almost absolute silence, and Mrs. Dare addressed herself to her husband, with an occasional remark to the boy as to what might further help the sufferer.

"Don't trouble yourself, Jane," said Mr. Dare feebly. "You've done enough already," and then the pain caused him to faint away.

When Dr. Melvin came back they all left the room but Mrs. Dare. A thorough examination was made that lasted nearly an hour. By the grave look on his face when the doctor called him, Richard knew that he was to receive no encouraging news.

"Your father is worse than I expected," were the doctor's words. "He has ruptured a blood vessel, and that is bad."

"Will he die, do you think?" faltered the boy.

"While there is life there is hope," he responded evasively, after Richard had repeated his question.

"Then you are afraid it will be fatal?" cried the boy, terror-stricken. "Oh, Dr. Melvin, can't we do something?"

The doctor shook his head.

"I have done all I can. Such things are beyond our reach, and mere medicine does no good."

"Have you told my mother and my sisters?"

"I have told your mother. She expected it from the start," replied the doctor. "You had better go in now. Your father wishes to speak to you," he added.

Richard entered the front chamber at once. As he did so, his mother passed out, her eyes filled with tears.

"Did he tell you?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied, without being able to utter another word.

"Oh, Richard, I never, never thought that such a thing would happen! Where are Nan and the rest?"

"In the kitchen."

"I must tell them. It is hard on the poor girls."

"And hard on you," said Dick. "And me, too," he added, with a sigh.

The curtains of the windows had been drawn, and it was quite dark in the room. Richard approached the bed and grasped his father's hand.

"Is it you, Richard?" questioned the sufferer.

"Yes, father."

"I'm glad you've come. I want to talk to you."

"But it may hurt you to talk too much," said the boy feelingly.

"Never mind. It will all be over soon," replied Mr. Dare with a heavy cough. "I suppose the doctor has told you. He said he would."

The boy nodded his head.

"It is God's will, and we must bow to His judgment," continued the injured man. "But I want to talk to you about what to do when I am gone."

"Oh, father!"

"Hush! I feel that I am sinking, even faster than Dr. Melvin thinks. Listen then to what I have to say."

"I am listening."

"When I'm gone, Richard, you will have to take my place. Your mother is strong, and can do much; but she is a woman, and she, as well as your sisters, will need your help."

"They shall have all that I can possibly give them. I will work, and do all I can."

"I know you will, Richard. You have always been a good boy. I am sorry that I cannot leave you all better off than I'm doing."

"Never mind, father; we will get along."

"I suppose I might have done so if I'd had the courage to strike out," continued Mr. Dare, with a sigh. "I always calculated to do something for myself, but that's all over now. But you take after your mother, the same as your sister Grace, and if you make the right start I feel you will succeed."

"I shall remember what you say."

"Do so. But remember also to be always sober, industrious, and considerate of those around you. Be true to yourself, and to every one with whom you have dealings. You may not get along so fast, but people will respect you more, and your success will be ten times sweeter than it would have been had you risen by pushing others down."

"I shall try to deserve success, even if I don't rise very high, father."

"That's right." Mr. Dare paused for a moment. "I'm sorry that I cannot leave you more of a capital upon which to start in life."

"Never mind; I have a common school education and my health. What more

can a boy wish?"

"It is as much as I had upon which to start. But I might have left you more. I deserve a pension as a soldier."

"You never pushed your claim, did you?"

"Yes, once. But I never told any of you, for fear of raising false hopes. I did apply, and it was all straight, but at the last moment the Department decided that I must have another witness to prove my identity, and this I could not get."

"You had one witness, then?"

"Yes. A man named Crawford, who was in our regiment. He was appointed an officer on the same day I was shot; but, as he was appointed after the occurrence they held that his single witnessing was not enough, and so I had to hunt for another."

"And you never found the other?"

"No, though I hunted high and low. Some who saw the affair must be still living, but I have not their addresses, nor do I know how to find them."

"Did you ever advertise in the papers?"

"Yes; I spent fifty dollars in the columns of the leading dailies, but without success."

"You have all the papers in the case?"

"They are in the trunk upstairs. If you can ever push the claim do so--for the others' sake as well as your own."

"I will, father."

"How much it will be worth I do not know, but it may be several thousands of dollars, and that, along with this house, which is free and clear, may suffice to keep the family many a year."

At this juncture a violent fit of coughing seized Mr. Dare, and by the time he had recovered, his wife and the three girls entered.

CHAPTER III.

PREPARING TO START.

Two days later the blinds of the little cottage were closed, and crape

hung in solemn black upon the front door. The neighbors, and indeed the whole population of the village, came and went continually--some few with genuine grief and sympathy, and the many others to satisfy a morbid curiosity regarding the man whose life had so suddenly ended.

It was a dismal enough time for the inmates. Richard did all a brave boy can do to comfort his mother and sisters, but he himself needed consolation fully as much as any of them. He had thought much of his father, and the cold form lying in the draped coffin in the parlor sent a chill through his heart that would have an effect in all after life.

At last the funeral was over, and the last of the neighbors had gone away. It was nearly sunset, and the entire family had gathered in the little kitchen to partake of a cup of tea, and to talk over the situation. Mrs. Dare sat in a rocking-chair beside the table, her face plainly showing her intense grief, and near her, on a low stool, sat Richard.

"Well, mother, I suppose I will have to do something very soon now," began the boy. "It won't do for me to remain idle when there is no money coming in."

Mrs. Dare sighed.

"I can't think of money matters yet, Richard," she replied, shaking her head sadly. "It is all so sudden, so unexpected, I cannot realize our terrible loss."

"There isn't a chance for any one in Mossvale," put in Nancy. She herself had been secretly wondering what they were going to do for support.

"So I told mother some time ago," responded Richard. "The few places here are all filled."

"Thought you were going to try New York?" said Grace, who was serving the tea.

"So I was. But--" The boy did not finish, but glanced over to where his mother sat.

"I could hardly bear to have you go away," said Mrs. Dare. "It would be so lonely--your father and you both out of the house. I would rather have you home, even if we had a good deal less to live upon."

"To-morrow I will go out and see what Mossvale has to offer," returned Richard. "In our circumstances it would not be right for me to waste any time."

"Do as you think best," was Mrs. Dare's reply. "You are old enough to think and act for yourself."

But Richard did not wait for the next day before he began his hunt. That evening he called upon Dr. Melvin to obtain some medicine for his mother, and after this portion of his errand was over he broached the subject of securing a position.

"You will find it a hard matter," said the doctor kindly, "unless you wish to go on one of the farms. But they are poor pay, even if you can stand the labor, which I doubt."

"I would not go on a farm unless I could find nothing else," replied the boy. "Could _you_ give me a place?" he asked.

Dr. Melvin nodded his head reflectively.

"I might take you in as an office assistant," he replied. "It would be a good chance to learn medicine. But there would not be much to do, and the pay would be necessarily small."

"Then I couldn't afford to accept it," was Richard's prompt reply. "It is kind in you to make the offer, but I have got to earn enough to support the family."

"I suppose so. Well, I wish you success. I have known you for a number of years, and if you need a recommendation I will give it to you gladly."

"Thank you, doctor. I'll remember that," replied the boy, and after a few more words of conversation he left.

On the following morning he called upon Mr. Barrows, the master painter for whom his father had worked. He found the old workman busy in his shed, mixing up colors for his journeymen to use.

"I suppose you've come down for the money due your father," remarked Mr. Barrows after he had expressed numerous regrets over the sad accident. "Well, here it is, the week in full, and I'm mighty sorry he isn't here to receive it himself, and many another besides," and he held out the amount.

"No, I didn't come for this exactly," replied the boy. "Besides there is too much here," he added, as he counted the bills. "Father did not finish out the week."

"Never mind, you take it anyhow," returned Mr. Barrows briefly. "What was it you wanted?"

"Work. I want to earn something to support my mother and sisters on. We can't live on nothing, and what we have saved up won't last long."

"It's hard luck, Dick, so it is!" exclaimed the old painter. "Tell you what I'll do, though. I'll teach you the trade--teach you it just as good as your father knew it, and pay you a little in the bargain."

"How much I don't care about the money for myself, but--"

"Yes, I understand," broke in Mr. Barrows. "Well, I'll tell you. I'll take you to learn the trade for three years, and start you at two dollars a week. I wouldn't give any other boy half of that, but I know you're smart, and I feel it my duty to help you along."

Richard bit his lip in disappointment. He knew that what Mr. Barrows said about the amount was true, but still he needed more, and for that reason, he had, somehow, expected a larger sum to be offered.

"I'm much obliged, but I'll have to think it over before I decide," he said. "Three years is a long time to bind one's self."

"Oh, they'll slip by before you know it. Besides, I'll raise your wages just as soon as you are worth it," said Mr. Barrows.

"I'll see about it," was all the boy could answer.

"Two dollars a week would not go far towards supporting a family of five," sighed Richard, as he walked away. "And then to be a house painter all one's life! I must strike something else."

But "striking something else" was no easy matter, as the boy soon learned. A visit to the two stores, the blacksmith shop and to several people whom he thought might give him employment, brought forth no results of value. Either they had nothing for him to do, or else the pay offered was altogether too small.

Richard returned home late in the afternoon. Grace met him at the end of the lane.

"Any luck, Dick?" she asked eagerly.

"No," he replied, and related his experience.

"Never mind," returned his sister. "Maybe it isn't so bad after all. The minister is here."

"Mr. Cook?"

"Yes, he's in the parlor talking to mamma, and I heard them mention your name, and say something about New York."

Richard's heart gave a bound. He knew that Mr. Cook, who was their old family pastor, had great influence with his mother, and that she would probably go to him for advice.

"Guess I'll go in and hear what he has to say," said Richard, and a moment later he knocked on the parlor door and entered.

Mr. Cook shook him cordially by the hand.

"We have just been speaking about you," he said. "How have you fared in your search for employment?"

The boy told him.

"Mossvale is so small, there is hardly any chance," he added.

"Your mother tells me that you have an idea you could do better in New York," went on the minister. "It is a big place, and nearly every one is almost too busy to notice a new-comer."

"I know that. But I should watch my chances."

"And there are many temptations there that never arise in such a place as this," continued Mr. Cook earnestly; "and it very often takes all the will power a person possesses to keep in the straight and narrow path."

"I wouldn't do what wasn't right!" burst out Richard. "I'd starve first!"

Mr. Cook looked down into the clear, outspoken face before him.

"I believe it," he declared. "You have had a good training, thanks to your mother and father. Well, I have advised her to let you try your luck in the great metropolis."

"Oh, Mr. Cook!"

"Yes. Now don't get excited. She has thought it over, and agrees to let you go for two weeks, at least. The fare is only four dollars and a half, and board for that length of time will not be much. Of course you can't put up at an expensive hotel."

"I won't put up anywhere until I find a job," declared Richard. "I only want my railroad ticket, and a dollar or two extra."

"Indeed not!" put in Mrs. Dare. "I would not have you stay out doors all night, like a tramp. There are plenty of cheap lodging-houses."

"And when can I go?" asked Richard eagerly.

His mother gave a sad little smile.

"Do you want to leave your mother so very soon?" she asked.

"Oh, no, only I want to be doing something--helping you and the rest," he replied quickly.

"Then you shall go bright and early next Monday morning," returned Mrs. Dare, and she turned away to hide the tears that sprang up at the thought of her only boy leaving the shelter of the quiet country home, to mingle with strangers in the great city more than a hundred miles

away.

As for Richard he was delighted with the prospects. At last the dream of many months was to be realized. He was to go to New York, to tread the streets of the great metropolis, to find a place for himself, and make a fortune!

Little did he know or care for the many trials and disappointments in store for him. He was striking out for himself, and intended to do his level best.

Would he succeed or fail?

We shall see.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TRAIN.

Of course there was a good deal of talking about Richard's proposed venture. The girls seemed never to tire of it, and the amount of advice that they gave their brother was enough, as the boy declared, "to help him along until eternity, and two days afterwards."

"You'll want your best clothes, city folks are so particular," declared Grace. "And your shirts and collars will have to be as stiff as old Deacon Moore's, I expect."

"I only want things clean and neat," replied Richard. "I'm not going there to be a dude. I'm going there to work--if I can get anything to do."

Nevertheless, Grace was bound that he should look his best, and spent an extra hour over the washtub and ironing-board.

It was decided that he should not be hampered with a trunk, but should take a valise instead.

This Mrs. Dare packed herself, and placed in the hallway late on Saturday afternoon.

Meanwhile Richard was not idle. He did not wish to leave any work around the place unfinished, and early and late he spent many hours in the house and in the garden, doing the things that were most needed.

Sunday morning the whole family, including little Madge, attended the pretty white church that was the one pride of Mossvale. Richard suspected that Mr. Cook had expected him to be there, for the sermon was on the text, "Be thou strong in the faith," and advised all,

especially the young, to stick to their Christian principles, despite the alluring, but harmful, enticements of the great world around them.

It was a sober little crowd that gathered in the kitchen in the dusk after supper. Richard was a trifle louder in his manner than usual, but this was only an effort to cover up the evidence of his real seriousness.

"You must not forget to write as soon as you arrive and find a stopping place," cautioned Mrs. Dare for at least the fifth time.

"Yes, and don't forget to tell us all about what happened on the train," put in Grace. "I'm sure that in such a long ride as that you ought to have some kind of an adventure."

"I trust that he does not," returned the mother. "An adventure would probably mean an accident, and we have had enough already;" and she gave a long sigh.

"Don't fear but what I'll write," replied Richard. "And if anything unusual happens I'll put it down."

But all evenings must come to an end, and finally, as the clock struck ten, the good-night word went its round, and they separated.

No need to call Richard on the following morning. He was up and dressed at five, and impatient for the start. Every one turned in towards serving him a hot breakfast, and in addition Mrs. Dare put him up a tidy lunch in a box.

There was one thing, though, that the boy was obstinate about. He would not accept all of the money that Mrs. Dare thought it her duty to make him take. The price of his ticket and five dollars was Richard's limit, and to this he stuck.

"If I get real hard up I'll write for more," was his declaration. "You will need what you have saved, and I am sure I can get along without it."

Mrs. Dare shook her head. But it was all to no purpose. Richard was firm, and doubly so when Grace gave him a pert look of approval.

The news of the departure had spread, and at the depot the boy met several who had come to see him off--Mr. Cook and two or three boy friends, including Charley Wood, the son of a neighbor, who was not slow in giving the lion's share of his attention to Grace.

"Here comes the train!" exclaimed Nancy, after a rather long wait, and a moment later, with ringing bell, the locomotive rounded the curve below, and the cars rolled into the depot.

"All aboard for Rockvale, Beverly, and New York! Way train for Hurley, Allendale, Hobb's Dam, and all stations south of Bakersville Junction!"

shouted the conductor. "Lively, please."

There was a hurried hand-shaking, and several warm kisses.

"Good-by, Richard," said Mrs. Dare. "God be with you!" And then she added in a whisper: "Don't be afraid to come home as soon as you don't like it any more."

"I'll remember, mother," he replied. "Don't worry about me. It's all right. Good-by, each and everybody!"

Valise in hand, he climbed up the steps and entered one of the cars. He had hardly time to reach a window seat, and wave a parting adieu, when the train moved off.

He looked back as long as he could. Mother and sister were waving their handkerchiefs, Grace having brought her largest for this special occasion.

But the train went swiftly on its way, and soon Mossvale and its people were left behind.

"Off at last!" was Richard's mental comment. "It's sink or swim now. Good-by to Mossvale and the old life!"

Yet it must in truth be confessed that there was just the suspicion of a tear in his eye and a lump in his throat as he settled back in his seat, but he hastily brushed away the one and swallowed the other, and put on as bold a front as he could.

The car was only partially filled, and he had a double seat all to himself. He placed his valise beside him, and then gazed at the ever-varying panorama that rushed past.

But his mind was not given to the scenes that were thus presenting themselves. His thoughts were far ahead, speculating upon what it would be best to do when his destination was reached.

He knew New York was a big place, and felt tolerably certain that few, if indeed any, would care to give him the information that he knew he needed.

Presently the train began to stop at various stations, and the car commenced to fill up.

"This seat taken?" said a gentleman, as he stopped beside Richard.

"No, sir," replied the boy, and made room for the other.

"Thank you," returned the gentleman. "Rather crowded," he continued, as he sat down, and deposited a huge valise beside Richard's, which had been placed upon the floor.

"I might have checked my satchel," remarked Richard, noting that the two valises rather crowded things.

"So might I," was the new-comer's reply, "but I thought it would be too much trouble in New York getting it."

"I'm not used to travelling," explained Richard, "and so I thought it best to have my baggage where I could lay my hands on it."

The gentleman looked at him curiously.

"Going to the city?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"First trip?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll see a good many strange sights. Going to stay several days, I presume."

"Longer than that, sir. I'm going there to try my luck."

The gentleman looked surprised.

"I hope you'll succeed," he said. "You will find it rather uphill work, I'm afraid. Where are you from, if I may ask?"

"I come from Mossvale. My name is Richard Dare. My father died from an accident a short while ago, and, as there didn't seem to be anything in our village for me to work at, I made up my mind to try New York."

The boy's open manner evidently pleased his listener.

"I am glad to know you," he returned. "My name is Joyce--Timothy Joyce. I am a leather dealer--down in the Swamp. Here is my card."

"The Swamp?" queried Richard, puzzled by the appellation.

"Yes--at least that's what us oldtime folks call it. There used to be a swamp there years ago. I'm on Jacob Street. Maybe I can help you around a bit."

"Thank you, Mr. Joyce; I'm glad to know you," replied Richard gratefully. "I'm a perfect stranger, as I said, and it will be right handy to have some one to give me a few points."

Mr. Joyce smiled. He was quite taken by the boy's frank manner.

"I'll give you all the points I can," he said. "You must keep your eyes and ears open, though, for there are many pitfalls for the unwary."

Mr. Joyce felt in his coat pocket. "Here is a map of the city. I am going out in the smoker presently, to enjoy a cigar. I would advise you to study it while I am gone, and when I come back I'll explain anything that you can't understand."

"Thank you, I will."

"Just look to my bag while I am gone, will you?" continued Mr. Joyce, as he arose. When alone, Richard became absorbed in the map at once.

On and on sped the train, now running faster than ever. But Richard took no notice. He was deep in the little volume, trying his best to memorize the names of the streets and their locations.

"It's not a very regular city," he sighed. "Streets run in all directions, and some of them are as crooked as a ram's horn. If I ever--"

A sudden jar at this instant caused Richard to pitch forward from his seat. Then, before he realized what had happened, the car tilted, and then turned completely over on its side.

CHAPTER V.

THE SMASH-UP.

Richard was bewildered and alarmed by what had happened. As the car went over upon the side nearest to which he was sitting, he fell down between the windows, with his head resting upon the bundle-holder, that a moment before had been over him.

His own valise and that belonging to Mr. Joyce came down on top of him, and as both were heavy, they knocked the breath completely out of him.

As soon as the boy had somewhat regained this and his scattered senses, he scrambled to his feet, and tried to look around him.

Daylight shone into the car from the windows above, but all was dust and confusion, mingled with the cries of women and the loud exclamations of men.

Luckily Richard was not far from the rear door, and having somewhat recovered from the shock, he resolved to get out as speedily as possible.

The car had now stopped moving, and as there seemed to be no immediate danger of anything more happening, the boy stopped to get the two valises.

With such a load it was no easy matter climbing over the seats to the door. Yet the feat was accomplished, and two minutes later, with an exclamation of relief, Richard pitched his baggage to the bank beside the track, and sprang to the solid ground.

His foot had been slightly sprained when the shock came, but in the excitement he hardly noticed the pain. He could readily see that assistance was needed on all sides, and he was not slow to render all that lay in his power.

The cause of the accident could be seen at a glance. A heavy freight train had backed down from a side track, smashing the locomotive attached to the passenger cars, and throwing three of the latter off the track.

One of the cars--the first--had been turned completely over, and to this every one was hurrying.

"It's the smoking car," replied a man, to Richard's eager question. "It's full of men, too."

Setting down the two valises within easy reach, the boy hurried forward.

"Mr. Joyce is in there," was his thought. "Oh, I hope he isn't hurt!"

Though Richard had known the man but a short hour, yet the city merchant's cordial manner had completely captivated the boy.

It was no easy matter for the men in the smoker to free themselves. In turning over, a number of the seats in the car had become loosened, falling on many, and blocking up both doors as well.

But presently several windows were smashed out, and the occupants began to pour from these, some with their clothing badly torn, others hatless, and several severely injured.

"There are two men in there stuck fast!" exclaimed a short, stout man, as puffing and blowing he reached the ground. "I tried to help 'em both, but it was no use,--the seats all piled up atop of 'em. Beckon they'll have to be cut away, they're jammed in so tight."

Instantly Richard thought of Mr. Joyce. Nowhere in the crowd could he catch sight of the gentleman. It was possible that one of the two might be his newly-made friend.

"There's a tool-house down the road a ways," continued the stout man. "I noticed it as we rode past, a moment before we went over."

"Where?" asked Richard eagerly.

"On the other side, up the embankment," was the reply.

"I'll see if I can get something to work with," returned the boy. "Just watch my baggage while I'm gone."

In an instant he was off, running as fast as possible. He found the building just as it had been described. The door was open, and rushing in, he confronted an Irish laborer, who was cleaning up some tools.

"The train has been wrecked, just below," he exclaimed hurriedly. "We want some tools--an axe or a crowbar--something--quick!"

"Train wrecked?" repeated the man in astonishment.

"Yes,--just below." Richard picked up an axe and an iron bar.

"Bring some more tools with you!" he cried as he started to go. "It may mean life or death!" Richard's earnest manner made an impression upon the laborer, and in a few seconds the man was following the boy, with his arms full of such implements as were handy.

Down at the wreck Richard found that one of the two men, a lean, sallow-complexioned individual, had already been liberated, but the other was still a prisoner.

"Just what we want!" cried one of the workers, as he took the axe from the boy's hand. "Can you use the bar?"

"I guess so."

"Follow me, then."

Richard crawled into the car after the man. Inside it was full of dust, and the thick tobacco smoke nearly stifled the boy.

Near the center of the car they found the unfortunate passenger. It was not Mr. Timothy Joyce.

The man was on his back, and a seat, fastened in some strange manner, pinned him down.

"Help me! help me!" he gasped. "That thing is staving in all my ribs!"

It did not take Richard long to insert the iron bar under one end of the slat and thus pry it up. This done the man with the axe gave the side of the seat a couple of blows, and then the prisoner was free.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the man, as he sprang to his feet, and followed the others out of the car. "And thank you, too, my hearties," he continued to the other man and to Richard. "I thought as how I was strangled sure. But Doc Linyard allers was a lucky tar. Thanky, messmates, thanky."

He was a nautical-looking fellow of perhaps forty. He wore a blue pea-jacket and trousers, and under the rolling collar of his gray flannel

shirt was tied a black bandanna in true sailor style.

"Is your chest hurt much?" asked Richard, as he thought he noticed a look of pain cross the man's countenance.

"No bones broken," was the reply, after a deep breath.

The two were soon standing side by side on the bank near the track.

"Wish I could reward you," went on the man. "But I ain't got a dollar all told."

And diving into his capacious pocket he brought to light only a miscellaneous collection of small coins.

"Oh, never mind that," said the boy, coloring a trifle. "I'm glad you're all right."

"So am I--downright glad, and no mistake. As I said afore, my name is Linyard, Doc Linyard, general manager, along with my wife, of the Watch Below, the neatest sailors' lunch-room on West Street, New York. I say neatest acause my wife keeps it. She's a worker, Betty is. Come and see me some time. I won't forget to treat you well."

"Thank you, Mr. Lin--"

"Avast there! Don't tackle no mister to my name," interposed the old sailor. "What's _your_ name?" he continued suddenly.

Richard told him.

"All right, Mr. Dare. I'll remember it, and you too. But don't go for to put a figure-head to my name. Plain Doc Linyard is good enough for such a tough customer as me."

