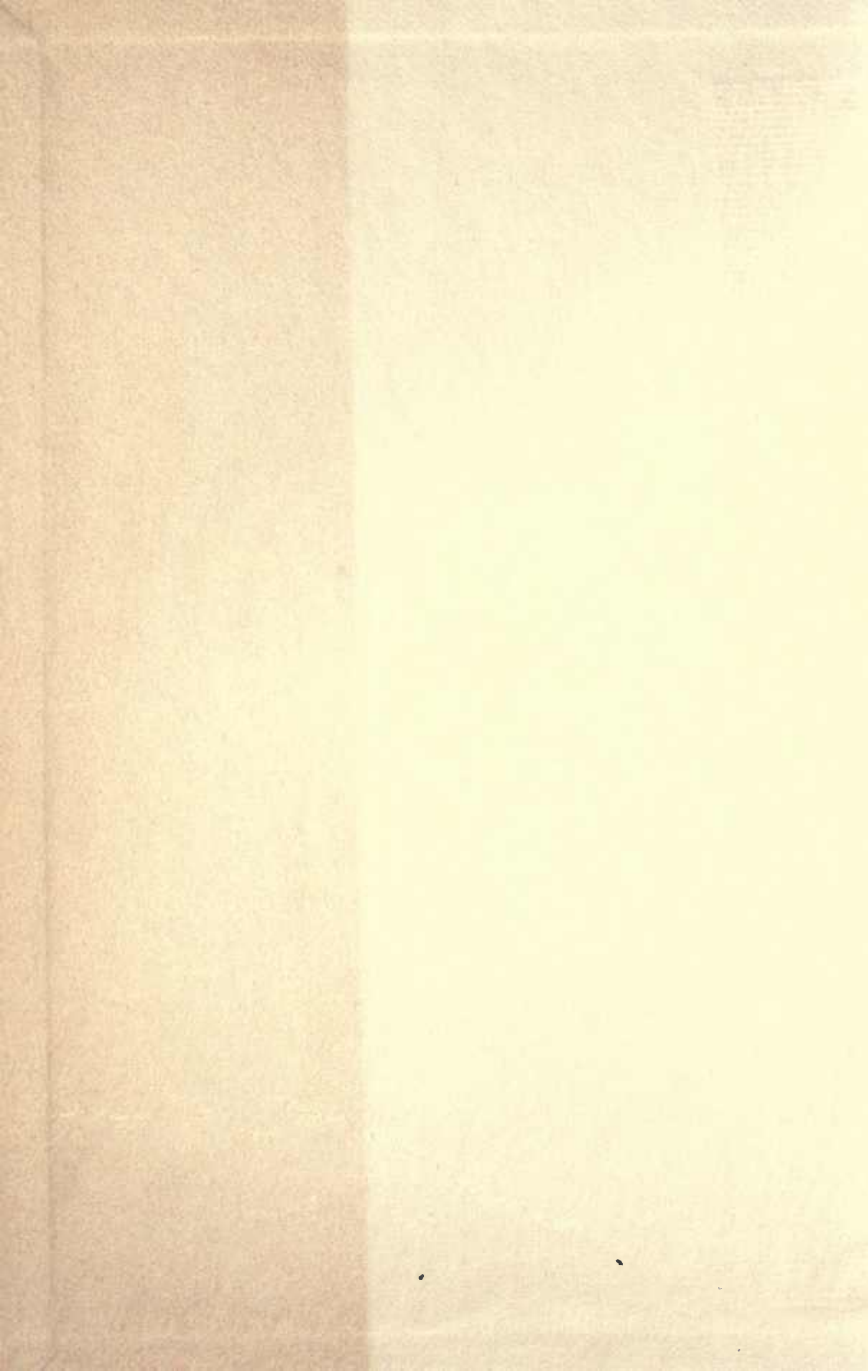


# TOM TAD



WILLIAM HENRY  
VENABLE



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48

Clarke M. Kay

June 26, '95







"MR. TURTLE WILL WAKE UP AND HUMP HIMSELF."

# TOM TAD

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By  
*William Henry Venable*

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AUTHOR OF "A History of the United States," "A Dream of Empire," etc.

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# Tom Tad

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## I

### BOYS IN THE WOODS

“HELLO!”

“Hello yourself!”

“Why, Charley, is that you?”

“’Tain’t anybody else. Didn’t you know me, Tom?”

“No; I took you for a coon or a catamount. What are you up there for?”

“For fun; I thought I saw a young squir’l go in this hole; but the holler don’t go no furdur’n I can reach, and there’s no squir’l. But I see a noriold’s nes’ out here on a limb. Come on up.”

“That’s not an oriole’s nest, Charley.”

“I bet you it is. Hurry, Tom. Let’s play circus. This limb is a trapeze. You hang on to me and swing out, and I’ll hold fast by one leg.”

“No; play we was on a ship’s mast, and that

there was a storm. Don't the wind feel nice and cool to your face? Whee! don't she rock! I'm going to climb clean to the tip-top and stick my head higher than the tree."

Tom clambered to the giddy outlook, clinging to the swaying bough and peering out through the dense foliage of the sugar maple which was now his ship at sea.

"Who's that whistling? Sounds like Sam Noggle. Look'e there! I spy a gang by the hollow sycamore. Can you see from where you are?"

"Yes, now I do. Keep still, Tom, and watch 'em."

"They are coming this way, Charley. Hope they won't look up and see us. Wisht I had something to drop.—Yes, there is Sam Noggle and Seneca Snooks and Alic Thug, and the fellow with the gun is Barclay Snooks. Right behind him there's Squinty Runkle, following along as if he was afraid of his own shadow."

"Hush up, Tom, or they'll hear."

While the two arboreal youths kept a dead silence, listening intently, the nomadic idlers below, having sauntered within the shadow of the tree, disposed themselves upon the ground in easy attitudes. The most striking figure in the vagabond group was that of a small-eyed, sallow individual of seventeen or more, with warts on his grimy hands, and a few reddish-yellow hairs

growing upon his chin, in patches, like tufts of dead grass on a clay bank. He wore a long-tailed nankeen coat, and the picturesque ruin of a white hat of that variety vulgarly called "plug."

Taking from his vest pocket a cheap cigar, he bit off the end of it and lighted the weed with a match, while the attendant ragamuffins gathered closer around him, admiring his powers of suction and his gun. That gun! How they longed to possess such a weapon of destruction! What a privilege to be allowed to handle the coveted firearm, if but for a second! The jealous owner was not easily induced to permit any one but himself to touch the precious fowling-piece. Squinty Runkle imprudently ventured to pick it up, raise it to his shoulder and, with eyes shut and mouth open, take aim at things in general, when the owner angrily shouted:

"Put that shooting-iron down! Don't you tetch it ag'in!"

Squinty, in a flurry, laid the gun on the ground, looking ashamed and penitent.

"Do you know what I'll do, young man, if you tetch my gun ag'in?"

Squinty stared helplessly at the other boys, in mute trepidation.

"I'll rip off yer scalp."

"He wasn't hurting the gun, Barclay," hesitatingly expostulated Seneca Snooks who, for

some reason, wished to appear the friend of Squinty.

“You shet your gab, Sineca,” was the reply, accompanied by a box on the younger brother’s ear. “Jist let him tetch that shooting-iron, and I’ll peel the scalp off him with my bowie-knife, like the red-skins used to scalp the whites in this here Big Woods. There used to be millions of Indians all around here. My gran’daddy lost his scalp two or three times. But he had his revenge, didn’t he, Sineca?”

The younger brother thus appealed to nodded confirmation.

“How did he git his revenge?” asked Sam Noggle.

“He coaxed the red-skins to come to his block-house to git some whiskey, and about fifteen of ’em dropped to it, or wasn’t it seventeen? And he let ’em drink whiskey until they was dead drunk and asleep on their backs. Then he poured melted lead down their throats, didn’t he, Sineca?”

“Yes, he did; lead and pewter.”

“My gran’daddy was a big man in the war,” continued Barclay. “He shot two hundred British with this very shooting-iron.”

Sam Noggle’s face plainly indicated that he doubted the statement, but he did not deny it; he merely remarked, “Must be a mighty good gun.”

"I should say so. It has saved my life more than once. Hain't it, Sineca?"

Seneca hesitated but an instant and then reinforced Barclay's word with an emphatic, "I bet it has."

"One day I was out alone in the woods, without ary gun, when a tiger came bulging at me."

"A tiger, Barclay!" said Sam, quizzically. "There ain't no tigers in these woods."

"That was when we was living at Christiansburg, more than twenty mild from here," replied Barclay, knocking the ashes from his cigar.

"But there's no tigers in the United States."

"Look here, Sam, do you mean to tell me I'm a liar? This tiger that I'm telling you about was a Siberian tiger that got loose from John Robinson's show and was bulging around the woods fer something to eat, and then's when it came at me. I hadn't ary gun or ary knife. So I picked up a club and I went fer that beast. We had it nip and tuck fer more than two hours. At last I got a fair lick and stunned him, and hollered to a man to fetch some rope, and we tied him—that is I tied him, fer the man was afeard to help. That man turned as white as a sheet when he seed the tiger. Well, I wrote a letter to John Robinson down at Cincinnati, and he came up and got his blasted old tiger. He paid me a thousand dollars fer that animal, didn't he, Sineca?"

"More'n a thousand," testified the faithful younger brother.

"No; jist a cool thousand."

"What a liar he is!" whispered Tom to his comrade in the tree-top.

"He knows they're afraid to deny anything he says," answered Charley. "I believe he'd just as soon kill a boy as look at him."

"Where shall we go next, Barclay?" asked Sam Noggle. "What's the matter of you all comin' down to the river with me and go in swimmin'?"

"No. I'm going round by Tadmores's house, on the hill, to try to get a pop at his dog. I'd like to shoot that dog, or pizen it, to get even with their Dutchman w'at ordered me out of the water-millon patch. Little Tom is a sassy cub, and the whole pack of Tadmores is proud. That gal Hanner is mighty stuck up; she won't look at a workin' man."