"I'll remember it, Mr--"

"Avast, I say--"

"I mean Doc Linyard."

And shaking hands the two separated.

Picking up the two valises, Richard made his way through the crowd, looking for Mr. Joyce. It seemed rather queer that the gentleman who had left his baggage in the boy's care was nowhere to be found.

Richard made quite a number of inquiries, especially among the men who had occupied the smoking-car, but to no avail.

The smash-up was no small affair, and it took fully an hour before the railroad officials that were present could get assistance to the spot. In the meantime, the injured were laid out on the grass and made as

comfortable as circumstances would permit. Luckily, several doctors had been passengers on the train, and as they were uninjured they took charge of all who needed their aid.

Finally a train backed down to take the passengers to Rockvale, the next town of importance.

Richard hardly knew what to do. If Mr. Joyce was hurt it was certainly his duty to remain. But perhaps the gentleman had gone off, to render assistance, or, it was possible, on a search for his satchel.

"Guess I'll take the train and risk it," was Richard's conclusion. "He is bound to follow to Rockvale sooner or later, and we will probably meet in the depot."

Nevertheless, as the boy entered the car he felt rather uncomfortable, carrying off the property of another, who was comparatively a stranger to him.

CHAPTER VI.

UNDER SUSPICION.

"Well, I've had an adventure on the road just as Grace hoped I would," was Richard's mental comment, as he lay back in the car seat. "So I'll have something to write home after all. But I don't care particularly to have any more such happenings."

For though Richard had taken the whole affair rather coolly he now found that it had been more the excitement than aught else that had kept him up, and he was beginning to feel the full force of a most uncomfortable shaking up.

But this feeling, bordering upon nervous prostration, was not confined to the boy alone. Every one of the passengers, most of whom had escaped without a scratch, were decidedly ill at ease.

It was not long ere Richard thought to take a look through the train for Mr. Joyce.

"He may have got aboard without my seeing him," he said to himself.

And leaving his baggage piled up in the seat, he made the tour from one end to the other and back.

He was unsuccessful. It was as if the leather merchant had disappeared for good.

"Hope he turns up," thought the boy. "If he doesn't what am I to do

with his baggage? I don't know where he lives and--Hold up."

He suddenly thought of Mr. Joyce's card, which that gentleman had given him, but a hasty and then a thorough search convinced him that the bit of pasteboard was no longer in his possession.

"Must have slipped out of my pocket in the smash-up," he thought.

"Well, I'll have to make the best of it, only I don't want to carry off another person's property."

Richard did not know enough to leave the valise with the baggage master or some of the other railroad officials. This was his first journey of importance, and everything was new and strange to him. The next station was quite a distance, and after thinking the matter over the boy concluded to let the matter rest until they reached that point.

He still retained the guide-book the merchant had loaned him, and presently he took it out and began to study it more carefully than ever.

"Father used to live up in that neighborhood," he said to himself, as certain familiar names of streets arose in his mind. "Sometime, after I'm settled, I'll visit that district and learn if there are still any people there who knew him. Who knows but what I might run across some one who knew him during the war, and could witness his application?"

The idea was a rather pleasant one, and gave the boy a wide field for meditation and hope. He determined not only to take a "run up," as he had said, but also, when the opportunity offered, to make a thorough canvass of the locality and get every bit of information obtainable.

"Ahoy, there! Mr. Dare. On board, too, eh?" exclaimed a voice, and looking up Richard saw Doc Linyard's beaming face.

"Sit down," returned the boy.

The seat in front was vacant, and in a trice the old sailor had it turned over and himself ensconced in the soft cushions, opposite Richard.

"Might I ask where you're bound?" asked Doc Linyard, after another long string of thanks for the services that had been rendered.

"I can't say any more than that I'm going to New York. I'm looking for work, and I don't know where I'll settle. Perhaps I'll strike nothing and have to go back home."

"What! A strong, healthy young fellow like you? Nonsense! Not if you care to lend a willing hand."

"Oh, I'm anxious enough to do that."

"Then you'll pull through. Them as is anxious and willing always do."

I didn't have much to start on when I settled in the city. Only six months' pay at sixteen dollars a month."

"How came you to leave the sea?" asked the boy, with considerable curiosity, for Doc Linyard was the first regular sailor he had ever known.

"Oh, you see I was wrecked a couple of times, and lost one leg; this," he tapped his left knee, "is only a cork one, you know, and then the wife grew afeared, and said as how she wanted me ashore. But a tar used to the rigging and sech don't take kindly to labor on land, so instead of working for other people, I up and started the Watch Below."

"What is it--a boarding-house?"

"Not exactly, though we do occasionally take a fellow in. It's a temperance lunch-room for sailors, with regular first-class ship grub; lobsouse, plum-duff and sech. Most of the fellows know me, and hardly a soul comes ashore but what drops in afore he leaves port."

"It must pay."

"I don't get fancy prices and only make a living. I'd like to ask you down, only maybe it wouldn't be fine enough."

Doc Linyard had noticed Richard's neat appearance, and saw that the boy was accustomed to having everything "nice."

"Oh, I should like to come very much," replied Richard, "that is if I get the chance."

On and on rolled the train, and finally the town for which it was bound was reached, and the passengers alighted and crowded the station.

It was announced that owing to the disaster no train would leave for New York for two hours. This left a long time on Richard's hands, and he hardly knew what to do.

Immediately on the arrival Doc Linyard had gone off to hunt up a friend he fancied lived in the place. Not far from the station was a little park containing a number of benches, and walking over to it Richard sat down.

The lunch his mother had given him came in handy now, and he did full justice to it.

He wished the old sailor was with him to share the repast. He had taken a fancy to the tar, and loved to listen to his hearty voice and open speech.

After the lunch was disposed of, Richard took a short stroll through the town. He did not go far, for he had the two valises with him, and they were heavy.

Presently he returned to the station, and it was not long before the train could be seen approaching in the distance. Along with a number of others, Richard started to walk over to the right track.

As he did so two men, who looked like railroad officials, approached him.

"Say, young fellow," sang out one of the men. "Hold up; we want to speak to you."

"What is it?" asked Richard.

"Whose baggage have you got there?"

"My own and another man's."

"What man?" asked the other official.

"A gentleman I met on the train."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know. I'm trying to find him."

By this time the train had rolled into the station. Not wishing to miss it, Richard began to move on.

Both officials made a dive for him, and one of them caught him by the shoulder.

"Not so fast, my fine fellow?" he exclaimed.

"Why, what--what do you want?" asked Richard, with a rising color.

"We want you to give an account of yourself," was the reply. "Where did you get that valise?"

CHAPTER VII.

THE END OF THE JOURNEY.

Despite the knowledge that he was doing no wrong, Richard's heart sank when he heard the railroad official call him back.

He did not think how easy it might be to prove himself innocent of all wrong-doing. It was bad enough to be suspected. Besides, he had not been the only one to hear the harsh words that had been spoken, and in a moment a crowd had collected.

"I was in the wreck, and this valise belongs to a friend of mine," replied Richard, as soon as he could collect his thoughts.

"What is your name?" asked the official who still held him by the arm.

Richard told him.

"And who was your friend?"

"His name is--is--"

And here, being greatly confused, Richard could not remember the leather merchant's name.

"Come, answer me," continued the man sharply.

"His name is--is--I've forgotten it!" stammered the boy in confusion.

"Humph! A very plausible excuse I must say," sneered the man.

"It's the truth. I met the gentleman on the train. He introduced himself, and we had quite a chat. Then he asked me to look after his baggage while he went into the smoking-car, and while he was gone the accident happened."

"Where is the man now?" asked the first official.

"I don't know. I've been trying to find him."

"Do you expect me to believe that?" exclaimed the other. "There isn't a soul missing from that wreck!"

"I can't help it," replied Richard stoutly, for he was recovering from the shock he had received. "What I'm telling you is a fact."

"What's the matter here?" broke in a hearty voice; and Doc Linyard elbowed his way through the crowd. "What's wrong with the young gentleman?"

"What business is that of yours?" returned the man sharply.

"Not much may be, but if there's trouble for him I want to know it. He saved my life down in the smash-up, and I intend to stand by him," returned the old tar decidedly.

"They think I'm trying to steal this valise," explained Richard.

"_What!_" roared Doc Linyard. "Confound you for a pair of landlubbers! Don't you know an honest figurehead when you see it? Look at him! 'Pears to me he looks more straightforward than those as accuses him."

Both officials were taken back by the tar's aggressive manner.

"Better be careful," continued the sailor. "You don't know who this young gentleman is, and before long you'll be laying up a heap of trouble for yourselves."

"We have to be on our guard," said the first official in a milder tone.

"The young man will have to leave the valise here, at least," added the other.

"I'm willing to do that," said Richard. "But I'm no thief," he continued as they walked over to the baggage-room.

"Yes, but that man's name--" began one of the men.

"Was Joyce--Timothy Joyce!" cried the boy. "I knew I would remember it sooner or later."

The official took a piece of chalk and scratched the name upon the bottom of the valise.

"That one is yours?"

"Yes; here is my name on the bottom," and Richard showed it.

"All right. You can go. If Mr. Joyce calls he can get his property, otherwise it will be forwarded to the main baggage office in New York."

"Hold up! Not so fast," put in Doc Linyard. "Just give him a receipt for that valise."

"Oh, that's all right," replied the man, turning red.

"Maybe so. But I don't see as how he ought to trust you any more than you trusted him," went on the tar bluntly.

"That's fair," put in an old man, who had stood watching the proceedings. "'What's sauce for the goose is the sauce for the gander.'"

With very bad grace the official wrote down something on a pad, tore the page off and thrust it at Richard.

"I hope you're satisfied," he snapped to Doc Linyard; and taking up Mr. Joyce's valise he entered an inner room, slamming the door behind him.

"Good riddance to him," muttered the old tar. "A few brass buttons on his coat has turned his head."

The train had fortunately been delayed, but it was now moving from the station. Richard and Doc Linyard made a rush for it, and succeeded in boarding the last car.

"Hope we're done with adventures," remarked the old tar, when they were seated. "I'd rather have things quiet and easy."

"I must thank you," said Richard heartily. "I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't come up just when you did."

"Shoo--'tain't nothing, Mr. Dare, alongside of what you did for me," replied the sailor. "But I've had a run of bad luck since I left New York two days ago," he added meditatively.

"Yes?" questioned the boy with some curiosity. "How so?"

"Well, it's this way," began Doc Linyard, crossing his good leg over the cork one: "My wife got a letter from England last week, saying as how an uncle had died, leaving his property to her and her brother, Tom Clover. In the letter she was asked to see her brother and fix the matter up with him. They wrote they didn't have his address, and so left it to her."

"I should think that would be all right," remarked Richard, as the old tar paused.

"It would be, only for one thing--we don't know where Tom is. He used to live in New York, but moved away, we don't know where. A party told me he thought he had got work in a place called Fairwood, but I've just come from there."

"And you didn't find him?"

"No; he had never been in the place. I have an idea he is again somewhere in New York."

"Didn't he used to call on you?"

"Sometimes; but he was a bit queer, and there was times he didn't show up for months and months. He's pretty old, and couldn't get around very well."

"Is the property valuable?"

"It's worth over eight hundred pounds--four thousand dollars."

"It's a fortune!" exclaimed Richard.

"'Twould be to Betty and me," returned the sailor. "We never had over a hundred dollars in cash in our lives."

"It's a pity you can't find him," said the boy. "What are you going to do? Get your wife's share, and let the other rest?"

"No; that's the worst of it. By the provisions of the will the property can't be divided very well except by the consent of both heirs."

"In that case I think I'd commence a pretty good search for Mr.--your wife's brother. It's worth spending quite a few dollars to find him."

"Just my reckoning. But New York is a big place to find any one in."

"Perhaps your brother-in-law will drop in on you when you least expect him."

"Hope he does."

The two continued the conversation for a long time. The more Richard saw of Doc Linyard, the better he liked the bluff old tar, and, to tell the truth, the latter was fully as much taken by Richard's open manner.

It was not long before Richard poured out his own tale in all its details. He found a strong sympathizer in the sailor, who expressed a sincere wish that the pension due the Dare family might be speedily forthcoming.

"Somewhat of a like claim to mine," he remarked. "We are both looking for other people to help us out."

"And I trust we both succeed," added Richard earnestly. "In fact we _must_ succeed," he continued, with sudden energy.

"Right you are!" was the reply. "We're bound to get the proper bearings some time."

Before they reached their journey's end they were fast friends.

"Jersey City!"

It was the brakeman's cry, and an instant later the train rolled into the vast and gloomy depot, and every one was scrambling up and making for the door.

In a moment they were upon the platform, amid a surging, pushing mass of people.

"Which way?" asked Richard, somewhat confused by the unusual bustle.

"This way," replied the sailor. "Just follow me."

"West Shore this side! Checks for baggage! Brooklyn Annex to the right!" and several similar calls filled the boy's ears.

He kept close to the tar, who led the way to the slip where a Cortlandt Street boat was in waiting, and, dodging several trucks and express wagons, they hurried down the bridge and went on board.

The gentlemen's cabin was so full of tobacco smoke that it nearly stifled Richard, and he was not sorry when Doc Linyard led the way

straight through to the forward deck.

It was a pleasant day, and the lowering sun cast long shadows over the water, and lit up the spires and stone piles of the great metropolis that lay beyond, tipped with gold, typical of Richard's high hopes.

Swiftly the ferryboat crossed the North River, crowded with boats. Then it ran into the slip--there was the rattle of the ratchets as the line wheels spun around, and finally the gates were opened.

Richard had reached New York at last.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE "WATCH BELOW."

"Gracious, what a busy place!"

This was the thought that ran through Richard's mind as he stepped from the ferryhouse to West Street, in New York City.

Doc Linyard had managed to get the boy off the boat as soon as the landing was made, but now, as they waited for a chance to cross the slippery thoroughfare that runs parallel to the water's edge, the crowd surged around them until to Richard there seemed to be a perfect jam.

"Hack, sir? Astor House? Coupe, madam? This way for a cab!"

In a moment they were safe upon the other side of the street.

"Made up your mind which way to steer?" asked Doc Linyard.

"Not exactly," replied Richard. "This is the way to Broadway, I suppose," he went on, pointing up Cortlandt Street.

"Yes; but what do you intend to do up there?"

"I thought I'd take a look around. I imagine I can't do much in the way of finding work at this time in the evening."

"No; you'd best wait till morning. Then get a World and a Herald, and look over the want advertisements. I reckon that's the best way of striking a position."

"Thank you, I'll try that plan. Good-by." And Richard held out his hand.

"Won't you come down to my place afore we part?" interposed Doc Linyard. "It's only a few steps from here."

Richard demurred. From the description he had been given of the place he knew money was to be spent there, and he had no cash to spare.

"I--I--guess not," he faltered.

"Why not?"

"I--well, to tell the truth, I haven't much to spend."

The old tar slapped the boy heartily on the shoulder.

"Don't worry about that!" he cried. "I'm no land-shark. This trip shan't cost you a cent. Come on."

And Richard followed. To a new-comer West Street is certainly a curious sight. Saloons predominate, but between them are located tiny eating houses, cheap clothing shops, meat stalls, bargain "counters," and lodging-places, only about one in ten of the latter being fit for occupancy.

"Here we are!" exclaimed the sailor presently.

They stepped up to a small restaurant, considerably neater than its neighbors. Its exterior was painted light blue, and over the door in big, black letters, hung the sign:

THE WATCH BELOW, DOC LINYARD, _Boatswain_.

And to the right of the door, near a figurehead representing a gorgeous mermaid, were added the words:

Messmates Always Welcome.

The doors were wide open, and the two entered.

Several men sat at various tables, eating and drinking, and behind a counter that did the double duty of a pie-stand and a cashier's desk sat a tall, old man with grizzled white hair.

"Well, pop!" exclaimed Doc Linyard, as he stepped up.

"Hello, my boy! Back again," returned the older man. "Did you find 'em?" he added, in an anxious tone.

"No."

The old man shook his head ominously.

"Too bad, too bad," he murmured.

But he was evidently too old to take a very strong interest in the matter.

"Never mind, it will all come outright in the end," was the son's reassuring reply. "Where is Betty?"

"In the kitchen."

"This is my father," went on Doc Linyard to Richard. "Pop, here is a chum as I picked up on the road. His name is Mr. Dare, and he saved my life."

"Saved your life?" queried the old man doubtfully.

As he spoke a door in the rear opened, and a buxom woman of thirty tripped out. She came straight up to the sailor and gave him a hearty kiss.

"No luck, Betty," said Linyard soberly.

"No?"

"Not a bit. Couldn't locate 'em nohow."

"It's too bad, Doc."

"And he says his life was saved by this chap," put in the old man, who had been gazing at Richard ever since the assertion had been made.

"Yes; we've both had strange adventures in the last twelve hours."

This bold praise made Richard blush.

"Oh, I didn't do as much as all that," he exclaimed. "I only helped him out of the car, just as I would have helped any one."

"No sech thing, he did lots."

And sitting down near the counter, Doc Linyard gave a graphic account of all that had transpired.

"I thank you very much," said Mrs. Linyard, when her husband had finished. "I know Doc won't forget what you did, and neither will I." She gave the boy's hand a tight squeeze. "Won't you have some supper with us?"

Richard hesitated. He always was backward in accepting favors.

"Come don't say no," urged Doc Linyard. "By the anchor, it's little enough."

Mrs. Linyard led the way to a cozy nook near the end of the restaurant, and gave them two seats at a small table covered with a snowy white cloth,--a table that was generally reserved for officers, or "upper class" patrons.

"So you've had no luck?" she said to her husband, as she began to bustle around with the tableware. "It's queer. What can have become of Tom?"

"Blessed if I know."

"We may lose that money, all through him," sighed Mrs. Linyard.

"It would be a shame," put in Richard. "Your husband has told me of the matter. I wish I could help you."

The sailor laughed good-naturedly. His disposition was too easy to worry much over the situation.

"Reckon as how you'll have your hands full on your own account, finding work and all that," he returned.

"I suppose I will. Still I would like to help you."

Mrs. Linyard provided a warm and bountiful supper, and both enjoyed every dish that was set before them.

"I mustn't lose too much time," went on the boy, as he was finishing. "I must at least find a boarding-house. I don't want to spend the night in the streets."

"No fear of that," said the old tar hastily. "Betty, another cup of that good coffee, please. Tell you what I'll do if you're willing. This place isn't as grand as a hotel, but Betty's beds are as clean as any of 'em, and if you will you're welcome to stay all night."

"Thank you, I'll do so gladly," replied Richard quickly, for the proposition took a load from his mind. "I'll pay you whatever--"

"Avast there! What do you think I am, to take money from you for that? No, thanky, I'm no land shark."

"I know you're not," replied Richard quickly, for he saw that the sailor's feelings had been hurt, "but I would like to do something in return."

"No need of that. Tell you what you can do though," continued Doc Linyard, after a moment's reflection.

"Well?"

"Write me out an advertisement for the newspapers. My eddication ain't none of the best, and my hand's more used to a marline spike than it is to a pen."

"Willingly. What do you want to advertise?"

"I want to put a notice in for my brother-in-law. I'll give you all the particulars."

"Very well. Have you pen, ink and paper?"

"Yes; Betty, will you bring 'em?"

Mrs. Linyard nodded.

A few minutes later the dishes were cleared away, and Richard prepared to write out the advertisement.

CHAPTER IX.

LOCKED OUT.

During Richard's and Doc Linyard's meal the Watch Below had been gradually filling up, principally with sailors, the majority of whom were short, heavy-set men, who clapped each other on the back and carried on their conversation in a sea lingo that was nearly unintelligible to Richard.

One thing, however, impressed the boy. All the patrons seemed of a better class than most sailors are, and he was glad to notice that drunkenness and profanity were entirely absent. Once in a while some one would let fall some coarse remark, but he was quickly choked off by the others out of respect for "Doc's Betty," who hurried around with a shining face, waiting on one and exchanging a pleasant word with another.

Every one was on familiar terms with the proprietor. They were glad to see him back to the "fo'castle," but those who knew were sorry his mission had been unsuccessful.

"They all know me and wishes me well," remarked the sailor to Richard. "It's something to be proud of--around on this here globe forty-five years and not an enemy in the world."

"How long were you a sailor?"

"Almost thirty years. I shipped as cabin boy on a South America brig when I was fifteen. I'd be at it yet if, as I told you, Betty hadn't anchored me ashore."

"It's long time. Some time I'd like to hear of some of the places you visited. But I'd better get at that advertisement."

"No hurry--the newspaper office is only a few blocks from here."

"But you want this advertisement to go in tomorrow, don't you?"

"They take 'em up to ten o'clock, and maybe later."

Presently the crowd began to thin out, and by nine o'clock only half-a-dozen customers remained. Mrs. Linyard and the old man waited upon these, and Doc Linyard drew up to the table and motioned Richard to go ahead.

"Here is the paper I'm going to put the notice in," he said. "Guess you better follow the style of the other advertisements."

"I will," replied Richard. "What is your brother-in-law's full name?"

"Thomas Clover. He has no middle name."

"And his address?"

"He came from Brighton, England, and lived here, in a number of places on the east side."

"The east side?"

"Yes; he lived somewhere on Cherry Hill last."

"And what is your wife's name?"

"Only Betty. That stands for Elizabeth, I suppose, but she was never anything else to me or anybody else."

"Better let it go at that, then," returned Richard. "Now what is the name of the estate to be divided?"

The old sailor told him.

"And say we want to hear from them at once," he added.

Richard went to work earnestly. Several attempts to get the advertisement into proper shape were failures. Finally he produced the following:

INFORMATION WANTED IMMEDIATELY of THOMAS CLOVER or his heirs, formerly of Brighton, England, but when last heard of lived in Cherry Street, this city. He is an heir of the PELEG SABINE estate which awaits settlement. Address DOC LINYARD, THE WATCH BELOW, West Street, New York.

"How will that do?" asked the boy.

"First-rate?" cried Linyard. "Only don't put my address on it. I want the answer to come through a box in the newspaper office. I don't want to be bothered by lawyers and detectives looking for a job on the case."

"I see," said Richard, and crossing out the address he substituted the words:

"Doc, box ---, this office."

"Guess I'll take a walk over to the newspaper office at once," said the old tar, when the boy had finished. "Reckon as how pop and the mistress can get along for a while. I suppose you'd like to come along."

"Indeed I would. I'd like to see as much of the city as I can before I get to work."

"There's lots of strange sights, no doubt, to new eyes like yours. You'll find lots that's bright and a heap more that's dark and dismal enough."

A moment later they set out. Passing up Liberty Street, they turned into Greenwich and walked along to Fulton.

The Elevated Road, with its noise, was a surprise to the boy, but he was not allowed time to notice it long, for the sailor hurried him up Fulton Street, to St. Paul's Church, and then they stood on Broadway. "What a busy--an awfully busy--street!" was Richard's comment.

"It's rather dull now," said Doc Linyard. "Just wait till day-time. The wagons and people are enough to drive a man wild. That's the postoffice over there," he continued, as he pointed to the stone structure that stands as a wedge, separating Broadway from Park Row and the Bowery.

"Come ahead. Here we are on Newspaper Row, as lots call it. This was the Herald building before that paper moved uptown. It used to be Barnum's Museum years ago. Way down at the head of Frankfort Street is the World, and nearly all the rest of the great dailies are strung along between the two. Here we are."

As Doc Linyard finished he led the way into the outer office of a newspaper about midway down the Row.

It was a lively place, a constant stream of people coming in and going out, and the hum of many voices--the whole putting Richard in mind of some huge machine, grinding out its stipulated work.

Along one side of the counting room was a row of small windows, each labeled with its department name.

Stepping up to that marked "Advertisements," the old sailor handed in the one Richard had written out.

The clerk examined it. Then he wrote in the number of a box, and put down several private marks in the corner.

"Pay at the next desk," he said, handing the paper back.

"How much will it be?" asked Linyard.

"Ninety cents."

At the next window the man in charge put the advertisement on file along with numerous others. Then he took the money the tar handed over, and in return filled out a printed order entitling the bearer to receive all letters bearing the address advertised, for ten days.

"It will go in to-morrow?" asked the tar.

"Certainly."

"Suppose we take a walk up the Bowery," suggested the sailor, when they were once more outside. "It's early yet."

Richard readily consented. He had often heard his father speak of the street--how beautiful it had been years ago, and how trade had taken hold of it, and the boy was curious to see what it was like.

The thoroughfare was a revelation to him, just as it is to every one seeing it for the first time. The shops huddled together, their show-windows littered with articles of every description, the second-hand establishments, the pawnbrokers, the peddlers and street-stand merchants, who offered everything from shoelaces to collars, books and trick novelties, were all decidedly new to him.

One stand in particular attracted his attention. It was laden with choice books, at remarkably low prices. There was a well-bound history of the United States for forty-five cents, and a beautiful edition of Shakspeare, with steel engravings, for the small price of one dollar.

"Selling 'em off cheap," cried the vender, putting several volumes in Richard's hands. "Take 'em right along. You'll miss the opportunity of a lifetime if you don't."

"They are very nice," replied the boy. "But I guess I won't take any to-night."

"You'd better. They may be all gone by to-morrow. This is only a job lot, and dirt cheap."

"No, I guess not," and Richard put the books reluctantly back on the stand.

"Give you a special discount of ten per cent," persisted the dealer.

"No; I haven't the money."

"Oh! Well, come around to-morrow. I'll lay the books aside for you."

"No, don't do that. I may not be back," and without waiting for further words, Richard hurried off.

Meanwhile Doc Linyard, all unconscious of what was transpiring, had gone on ahead, and when Richard looked around for him, the old sailor was nowhere to be seen.

Rather startled, the boy hurried along to catch up. But under the Elevated Railroad and down by the Brooklyn Bridge all was confusion and jam, and in a moment Richard realized that he had lost his friend.

He hurried along several blocks, and then just as rapidly retraced his steps. But it was useless. Doc Linyard had disappeared in the crowd and was not to be found.

"Now I'm in a pretty pickle," thought Richard. "I suppose there is nothing to do but get back to the Watch Below."

But that was easier said than done. The boy did not like to make too many inquiries, and so started off on his own account.

He paid dearly for the experiment. A wrong turn or two, and lo! it took Richard an hour to get back to West Street and to the restaurant.

And arrived here, an awkward state of affairs confronted the boy. The Watch Below was closed for the night. All was dark, and not a soul was in sight!

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST NIGHT IN NEW YORK.

For an instant a feeling of intense loneliness swept over Richard's heart as he stood on the dark and silent pavement. He had firmly counted upon spending the night at the Watch Below, and now to find that place closed up caused his heart to sink within him. He reproached himself bitterly for having allowed his curiosity and love of books to make him forgetful of his situation.

"How am I ever to get along in this world unless I watch out?" he said to himself dismally. "I suppose it will do no good to knock on the door. By the way the place is located, the sleeping-room must be upstairs in the rear, and I might pound till doomsday without any one hearing me."

Nevertheless, he rapped loudly upon the door, not once, but several times, and so hard that he drew the attention of the policeman on that beat.

"Phat are you trying to do?" asked the officer as he came up.

"I want to get in;" and Richard related the particulars of his plight.

"You'll have a job, me b'y," was the reply. "Mrs. Betty slapes like a log."

They waited for several minutes in silence. But nobody appeared and no sound came from within.

"Phat are you going to do?" asked the policeman finally.

"I don't know, I'm sure. My valise is inside with my money. I've only got twenty cents in change in my pocket."

"There's a lodging-house in Washington Street where you can get a bed for that," went on the officer. "But it's not over clean."

"I don't want to go where it's dirty," replied the boy, shuddering.

And for a brief instant a vision of his own neat and tidy cot at home floated through his mind.

"Well, oi dunno; you can't stay out here."

While trying to plan what to do a man turned the corner and came toward them. By the walk Richard recognized Doc Linyard, and with a cry of joy he ran up to the old tar.

"Ahoy! so here you are?" exclaimed the sailor, his face beaming with satisfaction. "A nice chase you've led me! Where did you go to?"

"Nowhere. I stopped to look at some books and then I couldn't find you again," replied Richard. "I'm so glad you've come. They've gone to bed."

"All below decks, eh? Well, it's time. I've spent an hour looking for you over on the Bowery. How are you, Mulligan?" the last to the policeman, who nodded pleasantly.

Producing a key, Doc Linyard opened the restaurant door. Then he handed the policeman a cigar as a reward for the trouble the officer had taken, and he and Richard entered.

The old sailor locked the door carefully behind them and lit a hand lamp that his thoughtful wife had placed upon the front counter.

"I thought such places as this kept lights all night," observed Richard, as they walked back.

"Most of 'em do,--them as has gas. But the insurance companies think oil dangerous, so we do without."

Doc Linyard preceded the boy up a narrow stairway to a small room on the third floor.

"Here you are," he exclaimed, as he set the lamp down on a table.

"Betty got it all fixed for you. There's your valise and the bed's waiting for you. Take my advice and don't get up too early, not afore seven o'clock any way,--and pleasant dreams to you."

"Thank you; the same to you," replied Richard sincerely.

It was a cozy apartment, and the boy had not been in it over five minutes before he felt perfectly at home. Before retiring he sat down to write the promised letter home.

He had no ink; but paper and envelopes had been brought along, and in half an hour his lead pencil had filled several sheets with a very creditable account of what had transpired.

This done he undressed and retired, not, however, before thanking God for his kind care, and asking for His help and guidance during whatever was to follow.

Despite the varied fortunes of his trip, the boy's sleep was a sound one, and it lacked but a few minutes to seven when he awoke in the morning.

A basin of clean water stood on a stand at the foot of the bed, and after a plunge into this, he dressed, combed his hair, and went below.

Of course the restaurant was already comfortably filled, and as a matter of fact, had been for over an hour.

"Hello, my hearty! on deck I see," called out Doc Linyard. "I hope you slept well in your strange bunk." "First rate," was Richard's reply. "And longer than I expected, too. Guess I'll start right out to look for work."

"Not afore you've had some breakfast. Sit down, and I'll fetch you some coffee and biscuits. Here's the morning papers; you can look 'em over--the Male Help Wanted column. Reckon you'll find something worth trying for."

Finding remonstrances of no avail, Richard sat down and allowed himself to be helped to a morning repast.

While eating he looked over the paper, and found quite a number of places worth hunting up. By the aid of the map Mr. Joyce had loaned him he sorted out the addresses in regular order, and put them down in his note-book.

"Here is that newspaper office order," said the sailor, as Richard was about to leave. "If you're around in that neighborhood in the afternoon just see if there are any answers. One might have come already."

"I will," replied Richard. "Can I leave my valise here?"

"Certainly; I want you to make yourself at home here until you find a better place."

"Thank you. But I must pay you--"

"Not a cent. You helped me, and I'm going to do my duty by you. I'm no land shark."

And the old sailor shook his head in a way that showed he meant every word he said.

BOY WANTED, bright and active; to help feed. Norris Printing Co., Water St., near Wall.

Such was the wording of the first advertisement on Richard's list.

He knew Wall Street ran from Broadway opposite Trinity Church, towards the East River, and he was not long in reaching that famous money mart, where millions of dollars change hands each day between the hours of 10 A.M. and 3 P.M. The grand approaches to many of the buildings made him feel timid, and he could not help but wonder if the place to which he was going was also so magnificent.

But Water Street, crooked, ill paved and dirty, was a decided contrast to its neighbor. Storage and warehouses abounded; and the numerous trucks backed up to receive or deliver goods necessitated walking more in the street than on the sidewalk.

The building occupied by the Norris Printing Co. was at length reached. The office was on the second floor, and climbing up a flight of worn and grimy steps, Richard knocked at the door.

"Come in," said a voice from inside, and he entered.

"I understand you want a boy to help feed," he began, addressing a man who sat at a desk piled with books and printed sheets.

"Apply to Mr. Nelson, in the basement," was the brief reply.

"Yes, sir."

The stairs to the lowest floor were even narrower than the others had been. It led to a pressroom that seemed to be one mass of motion and noise.

Mr. Nelson proved to be a pleasant man of perhaps fifty.

"Had any experience?" he asked, after Richard had announced his errand.

"No, sir; but I think I can learn as quickly as anybody."

"Perhaps; but we couldn't pay you so much while you were learning."

"How much would you start me at--if I worked real hard?"

Mr. Nelson hesitated.

"We'll give you two dollars a week to begin," he said. "When you can do as much as the rest we'll raise you to three or four."

Richard's hopes fell. Even four dollars a week would barely keep him, much less allow of money being sent home.

"I'm afraid I can't accept it," he said. "I must support myself and I can't do it on two dollars a week."

"It's all we can allow," replied Mr. Nelson, and he turned away to his work.

In a moment Richard was on the street again. The setback chilled his ardor, but only for an instant, and then he hurried on to the next place.

It was a confectionery store, and entering, he purchased five cents' worth of chewing gum, such as he knew his little sister would like.

"I understand you want a boy," he said to the proprietor, who happened to be the one to wait on him.

"I hired one about an hour ago," was the reply. "Are you looking for a place?"

"Yes, sir."

The man gave Richard a sharp glance.

"You look like a bright sort of a chap," he said. "Suppose you leave me your address? The other boy may not suit."

So Richard put down his name and the address of the Watch Below.

"I'm only stopping there temporarily," he explained, "and may leave, but I'll drop around again in a day or two if I don't strike anything else."

"Do; I don't like the other boy much. I only took him because a friend asked me to."

"What do you pay?"

"Four dollars a week, and I might make it five if you would be willing to help on the wagon as well as in the store."

"I certainly would," replied Richard promptly. "I'm willing to work real hard at anything, providing it's honest."

"That's the way I like to hear a lad talk," said the confectioner approvingly.

"Five dollars a week is certainly better than two," was Richard's mental comment, as he hurried along. "Perhaps the next place will offer something better still."

But the next place was already filled; and so were the three that followed.

The seventh was on Vesey Street, the neighborhood that supplies half the metropolis with tea and coffee. A boy was wanted to help fill orders and deliver--a man's work--though Richard did not know it.

"We'll pay you seven dollars," was the merchant's reply, after the boy had inquired after the place. "You will have to deliver principally, and collect, of course."

"And when can I go to work?" asked Richard, overjoyed at an opening that promised so well.

"Anytime. Right away if you like. But you'll have to furnish twenty-five dollars security." This news put a damper on the boy's hopes.

"Twenty-five dollars security?" he repeated.

"Yes. You'll have more than that to collect"--which was not true--"and of course you will be responsible, and must turn in the money for every order taken out."

"I'd be sure to do that, or else return the goods."

"We don't take the goods back," was the firm reply. "Everything that goes out has been ordered and is charged to the account of the one taking the goods out."

"Who takes the orders?"

"Our canvassers."

"But the orders may not be good," suggested the boy. "People sometimes change their minds, especially when they've been talked into buying."

"The orders are always good. Besides, if a person refuses to honor his order all you've got to do is to turn round and sell the packages to some one else. Come, what do you say? You'd better try it. It's a good offer."

"I haven't got the money," was Richard's reply.

And for some reason he was glad of the fact.

"Better get it then and go to work," urged the merchant. "You can't make seven dollars a week easier."

"I'll think it over," replied the boy.

There was something in the offer that did not strike him favorably, and indeed it was a good thing that he was not in a position to accept it.

The whole proposition was hardly above a common swindle, enough bogus orders being put among the honest ones either to make the one undertaking the job do a lot of peddling on his own account, or else cause him to pay away half his salary on the goods left over.

Walking up Vesey Street, Richard found himself directly opposite the post-office. By the clock on St. Paul's he saw that it was long after noon.

Rather disheartened at his non-success after spending a whole morning in the search for work, he rounded the Astor House corner and crossed Broadway.

"Newspaper Row," as Doc Linyard had appropriately called it, was just across the opposite street, and the boy made up his mind to visit the office where the advertisement had been left, and see if there were any letters as yet for the old sailor.

The doors of the post-office were open on both sides, and, curious to see how the building looked inside, Richard started to go through instead of going around.

The many departments upon the ground floor were a study to him, and the signs--Domestic Mails, Foreign Mails, Letters for New York City, Letters for Outgoing Mails--all this was in strong contrast to the little three by four box that held all the mail of the village at home.

And the many private boxes! He guessed there must be ten thousand of them. Every second a new-comer walked up to open one.

Presently a familiar figure stepped up to one directly in front of Richard, and taking out a handful of letters, closed the box and turned to go away.

It was Mr. Timothy Joyce.

CHAPTER XI.

ROBBED.

Richard was highly delighted to see his fellow passenger once again, and running up he grasped the gentleman by the shoulder.

"Mr. Joyce!"

"Why, hello! Where did you come from?" exclaimed the leather merchant, thrusting the letters into his pocket and taking hold of the boy's extended hand, "I hope you weren't hurt."

"No, sir," replied Richard, "only shaken up. I trust you were as fortunate."

"Not quite. My foot was caught under the seat and was wrenched pretty badly, so much so that I had a man take me half a mile in a wheelbarrow to a doctor's."

"I looked all over for you," continued the boy. "I saved your valise and wanted to return it."

And Richard related the particulars of his adventures.

"Humph! those railroad chaps are too particular in some cases and not half enough so in others," declared Mr. Joyce. "What is in the bag doesn't amount to much, but I'm much obliged to you for taking the trouble to save it. I'll send for it this afternoon."

"And here is your guide-book," went on Richard, handing out the volume. "I'm thankful for the use of it. It's been a real help to me."

"Better keep it then," replied the merchant. "I'll make you a present of it." He laughed, presumably at the smallness of the gift.

"Thank you."

"Have you had any luck yet in your search for work?"

"No, sir. I could have had a job at several places, but the pay was so small I couldn't afford to accept any of them."

"Yes, that's the trouble. Good openings are scarce, and very often one must be known to get a place."

"And some want security," added the boy, relating his interview with the tea-merchant.

"Don't have anything to do with that class of men," exclaimed Mr. Joyce emphatically. "They won't give you a cent more than they are forced to, and advancement in their service is out of the question."

"It didn't strike me very favorably."

"I am sorry that you are not better acquainted with city ways. You may have to pay dearly for your experience, though I hope not."

"I'm going to keep my eyes open as widely as I can, sir."

"You'll have to." Mr. Joyce paused for a moment. "Can you come over to my office this afternoon, about three o'clock?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Maybe I'll be able to place you. I won't promise, but I'll do what I can."

Richard's heart gave a bound. He had taken a strong liking to the leather merchant, and the hearty manner of the latter, somewhat like that of Doc Linyard, was certainly taking.

"Thank you, I'll be on hand," he replied quickly.

"Do; but remember I make no promises," returned Mr. Joyce. "I'm off now. I must answer this mail and a pile of other letters that have accumulated during my absence."

In a moment the merchant was lost to sight in the crowd.

"I'm glad that I met him," thought the boy. "It may be the luckiest thing yet. I'm sure if he finds an opening for me it will be the right thing to take hold of."

Under the turn of affairs Richard decided to get the sailor's letters, if there were any, and return to the Watch Below at once. It was after one o'clock, leaving him about an hour and a half before going to the merchant's place of business.

"I must be prompt," he said to himself. "It will count, I'm sure."

Watching his chance among the score of street cars which pass the post-office corner every minute, the boy dived through the crowd and reached the opposite side of Park Bow.

The newspaper office was but a few steps away, and in a second he was inside.

Quite a number of people were in the counting-room. They were mostly of the poorer class, and were either looking over the want columns of the papers on file or else waiting for answers to advertisements which they had inserted.

Richard joined the line of the latter, and in due turn found himself at the window, slip in hand.

The clerk glanced at the slip and then looked over some letters in a certain box.

"Here you are," he said, and handed back the slip, accompanied by two letters.

"Two answers!" exclaimed Richard as he moved away. "Doc Linyard is certainly in luck. I must hurry back. He will be anxious, I know."

Richard put the slip in his vest-pocket. In doing so he pulled out two one dollar bills which he had taken from his valise in the morning, and folded the paper and money together.

As he shoved the roll into his pocket he did not notice that a hungry pair of eyes, just outside of the swinging glass doors, were watching his every action.

The hungry pair of eyes belonged to a boy of twelve, though he looked older--a street urchin--dirty, ragged, with a pinched face and a starved, ill-clad form. A look of sheer desperation came into these eyes when their owner saw the money, and he trembled with excitement as a certain bold and wicked thought came into his mind--a thought born, not of a bad heart, but of--an empty stomach.

As Richard came out of the door the street boy shoved against him. The doors were heavy, and for an instant Richard found his way blocked. He pushed back the opposite door, and attempted to pass.

"Say, mister, dere's a big bug on your collar!" exclaimed the urchin, pointing to Richard's neck.

Now, as I'm sure every one knows, to merely have such a thing mentioned is to feel the insect in question. Such was the case with Richard, and still holding the door with one hand he put the other up to his neck.

This was the would-be thief's chance. With a dexterity worthy of a better cause the urchin transferred the slip, money and letters to his own pocket. It was done in less than three seconds, and then he darted back into the crowd upon the street.

Of course Richard found no bug, and he was considerably perplexed by the urchin's actions, never dreaming of what had really occurred.

"I suppose that boy was fooling me," he thought. "Maybe it's one of those silly jokes that become all the rage every now and then."

Richard walked to the corner of Ann Street. St. Paul's clock now pointed to ten minutes to two, and he had no time to waste.

"Watch protectors, gents, only ten cents each! May some day save you the loss of a valuable timepiece! Step right up now; only a dime! Regular price fifty cents!"

It was a street vender who made this announcement. He stood upon the curbstone, a small tray of his wares suspended from his shoulders.

"Here's just what you want, sir," he said, addressing Richard.

"Thank you; but I don't carry a watch," was the boy's polite reply.

"You will one of these days. Better have one."

"If I need one I'll call around," replied Richard briefly.

The idea of a safeguard caused him to feel in his pockets to see that his belongings were still in his possession, first in one--another--every one.

Then he realized what had happened. He had been robbed.

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE SEARCH.

Richard was dismayed and disheartened by the discovery which he had just made. He went through his clothing a dozen times to convince himself that he was not mistaken--that the slip, money and letters were really gone. But it was assuredly a fact, and groaning in spirit, he leaned up against a post, utterly overcome.

To tell the truth, however, much as he needed money, he did not think of the bills that had been taken. His mind ran altogether on Doc Linyard's property.

"What will he say when I tell him of it?" was Richard's mental comment. "He won't want to trust me any more. Perhaps those letters were worth hundreds of dollars. What a fool I've been! I ought to be sent back to Mossvale at once. I'm not fit to stay in New York."

Then came the thought that possibly he had dropped the things, and he hastily retraced his steps, scrutinizing every inch of the way as he went.

But, as we know, such an effort was fruitless, and by the time he had reached the newspaper-office Richard was convinced that it was a plain case of robbery and nothing else.

"But when did it happen? I had the letters when I reached the street--hold up; that boy. I'm sure he's the one!" he exclaimed to himself. "I remember now feeling something at my pocket when I put my hand up to my collar. That bug business was only a ruse! Well, I _am_ a fool! And after all Mr. Joyce and Doc Linyard told me, too!"

The thought of how he had been taken in made Richard fairly sick, and

the tears of vexation sprang into his eyes as he stood deliberating upon what to do next.

Just then a burly policeman came lounging along. Richard touched him on the arm.

"I have been robbed," he said.

"Robbed? Where? When?" exclaimed the officer, all attention.

Richard told him all he knew of his case.

"I think I know the chap," said the officer. "But I can do nothing now. He is likely a mile away by this time."

"Will you watch out for him?" asked Richard.

"I don't care so much for the money as I do for the letters."

"Better come over to the station and make a complaint."

"Is it far? I've got an engagement at three o'clock that I don't want to miss."

"Won't take ten minutes. Come on."

At the station Richard was required to leave his full name and address, describe what had been stolen, and give a full description of the person he suspected was the thief.

"I can't give you much hopes of recovery," said the officer in charge.

"Dollar bills are very much alike, and if the thief finds that he cannot put the letters to account he will probably destroy them. As to his getting other letters on the strength of the stolen slip, you had better go to the office and have the delivery stopped."

"Thank you, I will," replied Richard.

He was soon on his way back to Park Row.

"Do you remember me?" he asked of the clerk who had previously waited on him.

"Yes; what is it? Anything wrong with your letters?"

Richard told his story.

"Will you hold the letters?" he added.

"Certainly. And if there is a call for them, I'll send out for an officer and have the party detained."

When Richard was again on the street he hardly knew what to do. He had

no appetite for dinner, and there seemed now no use of returning to the Watch Below.

He had a fancy that the urchin who had robbed him had run across into the post-office. True, it was only a fancy, but Richard had some time to spare yet before he was due at Mr. Joyce's office, and he determined to take a walk in that direction.

Going through the post-office he walked over to Warren Street and thence down to College Place. There was a coffee-stand upon the corner, and here he bought two doughnuts for a cent each, and began munching them, noticing at the same time that they were not of the best, being dry, and that the flavor wasn't to be compared to that of those Grace was in the habit of turning out at home.

Under the Elevated Road it was not as light as could be wished, and Richard could not see very well. But presently he beheld a figure at the end of the block--a figure that looked familiar.

Richard quickened his pace and soon reached the spot, yet only in time to see the figure turn the next corner. But this time his view had been better, and Richard was tolerably certain that it was the thief he was pursuing.

He broke into a run instantly, and being light of foot, gained rapidly upon the boy.

A glance around the next corner, and Richard just caught a glimpse of the urchin's head as it disappeared down a cellar way. Rushing to the spot, he was compelled to pause. He was far down on a side street that was little better than an alley-way. The building before him was dirty and old, evidently a storehouse, and the open stone steps led down to a steep cellar from which not a ray of light came up.

Should he enter? For an instant Richard paused, and then slowly descended.

"They shall not say that I was a coward," he said to himself. "And I can easily handle that chap if it comes to a hand to hand affair."

The moldy smell of the cellar was nearly unbearable, and in several spots upon the brick floor the scum lay an inch deep. Presently the boy's eyes became accustomed to the darkness, and then he saw it was not so gloomy, after all.

At the back there appeared to be several windows, and, though covered with dust and cobwebs, they still admitted some light. The place was packed with wooden cases and barrels, and Richard had not a little difficulty in picking his way among them.

Evidently the street Arab had not calculated upon being followed into such a place, for Richard heard him boldly making his way to the rear.

He hurried after the urchin, making as little noise as possible. But unfortunately his foot at that moment struck against an empty case, and made known his presence.

Instantly the street boy realized the situation, and diving behind a pile of barrels, remained perfectly quiet.

Richard's blood was now up, and he did not intend to be outwitted. He hurried to the spot, in his eagerness nearly stumbling over the boy.

But the latter was alert. Visions of the Tombs probably floated through his mind; and tripping Richard over he sprang away.

Richard was on his feet in a second, but it was too late. In that second, the street Arab had sprung to the top of a pile of cases that stood directly under an opening in the floor above.

The next instant he had disappeared through the hole, and was gone.

But in mounting the stack of cases he had dislodged several and these now tumbled down, making a lively racket. The noise was followed by several exclamations, and the sound of hasty feet upon a stairway.

"Hey, you, vat you do here?" cried a voice; and Richard felt his arm grasped by a tall and savage looking German workman.

CHAPTER XIII.

RICHARD CALLS ON MR. JOYCE.

As the hand of the German workman grasped Richard's arm the boy realized that he was in an awkward fix. Appearances were all against him, and as the man glared at him Richard knew not what to say.

"Come now, vat vas you doing here, hey?" demanded the German.

"I--I was after a boy who stole something from me," stammered Richard.

"After a poy?"

"Yes. He ran down here, and I came after him."

"Ton't believe it. Vere ist der poy now?"

"He jumped up there and got through that hole," replied Richard, pointing to the place.

The German uttered an exclamation.

"Dat's nonsense!"

"It's true. He stole two dollars and some letters, and I chased him in here."