"She's good lookin', if she is stuck up," said Alic.

"That won't save the dog if I kin draw a bead on him with this," muttered Barclay, laying his warty paw on the gun.



## II

### THE LAND "TORTLE"

WITH rapidly beating heart, Tom, from his perch, heard these sentences concerning his home folks and his dog. What more Barclay might have said was interrupted by a shout from Squinty Runkle, who, after his humiliating adventure with the gun, had rambled off by himself. While tramping about in the weeds and tall grass, he struck his foot against a solid object and, stooping, discovered a queer animal which he picked up and held to the view of the idlers under the tree.

"It's a land tortle!" he cried.

"Danged if it isn't!" was the corroborative exclamation of Thug. "Bring him here, Squinty." The four squatters scrambled to their feet and crowded around Squinty when that rejoicing juvenile fetched the captured reptile near the maple.

"Le'me cut my name on his back," was the proposal of the elder Snooks, as he cast aside the stump of his cigar.

"No," protested the proprietor of the captive; "cut my name; he ain't your tortle."

“He’s mine if I’m a mind to take him away from you. Lay him down here, and le’s look at him.”

The intimidated Squinty obeyed. Sam Noggle looked on with manifest disapproval of Barclay’s despotism, but did not interfere. As for Thug and the lesser Snooks, they were reduced to serfdom.

“Now,” proceeded Barclay, “I’ll show you fellers how you kin have some bully sport. First, Alic, you go and kindle a fire in that holler stump. Wait, here is some matches. Squinty, you run and git a lot of dry leaves and twigs. No! hold on! Bring them matches back, Alic; go along with Squinty, and you two hurry up and fetch a pile of kindling, and I’ll tetch off the fire myself. Sineca, you stay here and watch my gun, and keep your eye on that turtle, and don’t let him git away, or I’ll wallop you. D’ye hear?”

The fire was soon blazing briskly and within half an hour the dry wood of the stump was one red glow. The pungent smoke rose among the green boughs and greeted the nostrils and eyes of Tom and Charley, like incense. Those observant witnesses were as curious as the terrestrial party to learn what sort of sport Barclay was about to begin. They were not kept long in suspense. The brutal big boy deliberately scraped a heap of burning coals upon a bark

shovel which he conveyed to the spot where the stupid tortoise lay, on the ground, with head and legs drawn within its shell which was shut up like a box.

"Fetch him out here, Sineca, on the level ground, and you'll soon see how Mr. Turtle will wake up and hump himself when I put my card on his back."

Tom and Charley, from their lofty seat in the tree, like sylvan gods, looking down, saw Barclay prepare to execute the plan of fiery torture he had devised.

"Now look out fer fun, boys! Something warm is about to drap on our friend. Didn't I tell you so? See him pop his head out to see what's the matter! He can't holler, or I swow he'd yell like ——"

"Take the coals off his back and let him go!"

These words rang loudly from above. To say that the group on the earth was startled by this order from the sky is not to say enough. They were amazed. It was as if the dumb victim of persecution had drawn out of heaven a voice of mercy.

"Take the coals off his back and let the tortle go!" Barclay and his companions staring up saw Tom and Charley in the top of the tree. Tom's was the voice they heard.

"What business is it of yourn?" yelled Barclay.

"It's anybody's business. You ought to be ashamed to play a mean trick like that. How would you like to have hot coals put on your back? It ain't fair. Why don't you take a tortle of your own size, you ornery brute?"

"What's that you say?"

"You're an ornery brute, I say, and a coward."

"Coward! Gi'me that gun, Sineca. Blast me if I don't shoot that kid's head off." Saying this he made a feint of carrying out the threat and actually pointed the gun at Tom; he even went so far as to cock it. Charley Blogson was desperately frightened. Tom's excitement was defiant and reckless.

"Don't, Barclay," interposed Alic. "Don't point the gun at him; it might go off——"

"Shoot if you dare!" cried Tom. "You are afraid to shoot! You are all cowards or you would take the tortle's part! Shoot if you dare!"

"And I will shoot!"

The next instant he did shoot, but took care to direct the muzzle of the piece so that the discharge would not be likely to injure the human game that he wished only to terrify. Now it happened that the rusty gun was overloaded and it had not been fired for a long time. It went off, with a tremendous explosion, and with so violent a kick that Barclay was thrown back-

ward to the ground and fell upon the very coals provided for "waking up" the smaller brute, which in the general confusion escaped to covert in the cool grass. That Barclay "humped himself" to avoid a scorching, his friends were not sorry to see. His bruises and sundry holes burnt in his long-tailed coat were not the most alarming effect of Barclay's rashness. A stray shot of the handful that flew into the air hit Charley Blogson in the leg, causing that hapless child to howl with pain and shriek that he was killed. Barclay, as soon as he could get upon his feet, took to his heels, as did likewise his brother, with Squinty Runkle and Alic Thug. Sam Noggle lingered until Tom and Charley descended from the tree. Satisfied that neither of them was seriously hurt, his mind was relieved. Still bearing in his memory the accusation of cowardice which Tom had hurled at the whole gang, Sam felt it due to his self-respect to show resentment.

"I can whale you both," he said, "and two more like you." After which sociable remark, he indulged in a war-whoop such as he imagined the Indians give when they rush to battle; then he scudded away through the thick woods to join the retreating forces of chieftain Barclay Snooks.

### III

#### CHARLEY BLOGSON'S LEG

"CHARLEY, do you think you can walk as far as our house? Is your leg much hurt? Maybe you'll have to have it cut off. Uncle Felix is a sargeant, you know, and he will saw it off for you for nothing. Pull up your trouse's-leg and let's see the woun'. Here it is in the hind calf of your ankle. There's a blue spot and some blood. Does it pain?"

"No, not much yet, but I'm afraid the shot will pizen my blood. Doctor Blumas says there's ars'nic in shot and a boy once died after swallowing a bullet. I'd hate to have that leg took off, Tom. Do you really think there is any danger? It must be dreadful to have them saw off your live leg."

The boys trudged along, up hill and down dale, over logs and through tangled underbrush, talking as they went, Charley's mind sorely troubled with misgivings that the shot might "pizen" his blood, in which case he would be obliged to suffer a surgical operation.

"If I have to have my leg took off, would they hang Barclay?"

"Of course; of course they would. They might hang Seneca too, and Squinty, and Sam, for they looked on and encouraged Barclay to shoot. The law says that an assistant in a murder case is just as bad as the head murderer."

"I wish they would hang 'em," said Charley, "or put 'em in jail anyway. But I hate to have your uncle saw it off."

"It don't hurt as much as you might think to have your leg or arm cut off. The meat under the skin hasn't any feeling, the physiology book says. You can jab a fork into the lean meat or muscle, and not know it. Then the bone won't hurt either, but you'll hate the sound of the saw. Bone is just like wood."

Miss Hannah Tadmire was the first to greet Tom when he and the melancholy Blogson came across the lawn in front of the house. She had been anxiously awaiting her brother's return. So had his mother and his aunt. They were all much relieved to see the boy, but not quite so glad he had brought Charley with him.

"Why Tom, where in the world have you been all day? Mother has needed you to split kindling and to bring up coal."

"Has she? What's the hired man for? It hurts my back, and makes my head ache, to carry up that heavy coal hod, and it's so far to go for kindling,—clean down to the shop. But I'll tend to it. Where's Uncle Felix?"

“He went out with his beating-net to catch bugs. Yonder he is in the meadow. Are you not hungry, you and Charley? Come in and get some pie; I’ll tell mother and aunty you are found.”

“We weren’t lost. We will be there in a minute. First I must see Uncle Felix; Charley has some business with him.”

“Can’t Charley wait until after you eat lunch? uncle will soon be back. Shall I run and call him while you eat?”

“No, no; we’ll go ourselves. We’ll be back in a second.”

They soon came near Uncle Felix, whom they found intently examining a beetle he had just caught.

“Oh, Uncle Felix,” began Tom, almost out of breath, “his leg is hurt.”

“Not a bit of it,” replied the uncle, inspecting the specimen in his fingers. “Not a bit of it, Tom,—all six of his legs are perfect.”

Charley Blogson, whose thoughts were concerned with his own walking appendages, wondered how Tom’s uncle could indulge in such crazy levity concerning the number of a boy’s legs.

“I mean Charley; I don’t mean the bug. His leg is hurt.”

“Not bug, but beetle; you should never call a beetle a bug. Have I not often explained to



you the difference? Now pay attention. A beetle ——”

“Yes, I know, but Uncle Felix, look’e here. Charley Blogson is shot in the leg by a gun, and might of been killed by old Barclay and he’s afraid it will poison his blood and mortify, maybe, so that he will have to have it took off.”

“What are you taking about? Mortify? Is this the boy? Who is hurt? Are you the boy? Are you Blogson?”

“Yes, ma’m,—I mean sir,” stammered Charley, much confused and frightened, for he now repented that he had rushed upon his fate. “Do you think it will have to—do you think you will have to—will I have to have it took off?”

“Let me see the wound. Lie right down upon the grass. You were inconsiderate, Tom, to bring him here if he is much injured. Why didn’t you stop at the house? Don’t be scared, Charley,—lie down and I will examine.”

Pale and trembling the sufferer obeyed and, having stretched himself on his back, he carefully pulled up the left leg of his trousers. Tom made haste to point out the little red spot on a brown and stalwart calf.

“Is that all?” asked the operator, not able to restrain his laughter. With what grateful joy did Blogson hear the slighting remark! Uncle Felix took from a small case of instruments a pair of tiny forceps with which he picked a bird-

shot from its shallow lodgment just under the skin of Blogson's leg.

Charley arose and, casting a sheepish glance at Dr. Eldon, beckoned Tom aside. "Don't tell anybody." Then, speaking aloud, "I've got to hurry home and fetch in the cows from the pasture. Good-bye."