The man eyed Richard suspiciously.

"Maype dot vas only a make-believe sthory; I don't know," he declared. "Come, ve go upstairs und see."

But, as Richard surmised, the boy had, by some means, already made his escape. But the marks of his muddy feet, as he had crawled from the hatchway, were still to be seen, and these Richard pointed out.

"Vell, if your sthory is straight dat lafer ain't here now; so you go about your beesness." And with a wave of his arm the stalwart workman motioned for Richard to clear out.

The boy was not loth to leave the place. Nothing was to be gained by remaining, and the German's company was certainly not desirable.

"I suppose I might as well give up the search now," said Richard to himself when outside. "That fellow will know enough to keep out of my sight for a while; and, besides, it must be time to go to Mr. Joyce's. Gracious, how starved that chap did look! If he wants that money to get something to eat with I'm sure he's welcome to it, only I want the letters."

Richard brushed off his clothes as best he could and started off. By the use of the guide-book he had no difficulty in finding the Swamp, as the leather district in New York is called.

Presently he came to a big warehouse, with an office at one side, over which hung the sign:

TIMOTHY JOYCE,
Successor to
JOYCE BROTHERS.
LEATHER AND HIDES.
Established 1837.

"It's certainly an old firm," thought Richard, as he read the words.

"I guess Mr. Joyce is a pretty substantial business man."

The boy found the leather merchant at his desk, deep in his letters.

"Ah! on hand I see," said Mr. Joyce. "I'm not quite ready yet; will be in a quarter of an hour."

"I won't mind waiting," returned Richard.

"Suppose you take a look around the place? I guess you've never seen anything like this before."

"No, sir: and I'll look around gladly."

Richard stepped from the office to the lower floor of the warehouse. The quantity of leather and hides on all sides filled him with wonder.

The place was several stories high, and was filled to overflowing with material soon to be worked up into shoes, pocketbooks, belting, gloves, baseball covers, and a thousand other articles for which this staple material of trade is needed. Several heavy trucks were loading and unloading at the doors, and the boy heard the workmen speak of a consignment to Buffalo, and another to Boston, and of a shipload that had just arrived from South America.

"It's a big business and no mistake," was Richard's conclusion. "I guess a person would have to be here half a lifetime to learn all the ins and outs of it."

When Richard returned to the office he found that Mr. Joyce had just cleared his desk, and was leaning back in his chair.

The leather merchant motioned him to a seat.

"Well, what do you think of it?" he asked abruptly.

"You seem to be doing a big business," returned Richard. "I think you must have enough leather to supply all New York."

"So I have--for a short time. But only a small part stays in the city. It comes and goes all the while. Have you found a place yet?"

"No, sir; I haven't had a chance yet." And Richard related the particulars of his recent misfortune.

"Humph! Well, after all, experience is the only school we all learn in. I don't doubt but what you've seen the last of both money and letters. Keep your eyes open in the future."

"I'll try to. I shall not forget this lesson in a hurry."

"But at the same time don't be too suspicious of everybody with whom you may chance to come in contact."

"I'll remember what you say, sir."

"Now about finding you a situation. I wish I had an opening here for you. I'd make a business chap of you."

"I should like to work for you, Mr. Joyce."

"Unfortunately, there is no room at present--that is, there is nothing I can offer you."

"I'll take anything you'll give me," exclaimed Richard earnestly.

"Yes; but you can't do any thing. You can't drive a truck--here in the city--and you don't know a thing about packing hides. Besides, such work would be altogether too heavy for you, and it never pays the wages that lighter but more intelligent labor receives."

"I suppose you are right, sir."

"I am. I don't want to gloss things over for you. It's the worst thing in the world for a young fellow just starting out to have a rosy view of the business world, which is composed of steady work and hard knocks, about equally mixed. You've got too much brains to work altogether with your hands; and one must find out what he is best suited to. How would you like to get into the book and stationery line?"

"Very much indeed."

"Do you think you could make anything out of it? Make it the business of your life, so that you would stand some show of advancement on the strength of the interest you took in it?"

"I think I could," replied Richard slowly, somehow deeply moved by Mr. Joyce's earnestness. "I always liked books--not only to read them, but to handle and to arrange them as well. At home I was the librarian of our Sunday-school, and I got out the catalogue and all that. Of course it was not a great work, but I enjoyed it, and often wished I might have charge of a big library or something like that."

Mr. Joyce eyed the boy thoughtfully.

"Reckon I was right. Thought you'd take to books. Persons with your kind of a forehead always do. Well, come along. I'll see what I can do toward getting you a place with a friend of mine."

Locking up his desk, Mr. Joyce put on his hat and led the way out on the street.

"We'll have to hurry," he said, "or we'll find my friend has gone home."

Richard needed no urging. With a strangely light heart he kept close behind the leather merchant.

They passed along several blocks, and at length turned into Beekman Street.

"Here we are," said Mr. Joyce, finally. "This is my friend's place of business."

CHAPTER XIV.

WORK OBTAINED.

The establishment to which the leather merchant had brought Richard was an imposing one, situated in a massive stone building, and having large and heavy plate glass doors and windows. A formidable array of blank-books and sets of well-known authors' works were piled up in the window which bore the firm's name:

WILLIAMS & MANN.

Directly to the left of the entrance inside, stood a great safe, and further on appeared an almost interminable row of shelves and drawers, all apparently crammed with articles pertaining to the stationery and book trade.

Stepping up to a salesman Mr. Joyce inquired:

"Is Mr. Williams in?"

"Mr. Williams has gone to Chicago," was the polite reply.

"Chicago, eh? When will he be back?"

"We expect him back day after to-morrow; possibly to-morrow afternoon."

"Humph!" Mr. Joyce rubbed his chin. "Is Mr. Mann about?"

"Yes, sir; just gone up to the stock-room."

"Tell him I'd like to see him for a few minutes."

"Yes, sir. Mr. Joyce, I believe."

"That's the name."

"I'll send word at once. Won't you sit down?"

"Thanks."

Mr. Joyce sank into an office chair.

Going to a speaking tube behind one of the broad counters, the salesman sent his message up to one of the floors above.

"Mr. Mann will be down directly," he said, after a moment.

In five minutes a stout, bald-headed gentleman of fifty came down by the elevator at one side, and stepped forward.

"How are you, Tim?" he exclaimed, thrusting out a chubby hand.

"First rate, Mel," returned Mr. Joyce. "This is a young friend of mine, Richard Dare," he continued.

Mr. Mann shook hands cordially.

"He has come to the city to try his luck," went on the leather merchant.

"He has a taste for your line, so I brought him around to see if you hadn't an opening for him."

Now an application made in this way, and coming from an ordinary source, would have met with a courteous negative. But the firm of Williams & Mann were under obligations to Mr. Joyce, who had on several occasions indorsed their notes for many thousands of dollars. Besides, all three men were old friends; so Mr. Mann gave the request every attention.

"We are rather full of hands," he said slowly; "but still I might find room for him. Have you had any business training?" he continued, turning to Richard.

"Very little, sir," replied the boy promptly, though it came hard to make such a confession.

"He hasn't had a bit," interposed Mr. Joyce. "He's as jolly green as we were when we came here," he added in a whisper. "But he's bright, honest and level-headed, and I've taken a fancy to him and want you to give him a chance."

"Do you like to handle books?" asked Mr. Mann.

"Yes, sir; very much."

"Yes, it's just what he does like," put in the leather merchant. "Place him among the books if you can."

"Perhaps I can do that; but I won't be able to pay you much until you are experienced."

"I must earn my living, sir," said Richard respectfully, but in a firm manner.

"Of course he must," added Mr. Joyce. "He has just lost his father," he continued in a low tone, "and I suppose it's hard times at home."

"Have you known him long?" asked Mr. Mann, as the two walked to one side.

"Only two days."

"Two days!"

"Yes."

"Is he--that is, suppose I put him in a place of trust? It will be a risk that--"

"I'll go security for him."

"And you have only known him two days, Tim! Seems to me you're not as cautious as you used to be."

"Never mind. I know some honest faces when I see them, and his is one. Let me tell you how we became acquainted."

The two men continued their conversation for several minutes.

"I'll take you on at once," said Mr. Mann, presently to Richard. "I suppose you would like that best."

"Yes, sir."

"You can have the hour remaining to-day to get broken in. I will give you six dollars a week at the start, and if you learn as rapidly as Mr. Joyce thinks you will I'll raise you in a few weeks to seven or eight."

"Thank you, sir; I'll try to make myself worth it."

"It's hard work, and you will have to pitch right in," Mr. Mann went on. "We have no use for laggards."

"Well, I'm going," broke in Mr. Joyce. "Now I've placed you I hope you will make something of yourself," he added.

"I'll try to," replied the boy. "Many thanks to you for your kindness."

"If you come down in my neighborhood drop in and see me."

"Thank you, I will with pleasure," was Richard's reply.

"We will go right upstairs to the stock-room," said Mr. Mann, after Mr. Joyce had departed. "We have a large pile of pamphlets and books which the clerk we discharged left all mixed up. I was just assisting the stock-clerk in making out a new division of the department."

Entering the elevator, they were soon taken to a floor three stories above. The stock-room was in the rear, the large windows overlooking an alley.

The place was piled high with books of all descriptions, some in sets and others separate, from cheap reprints to costly volumes filled with etchings and engravings.

"Here, Mr. Massanet, I've brought a young man to help you," said Mr. Mann, addressing the clerk in charge, a pleasant-looking fellow apparently not many years older than Richard.

He came forward and gave the boy a kindly look of welcome.

"We need help here," he said. "There is plenty to do."

"His name is Dare--Richard Dare," continued Mr. Mann. "I do not know him, but a friend recommended him."

"We'll soon see what he can do," replied Frank Massanet, with a smile. "Are you going to work now?" he asked of Richard.

"Yes; break him in at once," said Mr. Mann. "I'll leave him in your charge. Mr. Massanet will tell you anything you want to know," he went on to the boy. "He is the head here."

Left alone with Frank Massanet it did not take long for Richard to become well acquainted with the stock-clerk, who gave him a few brief directions and then set him to work filling up broken sets of books, dusting them, and placing them in a case for shipment.

"We must get this whole batch away by next Tuesday," said Massanet. "Because on Wednesday another large consignment will arrive, and we must have room to handle it."

The work delighted Richard, and he pitched in with a will. It was new and novel, as well as agreeable, and, besides, doing it for pay made it no task at all.

Talking did not interfere with the progress of either of the workers, and attracted by Frank Massanet's cordial manner, Richard gradually revealed to the stock-clerk why he had come to the city, and what his ambitions were.

In return Frank related much concerning himself. His father, who had been a Frenchman, was dead, and his mother, sister Martha and himself kept house up-town on the east side. It was apparent that the young man was the main support of the family, for he said that just previous to his death his father had been unfortunate in business and had lost nearly every dollar he possessed. His mother did the work at home, while his sister earned six dollars a week at typewriting.

"It is pleasant to have a home to go to," said Richard, after a bit.

"You don't know how queer I felt to be away from the others."

"Homesick?" asked Frank kindly; and then impelled by a sudden warm feeling he placed his hand on Richard's shoulder. The action, small as it was, brought a little lump to the boy's throat.

"No--not exactly," he replied, "only--"

"I know what you mean. Before I got this place I went to Boston for two months to try my luck, and _I_ was among strangers."

"Some day, when I can afford it, I intend to bring my folks to the city," Richard went on.

"Where are you stopping now?" asked Frank.

"With a sailor friend of mine down on West Street."

"West Street! It is not a very nice locality."

"No; but he is very kind, and so is his wife. They keep a restaurant. He was in a railroad accident with me, and that's the reason he takes to me."

"Yes, accidents often make strange people friends."

"But I must hunt up a regular boarding-house," went on Richard. "I suppose a good one that is cheap is hard to find."

"You are right. How much do you expect to pay, if I may ask?"

"Not over four dollars. I'm to get six here, and I can't afford any more. When my salary is raised I'll be willing to go a little more, but not much, because I want to send home all the money I can."

Frank Massanet was silent for a moment. Richard's way pleased him, and he felt drawn towards the new-comer.

"My mother has been thinking of taking a boarder," he said slowly. "We have a spare hall bedroom. It is not very large, but it has good ventilation, and is neatly furnished. I used it when--when my father was alive."

"Would your mother take me?" asked Richard. "That is, could she afford to at four dollars a week?"

"I can't say."

"When I get an increase in wages I'll pay four and a half," went on the boy. "I would like to live with you," he continued open-heartedly.

Frank smiled.

"I'll speak to my mother to-night," said he, "and I'll let you know to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XV.

NEW QUARTERS.

At six o'clock Frank Massanet announced the day's work ended, and, bidding his friend goodnight, Richard hurried off to West Street. His heart was light over his own good fortune, but heavy when he thought of the losses he had sustained earlier in the day.

The Watch Below was crowded, and Doc Linyard presided at the pie-stand and the desk. He noticed Richard's grave face, and surmised that all was not right.

"You're late!" he exclaimed. "Come sit down to supper. I'll bet you haven't eaten a mouthful."

"I've had bad luck," replied Richard. "Bad luck for you and good luck for myself."

And, sitting down beside the desk, he made a clean breast of what had transpired earlier in the day.

"I know I have been careless," he added, "and I don't deserve to be trusted any more."

"Never mind," returned the old sailor cheerily. "It's too bad, but, as Betty often says, it's no use crying over spilt milk, so we'll make the best of it."

"I'll have the advertisement put in to-morrow," said the boy, "and I'll add that former letters have been lost."

"That's a good idea. And don't tell Betty; it would only worry her. Who knows but what those letters didn't amount to much after all?"

"At all events, I'm going to get them back if I can."

"And your two dollars, too. The little rascal! But you said you had good news?"

"So I have. Mr. Joyce got me a place."

And Richard told of the meeting in the post-office, and his subsequent engagement by Williams & Mann.

"Well, I'm downright glad to hear that!" cried Doc Linyard heartily. "Reckon you are on the right tack at last."

The walking and working had made Richard hungry, and he was not backward about sitting down and eating a hearty supper. But he insisted upon paying for all he had, and, seeing that the boy really meant it, Doc Linyard took the money, though not without reluctance.

As soon as he had finished eating, Richard went to Park Row and handed in the advertisement. The clerk informed him that no other letters had been received, nor had any applications for them been made.

Returning to the Watch Below, Richard sat down and wrote a second letter home, which he shortly after posted, along with the precious packet of chewing gum for Madge. The old sailor offered him a ticket to the theater, which had been left in the restaurant for the privilege of hanging a lithograph in the window, but this the boy declined with thanks, and retired early, so as to be on hand promptly in the morning.

Seven o'clock was the hour for opening at Williams & Mann's, and five minutes before that time Richard presented himself, and was let in by the sleepy porter. The elevator was not running at this time in the day, so Richard took the narrow iron stairs, and was soon in the stock-room, where he went to work at what he had been doing the previous day until Frank Massanet arrived.

"My mother would like you to take dinner with us," said Frank, when he had given directions concerning how the work should go on. "She would like to know you before she takes you as a regular boarder."

"Can she take me at four dollars?" asked Richard.

"She thinks she can. You can talk it over together when you see her--that is, if you will come."

"Certainly I will."

"It's the best way. Perhaps our board might not suit you."

"I'll risk it," laughed Richard.

They were allowed an hour at noon, and at exactly twelve o'clock the two hurried off. Frank led the way up to the Third Avenue Elevated Station, and a five minutes' ride brought them to their destination.

"I generally bring my lunch with me," explained the stock-clerk on the way, "and I have dinner when I get home in the evening. By that means I save my car fare, and have plenty of time to eat the best meal of the day."

"It's the better way," said Richard. "Do you ride morning and night?"

"Only when the weather is bad. When it is clear I save the ten cents."

"So would I. Besides, it's healthy exercise," returned the boy.

The Massanets occupied the second floor of a modest little flat of six rooms. It was a cheerful home, and Mrs. Massanet, a pleasant, middle-aged Frenchwoman, greeted Richard cordially.

"You are indeed welcome, Mistair Dare," she said, with a beaming face. "Francois have tole me everyting of you, and I feel as eef I know you long."

Mrs. Massanet had the peculiar French accent of the province of

Lorraine, and Richard frequently experienced difficulty in understanding her, but her motherly way soon put him at ease, and in a few minutes he felt perfectly at home.

"This is my sister," said Frank, as a tall, dark-eyed girl of sixteen entered. "Mattie, this is Richard Dare."

"Frank has been telling us of you," said Mattie Massanet, as she took Richard's hand. "We talked you all over last night," she added, with a merry twinkle of her eye.

"I'm sure it couldn't have been a very bad talk if you had a hand in it," said Richard gallantly.

They were soon at the table, and having by a lucky chance (or was it the girl's natural tact?) struck the right vein, the conversation became quite animated, and soon all were on very good terms.

"I like you verra mouch," said Mrs. Massanet, when Richard had finished, "and I shall be pleased to have you as a boarder--eef you like ze _diner_."

"Thank you, Mrs. Massanet. I shall be thankful to have you take me. I know it will feel quite like a home."

"Ve make zat so. Ve keep no _hotel garni_ even--only for one."

"Thank you," returned Richard. He did not understand the French, which means a lodging-house. "Can I come to-night?"

"Oh, yees."

So it was arranged that he should become a boarder at the Massanets', and having this settled took quite a load from his mind. Now if he could only do his work well for Williams & Mann, he would be all right, and have every chance of eventually attaining the object of his metropolitan venture.

Of one thing he was sure--Frank Massanet's friendship and help, and in his present place he knew these would count for a good deal.

Little did he dream that the position kind-hearted Timothy Joyce had procured for him would lead him to the hardest trials of his youthful life, and place him in the bitterest situation he had ever yet experienced.

CHAPTER XVI.

PEP.

In a week Richard felt quite at home, both in the stock-room at Williams & Mann's and at the Massanets'.

During that time Mr. Williams had returned from Chicago, and both of the members of the firm seemed to be well satisfied by the way in which their new clerk discharged the duties assigned to him.

A warm friendship sprang up between Frank Massanet and Richard--a friendship that was destined to bear important results. The stock-clerk, though Richard's superior in the business, acted more like a chum, and in the evenings the two, accompanied by Mattie Massanet, walked, talked, played games, or listened to Mrs. Massanet's music on the flutina, and were all but inseparable.

Richard received several letters from home--one from his mother, congratulating him on the position he had secured, and another from Grace and Nancy, full of village gossip, and what people had said about his going away.

Both Frank and Richard loved their work, and by the second week the books in the stock-room were in a neater and handier condition than they had ever been before, and Frank expressed his pleasure at having some one who could really help, and not hinder, as the discharged clerk had done.

On Tuesday morning of the second week, Richard was hurrying to the store a little earlier than usual. The big consignment of books was soon to arrive, and they must have even more room for it than had at first been anticipated.

As he came down the Bowery at a rapid gait, a small figure crossed the street directly before him, and stopped to gaze into the well-filled window of a German bakery. It was the street Arab who had robbed Richard in Park Row!

For an instant Richard could hardly believe his eyes, but, stepping up, he took a closer view, and then grasped the urchin by the arm.

Instinctively the street Arab shrank away. Then he turned his pinched and startled face around, and, seeing who it was that held him, gave a loud cry of alarm.

"Oh, please, mister, please lemme go!" he pleaded. "I won't do it again, please, sir, no I won't! Oh, don't lock me up, mister!"

That piteous appeal went straight to Richard's heart. If he had felt any indignation, it melted away at the sight of that haggard, famished, desperate look.

"What have you done with the stuff you took from my pockets?" he asked, but his tones were not very harsh.

The boy began to whimper.

"I--I ain't got de money no more," he sobbed, "It's all gone, mister; I spent every cent of it but two nickels fer medicine and de doctor. Please don't lock me up, mister."

"Medicine and the doctor?" repeated Richard, rather astonished by this unexpected statement. "Who is sick?"

"Me dad, mister."

"Your dad? Your father?"

"Yes, mister; been sick going on two months now, and ain't no better."

Richard looked at the boy sharply. He had been deceived so many times that he was half inclined to discredit the urchin's story.

"It's the truth, mister," went on the boy, seeing the look of distrust. "I ain't tellin' no lies, so help--"

"What's your name?"

"Pep, sir."

"Pep what?"

The urchin held down his head.

"I ain't got no other name!" he answered hesitatingly.

"Oh, you must have!" exclaimed Richard. "Come, out with it."

But the little ragged figure only began to cry again, harder than ever.

"Come, tell me; I won't have you arrested," urged Richard.

"Oh, thank you, mister! It would kill dad to know I'd been stealin'. I told him I made the money sellin' papers."

"That was a lie," said Richard sternly.

"I know it, mister, but I couldn't help it. It was better than tellin' him I'd been stealin'. I wouldn't have taken yer money only I was afraid he'd die if he didn't have de doctor and de medicine, so help--"

"There, don't swear," interrupted Richard. "If you were so hard up you should have asked me for help. I would have given you something."

"I would have asked, only most of de people laughs at me and tells me to clear out, and they think I'm lyin' when I say dad's sick, and say they guess he must drink de money up, which is a lie itself, 'cause dad don't drink a drop; he's got pneumony, so de doctor says, and he's

coughin' all de time."

"Is your mother home?"

"Ain't got no mother; she died when I was a kid."

"Well, Pep, I'm sorry for you," said Richard kindly, "and I won't do anything to you for having taken that money. But those letters--they were valuable. What have you done with them?"

"I've got 'em home, sir. I'll bring 'em to you right away, sir."

"I haven't got time to wait now," returned Richard, highly elated to find that Doc Linyard's property was safe. "Will you meet me here at six o'clock to-night?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sure? Remember I must have those letters."

"I'll bring 'em. I've got 'em hid in de garret. I didn't open 'em or noddin'. I can't read only a little newspaper print--'nough to find out what's in de paper ter sell it."

"Well, I shall expect you sure," replied Richard. "I'll give you ten cents for bringing them," he added, to make certain that Pep would not change his mind. "Have you had any breakfast?"

"I haven't had no eatin' since yesterday mornin'."

"What would you do if I gave you ten cents?"

Pep's eyes opened in wonder. In his knockabout life he had met all sorts of people, yet here was certainly a new kind.

"Yer jokin'!" he gasped.

"No, I'm not."

"Then if I had ten cents I'd go and buy some morning papers--I could sell 'em yet--and take de money home."

"All of it?"

"Yes, sir. Every cent."

Richard felt in his pocket. He had just sixteen cents in change.

"Here is the ten cents," he said, handing it out. "And here is six cents. I want you to buy something to eat for that."

Slowly Pep took the money. He did not know but he might be dreaming.

"Thank you, mister, you--you're good to me," he said in a low tone.

"I'm in a hurry now," went on Richard, "otherwise I'd talk to you some more. I want to find out how you get along and how your father makes out. You can trust me."

"I know I can--now," replied Pep. "And I'll be on hand at six o'clock with those letters sure. I'm very, very thankful fer what you've done, indeed I am, and I'll try to make it up to you some day, see if I don't."

"Anyway, don't steal any more," said Richard. "It isn't right, and it will land you in jail sooner or later."

"I never took noddin' before," replied Pep, "and I won't ag'in."

"I hope so, Pep."

"Will yer please tell me yer name?"

"Richard Dare."

"I'll remember it, Mr. Dare; ye're the first gentleman ever noticed _me_, and I'm much obliged, even if you hadn't given me a cent."

"I shall expect to see you at six o'clock or a few minutes later," was Richard's reply, and fearful of being late at the store he hurried off.

The street urchin stood still, gazing after him. There were tears in the light blue eyes, and a choking sensation in the thin little throat.

"He must be one of them missionaries I once heard tell of," was Pep's thought. "They said they went around doing good, and that's what he's doing. Six cents for something to eat, and a dime to buy papers with! That's the best luck I've had in five years. If I don't make a quarter by nine o'clock I'm no good. And I'll never steal again--I won't--as sure as my name is Pep Clover."

CHAPTER XVII.

GETTING ACQUAINTED.

When Richard reached Williams & Mann's he found Frank Massanet already hard at work. He had told the stock-clerk of the robbery in Park Row, and now he related its sequel in the shape of the incident of the morning.

"Well, maybe you did right," said Frank; "although the majority of the street boys are not to be trusted beyond sight. You will find out by

this evening if the boy's word is worth anything."

"I think I can trust that boy," replied Richard. "I believe he was truly penitent. My treating him as I did may be the making of him."

Williams & Mann employed in their various departments between fifteen and twenty clerks. They were mostly young fellows, and outside of a tendency to play practical jokes, because he was a new-comer, they treated Richard very well, and the boy was, with one exception, on good terms all round.

This one exception was a young man of twenty.

His name was Earle Norris, and he was head of the shipping department. Richard's duties brought him into daily contact with the shipping-clerk, but though the latter treated him fairly well, there was something in the other's manner that he did not like, and consequently he did not associate as freely with Norris as that young man seemed to desire.

Norris was something of a dandy in his way, and rarely appeared at the store otherwise than faultlessly dressed. Of course when at work he changed his coat, cravat, collar, and so forth, so as not to soil them, but he never left without looking as much "fixed up" as when he had arrived.

"You're a new fellow here," he said to Richard when the latter came down to see if a certain box of books had as yet been sent away.

"Yes; new here and new in New York," Richard replied, smiling,

"I thought you weren't a New Yorker," Norris went on. "How do you like things in the city?"

"First-rate. I haven't seen much of the place yet, though."

"Where do you live?"

"I board with the Massanets."

"Oh, a relative?"

"Oh, no. I never knew them until I got acquainted with Frank here."

"Rather slow at their house, I imagine."

"Oh, I like it very well."

"My folks live in Yonkers," said Norris, "but I couldn't stand it there, though I had a good position. I like New York life. You ought to be over at our boarding-house. There are six of us young fellows, and we're out every night and have lots of sport."

"Thank you; I am very well content where I am," said Richard coldly.

He did not like the manner in which the shipping-clerk had spoken of Frank and his family.

"I did not think the Massanets kept boarders," continued Norris. "I thought they were too retired for that."

"I am the only one, and am treated like one of the family."

"Frank has got a sister, hasn't he?"

"Yes."

"Maybe that's the attraction," suggested Norris. "My landlady has a pretty daughter, too."

"It is not the attraction," said Richard flushing, "though she, like her mother, treats me nicely," he added stoutly, and with a certain amount of loyalty.

"Oh, well, it's all right," put in the shipping-clerk hastily. "I don't want you to change if you're satisfied. Only if you get tired of being quiet let me know. I tell you, there's lots of fun to be had if you only know how to get it."

"I guess I won't change, at least for the present," replied the boy.

When he returned to the stock-room he related to Frank what Norris had said about keeping too quiet.

"I don't agree with him," said the stock-clerk. "I don't know what he means by having lots of sport and all that, but I never believed in being out late nights. It isn't right, and besides it doesn't pay. Haven't you noticed the deep circles around Norris's eyes? They come from a want of sleep, and how long do you suppose he can stand that sort of thing and his work here without breaking down? Why, I remember when he came here, a year ago, he looked twice as healthy as he does now."

"Then he is foolish," said Richard. "I wouldn't want to run the risk of ruining my health, especially needlessly."

"Of course if our way of living is too quiet for you--I suppose it would be for most young fellows--you are at liberty to leave at any time."

"Thank you, Frank; I know I can, but I reckon I'll stay just as long as you care to keep me, or at least until I can afford to bring the family here."

"Norris has approached me several times on the subject of joining him in some of his frolics," went on Frank, "but I have never gone out with him."

"Does he get a very large salary?"

"No more than I--ten dollars a week."

"I should think it would take every cent he had after his board was paid to dress him. His clothing is more fashionable than Mr. Mann's."

"He certainly isn't saving any money," replied Frank.

Frank Massanet had his own idea about Earle Norris and his peculiar ways. He was almost certain that there would some day be a startling development at Williams & Mann's, but, having as yet no proofs, he kept quiet concerning his suspicions.

During the afternoon Richard had occasion again to visit the packing-room, and once more Norris, who was the only one present, approached him.

"How would you like to go to Niblo's Garden with me to-night?" he asked. "I have two tickets, and I would be pleased to have your company."

"I am much obliged, I'm sure, but I have an errand to-night," replied Richard. "I must deliver two letters."

"Well, that ought not to take you all the evening. Come along; I don't want to have the extra ticket and not use it. A friend of mine from Brooklyn was going with me, but he has just dropped me a postal card saying he is sick."

"Can't you sell the extra ticket?"

"Oh, I suppose I might; but I don't care to go alone," explained Norris. "Come, you'll enjoy it, I know."

Richard was sorely tempted. The play at the theater was a standard one, and the leading actor one of renown. Surely there wouldn't be much harm in going.

If any other person than Norris had asked him, he would probably have accepted.

Yet his reasoning on the point was remarkably clear. He was sure that there had been nothing in his own manner to draw him to Norris, and this being so, why did the latter take such an interest in one who was but a step removed from a stranger to him?

"No, I guess not," he replied, after a pause. "I don't care to go."

"Oh, well, don't then," replied Norris coldly. "I only asked you out of kindness, being as you were a stranger."

And he turned his back on the boy and walked away.

Richard told Frank where he was to meet Pep, and added that if the stolen letters were forthcoming he would take them to Doc Linyard's before returning to the Massanets'.

At six o'clock the two quitted the store together and walked over to the Bowery. Pep was already waiting for Richard. He had a big bundle of evening papers under his arm, and seemed to have improved both his capital and his time.

"Here's de letters, mister," he said, holding out the two envelopes and the slip. "I'm sorry I got 'em dirty."

For his unwashed hands had left many marks upon the white paper.

Richard took the letters eagerly, and put them in an inside pocket.

"How have you done to-day?" he asked.

"First-rate. Had luck ever since yer started me. I'm worth sixty cents now. Say," he went on in a whisper, "I'm going to pay yer back that two dollars soon as I kin."

"And how is your father?"

"He is a bit better to-day--he was awful yesterday. Can I see yer here in a few days?"

"Why?"

"About that money. I want yer to have it back. It's the first time I took anything."

"Yes, you can see me," replied Richard, somehow pleased at the idea of becoming better acquainted with the urchin, in whom he found himself taking a strong interest. "You can generally meet me at the same time you've met me to-day."

"All right. I'll have der chink in a few days, see if I don't. Have an _Evening Telegram_ or _Mail and Express_?" "I haven't any change," replied Richard.

"Ho! what yer take me for?"

And, thrusting a copy of each paper in Richard's hand, Pep darted across to the Elevated Station, crying his wares as he went.

"Not such a bad chap, I guess," said Frank. "I have seen worse fellows than him reform. I must see if we can't get him in our mission."

"I'll go right down to West Street with these letters," returned Richard. "They may be very important."

"I'm sorry I can't go with you," said Frank, "but I'm going out with mother. Will you be long?"

"I guess not. Of course I can't tell. Doc Linyard may want me to do something for him--write a letter or so, and that all takes time. I'll be back by nine, I guess."

And with these words the two separated, Frank hurrying up town, and Richard to carry his news to the old sailor.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE SITUATION.

The road to West Street was no longer a strange one to Richard, and it took him but a short quarter of an hour to reach the Watch Below.

As usual the restaurant was crowded, and the merry jests of the sailors mingled with the rattle of dishes and clatter of knives.

Doc Linyard was glad to see the boy, and immediately asked how he was progressing and how he liked his position.

"I have good news for you," said Richard.

And he handed over the two letters.

"Are they the ones as were lost?" asked the old sailor.

"Yes; I caught the boy and made him return them."

"Did you get your money, too?" went on Linyard, as he cut the envelopes open.

"Not yet, but I'm pretty sure of getting it in the near future."

"Hope you do; two dollars ain't much, but it's something, and nowadays everything counts. Will you read these letters for me? My eyesight ain't none of the best any more, and besides, writing is kinder stiff reading for me at the best."

"Certainly I will, Mr.--"

"Avast there on that figurehead!" interrupted the old tar.

"Doc Linyard, I'll do it with pleasure."

But it was no pleasure after all for Richard to read the two communications, for each was a disappointment.

The first was from a firm of lawyers who wished to take the case in hand at "astonishingly low terms," which must, however, be paid in advance. The other had been sent by a private detective, who was willing to institute a search for the missing party for the modest sum of three dollars per day, also payable in advance.

"Just what I thought they might be," observed Doc Linyard, when the reading was finished. "You can tear them up. We don't want such outside help."

Richard did as directed.

"It's a pity that such letters should cause you so much trouble," went on the old sailor; "but that's the way of the world."

"Have you had any other letters?" asked Richard, for he had not seen Doc Linyard for several days, and thought it possible that something might have turned up in the meantime.

"Nary a word. I've put the advertisement in the papers--three of 'em--twice now, and not a single answer."

"It's too bad. Have you heard anything from the property in England?"

"Yes; I got a letter to-day asking me to hurry, as they wanted to settle affairs up there."

"Did you answer?"

"Not yet. You know it's hard lines for me to write."

"If you wish I'll write for you."

"Thank you; I'll wait a day or two yet, and see if something doesn't turn up."

It was not yet eight o'clock when Richard, after having a bit of lunch, left the restaurant to return to the Massanets'. Feeling that it was early yet, and having a desire to do some "window gazing," he did not go up the Bowery, but strolled up Broadway instead.

The magnificent windows and their rare and costly exhibits were to him an enjoyment of the keenest sort, and as he approached the neighborhood of Astor Place, where the book stores seem to have congregated, he walked slower and slower, taking in all there was to be seen of each establishment, how the windows were dressed and the stock arranged, and wondering away down in his heart if he would ever own, or have an interest in, any similar establishment.

While deeply engaged in reading the titles of a number of volumes in a certain window, he felt a light tap on his shoulder, and turning, found himself face to face with Earle Norris.

The shipping-clerk was dressed in the height of style, including low cut shoes and carried a heavy gold-headed cane.

"Hello, Dare!" he exclaimed pleasantly. "What brings you up here?"

For an instant Richard was taken aback, not only at meeting Norris, but at being greeted so familiarly after what had occurred during the day.

"I have just finished my errand, and thought I'd take a walk to see the sights," he returned. "How is it you are not at the theater?"

"As I said, I didn't care to go alone, so took your advice and sold the extra ticket, and also my own. I'll take a walk along with you if you don't mind."

Richard was not overpleased at the proposition; yet he could not very well object except by seeming rude, and from this he shrank; so he gave a mild assent.

"You see I like to get on good terms with all the boys," explained Norris, as they walked leisurely along. "I'm on the best of terms with every one in the establishment but Massanet, and I'd like to be with him, only he's so awfully slow."

"Frank Massanet is a very nice fellow," said Richard stoutly.

"Oh, yes--too nice for me, though. But let that pass. Everybody has his peculiarities. Have a smoke?"

And Norris pulled two strong-looking cigars from his vest pocket.

"I'm much obliged," replied the boy. "I don't smoke."

"Try one. They are fine," went on the shipping-clerk, stopping to get a light. "No time like the present for making a beginning. I'm quite sure it won't make you sick."

"I don't think I care to try," was all Richard could say; and he heartily wished Earle Norris would go his own way.

"Oh, well, it's all right if you don't care to. I find it just the thing to settle my nerves after a big day's work."

They walked on in silence for nearly a block, and the boy was wondering how best to leave Norris without offending him when the latter spoke up.

"Here are the rooms of the Laurel Club," he said, pointing up to the narrow but brilliantly lighted stairways of a handsome building just around the corner of a side street.

"The Laurel Club?" repeated Richard.

"Yes; it is a club of about twenty young fellows. I am a member. We have a reading-room, and another for all kinds of games."

Norris did not take the trouble to add that "all kinds of games" had narrowed down to simply card playing, and that for money, too.

"Just come up for a moment," he went on. "I wish to get a book I left there a few nights ago."

"I'll wait for you here," replied Richard.

"No, no; I want to show you the rooms. We have some fine pictures and all that up there."

Somewhat against his will Richard consented. Norris led the way up three flights of stairs and then down a side hall.

Stopping at a certain door he gave two distinct knocks, followed by a single one.

There was a hurried movement within, and then the door, which had been securely locked, was cautiously opened.

"Hello, Springer!" exclaimed Norris to the tall young man who had admitted them. "You're locked up as if this was a sub-treasury. This is a friend of mine. Mr. Dare, Mr. Springer, our worthy secretary."

"Glad to know you, Mr. Dare!" said the other, and he gave Richard's hand a tight grip, but at the same time cast a sidelong, inquiring glance at Norris.

"He's a green one," murmured Norris, as he brushed past. "Don't you think we have it cozy up here?" he continued, turning to Richard.

Richard was not prepared to answer in the affirmative. His introduction into the place, even though his curiosity has been small, was a disappointment. The room had been nicely furnished once, but the carpet and the furniture showed signs of much wear, and the pictures of which Norris had spoken proved to be several of a remarkably "loud" sort, but of no real artistic value or excellence.

"Many of the boys here to-night, Springer?" asked Norris.

"Foley, Nichols and two or three others. Will you take a hand in?"

"Maybe; I'll see in a little while."

"My night at the door," growled Springer. "I hate it."

"Never mind; as long as we can't pay a porter some one has got to do it among us. I'll get my book," added the shipping-clerk, glancing at

Richard.

He entered the next room, closing the door carefully behind him. Richard thought he heard the clinking of glasses within, but he was not sure.

In a few moments Norris reappeared.

"Come in!" he said. "The boys would like to know you."

Not dreaming of what was to come, Richard accepted the invitation.

He found himself in a small room, well lighted. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke, and the fumes of liquor were not wanting. But what astonished him most was a group of five fellows seated at the center table, playing cards, with several piles of money in front of them.

"They are gambling!" he thought, with something like horror. "I wish I was out of it."

"Gentlemen, my friend, Mr. Dare," said Earle Norris. "Come, sit down and make yourself at home," he added, slapping Richard on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE LAUREL CLUB.

Richard felt decidedly uncomfortable over the situation in which he now found himself. It was so unexpected--it had been so forced upon him that he did not know what to do.

"Come, take a hand in," repeated Earle Norris, offering him a chair at the table and at the same time removing his hat.

"Thank you, but I do not play cards," replied Richard coldly.

"Oh, you'll soon learn!" returned the shipping-clerk. "Come, sit down, and I'll give you a few points."

"I don't care to learn," was Richard's firm reply. "I never gambled in my life, and I don't intend to begin now."

"Say, Norris, what do you want to bring such a fellow up here for?" asked one of the players, with a scowl. "We were just having a jolly good game, and don't care to have it spoiled."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm aware of that; but Mr. Dare is a new-comer to New York, and I'm only showing him around a bit."

"We don't want any one here who is going to give us away," put in

another player. "Harrison, your cut."

"I'm quite sure Mr. Dare won't be so mean," said Norris. "Come, make yourself at home."

But during the last few minutes Richard had been doing some heavy thinking, and the conclusion of it all was that he had better get out as soon as possible. He had nothing in common with such a crowd, and to remain might place him in an awkward if not dangerous position.

"I thought you only wanted to get a book?" he said to Norris.

"So I did; but now we are up here we might as well stay awhile and have some fun. It's early yet."

"It's not early for me," responded Richard. "I promised to be back by nine o'clock, and it must be near that now. Just give me my hat."

For Norris had taken his guest's hat and placed it on a hook beside his own.

For reply, the shipping-clerk pulled Richard down into a seat.

"Don't be a fool," he whispered. "We won't hurt you. All the fellows here are gentlemen. No use of offending them."

Richard sprang to his feet.

"I don't want to stay, and that's all there is to it," he exclaimed. "If your friends are offended by my going away, why I can't help it. I didn't come up here of my own choosing in the first place, and I claim the right to leave whenever I please."

"Oh, you do, do you?" sneered Norris. "Well, we'll see about that."

And he placed himself between Richard and the door.

Richard grew pale.

"Perhaps I'll have to fight my way out," he thought. "I suppose this is nothing but a gambling den. Well, I'll fight if it comes to that," he finished; and his eyes flashed with determination.

"Come, Norris, none of that," said a tall young man, who sat at the head of the table. "No one shall be forced to stay here against his will. You should have found out if your friend cared for this sort of thing before you brought him."

It was seldom that Don Wimler said so much, either at the club-rooms or outside, and every one knew he meant every word.

Earle Norris's face fell.

"Of course, if Dare won't stay, he needn't," he said slowly. "I only thought I was doing him a favor by bringing him."

"I hope, Mr. Dare, that you will not speak of what you have seen here to-night," went on Don Wimler. "It might place us in an unpleasant predicament."

Richard hesitated. "If I do, it will only be so far as it concerns Mr. Norris and myself," he replied. "I have no desire to hurt you or the others."

And going to the door Richard passed swiftly through it to the outer room. Norris was after him on the instant.

"What do you mean by saying you may tell on me?" he demanded, with an evil look in his eyes.

"I meant just what I said," retorted Richard. "I may be green, but I'm not so green as you take me to be. Let me go."

Norris had taken a tight hold of his shoulder.

"You shan't go till you promise to keep the thing quiet," he replied grimly.

For reply, Richard gathered himself together and gave the shipping-clerk a shove that sent that individual sprawling to the floor.

Before Norris could regain his feet, Richard had unlocked the outer door, and was speeding down the stairs.

"I made a failure of it that time," muttered the shipping-clerk, as he slowly arose to his feet. "But we'll get even yet, and more than even, too!"

Richard breathed a sigh of relief when he emerged once more upon the street.

"I'm glad I found Norris out, any way," he said to himself as he hurried along. "I think I can safely put him down as a bad egg."

Retracing his way down Broadway the boy at length crossed over to Grand Street, and directed his steps towards the east side.

When he reached the Massanets' it was quarter past nine. Mattie let him in, stating that her mother and her brother had not yet returned.

Frank had told her of the street urchin and the letters, and she was anxious to hear about the result of Richard's visit to Doc Linyard's, trusting it had been good.

Richard related the particulars. He did not mention Norris; and finally the talk drifted around to Pep, the street urchin.

"I feel sorry for him," said Mattie Massanet. "We must find out where he lives, and see if we can't do something for him and his sick father."

"I've been thinking of it," returned Richard. "He is very shy, and wouldn't even tell me his last name. But perhaps when he sees that I mean him no harm he'll grow more communicative."

"We might go down and see his father on a Sunday," went on Mattie. "I suppose the neighborhood in which he lives isn't a very nice one to visit at night."

"I'll ask him if we can come."

There was something about Mattie Massanet that Richard liked very much. She was gentle as well as lively, and sympathetic as well as full of fun. She reminded him strongly of his sister Nancy in one way, and his sister Grace in another. Indeed it was Mattie who made the Massanet flat a real home for him.

Presently there were footsteps on the stairs, and in a moment Mrs. Massanet and her son entered. They had been shopping over in the French district, and carried several bundles.

It was now drawing towards ten o'clock, and only a few words were spoken before the good-nights were said.

In the upper hall Richard asked Frank to come to his room, and giving his friend a chair and seating himself upon the edge of the bed he told of his adventure with Norris.

"I have suspected Norris of something like that for several months," said Frank. "I was tolerable sure that he was spending more money than he was making now. He must be an expert player or else an unfair one. I suppose he thought as long as he got you there the rest would follow easy enough. I'm glad you didn't give in. If you had, he or his companions would have won every cent you had, and perhaps have placed you in debt to them."

"What would you do? Tell on him?"

"Williams & Mann ought to know what kind of a fellow their shipping-clerk is," replied Frank. "Yet one word about it may cost Norris his position. Suppose you wait a day or two? Watch how he acts and think it over."

Richard thought this was good advice, and told Frank he guessed it was just what he would do; and on this conclusion the two separated.

Far better would it have been for both, however, if they had taken their information to the firm at once. Later happenings will explain why.

CHAPTER XX.

TROUBLE BREWING.

In the morning Richard went to work as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. It was not until after dinner that business called him down to the packing-room, and then there were several others besides Norris present.

Yet the shipping-clerk evinced a strong desire to talk to Richard privately, and finally accosted him just as he was going up the stairs.

"Say, I hope you'll let what happened last night pass," he said in an undertone. "I only wanted to show you a little of life here, and didn't dream you'd resent it as you did."

"Well, next time you will understand that I mean what I say," returned Richard sharply.

"I know I was to blame," went on Norris humbly. "But to tell the truth I'd had a glass of champagne at supper time, and my head wasn't as clear as it should have been. If you say anything of it here, though, I may be discharged."

"Well, I won't say anything unless something more happens," Richard replied. "I don't want to get any one into trouble. But I'll tell you, Mr. Norris," he went on, "I think you're on the wrong track. Take my advice, even if I am younger than you, and steer clear of the Laurel Club."

"I'll think of it," replied the shipping-clerk, turning away.

"I guess I've shut the young fool up," he muttered to himself. "He might have placed me in a decided fix if he had told all he knew."

Of course Richard reported the interview to Frank. Indeed the two were now deep in each other's confidence, and no such thought as keeping the matter to himself would have crossed Richard's mind.

"Perhaps it will teach him a lesson," said Frank. "But I doubt it. Better keep an eye on him."

Later in the day Mr. Mann came up to the stock-room, looking very black. He asked a number of questions about some books that had been sent to Troy four days before. "The party that received them says there were five or six sets of Irving's works badly damaged. Do you know anything about it?"

"No, sir," replied Frank promptly. "Those we packed up were all in

first-class order."

"Well, there was some damaged stock here."

"Yes, sir, quite a good deal that was soaked by that water-pipe bursting three weeks ago. But Mr. Williams ordered us to sort it out, and it was all sent to the second-hand dealer's last week."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive, sir. Dare, here, helped me ship it off."

Mr. Mann turned to Richard.

"That's so, Mr. Mann," put in the latter. "And I remember well that before the last box went down we hunted high and low to see that nothing that was damaged in the least should be left behind."

"Well, it's mighty queer how those people in Troy should get twenty odd volumes of damaged stock. We'll have to make a reduction in their bill, I suppose. Be careful of the goods shipped in the future."

And with this retort Mr. Mann took the elevator and went below.

"I can't see how those people could have got a single damaged volume," said Richard when the head of the firm had departed. "I remember that box well, and every volume in it was perfect."

On returning to the Massanets' that evening Frank heard bad news. An aunt had died over in Port Richmond, on Staten Island. His mother had gone to the place at once, and wished her son to come to the funeral, on the following afternoon.

"Of course I'll have to go," said Frank to Richard. "I'll stop at the store on my way down and let the firm know, and also help you enough to get along while I am gone."

This Frank did. He readily obtained permission from Mr. Williams to be absent, and at ten o'clock Richard found himself in sole charge of the stockroom.

There were a number of important orders to fill, and the boy worked like a beaver to get them done in time.

"I'm so glad for the chance to do something for Frank; he has been so kind," said Richard to himself. "Besides, some day I may wish him to do me a like favor."

Richard was careful that there should be no mistakes, and it is perhaps needless to state that he had both eyes wide open for damaged books.

While hard at work, with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, Mr. Williams appeared. He was quite an old man, and in many respects much

pleasanter than his partner.

"I came up to see how you were making out," he said. "You will have your hands full, trying to do two men's work."

"Oh, I guess I can manage it," replied Richard pleasantly. "I wouldn't want to do it very long, though," he added.

"I'll give you a hand," said Mr. Williams. "This used to be my work years ago, and I still like it."

"Here is an order from Pittsburgh I can't read very well," said Richard. "I'd be much obliged if you will help me on that."

"All right. Give it to me."

In a few minutes employer and employee were hard at work together. Mr. Williams had not intended to stay very long, but he became interested, both in the work and in Richard, and it was only when, two hours later, a message came for him, that he went below.

"He is a nice man," thought Richard, when Mr. Williams had gone. "I am sure he would not have treated Mr. Mann with more consideration than he did me. No wonder Mr. Joyce called for him first the day he brought me here."

A little later Earle Norris came up.