## IV

### TOM AND HIS MOTHER

TOM made a bee-line for the house, ravenous for pie. At the dining-room door he was met by his mother, his aunt and his sister. The mother surveyed him with looks of reproof and bid him wash his hands and face; the aunt scanned his torn garments and threw up her hands as though speech failed her; the sister cut the pie into quarters and put one of them on a big plate for Tom.

“Have you got any buttermilk?” The buttermilk was at hand. The amount of refreshments that Tom managed to convey to his interior was enormous, considering the dimensions of the boy.

Tom quitted the table, kissed Han, and went out onto the porch where his mother was waiting for him.

“My son, did you have something to eat?”

“Yes, mother; sister gave me a piece of pie and a cup of buttermilk, and I can wait till supper.”

“Where have you been to-day?”

“No place, particular.”

"Can't you tell me where you were?"

"Oh, no place at all, hardly; only just out here in the woods, t'other side of the Emperor."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, mother, don't you know the Emperor? the big tree that Uncle Felix named the Emperor, just out here in the edge of our woods?"

"Were you no farther than that?"

"Yes, I told you I was t'other side of the Emperor. I was out with Charley Blogson trying to get an oriole's nest; and, oh, mother, we saw a land turtle!"

"You should not say 'turtle.' I wish you would not run with boys like Blogson and take their ways of speaking and their manners."

"Why mother, Charley Blogson is a mannerly boy. He hardly ever talks bad grammar nor slang. The worst thing he says is that he'll 'be dogged,' and that's not bad swearing."

"Tell me some more about how you spent the day. I want you to give me a full account of everything, just as it happened; where you went, who were with you, what you saw, what you did and said, and all about it from beginning to end. You don't talk to me as much as you used to."

"Well," began Tom, with a long breath and a far-away look, as if laboring to recall the incidents of the day, "I told you I was with Charley in the woods."

"Yes, you said you were trying to get an

oriole's nest. Was there anybody else with you but Charley?"

"No, only me and Charley."

"You should say, 'only Charley and I.'"

"Charley was up a tree and I saw him there, and I clumb up——"

"You should not say 'clumb.' Surely you have been taught how to speak correctly."

"Well, *clim* up, then."

"No, Tommy, not that; there is no such word as *clim* or *clumb*. You really must pay more attention to your grammar. I will write a note to Mr. Gadmeter. Go on with your story."

The boy gazed steadily in his mother's face for a moment and saw that she was really grieved with him, and troubled by his blunders. He came to her, put his arms around her neck, and said, very sincerely,

"Mother, don't look that way. You are the nicest."

It made him miserable to see her unhappy. Yet he was forever causing her distress or anxiety. She pushed back the curly hair from his forehead and gave him a kiss of general forgiveness, and again said, "Go on with your story."

"I saw Charley up a tree, and I—I clamb up—no——"

"Climbed."

"That's what I say. I climbed up and *set*,—

no, *sot* on a limb, and after while we saw Squinty Runkle and some boys with a gun. They came up ——”

“Came up? How? Not up the tree?”

“No, they came up and laid, no, *lied* down under the tree, and was a talking, and we listened and heard what they said, and they didn’t know we was up in the tree. And old Barclay said ——”

“Who is ‘old Barclay’? You didn’t mention him before.”

“Didn’t I? Yes, he was there. Old Barclay Snooks, and he said he was going around by our house and try to shoot our dog.”

“Shoot our dog! Who is this old man that you tell me of, and why should he shoot Hugo?”

“He isn’t an old man; we only call him old Barclay. You thought I meant an old, old trembly man, like Crazy Fish, the hermit, didn’t you? We were nearly in sight of his hut, mother. I thought I saw the smoke of his chimney.”

“Whose chimney?”

“Crazy Fish’s. He lives all alone, in Mad-man’s Hollow, and they say he has piles of money, but he goes in rags, and don’t eat anything hardly,—and some think he steals children and sells them.”

“How did you learn all this? Who told you?”

“Oh, all the boys. I saw Crazy Fish once,—Charley and me, but we didn’t go near him. If you come close to him he throws a sort of powder in your face and then you can’t do nothing,—you can’t move your legs or your arms.”

“What nonsense you are talking, my child. Say no more about this imaginary crazy man, but finish what you were saying about the big boy who wants to shoot our dog.”

“Barclay, you mean.”

“Well, go on; what more did he say?”

“He didn’t say hardly anything else that I could hear; I was so high up in the tree. Pretty soon he went away and we came down, and hurried straight home.”

“Is that all that happened?”

Tom stared into the distance, as if striving with all his powers to recollect whether anything else *did* happen. His keen eye discerned the gliding figure of sister Han, coming across the lawn with a heap of roses in her apron. Running to meet her, he evaded the last question which his mother had asked.

## V

### THE ARROW-HEAD HUNTERS

THE sun was shining in at the window when Hannah came as usual to wake Tom.

“Breakfast is ready; you’d better hurry or the brown gems will be cold. Uncle is going on an excursion up the river.”

Tom looked at Han with wide open eyes.

“Tell him to wait for me. I’ll be down in just a second. Tell Uncle Felix to wait.”

Away danced Hannah, singing as she went, and Tom came bounding after her, in a partially buttoned-up and wholly unkempt condition.

“Where’s Uncle Felix?”

“He’s in the library with father. He says you may go along with him. Eat your breakfast and get ready.”

Dr. Felix Eldon was a bachelor of independent fortune, who made his home with the Tadmores. He was an excellent scholar, with a scholar’s tastes and habits, and chose to devote his time mainly to scientific pursuits. Tom frequently accompanied him in rambles with the beating-net, and spent hours in the library, looking on while the skilful naturalist prepared choice



specimens for his collection, impaling the labeled insects on long slender pins, and arranging them in boxes with glass covers. As a result of these associations, the boy picked up a superficial and miscellaneous knowledge consisting for the most part of Latin names. It added greatly to his self-esteem to be able to call a pinch-bug *Pasalus Cornutus*, and to speak of a green tiger-beetle as *Cecindela Sexgutata*.

"I have planned an excursion up the river principally to look for arrow-heads. I mean to take Tom along."

"I wish," remarked the father, "you would teach him something more useful than picking up arrow-heads and mussel shells. My opinion is that you and Eliza are spoiling the boy."

At that moment Mrs. Tadmire entered the library. Tom followed her, carrying a basket which contained an abundant supply of biscuits, cheese, boiled eggs, sardines and pickled cucumbers, besides a dozen big apples and a bottle of cold coffee.

"Take good care of him, brother, and don't let him get into the river and drown, or fall from a tree and break his neck."

"Nome," broke in Tom, eagerly replying for his uncle,— "Nome."

"Don't run foolhardy risks, my son; the river is treacherous. Remember Carl Meyer and how he was drowned near the mouth of Glen Creek."

These warning words of a fond mother were supplemented by her husband's not less earnest admonition.

"Yes, Tom, mind your mother's advice. Do not venture out on those coal-barges; the currents that sweep between them are dangerous; the best swimmer might be sucked under as Carl was. Are you paying attention to me?"

"Yes, father, I'll be careful; I always am careful. You needn't bother. I know all about suck-holes and eddies and undertow. Carl was a dandy swimmer, but he must have got the cramps, I guess. Sam Noggle helped pull him out and roll him on a bar'l, but they couldn't fetch him to. You ought to see *Sam* dive under a barge! Water can't drown him! Hurry up, Uncle Felix, I've been waiting for you a year!"

Dr. Eldon took his hat and some implements which he always carried on jaunts of the kind proposed, and the two scientific explorers started. Mr. and Mrs. Tadmore watched them march briskly away.

"What a darling he is!" remarked the mother to herself.

"Who?" grunted Mr. Tadmore.

"Why, Tom. The dear little fellow is so frank and truthful and generous. Nobody can be angry with him. He loves everybody and everything."

"Custard pie, in particular."

“Yes, custard pie; but he likes sour things as well as sweet. He told me this morning that he liked his father.”

“Did he, Eliza? Nonsense. Hannah is worth a baker’s dozen of Tom.”

The specimen-hunters set out at a lively pace, on the road to Forest Glen, but they were destined to another delay before escaping from the Tadmore premises. The hired man, Fred Haberkorn, caught a glimpse of them from the field in which he was at work, and, rushing to meet them, gave Tom a huge hug and then shook both his hands saying with a guttural laugh of love and pleasure:

“Good-bye, Herr Tom! You vas go walking mit your uncle dees day? Ja wohl! Dot vas blenty fun, eh?”

“You bet, Fritz; we are bound for the mouth of Glen Creek to hunt specimunds.”

The glad expression of the hired man’s features instantly gave place to a lugubrious look of concern. He shook his head doubtfully and, addressing Dr. Eldon, uttered in broken English, pretty much the same fears and counsels concerning the perils of water, as had just been urged upon Tom by his parents. The doctor assured Fritz that no harm by flood or by field should befall their common charge, and the excursionists moved on.

“Fritz is an old granny; he teases me to death

by liking me so much and taking care of me. He is worse than mother. Ever since I broke through the ice last winter he follows me everywhere. I wish he wasn't so affectionate and so uneasy. I'm big enough to manage myself, I reckon."

"I hope you are, Thomas, but you must not be ungrateful to the old Dutchman. He means well."

"I should say he does mean well and act well, too. You oughtn't call Mr. Haberkorn an old Dutchman. He is no Hollander; he's a full-blooded high German. And he is a mighty splendid scholar too, let me tell you, and an awful brave fighter. Fritz is learning me the German language so as I can read Wilhelm Tell in the original, and he knows the Erlking and the Song of the Sword. He's got a bully scar on his breast of a sabre cut; and a bullet through his leg. Once he showed me the breast scar, but he says he wouldn't tell anybody else, for a man mustn't brag of his woun's."

## VI

### SQUINTY RUNKLE AND OTHER SPECIMENS

AMUSED by Tom's prattle, Dr. Eldon led the way from the plateau on which stood the Tadmore homestead, to Forest Glen, a scattered village fringing the shore of the Ohio. The distance from the hilltop to the town was somewhat more than a mile, as measured by the crooked road of steep grade which the care-free pedestrians followed. They passed up the main street, by the drug store, the Baptist Church, the Union School House,—then down a cross-street running to the river. On a conspicuous corner stood a two-story frame building, over the door of which was painted the sign, "People's Saloon. By Mike McStaver." Upon the pavement near the entrance were several empty beer-kegs one of which was utilized as a convenient seat by a lazy youth, neither boy nor man, who, wearing striped pantaloons, a soiled linen coat, and a cheap wheat-straw hat, was smoking a "Slim Jim" cigar, while he listened to some confidential communication from a not uncomely, giggling damsel standing in the doorway. Another girl, of bolder face, thrusting her head and

shoulders from a second story window, was in the act of calling down to her sister, when Tom and his uncle walked by.

“Oh Rache! Come right in! Pa wants you.”

“I’ll come when I’m ready,” replied the nymph of the doorstep,—“and not a minute before.”

The excursionists paid no attention to the pert young women who stared at them saucily, but Tom exchanged nods with the slovenly loafer on the beer-keg.

“Barclay’s got a new hat,” remarked he, after they had passed the People’s Saloon.

Continuing their tramp they could see, not far in the distance, a peculiar low structure like a small hut or cabin, half-hidden from view by a clump of black willows.

“Hello!” cried Tom; “we are coming to the river! Do you see that shanty-boat? That’s where Sam Noggle lives! There, I believe I see Sam Noggle now, walking along on the sand. No; that can’t be Sam,—Sam don’t walk so slow, and he isn’t so small. Oh, I bet I know who it is! It’s Squinty! You know Squinty Runkle, don’t you, Uncle Felix?”

“I have heard you describe him, Tom. You appear to be well acquainted with boys of all sizes, colors and classes.”

“Yes, of course; all the fellows know all the other fellows.”

A few minutes' walk brought the pair to the river bank, and close to the shanty-boat. The long, narrow, weather-worn craft was covered by a slightly arched roof of tarred paper, through which, at one end, a section of rusty stove-pipe protruded. The roof was cumbered with trumpery, broken furniture, cracked crocks, worn-out boots and shoes. Faint traces of color, still adhering to the least exposed weather-boards, told that the vessel had once been painted green; and some almost effaced large letters in Venetian red, showed that the name of the boat was *The Nelly Barton*. Silence reigned in the precincts of the amphibious house, and the loitering man and boy concluded that nobody was at home. They continued their stroll, along the gravelly margin of the Ohio.

"What has become of your friend Runkle?"

"Squinty?" laughed Tom. "Maybe he has blown away. You never know what has become of him. Seems to me he vanishes, like ghosts and fairies. He's afraid of everybody except Sam Noggle. Squinty don't live anywheres in particular, and Sam sort of takes care of him and does his fighting, and keeps the toughs from teasing him too much. They say Barclay Snooks watches for Squinty, in scary places, just to jump out at him and make him screech. Squinty hasn't much sense; he believes everything, and kind of dreads everybody. But I don't think he

hates me. I'll see if I can't coax him here. —Hay, there! Squinty! I've got something for you. Come this way."

The boy thus summoned came slowly shuffling along, but he halted when within a dozen paces of Tom.

"Here's an apple for you," continued Tom, holding up the tempting fruit. "Come and get it."

Squinty advanced a few paces, and stood irresolute. Uncle Felix spoke in a pleasant tone, and offered him a dime. At length the timid urchin sidled up and got the coin and the apple.

"Where's Sam?" asked Tom.

"Gone to fetch his mother."

"Where is she?"

"Saloon. Drunk."

"Have you seen Barclay, to-day?"

Squinty was silent.

"You needn't be afraid of us," said Tom.

"We only just want to talk with you."

"Barclay runned away."

"Who said so?"

"Seneca did. Seneca said Barclay was afeard he would git took up fer shootin' Charley Blogson. Seneca said he heern Charley Blogson was dead. Seneca he said Barclay mought be stringed up, Seneca he said."

"I reckon they will string him up, if Charley is dead," remarked Uncle Felix, in a solemn



manner highly amusing to Tom. "But we must be going on, or we shall not find any arrow-heads. Good-bye, Squinty.—Give him another apple, Tom."

Tom did as directed, and he and his uncle resumed their walk.

They sauntered on leisurely, keeping near the water's edge, stooping now and then to pick up a tinted shell or a choice specimen of coral.

"Uncle, you are a pretty smart man, ain't you?" was the abrupt way in which Tom opened conversation, when the two had walked some distance in silence.

"I'm hardly smart enough to answer *that* question, Tom. You must ask something easier."

"Yes, but now, without joking, you know you *are* smart. Most of my relations *is* smart. They are nearly all *some sort of men*. I'm going to be some sort of a man myself."

"I don't quite understand you."

"Why, I mean kind of important, and not no account. There's you are a doctor, and what they call a jackass at all trades. And pa is a trustee; and a kind of miser-like ——"

"No, not a miser, my boy; your father is a very liberal man. A miser is one who hoards up money. A miser is stingy."

"And there's Uncle Bob, out in St. Louis, Frank's pa,—he is a lawyer; and so on. They are all some sort of men. I'd like to be a great

natural like Buffon, or Herbert Darwin, that you told me about."

"A great naturalist, you should say, not a natural. Look in the dictionary and you will find that a natural is a fool,—an idiot. You didn't remember right about the names, either. It was Buffon, not Buffon. Mr. Darwin's first name was Charles. I told you that Cuvier was a famous naturalist, and Agassiz another."

"Yes, he is the one who invented the human specie, wasn't it? Or was that Mr. Huxley?"

"These subjects are rather difficult for a boy. You had better observe the things that are near at hand, actual objects, birds, fishes, stones, grass. You can take up books later."

"Uncle Felix, I know most of the common bugs about here. There's the potato-bug."

"That's a beetle, not a bug."

"And there's the bed-beetle."

"No, no, Tom, that's no beetle, but a real bug."

"And I know the sow-bug, or is that a beetle?"

"What you call a sow-bug is neither a bug nor a beetle; it is an isopod crustacean."

"I believe it is," said Tom, "now I come to think,—or a —— Look! there is a shite-poke! Wisht I had a gun.—I saw a crane the last time I was down here. You don't see cranes very often."

As Tom said this the attention of the two was drawn to a water-fowl which flew swiftly by, and, descending suddenly to the surface of the river, made a quick plunge, and disappeared.

"That's a hell-diver," explained Tom. "There he comes up. He's as quick as lightning. You can't hit a hell-diver, for when he sees the flash of your gun, he dives out of sight."

"What you call a hell-diver is a species of wild duck."

"Of course; anybody knows that," said Tom, who always made the most of his own knowledge, and the least of other people's. "Haven't we come to the place where the arrow-heads are?"

"There at the bend of the river, not far from that gum-tree on the bank of Glen Creek. The place is rich in arrow-heads. I have come to the conclusion that the Indians had what might be called a flint factory in this locality. Keep your eyes open, and look sharp. I'll give you ten cents for every perfect specimen you find."

When they reached the vicinity of the gum-tree the search for arrow-heads was continued diligently, but with unsatisfactory results. Tom found numerous fragments, which gave evidence of having been chipped off by some tool, and the trained eye of Uncle Felix discovered two or three small stone darts.

"We are not having very good luck," said he.

"Shall we sit down and rest awhile? We have walked a long way. The shanty-boat is scarcely visible. There is somebody who seems to be watching us."

"Why," exclaimed Tom, "it's Squinty again. He has followed us. Now he is turning back; I guess he sees us looking at him."

Squinty had not lost sight of the arrow-hunters or their basket. Keeping at what he considered a safe distance, he followed after them in a slinking manner, like a dog which, having been driven back, still entertains a forlorn hope that its master will relent and whistle permission for it to come on. While Felix and Tom were regarding the boy with some curiosity, they saw him stop and stand irresolute, kicking the sand with his bare feet.

"Let's pretend not to notice him," said Tom, "and go on hunting for specimunds, and like as not he will sneak up close to us. Isn't it fun to hear him talk?"

"Not much," replied the uncle, with a touch of sadness. "Poor fellow."

"He's happy. He don't have to go to school at all. And he never needs to dress up, or anything."

In the course of half an hour Squinty drew near, by cautious degrees, keeping an eye on the dinner-basket; and, imitating the others, he moved slowly around with back bent and eyes

fixed upon the ground, seeking he knew not what. At length he approached Dr. Eldon, holding in his fingers a bit of anthracite coal. The naturalist took the valuable relic, and explained that the object of search was to find arrow-heads, samples of which were shown. No sooner did Squinty's slow eyes rest upon the samples, than his countenance lighted up with gladness. Turning to Tom and grinning, he delivered himself of the potent expletive,—  
“Gosh!”

Without another word, he started off at a rapid pace, in a straight line, nor did he halt until he came to a small point of ground near the mouth of the little stream that flowed into the Ohio. There he paused and, turning, beckoned Uncle Felix who, with Tom at his side, hurried to the spot. Squinty pointed out a crevice between two large stones. Tom made haste to inspect the crevice. It contained more than twenty very fine specimens of spear points and arrow-heads, of various sizes and shapes. Squinty had picked them up in childish wonderment and had deposited them in that secret place, not having the least idea of their value.

“What will you take for them?” asked the doctor, putting his hand into his pocket. Squinty made no reply, but looked hard at the dinner-basket. Acting on this hint, Tom gave him several biscuits, and Eldon handed a silver dollar to

the hungry boy, who for the second time said, "Gosh!" then immediately turned westward and scampered away not looking to right or left. On went Squinty, due west, down along the river bank, over the sand and gravel. Tom and his uncle watched the retreating figure until it was lost beyond a bend in the river.