"Hello! alone?" he exclaimed.

"Yes."

"How's that?" Thought Massanet was as steady as clockwork.

Richard told him why Frank was absent.

"Oh, that's all right," said Norris.

"What brought you up?" asked Richard.

"I came up to see if Martin's order from Pittsburgh was filled yet. It's got to go first thing in the morning."

"There it is; been done half an hour ago," replied Richard.

He did not think it necessary to add that Mr. Williams had filled it.

"All right; send it down at once," replied Norris. "Rather tough, making you do all the work," he added. "I'd strike for higher pay."

"I am very well satisfied with the way I am treated," returned Richard.

Norris disappeared, and a moment later Richard sent the crate containing

the goods down on the elevator to be packed up below. After that he worked steadily until six o'clock, at which time he had the satisfaction of knowing that every order sent up had been promptly and correctly filled.

Richard found Frank and his mother already at home when he reached there in the evening. The funeral of Mrs. Massanet's sister had been a quiet, but sad affair, and Richard saw that no one was in humor for much talking, and all retired early.

Frank was not a little astonished in the morning to find that Richard had done all the work so well, and also that Mr. Williams had helped.

"I declare, between you, you'll soon be cutting me out of a job," he laughed.

"Oh, I hope not," returned Richard. "If I'd thought that, I surely would not have worked so hard."

"Oh, it's all right," replied Frank.

"If I ever go into business for myself," he thought, "Richard Dare is just the clerk I want to help me. He is bright, and not afraid of work, and those are the fellows who get along."

Frank Massanet's one idea was to some day own a bookstore of his own. He understood the trade thoroughly, and with the proper location and a fair amount of cash he was tolerably certain that he could make such a place pay. His savings amounted to several hundred dollars now; he was only waiting for the time to come when they would be at least a thousand. Then he intended to strike out for himself.

The two worked on steadily through most of the day. Late in the afternoon a boy came up from below.

"Mr. Mann would like to see you in his private office," he said to Richard.

The latter was surprised at the announcement. Since he had gone to work he had not been called for once before.

"What does he want of me?"

"I don't know," replied the boy. "He is awful mad about something, and has sent for several of the others."

"I can't understand it," said Richard to Frank, as he put on his coat.

"I don't know of anything that has gone wrong."

And considerably worried, Richard descended to the ground floor, and knocked on the door of the private office.

CHAPTER XXI.

RICHARD IN TROUBLE.

Richard found Mr. Mann alone. The gentleman was seated at his desk and greeted the boy coldly.

"You sent for me, I believe," began Richard.

"Yes," replied Mr. Mann, "I want to have a little talk with you." He gazed at Richard sharply. "How long have you lived in New York?" he asked.

"Two weeks, sir. I was only here two days before I came to work for you."

"But you are pretty well acquainted with the place?"

"Not very well, sir. I was never here before. But I think I can find my way anywhere quick enough, if you wish to send me on an errand," he added, thinking Mr. Mann might possibly have some commission for him to execute.

"No doubt you could," replied the gentleman dryly. "But I don't wish to send you anywhere. You are an orphan, I believe. Where do you live?"

"I board with the Massanets."

"Does Norris board with them, too?"

"No, sir."

"Where does he live?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Mann gazed at Richard severely.

"I thought you two were good friends," he said.

"I hardly know Norris," replied Richard. "He is certainly no friend of mine."

Richard felt that the present would have been a good time to tell what he knew about the shipping-clerk, but remembering his half promise to the latter he remained silent.

"You may go," said Mr. Mann, briefly; "but stop. Have you any keys belonging to this place in your possession?"

"Keys? No, sir."

"Oh, all right."

"But--what made you ask that?" began Richard, considerably perplexed.

"I wanted to know, that was all."

"We have no keys of anything up in the stock-room," continued the boy.

"I know _that_. You can go to work," Mr. Mann snapped.

And Richard passed out.

"Either that boy is perfectly honest or else he is the most accomplished actor I ever saw," thought the merchant when left alone.

"Well, what's the trouble?" asked Frank, when Richard reached the stock-room. "I hope you haven't been discharged."

"No, it's not as bad as that, but I--I don't know what to make of it, and that's a fact."

The stock-clerk listened carefully to the story Richard had to tell.

"Depend upon it there is something in the wind. You had better watch Norris; he may be getting you into trouble."

"I half wish I had told the firm of Norris's actions," said Richard.

"Perhaps it would have been best," replied Frank.

On the way home that night the two met Pep. The urchin had evidently been waiting for Richard, for he ran up at once.

"I've got something for you, Mr. Dare," he exclaimed, and shifting his bundle of papers he drew out a silver dollar from his ragged clothes.

"Here is one of de dollars I owes yer. I'll have de odder one in a few days, I guess."

"Did you earn it?" asked Richard, without taking the proffered coin.

"Yes, sir, honestly too, sellin' papers."

"And how is your father? Any better?"

"Not much, sir. That pneumony hangs on so."

"Perhaps you had better keep this money. You may need it for medicine."

"No, sir, I'm earning enough to buy that now. I want you to take this. I'd feel better if yer did. If it wasn't fer dad I a-given it to yer long ago."

"All right then." Richard slipped the coin in his pocket. "I'd like to see your father once, and see how you live. Maybe I and my friend here, Mr. Massanet, can help you a bit. Can I come?"

Pep hung his head.

"We live in a garret, and you'd find it mighty dirty. Nobody with good clothes has got any right there."

"We won't mind the dirt," put in Frank eagerly. "Only let us come. I'm sure we can help you some."

"Where can we meet you, Pep?" asked Richard, seeing that the little Arab wavered. "I suppose we can't find your home alone very well."

"Guess you can't. We're in a heap down our way. I dunno," the last in reference to the meeting. "Just wherever you two gentlemen says. You was so kind I guess dad won't mind my bringin' you."

"Suppose you come up to our house," suggested Frank. "Will you do that?"

"Yes, sir, if yer want me."

"I do. Come to dinner at one o'clock, and we'll take something along for your father." Frank described the location and the house in which he lived. "Do you think you can find it?" he concluded.

"Walk right in de front door wid me eyes shet," laughed Pep. "You're mighty kind," he added soberly.

"Will you come?"

"Yes, sir."

"Sure?" put in Richard.

"I will, 'ceptin' dad's so sick I can't" replied Pep.

In the evening Richard and Frank took a walk, first up town and then down Broadway. On the way the boy pointed out to his friend the building in which the meetings of the Laurel Club were held.

"I wonder if Norris is up there to-night," observed Frank. "Suppose we stand here in the shadow for a while and watch who goes in and comes out."

Richard agreed to this, and crossing the street they took a stand

directly opposite the entrance to the place.

Here they waited for perhaps fifteen minutes.

At the end of that time along came Norris, arm in arm with another member of the club.

"There he goes!" exclaimed Richard, as the two went up the stairs.

"There is a man watching them?" added Frank, as another individual, who had come close behind the others stopped at the corner. "Wonder who it is?"

"He's coming over here," said Richard. "We'll get in this hallway and see him as he passes. I suppose he's a stranger to us."

Near by was a dark hallway, partly open. Both of the boys stepped into it, and an instant later the stranger went by.

When he was gone Frank uttered an exclamation.

"I saw that fellow talking to Mr. Mann in the post-office only a few days ago! I think he is a private detective."

Richard gave a start.

"Then I see it all," he groaned. "That man knows of Norris's doings, and as he has seen me in his company he thinks I'm in with that crowd, and has probably told Mr. Mann so."

"Very likely that's the case," admitted Frank, after a moment's thought.

"It's an awful fix to be in," continued Richard. "I don't know how I can ever clear my name. Even if I tell what I know about Norris I have no proofs to show that I didn't go to that place willingly."

"That's true. You're in a bad light at the best. It's a shame! I'll tell you what you do."

"What?"

"There is no reason why you should suffer on Norris's account. He is no friend of yours, and has been trying to lead you astray. Who knows but what, if he is left alone, he may not try some day to get you in even deeper? I'd go to Mr. Williams and tell him the whole truth."

At first Richard demurred. He did not wish to "tattle" on anybody, and, besides, not having a forward nature, he shrank from the exposure.

But Frank soon talked him out of this, and by the time they reached the Massanets' home Richard decided to "have it out" the first thing in the morning.

But upon reaching the store the following day a disappointment awaited him. Mr. Williams had gone to Boston, and would not be back for several days.

"I hate to tell Mr. Mann," said Richard. "I guess I'll wait till Mr. Williams returns."

"I wouldn't," replied Frank. "I'd have it off my mind at once." But the thought of facing Mr. Mann was not a pleasant one, and the boy hesitated. While deliberating upon what to do the office boy appeared.

"Mr. Mann wants you down in his office right away," he said to Richard.

"What, again?"

"Yes, sir. Told me to tell you to come right down."

"Oh, Frank, I'm sure something is wrong!" cried Richard, when the boy was gone.

"It looks so," replied the stock-clerk. "Never mind. Remember you are in the right, and keep a stiff upper lip."

Much troubled in mind, Richard slowly descended the steps, and entered Mr. Mann's office. As before the gentleman was alone.

"You wish to see me, sir?" began Richard, and somehow his voice trembled in spite of himself.

"Yes, I do," replied Mr. Mann coldly. "I wish to tell you that your services are no longer required. Here is your salary for this week. You can leave at once."

Had Richard been struck in the face he would not have been more taken aback than he was by this short and cold speech.

"But--Mr. Mann--I--" he began.

"I want no words with you," interrupted the merchant. "You understand why you are discharged as well as I do."

"Yes, but I'm sure--"

"No words, sir. Don't you understand me? I wish you to leave instantly," cried Mr. Mann irascibly.

Richard colored.

"I'll go," he said. "But let me say that I consider you are treating me very unfairly."

And with tears of indignation in his eyes, Richard left the office.

CHAPTER XXII.

RICHARD VISITS MR. JOYCE AGAIN.

"I'm discharged, Frank."

Frank Massanet dropped the books he held in his hands. "Discharged!" he cried. "Surely, Dick, you don't mean it!"

"I do," replied Richard. "Mr. Mann has given me my wages for this week, and says he wants me to leave at once."

"But how--what did he have to say? What did he accuse you of?"

"He had very little to say. He said I knew quite as well as he did why I was discharged."

"But didn't he give you a chance to explain?"

"No; he wouldn't let me say a word. I tried to, but he shut me right up."

"It's a shame," exclaimed the stock-clerk, indignantly. "I never thought Mr. Mann could be so unfair." He hesitated a moment. "I'll do it; yes, I will," he went on, half to himself.

"Do what?" asked Richard.

"Go down and have a talk with him. He's in the wrong, and ought to be told so."

"No, no, don't go down!" cried Richard in alarm. "I could plainly see that he was in a bad temper, and you'll only get yourself into trouble."

"I don't care, it's--" began the stock-clerk with flashing eyes, that showed up well the force of character within.

"No, no!" repeated Richard. He would not have his friend get into trouble on his account for the world. "I am much obliged to you for wanting to help me, indeed I am, but I'd rather leave the thing as it is."

"What will you do?"

"I hardly know yet. I'm completely upset and want time to think."

"You're not going to sit down and calmly submit to it, I hope?"

"Indeed I'm not. Mr. Mann has cast a slur on my character, and I'm

going to remove that, no matter what happens afterwards."

Richard washed his hands and put on his coat in silence. Frank Massanet sat on the edge of a packing case and watched the boy thoughtfully.

"I wonder if Earle Norris has been discharged?" he remarked. "If any one was to go he should have been the person."

"I don't know," replied Richard. "I'll try to find out as I go down."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know that either. I must think it over."

"Never mind; remember what I said before; you're in the right, so keep a stiff upper lip," returned Frank.

When Richard went down he passed through the shipping-room. Earle Norris was hard at work, sending off orders. He looked surprised, or pretended to, as the boy entered.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, "Off early?"

"Yes, I am," returned Richard briefly.

"How's that? Got a vacation?"

"Yes."

The boy did not care to be further questioned, and so quickly left the building.

"Reckon he's discharged," muttered Norris under his breath. "So far Harrison's scheme works well. Now I must use my wits to clear myself."

"Norris does not act as if he had received bad news," thought Richard, with a shake of his head. "I can't make it out. There is something behind it all, but what it is, still remains to be seen."

Richard walked down Beekman Street and then turned the corners of several other streets. He had no definite plan in mind, and time seemed at that particular moment of no great value.

Finally he found himself in the neighborhood of the leather district, and determined to call upon Mr. Joyce.

He was not long in reaching the latter's warehouse, and a moment later found himself in the merchant's office. As usual Mr. Joyce was hard at work at his desk. He looked surprised at Richard's entrance, but finished the letter he was writing before he turned around and spoke.

"Well, Dare, dropped in to see me?" he said pleasantly. "Have a chair."

"Thank you, Mr. Joyce. Yes, I--I have come to see you," said Richard, hardly knowing how to begin. "I want your advice," he added.

"Yes? Well, you can have that, I'm sure. How are you making out at Williams & Mann's?"

"I was discharged this morning."

"What!"

Mr. Joyce's face betrayed resentment, anger, pity and curiosity, all in one.

"But believe me, sir, I am not to blame," went on Richard hastily. "I have done my work, and more, faithfully, and Mr. Mann would give no reason for discharging me."

"But there must have been some reason," exclaimed the leather merchant flatly. "No one sends away an efficient clerk without cause."

"Well, I can't make it out," replied the boy. "That's the reason I came to you. I'm sure I haven't done anything wrong, and I haven't been negligent."

Richard's earnest manner had its full effect upon Mr. Joyce.

"Well, tell me your story," he said. "Tell me every word of the plain truth. Unless you do that I can't help you a bit."

So Richard told of everything that had happened since he had gone to work--of his intimacy with the Massanets, his acquaintanceship with Earle Norris, the adventure at the Laurel Club, and all. Mr. Joyce listened in silence until the boy's story was concluded.

Then he put a number of questions, to make sure that nothing had been left out or covered up.

"I can't see how you are to blame," he said at the last. "You did wrong not to let some one know how this Norris had treated you, but you have done nothing, as far as I can make out, to warrant dismissal. I will go up and see Mr. Mann in a little while--just as soon as I finish my morning's work. Will you go along?"

"If you think I ought to. Mr. Mann wanted me to get out though, and talked as if he didn't want to see me again."

"Never mind. Everybody is entitled to a hearing, and Mr. Mann is probably laboring under a false impression."

In half an hour the two were on the way. Richard's heart beat quickly as they walked along, for in some manner Mr. Joyce's presence inspired him with confidence.

When they reached the store Mr. Mann had gone out for lunch. In a few minutes, however, he returned. He greeted Mr. Joyce with cold politeness, and then frowned openly upon Richard.

"Say, Mel, what's the trouble here?" began Mr. Joyce, diving right into the subject at hand. "My young friend says he has been discharged without warning."

"We have paid him his week's wages," replied Mr. Mann stiffly.

"So he says, but he wants to know why you discharged him. He says you acted as if something was wrong."

"Well, something is wrong," admitted the book-merchant; and then he added in an undertone: "I meant to send you word about it. I don't care to have the boy aware how much or how little I do know. Send him out, and I'll tell you the whole affair. The boy is not so innocent as he looks."

"Bosh! I told you before I knew an honest face when I saw it, and I'll wager he's as honest as the day is long. Dare," continued Mr. Joyce, turning to Richard, "just go outside in the store and wait for me."

"Yes, sir."

Richard went out as directed. In the short time that he had been with Williams & Mann he had come but little in contact with the clerks downstairs, and they hardly knew him, and now allowed him to stand around as though he was a stranger.

The dismissal made him feel strange, too. He wished he could go upstairs to Frank, but he did not know how soon Mr. Joyce might want him. He wondered how Frank was getting along, and who the firm would get to help him.

A short half hour passed. It seemed like an age to Richard.

Then the private office door opened and Mr. Joyce called for him to come in.

Hardly knowing what to expect, the boy entered. Mr. Joyce closed the door carefully behind him.

"Well, Dare," began Mr. Mann, "we have talked your case over pretty thoroughly, and while there are some things in your conduct that I don't like, yet I admit that perhaps I was hasty in judging you. I did not care to explain all I know for reasons you may learn later. You may go to work again if you wish."

"Thank you, sir," replied the boy, nearly as much surprised at this sudden turn as he had been at the first. "But I--"

"Never mind, now. I know there are many things you would like to know,

and which, perhaps, I ought to explain; but for the present you will have to let that pass."

"I'm willing to, as long as it comes out right in the end," replied the boy. "Thank you, Mr. Joyce, for your kindness," he added, turning to the leather merchant, and then withdrew.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STRANGE DISCOVERIES.

Frank Massanet was surprised and delighted to have Richard come to work again.

"You have indeed a good friend in Mr. Joyce," he remarked when the boy had told him what the leather merchant had done. "One such is worth a thousand of the common sort."

During the afternoon Earle Norris had occasion to come up to the stock-room. He started back upon seeing Richard at work.

"Why, I thought you had taken a vacation!" he exclaimed.

"So I did--for an hour," replied Richard, and without further words went on with his work.

"Why, I thought--" began the shipping-clerk.

"What did you think?" demanded Frank, coming forward.

"Why I--I----" stammered Norris. "What business is it of _yours_?" he added rudely.

"You thought he was discharged," went on Frank. "You've been trying your best to get him discharged."

"Who says so?" demanded Norris, but he turned slightly pale as he uttered the words. "I say so. I don't understand your scheme, but that's what you are trying to do; and I warn you that you had better quit it."

It was seldom that Frank Massanet spoke in such an arbitrary way, yet it was plain to see that he meant every word he said.

"You're mistaken," returned Norris, hardly knowing how to reply. "But it's only natural that you should stick up for your mother's boarders. They help support the family, I suppose."

And with this parting shot the shipping-clerk hurried below.

In the middle of the afternoon Mr. Mann sent for Richard and asked the boy to accompany him to an office on lower Broadway.

"I wish you to keep our visit to the place a secret," he said. "I might as well tell you something is going wrong at our place. Goods are missing from several departments and we cannot trace them. They are taken by some one in our employ, but there must be a confederate outside."

"Did Mr. Joyce tell you about----"

"Norris? Yes; but I knew that. I thought you were in collusion with him, because you were seen in his company."

"By that detective, I suppose."

"Do you know him?" asked the book merchant, in much surprise.

"Not much; Frank Massanet told me of him."

And Richard related the particulars.

"But did not Norris try to get me out of a position?" he added.

"Yes--no--I don't know." Mr. Mann contracted his brow, and then a light seemed to break in upon him. "He did cast suspicion upon you, but I thought that was only done for effect--I couldn't exactly understand it."

"Perhaps he wished to get some one in my place--some one who would aid him--that is, if he is the guilty party. Who had my place before?"

"A tall young man named Springer. He was discharged for incompetency.

"Springer!" exclaimed Richard. "That was the name of the doorkeeper at the Laurel Club. He and Norris are great friends."

"Ah! Then I see it. Hold up! We received two applications for your position only last week."

"What were the names?" asked the boy, deeply interested.

"I have them here in my note-book," replied Mr. Mann, feeling in his pocket. "Do you remember the names of those you met at that club?"

Richard thought a moment.

"Harrison, Foley, Nichols and Springer, I think. I'm pretty good at remembering names," he returned.

Mr. Mann got out his notebook.

"Here they are!" he cried. "Andrew S. Foley is one, and Henry Nichols the other." He jammed the volume back into his pocket. "It's as clear as day. There is no necessity for your going with me now. You can return to the store; but remember, not a word of this, even to Massanet."

"I'll remember, sir."

When Richard returned to the stock-room, his friend, of course, wanted to know what was up, but the boy only replied that it was all right, and that Mr. Mann had requested him to keep silent.

Throughout the entire establishment there appeared to be the feeling that something was about to happen--what, no one knew.

As the two boys were returning home that evening, they met the street urchin Pep, who greeted them politely. He had a bigger bundle of papers than ever, and seemed to be prospering in his street trade.

Nevertheless, he had a sober, earnest look upon his countenance that caught Richard's eye immediately.

"What's up, Pep?" he asked kindly.

"Dad's worse, sir," replied the boy. "I don't think I can come up Sunday, 'ceptin' he gets better."

"Wouldn't you like us to come down, any way?" asked Frank.

"I would, yes; but he wouldn't. His head ain't right, and he don't want no one around 'ceptin' me."

"Well, will you come up to the house, and get some nice stuff I will give you? Some eating and the like?" continued Frank.

"Yes, sir; thank you."

"I'll expect you. Good-by."

"Good-by, sir. Good-by, Mr. Dare," cried Pep. "Oh, say," he added, running back, "I reckon I can give you that other dollar by Monday."

On Saturday afternoon, as they were starting home early, Frank unfolded his scheme of one day going into business for himself.

"I would like to see you do it," cried Richard, "and make a big success of it, too. You deserve it, Frank--such a good fellow as you are!"

A few minutes later a funeral of some old soldier passed. There were several coaches, and then a post of Grand Army men. The sight was a sad one to Richard.

"My father was a soldier," he said to his companion. "He was shot,

too," he added, with a sigh.

"Yes?" said Frank. "Then your mother gets a pension," he added, after a pause.

"No, she does not. She ought to have one, but we cannot get our claim passed. My father let it rest so long that when he did try he could find no witness."

And Richard related the full particulars of the case. Frank Massanet listened attentively.

"I think, as your sister Grace says, I'd turn the whole country upside down before I'd give up the hope of finding a witness," he said. "Why, it would amount to several thousand dollars! A small fortune!"

"I'm going to try as soon as I get settled," replied Richard. "I haven't any money to do anything with yet."

"I'd advertise as soon as I could afford it," suggested Frank. "And I'd write to the secretaries of all these old soldiers' organizations, too, giving your father's full name and what he belonged to."

"That's a good idea," exclaimed Richard. "I'll do that this week. I have plenty of time in the evening, and can get the addresses from the directory."

CHAPTER XXIV.

PEP'S HOME.

Sunday morning dawned clear and bright. Richard was naturally an early riser, but the unaccustomed sounds in the streets awoke him at an even earlier hour than he usually arose, and when seven o'clock came, and the Massanets assembled for breakfast, they found that their boarder had had quite a delightful walk.

By ten o'clock the Massanets were all ready and bound for church.

When the congregation was dismissed, Richard and Frank hurried home ahead, wishing to see if Pep had come.

They found the street urchin waiting for them at the door. He was very pale and nearly out of breath.

"I was thinkin' you'd never come!" he gasped. "I run all de way, and went upstairs, but couldn't find nobody."

"What's the matter?" cried Richard. "Is your father worse?"

"Yes, indeed; a heap worse. I was thinkin' he was goin' to croak last night."

"I'll go right down with you."

"Shall I go, too?" put in Frank hesitatingly. "I'll go willingly if you want me."

"I dunno," replied Pep slowly. "Dad don't want no visitors. I was only going to get Mr. Dare. But I reckon you can come. Dad won't know de difference. He ain't right here."

And the street urchin tapped his forehead significantly.

Rushing upstairs, Frank got out a basket and filled it with a number of things that Mrs. Massanet and Mattie had prepared. He was down again in a moment, and then the three, guided by Pep, hurried off.

It was far down on the east side, through streets that are narrow, dirty and notorious for crimes of all kinds, that the boy led them.

"Tain't no nice walk to take," he said, "and you're dressed too good to go through here after dark. If you come ag'in put on yer old clo'es; da won't notice you so much."

"I'm glad that your sister isn't along," said Richard to Frank, with a shudder. "I never dreamed of a place as wretched as this."

"Mattie knows how bad it is," returned Frank. "In her mission class she has several children from the Italian quarter, and that's every bit as bad as this."

"Here we are," remarked Pep, as they came to a narrow court. "Dis is my street. Da calls it de Fryin' Pan, 'cause one of de houses took fire last year and ten people were burnt up."

On this Sunday morning the Frying Pan was alive with people, Jewish tailors and cloakmakers, who were enjoying a bit of needed rest. They filled the doorways and the steps, and down on the pavement the children ran around, shouting and playing games.