## VII

### THE SHANTY-BOAT SURPRISE

“SQUINTY RUNKLE isn't such a bad natural, is he, uncle? He beats us finding things.”

“That's true, Tom. And he is wiser than we in another way. He knows enough to avoid being caught out in the rain. We have kept our eyes so close to the ground that we have forgotten the sky. How the clouds have gathered! Look! What angry flashes of lightning there beyond the Kentucky hills! We must seek shelter, for it's going to storm.”

A peal of thunder confirmed these words. Every aspect of the sky and token of the air indicated that the valley was soon to be visited by one of those sudden thunder-gusts to which the region is subject in summer. The excursionists took up their basket and walked briskly towards the shanty-boat, following the tracks of Squinty. A delightful breeze was blowing up the valley. But the sky was entirely overcast with dark clouds, and the sullen waters of the broad river looked like molten lead. The wreck of a half-sunk coal barge lay near the shore. Passing

this, Tom's sharp eye caught sight of a small animal swimming towards the boat.

"There's a mus'rat," shouted he in his usual excited fashion. "The ign'rant folks down here by the river calls it 'mush-rat.'"

"You say the right name is mus-rat, do you?"

"Yes; mus-rat, not mush-rat. There's no mush about it. These ign'rant folks don't know no better. They can't pronounce worth a cent."

"I am sorry for them," quietly replied the uncle.

The storm made such progress that by the time the hurrying man and boy arrived opposite the shanty-boat, the rain was falling. Without ceremony, they ran down to the floating structure and stepped aboard. A door leading from the front platform to the main room was wide open. To avoid a wetting, Dr. Eldon made bold to step inside this door, at the same time knocking and calling out.

A small girl, perhaps six years of age, sat on the floor of the cabin. She made no attempt to move, but stared vacantly at the visitors. At the farther end of the room was a low bed upon which lay an old man with abundant gray hair. His face was very pale.

The unexpected visitors were at a loss what to say or do. Tom was the first to speak.

"Are you hungry?" he asked of the girl.

She nodded her head. Tom thrust his hand



into the basket. Though his sympathies were stirred, he did not entirely forget himself, but providently slipped two biscuits into his own pocket before handing one to the girl. She took the biscuit and bit from it a huge mouthful. When she had swallowed this and was raising the biscuit to her mouth to take another bite, Tom interjected a question.

“Is your name Noggle?”

Again the girl nodded.

“Sam’s sister?”

The same sign of assent.

“What’s your name?”

“Mandy.”

“Who is that on the bed?”

“Gran’dad.”

Dr. Eldon stepped to the bedside and felt the pulse of the old man who rolled his eyes wearily but said nothing.

“A very sick man. We have got ourselves into business, Tom, my boy. We must take care of these folks.—How the rain pours down!”

The next instant a vivid flash of lightning filled the place with a brightness so dazzling that Tom shrank with terror. A crash of thunder followed. While the awful sound was rumbling away in the distance, a voice was heard wailing and moaning, and an apparition darkened the door. There stood a woman, drenched with rain, be-

draggled, bare-headed, her loose black hair straggling down her shoulders and back. She was in the last stages of intoxication, and was held from falling and pushed forward into the shanty by a youth whom Tom recognized as Sam Noggle. The sight of strangers seemed to recall the drunken woman's senses, partially. She stared at Felix, then at Tom, and, sinking down upon the floor in a confused heap, muttered incoherent words:

“Go away—go away—see the dandy—see the dandy—go away—where's Sam's baby?—Sam's baby—Sam's baby—dead again—dead again—go away—go 'way.”

Sam Noggle frowned fiercely at the uninvited guests before him.

“What are you doing here?”

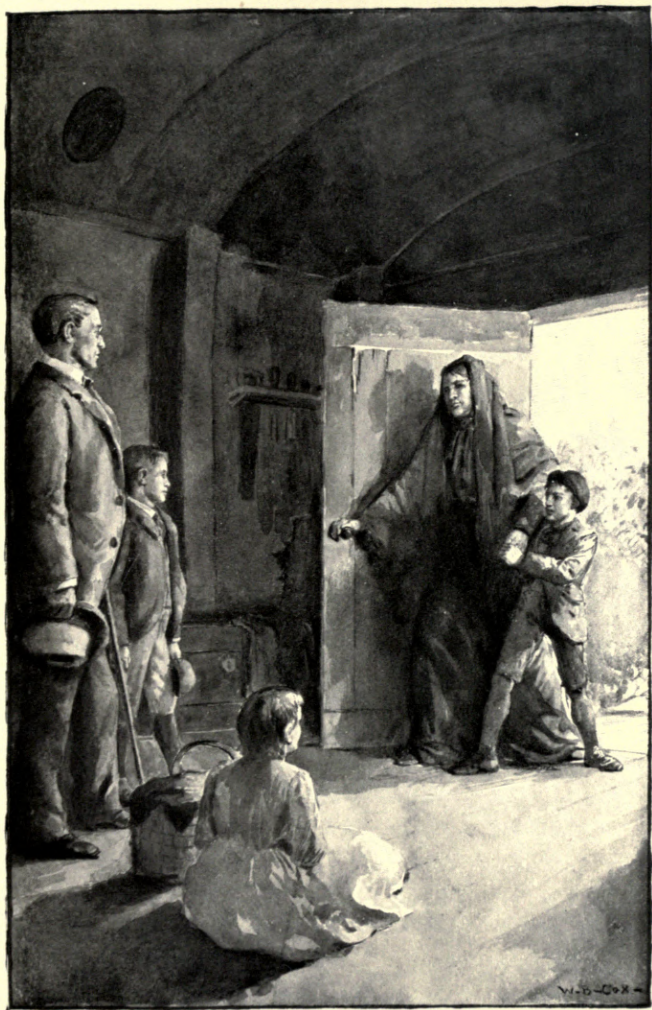
“Why, my lad, we came in out of the rain,” said Eldon.

“Don't call me your lad. I'm not your lad. I want you to get out of this.”

“But it's raining rather hard to go out just now.”

“You've no business in here. Nobody asked you here. Nobody wants you. This is my house. If you don't go out, I'll make you! If you don't go out, I'll *kill* you!”

Eldon, surprised at the boy's violence, though admiring his spirit, proffered a conciliatory hand which Sam, instead of accepting, struck at with



AN APPARITION DARKENED THE DOOR



clenched fist. The doctor's steady gaze kindly met the flashing eyes of the boy.

"Let us be friends, Sam. Your grandfather wants my help. He needs medicine. I think, too, I can be of some service to your sick mother."

Touched by the manifest sincerity of this appeal, the passionate lad cast his eyes downward and fixed them upon the degraded woman at his feet. His breast labored, he sobbed, and tears of humiliation stole down his brown cheeks. Tom stared blinkingly at the low ceiling. A beam of sunshine suddenly streamed in through a narrow window of the shanty, for the storm had passed as rapidly as it had come on. So also, it seemed, had subsided the tempest in Sam Noggle's clouded mind.

"I wish you would try to cure gran'daddy. He's been sick for a week. I can take care of mother. You mustn't mind what I said. I couldn't stand it to have you see ——"

"Where is your father, Sam?"

"He has gone to Flee'town to help unload coal barges. I'm glad he's not here."

Dr. Eldon had some further talk with Sam, advising him what was best to be done for the sick old man, and promising to provide for the wants of the family. The visitors then took their departure. Tom made it convenient to forget the basket, leaving it at the feet of

Mandy. As he was making his way from the shanty-boat to the shore, across a gangplank, a lank dog followed close upon his heels, sniffing at his pocket. Tom drew forth one of the two biscuits and tossed it to the dog.

“Everybody about here seems to be hungry. Now I’ve only got one biscuit left and you and I haven’t had a bite to eat since we left home. Here, uncle, you take the upper half of this and I’ll take the lower half.”

## VIII

### TOM TAKES A LESSON IN GERMAN

TOM failed not to tell Fritz Haberkorn what befell at the Noggle shanty, and to dilate on the kindness of Uncle Felix.

"I'll tell you what, Fritz, if I do say it myself, he is the Christianest man in this neighborhood; and he don't brag about it, neither. There never was a man who was kinder to the poor unless it might be mother."

"Your uncle vas like a man in my country. I rode about him in the almanac. He vas—vat you call him?—a Sam-a-reé-tan."

"A what?"

"A goot Sam-a-reé-tan."

Tom had a faint recollection that in Sunday-school he also had "rode" about the Good Samaritan.

"I tell you dot story. Vas a man, by golly, going along der road, und, vat you tink? five oder six tief shump right away out mit a bistols und knock him dot head on, und pull him dot coat off, und run away mit hees monee. He vas all bleedin', und pooty nigh dead, und a breacher coomt his buggy in ——"

“What came in a buggy, Fritz?”

“Ein breacher,—vat you call der briest?”

“Preacher! Oh! Go on.”

“Ya. Dot breacher see dot man und say to heesself, ‘By golly, vat’s dot?’ Und he vip up hees pony und drive fast away by de uder side. Pooty soon coomt a pig, rich lawyer, mit a golt cane, und see dot poor man a bleedin’, und he look at him und go right away by de uder side. Vell. Pooty soon coomt dot Sam-a-reé-tan vat I told you, und ven he see dot man,—he vas ridin’ a leetle mool,—he says ‘Donner und Blitzen!’ und shumpt right away dot mool off, und schtoop down und put some oil or so on hees vounds, und tie um up mit hees handkerchief, und took out hees viskey bottle und make dot dead man trink leetle, und say, ‘Mein Freund, shust shumpt dot mool on,’ und help him ons dot leetle mool. Ya wohl! By golly, vat you tink? Right away dey vas coom by der Gast House, oder tafern,—vat you call saloon, und dees goot Sam-a-reé-tan say, ‘Hi! Hello! you land-lort. Take care dees man. You gief him vat he need,—some wurst oder beer, und put him in bett. Hier ist der monee. You shust treat him like a shentlemans, und by golly, ven I coom back to-morrow I pay hees doctor pill.’ Dot Sam-a-reé-tan vas like your Uncle Felix, nit?”

“Yes, he was, Fritz. Only Uncle Felix doesn’t ride a mule nor carry a whiskey bottle. Fritz,



you speak mighty good English for a man of your age. I'd like to talk German as well as you can talk English. I wish you would learn me the German language.

“What's boy in German?”

“Knabe.”

“And girl?”

“Mädchen.”

“That sounds like maiden. What's father?”

“Vater.”

“And mother?”

“Mutter.”

“What's sister?”

“Schwester.”

“And brother?”

“Bruder.”

“Why, Fritz, that's all pretty much the same as English, only you don't pronounce the words quite right. *Fater, Mutter, Swester, Brutter*; I can say that as well as you can. I think I've got the hang of the language, and I won't need to take many lessons. Now I'll try you. I'll ask you something in German and see if you can understand me. Let's see.—‘Ister Grander Fater Bartoner sicker?’ Can you make that out?”

Fritz shook his head and said, “Nein.”

“Wait, Fritz, I'll put it in English. I'll say it slow. ‘Ister,’ *is*, ‘Granderfater,’ *grandfather*, ‘Barton,’ *Barton*, ‘Sicker,’ *sick*. *Is grand-*

*father Barton sick?* Do you understand that?"

Yes, Fritz understood that.

"Why, then, it seems to me that you understand English better than you do your own foreign tongue!" exclaimed Tom. "Let's hear how you would ask me if *my* grandfather is sick?"

"Ist dein Grossvater krank?"

"'Crank!' Is my grandfather a crank? You are getting off the subject, Fritz. But I s'pose it will be easier for you to speak English, now, anyhow, for you've been in the United States a good while. This country beats Germany all to smash, don't it? You are welcome to this native land. I 'spect you have seen some of them tyrants over there in Europe, haven't you? But you are out of the way of their chains now in this free land of liberty, and I bet you are not afraid to stand by your red, white and blue, or plunge in the cannon's mouth and fight till the last armed and last legged foe expires, like Morocco Bowarrows."

## IX

### TOM IGNORES SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS

DR. ELDON kept his promise to Sam Noggle. Daily he went down to the shanty-boat and gave his personal attention to the family whose miserable condition he had accidentally discovered. Moreover, he enlisted the cooperation of the Tadmores, one and all, in his benevolent schemes.

Boxes of eatables and bales of wearables were sent to the destitute occupants of *The Nelly Barton*. Mr. Tadmore was persuaded by his wife and daughter to exert himself in the philanthropic enterprise, and his influence secured for Peter Noggle employment with fair wages, in a lumber-yard at Forest Glen.

More than a week elapsed before Uncle Felix would allow Tom to accompany him on a visit to the Noggles', though Tom had continually teased to go along. When he did go he had a long talk with Sam who took him out for a boat-ride and showed him the wreck of a burned steamer. In the evening when Tom came home, his mother took occasion to question him in

regard to his day's doings, as was her custom. Hannah was present at the interview.

"Well, tell us about your visit to the shanty-folks. Did you see Mandy?"

"I didn't go in the boat. I hated to see the lady," said Tom. "But I got pretty thick with Sam. We went out on the river in a skiff and talked a heap. I'd like to live in a boat. It must be lots of fun. It's like camping out. Then you can fish so handy. Sam's got a dog. What do you think, mother, Sam hatched a dozen chickens right in the boat; that is, he didn't hatch them himself, but the old hen did, in the coop, plumb in the house. But a mus'rat got nine of the chickens."

"What does Sam *do*? How does he put in the time?"

"He fishes, and shoots ducks, and goes a swimmin'. When the water is up he helps his daddy pull in drift. They use it for wood. All sorts of curious things float down. But you can't guess what Sam fished out one time."

"What was it?"

"A dead suicide."

"Why Tommy!" exclaimed Han, with a horrified countenance.

"Yes, he did. He had to go to the corner with his daddy."

"You mean coroner."

"Yes, coroner; what did I say? I meant cor-

oner, of course. Do you know, Han, how they make a sunk corpse that's drowned come up from the bottom?"

"I've heard that they fire a cannon over the place. Don't they, mother?"

"I believe so, my dear. But it's not a pleasant thing to think about."

"I hate to think about it, and I hate to hear about it, and I hate to talk about it," said Tom, with a visage of disgust; "but there's a better way than the cannon way to fetch 'em up. If you can just get a shirt that belongs to the drowned floater, and tie up a loaf of dry bread in it, and chuck it in the water, it will draw right to the spot where the dead corpse is and sink down to him."

"Do you believe that?" asked Han.

"'Course I do. Sam says so. They tried it when their baby was drowned but it didn't work, 'cause the baby didn't have the right sort of a shirt. Wasn't it awful about that baby drowning? It was a girl baby, Sam says."

"How did it happen, and when?"

"I don't know when. Sam didn't say when. A good while ago, I guess. His mother dropped it into the river when she was intoxicated. She didn't know what she was doing. But it was clean drowned plumb dead and they never saw it afterwards. Sam says seems like his mother has been sort of crazy-like ever since. He says

she talks about it when she's asleep. She always calls it 'Sam's baby.'"

"This is dreadful," said Mrs. Tadmore.

"Sam cried a little. He said he saved a baby's life that night of the steamboat burning, and he felt like stealing the baby for his mother. His mother is real nice when she isn't drinking. He asked me one queer thing. I felt mad, at first, but *my*, he didn't mean any harm. He asked me about *our* folks, and how we act, and he says, 'Tom, does *your* mother ever take too much?' 'Too much what?' says I. 'Why, too much liquor,' says he. 'I'll knock you into the river,' says I. 'I thought,' says he, 'that you and me was good friends, now, and I'd ask you that, for I sometimes wish some swell lady did take too much so's I needn't be so 'shamed about mother. But I'm glad your mother don't get drunk, and I don't care if you do knock me in the river, for it's my notion that the baby has got the best of it.' After a bit he cheered up and showed me a dog-type of his mother when she was a little girl."

"You should say daguerreotype; I suppose that is what he meant."

"He calls it a 'dog-type.' It is a sort of dim, looking-glass picture in a case that shuts up. You never saw such a pretty face! I couldn't hardly believe Sam's mother was that beautiful. Near 'bout as nice looking as Han."

## X

### TOM AND FRITZ CONVERSE

THOMAS TADMORE was sociable to a fault. The number and variety of his familiar acquaintances astonished his mother. Like Socrates, this young American philosopher was ever wishing to converse with mankind, and would even be willing to pay for a good listener. Like Socrates, he had a high opinion of his own shrewdness and was fond of a sly joke. Nothing pleased him better than to display his learning to those whom he imagined ignorant, especially to those who received his scientific facts and doctrines with wonder and admiration.

Among his docile pupils was Fritz Haberkorn. One morning the indispensable Fritz was sawing and hammering in a natural arbor called the "Centennial Bower," constructing a rustic bench of ironwood, ornamented with grape-vine, when Tom accosted him :

"What are you doing, Fritz ?"

"I make a bench for your mutter."

"It's an awful nice one," said Tom, surveying the structure approvingly. "Easy, too," added he, sitting down upon it.

“Here,” said Fritz, taking something from the pocket of his coat which hung near by on a hackberry limb. “Here is somedings vat I tig up mit der shpade ven I tig der shpring out.” Tom examined the object. It was a specimen of coral of the variety called, in the hard language of geology, *Cyathophyllum*. “Dot vas a calf’s horn turned to shtone, eh?”

Tom looked wise. “No; this is a putrefaction. There’s a good many such about here. I found a new sort of organic remain the other day in the quarry. It appeared to me to be a gasterpod, but the gaster-peas was all shelled out. It’s a trilobite.”

“Vare did it bite you?” inquired Fritz.

“Trilobite, I say. They are putrefied, also. We use them for charms. Geology treats trilobites. Geology is a splendid study; it tells all about stratums and strikes and outcrops. Charley Blogson and me discovered five unknown silurians that I labeled *Specimenicus Tadii*. They used to be alive about ten quintillion years ago.”

Fritz Haberkorn listened to Tom profoundly mystified. The voluble Master Tadmore appeared to think his talk quite lucid and edifying. Thrusting his hands deep into his trousers’ pockets, he went on:

“Geology treats the earth, too, as well as trilobites. The earth is a round spear in the



shape of a ball and was made to imitate a globe. This earth is all holler inside and filled up with molten liquor. Some thinks there is a solid nucleus in the centre of the middle, like a baked dumpling with an apple in it. But I doubt that. There is not enough theory to prove it. The crust of the earth is thick compared to pie-crust, but thin compared to Barclay Snooks' skull. Fritz, did you know Barclay Snooks ran away?"

"He vas here shust now, mit hees shmall brudder."

"Was he? What did he want?"

"He vas mit a gun."

"I'll bet he was prowling around here to get a shot at our dog. Or to steal something. What sort of a tree is that by the spring, Fritz?"

"Dot? dot vas a linn. By golly, I tell you a shtory by dot. Vas a man, in my country, vot has a daughter, und a yung man coom to see her, by golly, nearly efry night, und he vant to marry her. But dot man say, 'Vot for you marry? You got notings,—you pooty nigh starf.' Vell, dees girl say, 'Fater, Gott make der vorld from notings.' So, von night, dot old man treamt he been diggin' und diggin' under a linn-tree, und found a pox monee. So next day, he get a shpade, und pick, oder so, und he go vare vas two linn-trees, a pig von und a leetle von; und he began to dig right away by dot leetle tree. He vas villins to dig it up by roots.