Picking their way among the latter and the heaps of dirt and streams of filthy water on all sides, the two boys followed Pep to the end of the court. Curious eyes gazed after them, and open remarks concerning their presence in that locality were not wanting.

But to these the two paid no attention, though both were glad enough to escape into the hallway of the tenement to which the street boy led them.

"Look out for de stairway," cautioned Pep, as they ascended the first flight. "It's mighty rotten, and you kin break a leg widout half

tryin'."

Up and up they went, until finally they stopped at the door of a room on the top floor and in the rear.

"Here we are," whispered Pep. "Let me go in alone first, and see how he is."

The street urchin opened the door and went inside. In a moment he reappeared.

"He's asleep," he said. "You can come in."

The room was part of a garret, with a sloping side and a dormer window. Opposite was a large brick chimney with an open fireplace. Near it lay a mattress on the floor, and upon this rested a man.

He was apparently nearly fifty years of age. His face and form were terribly shrunken, and his untrimmed hair and beard and generally untidy appearance made him a repulsive object indeed.

"That's him," whispered Pep. "Glad he's asleep. Hope he don't raise no row when he wakes up."

Just then the man turned and moaned to himself.

"Water! Water!" he cried.

"Have you any?" asked Richard.

"Yes, but 'tain't fresh," replied Pep. "I'll get some."

And catching up a pail, he ran out of the room and down the stairs.

"That man has a raging fever," declared Frank, after a careful look at the sufferer.

"There ought to be more ventilation here," said Richard, "I'm going to open that window."

For the dormer window, the only one in the place, was tightly closed.

It was no easy job. The window had probably not been opened for some time, and stuck obstinately. Finally it went up with a bang, and a draught of fresh air swept into the place.

"It's a pretty stiff breeze," remarked Frank; "but too much is certainly better than too little."

The noise had aroused the sick man, and, opening his eyes, he stared at the two boys.

"Ah, I've caught you!" he cried. "Pep! Pep! Bind them--don't let 'em

get away Where's the water?--

"Water, water everywhere,
Upon the deep blue sea;
Water, water, here and there,
But not a drop for me!

"That used to be Doc's favorite song. Why don't you give poor Tom a drink? Where's Betty? She'll give her brother what he wants. Oh, Pep, Pep, don't leave your dad to die of thirst!"

Richard uttered an exclamation, and grasped Frank's arm.

"That man is Tom Clover!" he gasped. "He is Doc Linyard's lost brother-in-law!"

CHAPTER XXV.

TOM CLOVER.

For a moment Richard could not realize the discovery that he had made. Could this weak, delirious man be Doc Linyard's brother-in-law, the one for whom the old sailor had been searching so diligently and so unsuccessfully?

If such was the fact then his visit to Frying Pan Court would undoubtedly be productive of more than one good result.

"What makes you think he is the man?" asked Frank Massanet, with considerable astonishment.

"Because he mentioned his own name as Tom, and I know Betty is the sailor's wife's name," replied Richard.

"He doesn't look very respectable," went on Frank. "He isn't a relative for even a man like Mr. Linyard to be proud of."

"He may look better after he's shaved and washed and fixed up a bit," returned Richard; "that is, if he gets well," he added, in sudden alarm.

"Pep, Pep," went on the sufferer, "where's the water?"

"Here you are, dad, nice and fresh," and Pep entered with his pail full. "Whew! but he does drink a pile!" he added to the two, as he held a cup to his father's lips.

"I've brought something you can give him," said Frank, going to his basket and depositing the articles upon a rickety table that stood in

a corner.

"And we'll send a doctor around here, too," he added. "You haven't had one lately, I guess."

"Not this week. He charged too much, and he wouldn't come if I didn't pay beforehand," replied the street urchin.

"Pep, what is your full name?" asked Richard abruptly.

The boy was silent.

"Why won't you tell me? I don't want to hurt you."

"Dad said afore he got sick he didn't want people to know it; that's why," exclaimed Pep finally.

"Why not? He's honest, I'm sure."

"Honest? Bet yer he is! But he don't want his old friends to know how he's come down."

"Oh!" exclaimed Richard, a new light breaking in upon him.

"Then you were better off once?"

"Deed we were when marm was alive, and sister Mary. When they died dad went on a spree--the first and last one--and spent what money was left after the bills was paid. Then he sold our stuff and we came here, and I got into the streets."

"How long ago is that?"

"Most three years. It's been tough times since then."

And Pep suddenly raised his coat sleeve to wipe away two big tears that had started to come down his cheeks.

"Did you ever know anything of an Uncle Doc?" asked Richard suddenly.

Pep gave a cry.

"What do you know of my Uncle Doc?" he exclaimed trembling. "Oh, Mr. Dare, did he--did he--"

"What? Send me here? No; but he is looking all over for your father. Then your name is Pep Clover?"

"Yes, sir. But how did you find it out?"

"Your father's talking led me to think so. I'm glad I found you for there is money coming to your father. How much I don't know, but quite some."

"Money coming to him?" Pep's eyes opened widely. Then suddenly his face fell. "Yer foolin' me."

"No, I'm not. It's money from an uncle in England, left to your father and your Aunt Betty."

Pep gave a whoop. "Hooray!" he cried, with a wild fling of his arms. "How much is it? As much as twenty--as fifty dollars?"

"Yes, a good many fifty dollars," replied Richard with a smile.

"And kin dad have a nuss and medicine? Maybe they'll let him in the hospital if he pays, hey? And I'll get some new clo'es, and then they'll let me come and see him."

Pep rattled on as if the idea of sudden wealth had turned his head.

"I'll go and tell your uncle," said Richard at length. "I know it will be a big surprise to him."

"Kin you find the way from here and back?" asked Pep anxiously.

"I don't know," replied Richard doubtfully. "I wish you could come along."

"I would, only--" and the urchin pointed to the mattress. "Go ahead," put in Frank. "I'll tend to him while you are gone, I don't think I'll have any trouble."

"Dad gets mighty cranky sometimes," returned Pep, with a doubtful shake of his head.

"Never mind; I'll manage it. You won't be gone over an hour, I guess," added the stock-clerk to Richard.

"I think not; that is, if we can find Doc Linyard. His place is no doubt shut up and he may be away."

A moment later Richard, accompanied by Pep, went down into the court and made their way to the street beyond. The urchin was all eager expectation, and if it had not been for Richard, for whom it was hard work to keep up as it was, he would have run the entire way.

In a few minutes they were down on the Bowery, and passing Park Row, the only lively spot in lower New York on Sunday, they crossed Fulton Street and so on down to West.

As Richard had anticipated, the Watch Below was closed. Doc Linyard did not keep his place open on Sunday, excepting for an hour or two early in the morning.

"I'll have to see if I can knock him up," he said to Pep.

And raising his foot he kicked several times on the lower portion of the door.

"Something like the first night, when I got lost," he thought to himself. "What changes have occurred since then!"

Richard repeated his kicking, and presently there were sounds of footsteps within, the turning of a key in the lock, and then the door opened cautiously, revealing Mrs. Linyard.

"Oh, it's you!" she exclaimed. "Come in! I was afraid it might be some drunken man; there's so many here of a Sunday, trying to get in."

"Aunt Betty, don't you know me!" piped up Pep's voice, all in a tremble.

Mrs. Linyard turned and surveyed the street urchin eagerly.

"Mercy me! if it hain't Tom's boy!" she ejaculated. "Where in the world did you come from?"

"Mr. Dare brought me," replied Pep.

Mrs. Linyard caught him up in her arms.

"Who'd a believed it!" she cried. "Mr. Dare a doing of it. Why, you're as dirty as a pig! Where's your dad and your marm and sister Mary?"

"Dad's sick. We just left him. Marm and Mary are dead. Mr. Dare says you've got money for dad. I'm so glad, 'cause he's sick."

"Mother and Mary dead!" The sad news brought the tears to the woman's eyes. "Poor dear! Poor Tom!"

"Mr. Clover is very sick," said Richard. "He has no one to care for him but Pep. Is Mr. Linyard at home?"

"Yes; taking his nap on the sofa. I'll call him--or no, come up. My, what a surprise 'twill be for him! He'd about given up."

Taking Pep by the hand Mrs. Linyard led the way up to her "best room," where her husband lay sound asleep on a lounge.

"Get up, Doc!" she cried, shaking him vigorously. "Get up! Here's your nevvie; and Mr. Dare has found Tom! Just think of it--he's found Tom! Wake up, Doc! Was ever there such a man! To keep on sleeping with such good news to hear!"

A SCENE IN THE STOCK-ROOM.

But Doc Linyard did not sleep for any great length of time after his good wife began to shake him. A moment later he sprang up, rubbing his eyes.

"Ship ahoy!" he cried heartily. "What's up, what's the trouble?" Then catching sight of Richard and Pep: "Hello, visitors! How are you, Dare?"

"Here's Tom's son," repeated Mrs. Linyard. "Mr. Dare has found Tom."

"_What!_" The old sailor looked at the street urchin. "Bless my heart if it _hain't_ Tom's son! Well, well, Dare; this is better than getting them letters back." And he took hold of Pep with both hands.

Richard had it on his tongue's end to say that Pep was the one who had taken the letters in the first place, but a second thought made him keep silent. It would do no good to tell, and he would be willing to vouch for the boy's honesty in the future.

Richard's story, as well as Pep's, was soon told, and then Doc Linyard and his wife prepared to accompany the two back to Frying Pan Court.

"I'm glad I've got a little money saved," said the old sailor to Richard, as they hurried across town. "Poor Tom shan't want for anything while there's a shot left in the locker. It's funny he wouldn't let us know his condition."

"He was allers sensitive," put in Mrs. Linyard, "and I suppose coming down made him more so."

It was not long before the little party reached the dingy garret room where the sufferer lay. Frank received them with a warning for silence. He said he had had quite a turn with the sick man, but now Mr. Clover had dropped back exhausted and was dozing.

Mrs. Linyard wept bitterly as she knelt beside the form of her sick brother. Yet she was thankful that he had been found, and her gratitude to Richard was outspoken and genuine.

It was decided that the sick man should be at once removed to one of the private wards of a neighboring hospital, where Mrs. Linyard might see him daily; and then have him taken to her own home as soon as it was deemed safe to do so.

Frank, who was somewhat acquainted with the methods of procedure, accompanied the old sailor to the institution and helped him to make the necessary arrangements.

Half an hour later an ambulance drove into Frying Pan Court. Tom Clover

was removed with the greatest of care, the garret room was locked up, and Pep, like one in a dream, went off with his newly-found uncle.

It was nearly sundown when the two boys reached the Massanets' again.

"How long you've been!" exclaimed Mattie, who let them in.

"And we've had quite an adventure," replied her brother.

"Ees zat so?" put in Mrs. Massanet. "You must tell ett, Francois."

"I will, mother," replied Frank. "But Richard will have to help; it's really his story."

"Then both go ahead," cried Mattie. "Only _do_ go ahead. I am dying to hear!"

Of course Mrs. Massanet as well as Mattie was highly interested in the boys' story, and both were deeply touched at the account of Frying Pan Court and the scene in the little garret room.

"I want to know little Pep," said Mattie. "He is too bright a chap to run the streets." "I guess Doc Lanyard won't let him do that any more," returned Richard. "Especially if he gets that money he's expecting from England."

"That sailor didn't lose anything by being kind to you," remarked Frank. "I declare you deserve a reward."

"If only some old soldier would turn up, so that you could get your father's pension," went on Mattie, "that would be better than a reward."

"You're right," replied Richard. "Even if we only got a thousand dollars it would help along wonderfully at home."

Monday morning found the two hard at work in the stock-room. About ten o'clock Mr. Mann came up, and beckoned to Richard to come to one corner.

"I want to find out about an order that was shipped on the tenth to Pittsburgh," he said, when they were alone. "There is something wrong about it. You were here by yourself on that day. Do you remember it?"

"To Pittsburgh?" repeated Richard slowly. "Yes, I do. Mr. Williams filled that order."

"Mr. Williams!" Mr. Mann looked surprised. "I don't understand."

"Mr. Williams came up here while I was alone and offered to help me. I said that the Pittsburgh order I couldn't read very well; so he took it and filled it. He will probably remember it."

"Probably he will," replied Mr. Mann, "and in that case the trouble is certainly _all_ downstairs. You need not mention this occurrence

to any one."

Mr. Mann went below; and there were no more interruptions for that day. But trouble was in the air, and on the following day the climax came.

Richard was alone in the stock-room, Frank having just gone below on business. There was a clatter on the stairs, and turning to see what was the matter Richard confronted Earle Norris.

The shipping-clerk was pale, but his manner showed that he was also angry, whether reasonably or not remained to be seen.

"You little greenhorn, you!" he cried. "What do you mean by getting me into trouble?"

"I don't know as I have," replied Richard, as coolly as he could; and, not wishing to engage in a personal encounter, he very wisely placed several cases between himself and his angry accuser.

"Yes, you have!" roared Norris. "You told Mr. Mann that that order from Pittsburgh was sent down all right, and that if any of the goods were changed they were changed downstairs."

"I told no one anything of the kind," replied Richard briefly, though he could readily understand the mistake under which Norris was laboring.

"Yes, you did."

"No, I did not."

"Oh, come, I know better. If you didn't, who did? Massanet wasn't here."

"That's true, too; but, nevertheless, I didn't tell Mr. Mann."

"You're a--" began the shipping-clerk passionately.

"Here! here! Stop that, Norris!" came a voice from the elevator; and the next instant Mr. Williams stepped into the room. "What do you mean by creating such a disturbance?"

"Dare is trying to put up a job on me," began the shipping-clerk. "He told Mr. Mann that that order for Pittsburgh was sent down O.K. and--"

"And so it was," replied Mr. Williams calmly.

"No, sir; it was--"

"Hold up, Norris; there is no use of further words," said Mr. Williams sharply. "You were discharged half an hour ago, and you had better leave. It was I that told Mr. Mann that the order had gone down all right, because I filled it myself. I suspected you for a long time,

and I wanted to find out the truth. Dare and Massanet are entirely innocent in the matter. I have much more information against you--and also a book-dealer who has sold you old books and bought your new ones--but we will let that drop. I have learned that your family is quite a respectable one. For their sake, as well as your own, I advise you to turn over a new leaf. You can go."

For an instant Norris hesitated. Then he turned, and without a word of reply hurried down the stairs.

Richard breathed a sigh of relief when he was gone.

"I am sorry he placed you two up here in such a false position," said Mr. Williams to Richard. "Please tell Massanet of it, too. Neither of you shall lose anything by it."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A FIRE AND ITS RESULT.

As one proof of Williams & Mann's good intentions towards Richard, the boy found his salary on the following week increased to eight dollars, and Frank received a proportionate addition to his pay.

In the middle of the week a new shipping-clerk, a German by the name of Bretzwart, was engaged, and, though everybody in the establishment found it hard at first to understand the young man's broken English, yet he was such a jolly fellow--as well as an honest and capable one--that he was soon on good terms all around.

During the evenings of this week Richard wrote a great number of letters to the Grand Army and other military organizations, in the hope of finding some one who had known his father during the war or immediately after it.

On Thursday evening Frank accompanied him to the neighborhood in which Mr. Dare had once resided; but, though the two spent nearly three hours in the search, no trace of any former acquaintance was found.

"You see it's different here from what it is in the country," said Frank, when they were returning. "Here you often find that people don't know who lives next door, or even in the same house with them. It sounds queer, but it's true. No one is introduced, no one is sociable, and the majority are continually moving, in the hope of finding a better dwelling or cheaper rent."

"Yes, I noticed that," replied Richard, with something like a sigh.

"Out in the country everybody knows everybody else, and outside of a few prim people all are as sociable as can be. But I suppose if one

wants to make money one must expect to give up some comforts."

"You're right there," replied Frank.

During the week Pep met them twice on the Bowery. He was cleanly washed, had his curly hair brushed, and wore a brand-new suit. In his altered appearance Richard hardly knew him.

"Dad's better," was the urchin's reply to the boy's question. "Uncle Doc is going to take him out of de hospital next week, so as Aunt Betty can nurse him herself. She's awful kind, she is."

"And how do you like the change?" asked Frank.

"I feel like I was dreamin'," was Pep's answer. "It don't seem natural--these clo'es and that nice home. It's like de times long ago."

"Are you selling papers yet?" asked Richard.

"No, sir. Uncle Doc says I'm to go to school in a week or so. He says I must have an eddication, and he's going to help dad get his money and invest it so it's safe, and all that. Here's yer dollar."

As Pep concluded, he suddenly dived into one of the pockets of his new trousers, and, after considerable difficulty, extricated a silver dollar.

"Never mind, Pep, you can keep it," said Richard, yet well pleased to see the urchin's evident desire to right the wrong he had done.

"No, no, it's yours," exclaimed Pep earnestly. "I won't keep it nohow. And say," he added in a whisper, "I'm awful glad you didn't say nothin' to me uncle of it. It's de first time I stole anything, and it's the last, too, and I wouldn't have Uncle Doc or Aunt Betty know it for de world."

"You can make sure they shall never hear of it," returned Richard, as, after more urging, he took the coin. "I can understand how desperate you felt that morning we met at the newspaper office, and we'll let the whole matter drop."

"Thank you, sir."

And Pep felt much relieved.

"You must come up Sunday," put in Frank. "Come up to dinner, same as you were going to."

"Thank you, Mr. Massanet, I will," replied Pep. "My uncle expects both of you down soon, too."

And they separated, Pep being on his way to Frying Pan Court to get a few treasured belongings that still remained there.

Early the following morning Richard and Frank started for the store together. It was a clear, but windy day, thick clouds of dust flying in all directions. As they passed the entrance to the Brooklyn Bridge, a fire engine dashed past, on its way down the street.

"Hello! there's a fire somewhere!" exclaimed Frank.

"Can we go to it?" cried Richard. He had not yet seen a conflagration in the city, and was anxious to see how such a thing would be handled. Frank looked at his watch.

"We've got twenty-five minutes," he replied. "Come on; if it's in the neighborhood we can take a look at it."

Both boys started off on a run. They reached Spruce Street, and followed the engine around the corner.

A dense volume of black smoke greeted them.

The crowd was thick, and the two had hard work making their way forward.

"_It's our place!_" cried out Frank suddenly. "And the whole store is afire, too!"

"Our place!" ejaculated Richard. "Oh, I hope not!"

But it was only too true, and in a moment they stood opposite the establishment of Williams & Mann, now all blaze from top to bottom.

"Stand back there!" exclaimed a burly policeman, waving his club at both boys. "Stand back."

"We work in the place," explained Frank.

"Can't help it," was the reply. "The insurance patrol has charge of the goods. You'll have to get out of the way. Lively, there!" added the officer, as a hook and ladder truck came dashing up the street.

So Richard and Frank fell back into the crowd, and were immediately joined by Bretzwart, the German shipping-clerk.

"I guess the place is a goner," remarked Frank, as the flames shot out of the upper windows.

"Wonder how it caught?" said Richard.

"Der poiler in der pasement busted," put in Bretzwart. "I chust come, and vos putting on mine odder coat ven I heard an explosion vich knock me mine feets off, and I rund out like I vos killed, and der whole place was on fire in two seconds already."

"Was Larry killed?" asked Frank.

Larry was the engineer and porter around the place.

"No, he was out, getting a bite to eat," replied the shipping-clerk.

Despite the efforts of the firemen, the flames made rapid progress, and in an hour the "fireproof" building was known to be doomed. Both of the heads of the firm had been sent for, and Mr. Williams soon put in an appearance.

He was pale and excited, and shook his head sadly when his many employees offered their services in any way they could be used.

"We can do nothing at present," he said. "The insurance companies have entire charge."

"I hope you are covered, Mr. Williams," said Richard earnestly.

"Very nearly so," was the reply. "The stop to business will be our worst loss. There is no telling when we will be able to resume. I only trust the accounts in the safes are all right."

By noon the fire was under control. It had burnt itself out, and all that remained of the establishment was its four scorched walls, and the mass of half burned stock and fixtures within. Part of the stock had been saved, and this was transferred to an empty store near by.

The boys assisted in this work until late in the evening, and also all day Saturday.

In the middle of Saturday afternoon Mr. Mann came to them and paid them their week's wages.

"You had better find other places," he said. "We have got into difficulty with the insurance companies, and it may be some time before our claim is adjusted. Besides, Mr. Williams speaks of retiring, and in that case I will probably join some other firm,"

This was dismaying news. Yet neither could blame Mr. Mann, though it threw them both out of employment without notice.

"You may help us here next week," went on Mr. Mann. "But next Saturday will finish the job. I will give both of you first-class recommendations, and if I hear of any openings will let you know."

And Mr. Mann went away to carry his news to the other clerks.

"It's too bad," said Frank, when he was gone. "It won't be an easy job to find another place."

"No, indeed," replied Richard. "Still, we can't complain of the way they have treated us."

Both of the boys wore sober faces that night. To Richard came the ever-recurring, thought, what next?

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A LUCKY RESOLVE.

"Well, Richard, we are gentlemen of leisure now."

It was Frank who spoke, and the occasion was the Monday morning following their final week with Williams & Mann.

"Yes; but it doesn't suit me in the least," returned Richard. "To be idle is the hardest work I can do. Have you anything in view?"

"Not a thing. I put in twelve applications last week to as many different houses, but as yet I haven't heard from a single one."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I hardly know. I don't think it will pay to make any personal applications."

"I'm going to try it," returned Richard, resolutely. "They can't say any more than no, and each no will save just two cents in postage if nothing else."

"When do you intend to start out," asked Frank, who could not help admiring Richard's pluck.

"In about an hour. It is too early yet to catch the heads of the firms."

"Going to start at any particular place?"

"Yes."

"Where?--or perhaps you don't care to tell," added Frank hastily.

"Yes, I do," replied Richard, smiling quietly. "I am going to try the stationer on the corner."

"Who? Martin? Why, he has such a small store I'm sure he doesn't need help. He and his son and a boy do all the business."

"Never mind. I made up my mind to stop at every place, and his is the first on the route; so I'll call, if only for the principle of the thing."

"That's an idea!" cried Frank. "You are bound to have a place if there

is a single one vacant. Well, Dick, I trust with all my heart that you'll succeed," he added warmly.

"You had better start out, too, Frank."

"Oh--I--I don't think it's much use," said the other hesitatingly.

"Oh, yes, it is, and you know it. Now confess that it is only your lack of 'nerve' that keeps you from it."

Frank colored slightly.

"Well, I guess it is," he admitted. "I never was a good hand at approaching people."

"Then you ought to break yourself in at once. Just break the ice and you'll have no further trouble. I remember just how bad I felt when I first came to New York to look for work. But I'm over it now, thank goodness!"

And truth to tell in the past few weeks Richard had lost much of his former shyness.

Frank Massanet was silent for a moment.

"I guess I will," he said finally. "I'll start out and have the thing over at once. Which way do you intend to go--up or down?"

"I thought I would try down town first."

"Then I'll go up. We can compare notes at supper-time."

"So we can. I hope we both have luck," said Richard.

But he did not feel particularly elated over the prospects. His former search for employment had convinced him that desirable situations were rarely to be had--there was always some one on hand to fill a vacancy as soon as it occurred.

He felt, however, that he must obtain employment of some kind, and that quickly. The small amount of money he had in hand would not last him long, and though kind-hearted Mrs. Massanet might be willing to let him remain awhile without paying board, he knew that now, with her son idle, the good woman could not afford so generous a course.

Richard had not gone to see Mr. Joyce as yet. He hesitated for several reasons. In the first place the leather merchant had been so kind to him that the boy felt it would be encroaching upon good nature to solicit further aid, and in the second place, Mr. Joyce must know he was out of a place, and would help him if he could, without being bothered about it.

"I won't go to him until after I've done all I can for myself," had

been Richard's conclusion. "I would rather show him that I can help myself."

Richard had written home about the fire, and had added that he would probably lose his place in consequence, but he had not sent word home that he was now idle, thinking it would be time enough to do so when he found himself unable to obtain another situation.