Now, vat you tink? Dot yung man vas hid in dot leetle tree,—Christopher vas his name, und dot girl's name vas Margaret,—und he tink, 'By golly, vat I do?' Und Margaret she say, 'Fater, vat you done if Christopher coom?' 'I kill him right avay!' Den Margaret she feel her heart shumps, 'Vy you diggin' here, fater?' 'Vell, I hat a dream dot I find von pox monee unter von linn-tree.' 'Sure, fater, dot monee been hid a gut vile; hoondert years, maybe, und dees leetle tree ist nicht so alt. Vy you not dig unter der pig linden?' 'Ya, wohl!' said der man, und he begins right avay diggin' und diggin', und, vat you tink? dere vas von pig, pig pox, full mit gold, und silber, unt timons! So he shump up, like crazy mans—'Margaret, Margaret, dot tream coom true; here iss der monee, Margaret!' 'Vot you do now, fater, if Christopher coom back?' 'Now, I don't care, Margaret; you shust marry Christopher venever he cooms back.' Den Margaret look up dot leetle tree, und she say, 'Hi, by golly, Christopher, coom down! Didn't I tell you, fater, Gott make der vorld out of notings?' "

There is no saying how long the profitable interchange of science and romance might have gone on between Tom and Fritz, had not their conference been interrupted by Mr. Tadmire, senior. That gentleman, observing that the sound of hammer and saw had stopped, made it

convenient to stroll in the direction of the Bower. The noise of hammer and saw recommenced with energy. The young scientist sauntered from the Bower to meet his father, upon whom he had designs.

## XI

### TOM AND THE SHOW

"PA, I wish you would give me a job of work to do. I would like to earn a quarter."

"You may pick up the stones in the new pasture, and throw them into the ravine."

"Yes," slowly and with a sigh, "I did pick up a good many. Aunty thinks it brought on a headache."

"You might dig up those dock-weeds."

"Don't you think, pa, I might gather some cherries and sell them, and make money that way?"

"What will you pay me for the cherries, my son?"

Tom gave up the idea of speculating in cherries.

"What do you want money for?"

"Oh, I dun' know. Nothing in particular. Uncle Felix said yesterday you was a very generous man."

"How did he come to say that?"

"Well, we was a talking about you, and how kind you was, and all that, and how you wasn't a bit stingy, and I said of course you was ——"

“Was stingy?”

“No! Kind and good to boys, and all that.— Pa, what y’ goin’ to do next Friday?”

“Friday? I have no plans for Friday. Why do you ask?”

“Oh, I dun’ know. I just wondered. I ’spect Friday will be a clear day. You haven’t any rheumatism in your bones, have you, pa?”

“No, Tom, I am feeling unusually well this summer.”

“I’m so glad of that, pa!

Mr. Tadmore was pleased at this manifestation of his son’s affectionate interest in his health. It was scarcely to be expected in one so young. The sympathetic child put his hand confidently into that of his parent. “Pa, Cousin Frank’s father always takes him most generally to the circus.” This information was accompanied by an eager interrogative glance at pa’s face. Pa’s face took on an expression of seasoned wood of some hard variety. There was embarrassed silence.

“Pa, Robinson’s Show ——”

“A foolish way to spend money,” said the wooden face. “All nonsense.”

“There’s three elephants.”

“Folly! Nonsense! No place for a boy.”

“And a giraffe, and monkeys.”

“Say no more about it.”

Thus speaking the wooden face bent its frown-

ing brows, looking sternly at the doleful countenance of the boy. The countenance of the boy was wrinkled into a most dismal shape. The wooden face changed from hard oak to soft maple. "Don't whimper!"

"All the boys are going."

"They are, are they?"

"There's a baby elephant, too."

"You are a baby yourself, Tom."

"I'd like to see the 'potamus."

"Well, we'll see about it."

Victory! Tom knew well enough that when his father said, "We'll see about it," the battle was as good as won.

Friday came, and with it the circus and menagerie. The great tent and the smaller ones containing the side-shows were erected not far from the river, in the outskirts of the goodly village of Forest Glen.

Tom, who was accustomed to express himself with pen and ink, a very unusual practice for a boy of his age, and a practice of which he was proud and vain, wrote a long letter to his Cousin Frank, of St. Louis, giving an account of the show, and his impressions of it. Tom's letters, like his conversation, contained a queer mixture of conscious humor, precocious insight and naïve simplicity. The lad was at once wise and innocent; droll and serious; spontaneous and artificial. His natural shrewdness and comic fancy

were curiously modified by a severely moral home-training and by a hodge-podge education in school. His letter to Cousin Frank ran as follows:

“It seems an awful long time since you have went. I promised to wright and here goes, for I miss you at home do I miss you as the song says.

“Frank I will take great panes in the composure of this so as to improve both our minds.

“And now I must first tell you we went to the Grand Circuss me and pa and me but I wouldn't take sister Han to see such things. I do not care myself for the frivolous equistrian horse hippodrome but pa was ankshus to go as I could see by his unexpressed looks so I took him along he only paying the bills. If it hadn't been for me we would have been late but we kept out of the jamb by going at ten, and the doors open at one so no trouble to pa. Pa was by no means the only ball headed man there. I noticed that lots of the boys of our school had one or more of their fathers and mothers with them and there was slithers of girls too and some rite Nice.

“I can't say that the circuss is hardly the right kind of place for old folks. However they have their weaknesses, Frank, as well as you or me. For my part I go to such places merely as a looker on.

“But the menagery part has its uses to the mind, for it shows the habits of wild animals in their natural homes. there is elephants for instance and aquariums and the Bengal gnu and Napoleons State coach and the calliope and other zoological wonders and monkeys too remind us of our origin of specie and warns us not to be stuck up. Side-shows prove how much Bigger and stronger the picture of things is than things is themselves. I have took notice that a Wild Man of Borneo on a show bill is a heap wilder and more frosius than a real Wild Man of borneo inside the tent.

“Then I might also expectorate on those who sell lemonade at the circuss. Never you deal with them Frank I warn you as a true friend. Some folks have a wasteful and vicious vice of feeding elephants unwholesome peanuts and gingercakes. it is not only wasteful but it disorganizes the stummick of the poor brute whose natural food is the jumbles of Africa.

“There was a lady in the big tent dressed up tight that they called the Flying Sylph because they slung her by a catapult through the air about a hundred feet and she lit on a big hammick. The Flying Sylph laid down on the spring and they touched her off and away sure enough she flew! I tell you Frank pa was skeert.

“Seems to me clowns has more sense than they make use of and ringmaster’s has less. Ide like



to be a clown myself if it wasn't for the blame ringmasters whip.

"The funniest thing was the clown bringing in the family donkey. He was a little bit of a donkey no bigger than you but mercy how he did kick up.

"There was three rings in the circuss all going round at once which made my head ake. Who can look at a dancing pony and listen to the jokes of two other clowns in the two other rings while the man with lemonade and tickets keeps bawling at you all the time?

"Dear Frank I have aten my dinner and rested up and now I will go a hed and phinnish upp my letter.

"I was going to say they brought in the trick donkey and the ringmaster said 'he would give any gentleman a new coat who would ride him around the ring' and a ragged fellow he came and pretended to be a greenhorn and the little tads they thought sure enough he was a green country horn but he got up onto him and sot the other way and grabbed him by the tail and rode around backward the donkey a kicking up so that it would make a vinegar barl laugh.

"I forgot to tell about the Best of all the wonder of the Nineteenth Century and only just a girl all spangled up dressed in muskeeter-bar stuff and ribbons and she rode a bare back mare dancing and kissing her hand and jumping over poles

and flags and through a hoop of tisshew paper, I tell you she was fine, seems to me like a fairy or a sort of angel but Id hate Han to be hollered at by the boys that way and joked by the clown.

“There was two clowns and when that girl I just told of performed on the tite rope the ringmaster told one of the clowns to chalk the rope so that she wouldnt slip down after he had chalked it above he began to chalk it below and when the ringmaster said why he did that the clown said so the young lady won’t slip up.

“Squinty Runkle was there and so was Sam Noggle. I saw the Snooks boys too that I told you about being so mean. Barclay was with them McStaver girls a treating them to Red lemonade. Old barclay saw me and Charley Blogson standing by the Happy Fambly cage and he said git out of my way kid and I called him a potamus right before his girls.

“Good by frank wright soon.

“Your cousin,

“THOMAS TADMORE.”

## XII

### FIGHTING THE FRENCH ARMY

SKIRTING a neglected woodland on the Tadmore estate, was a field overgrown with rank weeds and blackberry bushes. Fritz had undertaken the task of clearing away these wild growths, with the view of transforming the waste ground into meadow. He sharpened his scythe with the whetstone and, making believe to be the Prussian Army, valiantly proceeded to mow down whole regiments of French grenadiers, for such, he told Tom, were the fierce briars. While Tom stood watching with admiration the advance of the Prussian Army, Charley Blogson hailed him from the top rail of a fence a few rods away. Retiring from the battle-field, the loquacious young Tadmore joined his admiring comrade, and the two lads, sitting side by side on the fence, entered into familiar dialogue, Tom, as usual, taking the lead.

“I was just telling Fritz how much better off he is in this country than he was in the old world, where he had to mind kings and tyrants, or get his head cut off. I told him that he ought to be glad of a chance to fight for the red, white and

blue. Uncle Felix says folks ain't as partyotic as they ought, and don't raise liberty poles enough, nor holler enough for Washington and Columbus. He says we forget our forefathers. I reckon you know who our four fathers was? Washington, and Columbus, and William Tell, and Abe Lincoln."

"I wasn't sure about the last one," said Charley, taking out his pocket-knife and pulling a splinter from a rail, to whittle.

"Wasn't sure about Abe Lincoln? He was the biggest of the four. The boys around here don't know nothing scarcely about our minute-men, and how they started the Fourth of July. I asked Sam who wrote the Declamation of Independence, and he said Pontiac. When I told him it was Washington he said he knowed it was now that I reminded him, but he was just letting on because he hated to show his own ign'rance. Fact is he didn't know any more about it than you do."