The store to which Richard had referred was a small but neat one, situated upon the corner of the street in which the Massanets lived and Second Avenue. It was kept by Jonas Martin, an elderly man, and his son, James. The stock consisted principally of books and stationery, although the proprietors also kept papers and magazines, for which there was a steady daily demand.

"I suppose there is hardly any use in striking him," thought Richard, as he entered the store. "But I said every place, so here goes."

He found the elderly Mr. Martin behind a desk, writing a letter. The storekeeper's face wore a troubled look.

"Good-morning," began Richard. "Is this Mr. Martin?"

"That's my name," was the reply. "What can I do for you?"

"I am looking for a place, sir. I worked for Williams & Mann, but they burned out, as, no doubt you know, and that threw me out of work. Have you anything open? I can furnish good recommendations."

Richard had carefully rehearsed this little speech, and now delivered it so that his hearer might understand every word that was uttered.

Mr. Martin looked at him sharply, and then rubbed his chin reflectively.

"What made you think I needed help?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know, sir. Every proprietor needs help at one time or another, and I've made up my mind to find a place if there is any open."

"You have recommendations, you say?"

"Yes, sir."

And Richard handed over those he had received from Williams & Mann.

Mr. Martin read them carefully.

"It seems to be all right," he said, as he handed back the paper. "If I thought you would answer my purpose I would look you up."

"Then you need help?" asked Richard, quickly, glad to think he had struck an opening with so little trouble.

"Yes, I do. My son James who helps me is sick in Philadelphia, and consequently I have only the errand boy to relieve me. It is too much for me and I must get a clerk."

"I would like you to try me," said Richard eagerly. "I would do my best to suit, even if the place was only a temporary one."

"It might be permanent. The business is growing. But of course when my son came back I could not pay a clerk so much."

"How much would you pay now?"

"How much do you expect?" asked Mr. Martin cautiously.

"I was getting eight dollars a week at my last place."

"I would be willing to pay that. But I want some one who is trustworthy and willing to learn. Have you other recommendations?"

"I can refer you to Mr. Timothy Joyce," replied Richard; and he wrote down the leather merchant's name and address on a bit of wrapping paper.

Mr. Martin looked at the neat handwriting.

"Come round to-morrow morning this time," he said. "I will look up the references this afternoon and if I find them satisfactory you can come to work at once."

"Thank you, sir. Good-morning."

By this time there were two customers waiting, so not wishing to detain the storekeeper longer. Richard nodded pleasantly and left the place.

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRANK'S IDEA.

"That's what I call luck!" thought Richard, as he hurried back to the Massanets' home. "I'm mighty glad I called on Mr. Martin. He seems to be a gentleman and will no doubt do what is right. I hope Frank has been equally fortunate."

Mrs. Massanet was surprised to see him returning so soon.

"What ees eet?" she asked, anxiously. "I hope you no deesheartened a'ready?"

"No, indeed!" returned the boy; and he told her of his good fortune.

"Zat ees nice!" exclaimed the Frenchwoman. "I hope you gits zee place widout trouble."

And then she gave a little sigh as she thought of her son's uncertain search.

"Maybe Frank will be as lucky," said Richard, who fancied he could read her thoughts.

"I sincerely hope so," returned Mrs. Massanet.

Not having anything special to do for the rest of the day, Richard sat down and wrote a long letter home. He intended not to send it until the following day, when he could add a postscript that the new place was positively his.

Five weeks in the great metropolis had worked wonders in the boy. He no longer looked or felt "green," and he was fast acquiring a business way that was bound, sooner or later, to be highly beneficial to him.

In these five weeks he had received several letters from friends and not a few from home, the most important news in all of them being the announcement of his sister Grace's engagement to Charley Wood, and baby Madge's first efforts to master her A B C's.

"I wish I could afford to bring them all to New York," had been Richard's thought. "Or else near enough so that I could go home to them every night. It would be so pleasant to have them around me. Perhaps some day I can afford to get a little cottage right near the city, which would be nicest of all; for I am sure mother would like to have a garden, even if it was a small one."

His letter for home finished, Richard spent an hour or more in the preparation of an advertisement which he intended to insert in one of the army journals on the following week. The advertisement gave his father's full name, company, regiment and so forth, and asked for the address of any one who had known him during the war, with promise of reward for information.

By the above it is easy to see that Richard was now in earnest about getting his father's pension money. Not only was he satisfied that they were entitled to it, but just now when his mother and sisters were struggling in Mossvale to make both ends meet, it was actually needed.

During the time that he had been working Richard had sent home every cent that he could spare. To be sure, the total amount had not been large--only a few dollars--but in the country this went a long way, and for it, as well as for the fact that it showed the son and brother's willingness to help, those at home were extremely grateful.

It was dinner-time when Richard had finished writing out the advertisement. Mrs. Massanet had prepared only a lunch, reserving a regular meal for the evening.

After he had eaten the time hung heavy upon Richard's hands. He put on his hat and sauntered down the street, and finally concluded to pay a visit to his friends at the Watch Below. He had not seen Doc Linyard since that visit to Frying Pan Court, and he was curious to know how Tom Clover was, and if the property in England had been heard from further.

It being the middle of the afternoon, trade at the small restaurant was slack, and Richard found both the old sailor and his wife glad to see him.

"Tom's mendin' fast," was the old sailor's reply to Richard's question concerning the sick man. "We are goin' to bring him down here to-morrow or the day after. He's in his bearings again--right mind, you know--and I think as how the worst is over."

"And where is Pep?"

"Pep's to school; I sent him last week. He's got to have an eddication, no two ways on it. Betty's goin' to manage it with Tom when he is well."

"I am glad to hear that. And how about your property?"

"Oh, it's safe. Last week I run afoul of an old lawyer friend of mine-- saved his life onct in a blow off Cape Hatteras--and he's taken it in tow. He's written to the lawyers on the tudder side and we're to fix it up just as soon as Tom's strong enough to sign articles." "Good enough," said Richard, heartily.

During the course of the conversation which followed he told Doc Linyard of his hopes of finding some one who had known his father during the war.

"Tom is an old soldier!" exclaimed Doc. "He took to the army and I took to the navy."

"Is that so? What regiment was he in?"

"I don't know. He was in Boston at the time, and was drafted from there."

"My father went from here. But he might be able to put me on some sort of a track," added Richard, who was unwilling to let even the smallest chance escape him.

"I'll ask him about it when he's strong enough. How much would the pension money amount to?"

"Not less than a thousand dollars--perhaps twice that."

"Phew! It's worth workin' for."

"Yes, indeed!" put in Mrs. Linyard. "I hope you get it, Mr. Dare; you deserve it."

When Richard returned to his boarding-place he met Frank Massanet at the door. He could see by his friend's face that he had not met with success.

"I tried twenty-six places," reported Frank. "Every one had all the help needed. One man offered to put me on the road, selling goods on commission, but I was to pay my own expenses. The offer didn't appear good and I declined it. How did you make out?"

Richard told him. Of course Frank was surprised.

"It wasn't luck though," he said, "it was sticking to the principle you started out on. I trust it is a sure thing. It will give you an insight into the retail trade, so that you may start for yourself some day. I would start in for myself to-morrow, if I had the capital."

"Do you understand the retail business?" asked Richard, with much interest.

"Pretty well. Last year and around the holidays I tended during the evenings for a firm on Fourteenth Street, and I had a good chance to learn all the ins and outs. Besides, I was in the business when I went to school--carrying papers and parcels between school-hours."

"How much would you need to start?"

"I've got six hundred dollars saved. If I had twice that I wouldn't be afraid to hire a store and try it."

"Can't you raise the other?"

"I haven't tried yet. I would rather use my own money--or take a partner, if I could find the right fellow."

"I'd like to go in with you," said Richard. "I think we would get along first-rate together."

"I know we would," cried Frank, enthusiastically. "Can't you raise the money?"

"I don't think I can. I'll think of it though."

MR. MARTIN'S CLERKS.

The idea of some day going into partnership with Frank Massanet was an attractive one to Richard. He felt that the stock-clerk would not venture into business on his own account unless he was moderately certain of success, and that would mean more money and a certain feeling of independence.

Richard was up early on the following morning and on hand at Mr. Martin's store long before that gentleman put in an appearance. He found the place in charge of the boy, who was busy sorting out the morning papers and folding them.

"I'm waiting for Mr. Martin," said Richard, by way of an explanation for standing around.

"Are you the new clerk?" asked Philip Borne, for such was the boy's name.

"I expect to be," replied Richard. "Did Mr. Martin say anything about me?"

"Said he expected to see you this morning. He'll be here in about half an hour. He's terribly worried over his son Jim, who's sick in Philadelphia. The doctors telegraphed last evening that they were afraid he couldn't live."

"It's too bad. I trust, for Mr. Martin's sake, they are mistaken."

In less than half an hour the proprietor put in an appearance. He looked even more worried than the day previous.

"I am glad you are here, Dare," he said. "I saw Mr. Williams last night and he gave you a good recommendation. But he was almost afraid you had not had enough experience in the retail trade to take charge, which just at present you would have to do, because I must go to Philadelphia by the first afternoon train by the latest."

Richard's hopes fell.

"I will do the best I can, Mr. Martin," he said, earnestly. "Although I'll admit I thought to come here only to help, and--"

"Yes, yes, I understand; and that is all right," interrupted the storekeeper, hastily. "I expected to stay, up to last night, but now I must go. If I could only get some one here besides you, some one who understood customers. Phil can help some, but he is too young."

"I know the very person!" exclaimed Richard. "He has had just the experience you desire, and I can get him at once, too."

And Richard told Mr. Martin about Frank Massanet.

"Ah, yes, Mr. Williams mentioned him to me. Do you think he can come to-day?"

"Yes, sir. I'll go at once and find out."

"Do so; I'll promise that you shall lose nothing by it," returned Mr. Martin.

In a moment Richard was on his way back to the house. He found Frank just finishing breakfast.

"Why, what's up?" asked the stock-clerk. "What brings you back?"

"Nothing only--I've got a situation for you," replied Richard as coolly as he could, although he could not suppress a hearty smile.

"A situation for me!" ejaculated Frank, in undisguised wonder. "Surely you don't mean it!"

"Don't I though? Just come along and see."

"Where?"

"At Martin's."

"But I thought you had accepted--"

"One position. So I have, but there is another for you. Come along, I'll tell you all about it on the way."

And Richard got Frank's hat and put it on his friend's head and had him out on the street almost before he could realize it.

At Mr. Martin's store a general explanation followed, and Richard and Frank were hired at a joint salary of sixteen dollars per week. They were to have entire charge of the business, and with the aid of Phil were to do the best they could until they heard from Mr. Martin again, which the storekeeper hoped would be in a few days. The proprietor spent an hour in giving all the instructions he could in that limited time, and then, half distracted, hurried off to catch an early train for Philadelphia.

"Well, this is a queer go, to say the least," exclaimed Richard, after Mr. Martin had gone. "It's more like a dream than anything else."

"He would never do as he has--leave two entire strangers in charge of his place--if he was not distracted by this bad news about his son," returned Frank; and he hit the exact truth.

"Well, now we are here, we must make the most of the opportunity," said Richard. "Let us consider ourselves partners and push _our_"

business for all it is worth."

Both boys started in with a will. The first customer was a little girl, and both Richard and Frank desired the honor of waiting upon her.

But the girl wanted a cent's worth of red chalk, and as neither could find the article in demand the would-be purchaser was turned over to Phil, who in turn handed the cash to Frank, while Richard gravely made the entry upon the daily sales-book.

But the two set diligently at work, and by evening had the stock fairly well located in mind and also the prices. During the day trade had been fairly brisk, and when closing up time came they found they had taken in twenty-eight dollars.

"I don't know if that's good or bad," said Richard. "We certainly sold goods to all who wished them."

"The thing is to sell to those who don't know whether they want to buy or not," observed Frank. "Still I guess twenty-eight dollars is fair enough for Tuesday."

Both were on hand early next morning. According to Mr. Martin's instructions the show-windows were emptied, and after they had been cleaned, Frank, assisted by Richard, dressed them again.

Now, Mr. Martin's window dressing had always been of the plain, old-fashioned kind, not altogether suited to the present times. He only put in a few staple articles and left them unchanged for a long time.

But Frank Massanet proceeded on different lines, and when he and Richard had finished the improvement was apparent. Nearly every class of goods in the store was represented, and anything new or special was given a prominent place.

"That looks hot," said Phil, who was given to slang. "Never saw it so showy before."

And the many people who stopped to gaze at the display seemed to justify his statement.

"How often should a window like that be cleaned?" asked Richard.

"At least once a week," replied Frank. "And twice a week is not too much, if you have the time to spare."

Both Richard and Frank worked diligently all day. Of course many things were strange to them, and they made some laughable blunders; but they invariably took things so pleasantly that none of the customers seemed to mind.

When night came they found that they had taken in five dollars more than the day previous.

"It's on account of fixing up the window," said Richard.

"Partly that, and partly getting used to customers and the run of stock," replied Frank.

They were soon on the way home. Richard had sent his letter to his mother the day previous, and was now expecting one in return.

"Here is your usual letter," said Mattie Massanet, appearing at the door.

"Thank you," replied Richard. "Excuse me if I look at it at once. I want to see if it contains anything important."

Richard tore the letter open and began to read. His eyes had glanced over scarcely a dozen lines when he uttered a cry of dismay.

And no wonder, for the communication contained the startling intelligence that fire had visited Mossvale, the Dare cottage was burned to the ground, and his mother and sisters were left without a home.

CHAPTER XXXI.

TOM CLOVER'S STATEMENT.

The news from Mossvale was certainly a cruel blow to Richard, and, as he read the letter written by his sister Nancy, his cheeks paled.

"What is it?" asked Frank, seeing that something was wrong. "No one dead, I hope."

"No, not as bad as that," replied Richard faintly; "but bad enough. Read it."

Frank took the letter and glanced at it hastily. The important passages ran as follows:

"It is awful news. Our home is burned to the ground, and I am writing this at Mrs. Wood's where we are all staying. The fire started in the barn (we think a tramp must have done it), and the wind carried the sparks over to the house, and in ten minutes it was all ablaze. It was one o'clock at night, and no one was around to help us. Mother, Grace and I saved all we could, but that was not much, because we did not have time, and it got so awfully hot. When the fire was out, Charlie made us all go over to his house, and sent a team over for what stuff we had saved.

"Mother is awfully excited, and Grace is sick over it. Madge is all right, and so am I. But I think it's awful, and I don't know what we are going to do. Mrs. Wood and Charley, are very kind, but we can't stay here very long, even if Grace is engaged to Charley.

"Mother says there is an insurance on the house and furniture for nine hundred dollars, but she hasn't been able to find the papers yet, and maybe they have been burned, too. If you can, come down right away. I suppose they don't like to let clerks off in New York, but they ought to make an exception in a case like this."

Frank handed the letter over to his sister Mattie.

"I'm sorry for you and your folks, Dick," he said earnestly. "Of course you'll go at once."

"How can I?" replied Richard helplessly. "Mr. Martin will--"

"Never mind Mr. Martin," interrupted Frank. "Your first duty is to your family. I'll get along as best I can, and I'll explain to Mr. Martin if he gets back before you do."

"But what will you do for meals? You must have time to get them?" went on Richard, anxious lest his friend should be assuming too much.

"He can take lunch along, and I'll bring him his dinner," put in Mattie. "You go, Dick; your mother and your sisters need you."

Richard needed no further urging. Whatever Mattie said must certainly be right. He glanced at the clock.

"Quarter to ten. I wonder when I can get a train?" he cried.

A consultation of a time-table showed that no train for Mossvale could be had until nine-thirty the next morning.

"It's too bad!" he groaned. "I could have taken one just an hour ago if I had known."

There was nothing to do, however, but wait, and so Richard retired with the rest.

He passed a sleepless night, thinking over what had happened, and trying to form some plan for the future. But he could arrive at no conclusion, and found that he must wait until he had talked the matter over with the others.

He was the first one up in the morning, and, having over three hours yet to wait, took a walk around to the store to see what Phil was doing.

"There is a telegram for you; just came," said the boy, and he handed it over.

"More news from home," thought Richard. "But we have no telegraph office. Wonder what it means?"

And he tore the telegram open.

It ran as follows:

"PHILADELPHIA, _June_ 28.

"RICHARD DARE:

"My son is dead. Close store until further orders.

"JONAS MARTIN."

Richard had just finished reading the dispatch when Frank came up.

"You are ahead of me," said Frank. "What have you there?"

"Word from Mr. Martin. His son is dead, and we are to close the store until further notice."

Here was more sad news. Phil, who had known young Mr. Martin well, and liked him, felt it the most.

"It will break old Mr. Martin all up," he said sadly. "He thought a heap of his son. The two were alone in the world."

"I can get away easily enough now," said Richard, with a sorry little laugh. "I won't hurry back as soon as I intended. You must write me if anything turns up."

In less than an hour the store was closed up, a death notice pasted on the door, and then Frank accompanied Richard down to the ferry.

On the corner of Liberty Street they met Pep, who started back in surprise.

"I was just comin' up to see you!" he exclaimed to Richard. "My uncle wants you to come right down!"

"Wants me to come down?" queried Richard. "What for?"

"Don't know exactly. Dad's there, and they both want to see you. You'd better go right away; but maybe you _was_ going," added Pep suddenly.

"No, I wasn't. I was going to take a train home," replied Richard.

"Perhaps it's nothing in particular."

He had an hour before train time, and, accompanied by Frank, walked down to the Watch Below.

Doc Linyard greeted him cordially. He was surprised to see Richard dressed up, and grieved to learn of the cause.

"Well, I'm glad as how _I_ ain't got no bad news to tell you," said the old sailor with a grin. "Tom Clover is upstairs, in his right mind, and wants to see you."

"What about?" "Never mind, just go up," replied Doc.

On a comfortable bed, in an upper chamber, lay Tom Clover. Good care and nursing had done wonders for the man, and when Richard looked at him he could hardly realize that this was the miserable wretch he had visited in the garret at Frying Pan Court.

"Here's Mr. Dare come to see you," said Doc Linyard, by way of an introduction.

Tom Clover grasped Richard's hand tightly.

"Betty and Doc have told me all about you," he said in a somewhat feeble voice. "I thank you more than I can put in words. Sit down; I want to talk to you."

"I would like to, Mr. Clover, but I've got to catch a train for home in three quarters of an hour," replied Richard. "I'll call as soon as I get back."

"Just stay a little while," urged Doc Linyard. "Tom's got something to say to you."

"Doc tells me your father was a soldier in the late war?" went on Tom Clover.

"Yes, sir."

"Did he once live in Brooklyn?"

"Yes, sir. But--" and Richard paused, while his heart beat rapidly.

"And was his first name John?"

"Yes, sir--John Cartwell Dare. But why do you ask, Mr. Clover? Is it possible that you knew him?"

Tom Clover raised himself up to a sitting position.

"Know him?" he cried. "We were bosom companions for eighteen months! Why, I caught him in my arms the day he was shot!"

THE FIRM OF MASSANET AND DARE.

Tom Clover's unexpected statement was a revelation to Richard, and subsequent questioning convinced the boy that all that Doc Linyard's brother-in-law had said concerning the acquaintance with his father was perfectly true.

It was a fact that Clover had been drafted in Boston, but during the second year of his service his time had expired, and then he had enlisted in a Brooklyn regiment, and become a member of the same company to which Mr. Dare belonged.

"It seems too good to be true," cried Richard finally. "Perhaps Doc has already told you of the pension we are trying to get."

"Yes, and I can witness the papers easily enough, and get several others to, too, if it's necessary. Have you got them here in the city?"

"No; they are home. But I can soon get them, and either bring them or send them on."

This was agreed to, and it was with a much lighter heart that Richard, a quarter of an hour later, bade Frank good-by at the ferry.

"Send the papers to me," said Frank at parting. "I haven't anything to do at present, and will attend to the affair with pleasure."

"Thank you, Frank, I will," was Richard's reply.

The journey to Mossvale was an uneventful one. When Richard reached the Wood cottage all the family ran out to meet him, and in a second his mother's arms were about his neck.

"I'm so glad you have come, Richard!" she cried. "We need you sadly."

Presently he was seated in the doorway, with little Madge on his knee, and the others gathered around, and there he listened to all they had to tell.

The insurance papers had been found, but Mrs. Dare was undecided whether to rebuild or accept the cash.

"We could not get back such a nice home as we had for nine hundred dollars," she said. "And, besides, Sandy Stone has offered me two hundred dollars for the land, and that's a good price, Mr. Wood says."

"Did you save father's pension papers?"

"Yes. But why do you ask?" inquired Mrs. Dare, her curiosity aroused.

For reply Richard told the little party all about his strange meeting

with Tom Clover.

"He tells the truth!" cried Mrs. Dare. "I have heard your father mention his name. Thank heaven for having brought you two together!"

And that night, even with all their troubles, the whole Dare family rested without much worry beneath their kind neighbor's roof.

In the morning Richard sent the pension papers to Frank by the first mail. Then he helped get what was left of their furniture into shape, and took a walk over to what had been the old homestead.

Nothing remained but a heap of charred timbers and fallen stones.

"It's the ending of our life here in the country," he whispered to himself. "God grant it may be the beginning of a more prosperous one in the city."

At the close of the week came visitors--Frank, Doc Linyard, and a strange gentleman, who was introduced as Mr. Styles, the old sailor's lawyer friend.

"Mr. Styles says your claim is all right," said Doc Linyard, when introductions all round were over. "He says as how you'll get twenty-five hundred dollars afore three months are up."

It was glorious news.

"Sure?" asked Mrs. Dare, with tears in her eyes.

"Positive, madam," replied Mr. Styles. "I will buy the claim for two thousand dollars if you need the money," he whispered.

"No, thank you; I can wait," she replied. "But I will pay you well for what you have done for us," she added hastily.

"Avast there!" cried the old sailor. "Tom and I are going to settle his claim. We're going to get our money in one month--two thousand dollars each!"

A little while later Frank drew Richard to one side.

"I've heard from Mr. Martin," he said. "Since his son died he has lost all interest in his business, and he wants to sell out and go back to his family in England."

"Sell out?" repeated Richard in surprise. "It would be a good chance for us."

"So I thought; a chance that may not happen again in a lifetime. He has been established twelve years, and has a good run of trade. Last year his sales amounted to twelve thousand dollars. The rent is only seven hundred dollars a year, and he has a three years' lease."

"How much does he ask?"

"If he can sell out before the first he will do so at the cost of the stock--fifteen hundred dollars. Now, by hard scraping I can raise half of that, and if you can raise the other half, and a little extra besides, I believe it will prove a good venture."

Richard thought a moment.

"If my mother will advance the money I'll do it," he replied.

* * * * *

Two years have passed.

As Mr. Styles had predicted, at the end of three months Mr. Dare's pension money was in the widow's possession. Long before this, however, Mrs. Dare sold her land in Mossvale, and removed with her family to New York, having apartments adjacent to Mrs. Massanet, with whom she was soon on intimate terms. She advanced the necessary money to Richard, and he and Frank Massanet immediately bought out Mr. Martin's store and set up business on their own account.

Doc Linyard and Tom Clover now run a prosperous hotel and restaurant in the lower part of the city, where their old friends are always welcome. Pep attends school regularly, and thoroughly appreciates his improved condition in life.

Grace Dare has gone back to the country, and in her Charley Wood has found an affectionate wife and a good housekeeper. Next month Nancy is to become Mrs. Massanet. As for Mattie Massanet, she is often seen to blush when Richard's name is mentioned, and rumor has it that she will some day give her heart into the keeping of her brother's partner.

And Mr. Timothy Joyce? Only last week I met him at a Third Avenue Elevated Station, looking as stout and hearty as ever.

"Just come down on the train," he replied, in answer to my question. "Been making a call on Massanet & Dare, the stationers and booksellers. They are young friends of mine, Dare especially, and I take a great interest in them. Since they fixed up this spring they've got a fine store, and I know they're doing first-rate. They deserve it, too--working as hard as they do. They've got my best wishes for success."

And ours, too; eh, reader?

THE END.

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