"I thought," said Charley, deferentially, "that the book said Thomas Jefferson wrote that."

"Wrote which?"

"The—what you jest said;—the Fourth of July thing."

"The Declamation of Independence! Maybe you are right, Charley. But I think it was Washington. Or was it Patrick Henry? I get these things mixed up myself, sometimes."

"So do I, I hate history, Tom."

"Well, I like it. I think history is the nicest study in school, and the nicest study there is, except animals."

"I recollect," said Charley, "how they fired at the Redcoats from behind stumps and stone walls."

"Yes, they did; you've got that right. That's the way the Fourth of July started. We ought to study these things, Charley, so as to be partyotic. I believe I'll go into politics when I get to be a man, if I live and keep my health. Seems to me I've been saved up for something great. As like as not, maybe I'll be elected to the presidential throne, like Abe Lincoln, and I'll send you on a foreign missionary or else minister plenty penitentiary."

"I'd like that," rejoined Charley.

"Charley, let's celebrate the Fourth of July this year, and have speeches and fire-works."

"I'm willing."

"We will have a sort of mass-meeting over in your orchard, Charley, there back of the barn."

"Who'll come to it?"

"Oh, all the boys and girls. You fix up a nostrum for me to make a speech. We'll get some wooden guns, and swords, and so on. I'll fetch a flag. But you mustn't tell the Snooks boys, or any of their crowd. They would spoil

the celebration, and like as not old Barclay would bring his gun and shoot you again."

Charley went on whittling. He did not like the topic Tom had introduced.

"Charley, would you stand by me if I'd pitch into Seneca Snooks and give him a black eye?"

"Seneca isn't the one," replied Charley. "Seneca only does what his brother tells him to. I'm not afraid of Seneca, are you?"

"No; that's the reason why I thought I'd better lick him. But mother don't want me to fight. She says it takes more moral courage not to. Sister Han says no gentleman will stoop to fight a rowdy, and she would be ashamed to have her brother fight. Aunt Tildy is the worst of all; she says she'd rather see me in my little coffin than she would fight. And pa says, if I get into a fight at school, he might forget himself and try hickory oil on his dear son. Not one of our family ever seems to have been a boy,—not even mother."

"There goes Barclay Snooks, now," said Charley, pointing to the woods. "That's him, and Seneca, and Cuff Chuck, and Squinty Runkle."

"Is that Cuff Chuck?" questioned Tom, shading his eyes from the sun. "He is the laziest nigger in the world. I wonder why Squinty goes with them boys? What are they trying to do with Squinty?"

From where the lads sat on the fence, they

saw Barclay seize Squinty Runkle and throw him to the ground. Then Seneca and the colored boy were seen to stoop over the prostrate Squinty who screamed lustily for help. Squinty's cries reached the ears of Fritz Haberkorn who immediately dropped his scythe and rushed to the rescue.

"Donner und Blitzen!" shouted he, seizing a huge club. "I make your hets right away off." But the dastardly Barclay and his attendants took their own heads and bodies off to the cover of the woods, leaving the victim of their persecution blubbering.

"Vat der matter iss?"

Squinty got up, hawking and spitting. Tom and Charley, who came running to the scene as soon as the Snooks forces fled, took Squinty in charge, and Fritz went slowly back to resume offensive operation against the French army of occupation.

"What did they do to you, Squinty?"

Squinty kept on spitting, his face the picture of disgust. Minutes elapsed before he could be induced to speak. "Gosh," he finally articulated putting an immense amount of expression into the monosyllable. Tom, by dint of hard questioning, learned that Snooks had forced into Squinty's mouth a crow's egg, far too old to be palatable.

Unpleasant as the experience was to Squinty,

neither Tom nor Charley refrained from laughing. They advised the sufferer to keep out of bad company, and were offering to see him safe home, when they heard startling vociferations from the hired man. They soon caught sight of him, in the briar field, acting in a most extraordinary manner. Fritz was plunging madly about, as if dodging unseen missiles, and he kept boxing his own ears as in violent rage. The torrent of loud speech that issued from his mouth was guttural German of the strongest kind, and abounded in exclamations that Tom couldn't help fancying were profane. The boys understood the situation immediately. They both cried out in a breath,

“Bumble-bees!”

The Prussian army in its devastating march and slaughter of the French grenadiers, had been surprised by a foe in ambush. The invading scythe had struck into the very citadel of the armed honey-stealers and the furious horde issued forth, every sting unsheathed. They took Fritz by storm; they attacked him front and rear; they assailed his ears, his eyes, his nose; lodged in his shaggy hair, and penetrated through his valiant beard to pay their warm respects to his chin. The Prussian army, rushing to the woods, tore up a small pawpaw-tree by the roots, and madly slashed the air, like another Don Quixote fighting invisible giants.



What, meanwhile, was the conduct of Thomas Tadmire and Charles Blogson? Did they fly to the defense of the unfortunate man, as brave lads should have done? Ah, no. The truth must be told. Those hardened wretches rolled upon the grass convulsed with delight.

"I never laughed so much in my life," chuckled Tom, when he related the incident that afternoon to Uncle Felix.

"Neither did I," said Charley; and the boys indulged in a second fit of laughter in mere remembrance of the fun.

"Fritz always tells me," said Tom, "not to pay any attention to the bumble-bees when they come around my head, and they won't hurt. He says if you act as if you don't know they are there, they won't never sting."

As Tom was saying these words, Fritz unexpectedly appeared, his scythe on his shoulder.

"Did you whip the French, Fritz?" asked Tom.

"By golly! If I catch you poys laughing, I schlag you dot shingle mit! Now you mint out vat I say."

Tom put on a serious face.

"Fritz, don't pay no attention to them and they won't sting. You oughtn't to talk like a crazy man about the dam and places in the Bible, and such slang, or Charley and me'll have to run away to keep from learning the bad words you spoke on the spur of the minute."

The old soldier, scowling, strode away towards the barn, and Tom gave Charley the benefit of a moralist's reflections:

"There are three things I'd like to see anybody do. The first is, to not get excited when you fall into the river, but lay calm on your back and float. Another hard thing is to look a cross dog straight in the eye when he rushes up to bite you. I tried that one time, to see if the dog had the nerve or if he would quail. I looked him tolerable straight in the eye, but he quailed around my left wing and took me by the hind part of the trouse's like a coward. But the hardest of all is to not let on when a bumble-bee comes bumping like fury around your head. I like to fight bumble-bees but I hate 'em to fight me. Still, I pity them. They are like the wild Indian red man, because they came to this country first and we hadn't ought to treat them mean. Suppose, Charley, you was a lone red man, paddling your own canoe which the Great Spirit gave you, and the pale face comes sneakin' along and says he has the right to all the hunting ground for his sovereign? If I was a lone red man, I'd kick, too, before I'd give up my wigwam. Wouldn't you? Well, it's just the same with the bumble-bees. It's their nest, ain't it? If I was a King Bee, I'd do just the same as Pontiac and Black Hawk did."

## XIII

### TOM LOSES HIS MORAL COURAGE

TOM and Charley immediately set about making preparations for the Fourth of July celebration ; or, to speak accurately, Tom began to give orders which Charley was to execute. A grassy space in Blogson's orchard was chosen for the proposed "mass meeting," and a rude platform was erected to furnish a stand for public speech-making. Boards for the construction of the rostrum were collected from far and near, Tom contributing not a few from sidewalks and fences on his father's farm. This lumber, with a quantity of stone and brick for foundation, was transported to the place where it was to be used by Charley, at the expense of much energy and sweat. Tom's impatience demanded, and easily secured, the services of Squinty Runkle as general assistant, which lightened the labors of Charley wonderfully. Tom assumed the responsible office of architect and designer ; Charley took upon himself the duty of boss ; and Squinty had nothing to do except to saw, hammer, lift, and, in short, make the platform. The architect and the boss-builder looked on, with their hands in

their pockets, while Squinty, with the pride of a true Knight of Labor, performed the part which a just division of labor allotted to him. When the rough work was finished, and while the Knight of Labor was tying a rag around his left thumb which he had bruised, his superiors decorated the stand with green branches and a scanty display of small and much faded flags.

To make up for the deficiency in patriotic emblems, Tom manufactured a flaunting banner from a remnant of one of his sister's dresses, a very gay pattern in stripes of red and white, to which a blue field with stars of silver paper was stitched, producing altogether a most brilliant and soul stirring effect. Unfurled at the top of a tall bean-pole nailed to the front of the speaker's stand, this home-made flag streamed and fluttered in the free air of Blogson's orchard, to the unbounded admiration of Squinty Runkle and his employers.

"See her wave!" exclaimed Charley. "Isn't she a beauty, Tom?"

"Splendid!" was the enthusiastic reply. "I didn't think I could make such a fine flag, did you? Squinty, what do you think I made that flag of? It isn't common flag stuff at all: it's Sister Han's striped frock!"

"Gosh!" said Squinty.

"Now, Charley, we must have a lot of guns and swords. You can make the guns of broom-

handles and hoe-handles, and the swords out of pine. I'll make one of tin for myself and put red ink on the blade for blood. Then we can have plumes of roosters' tails and such like, and you'll be the brass band, Charley, and march behind me with a drum ——"

"I haven't got a drum."

"Well, you can use a wash-boiler, or something, and you must play on your mouth to imitate fifes and trumpets."

"I can do *that*," said Charley, and he proceeded to puff out his cheeks, and to execute, in a most novel and energetic manner, the tune of Yankee Doodle.

"That's it! That's as good as a circus band. You must learn to play 'Hail Columbia,' and 'Star Spangled Banner.' I had a notion to open the mass meeting with singing, but I guess I'll give that up, now. I wrote the first verse of a hymn which begins this way. Let's see, how did I begin? —

"God bless our native land all hail —  
No tyrants here shall reign ——"

"Do you think it's better to hail than rain?" asked Charley, interrupting the recitation.

"It don't mean real *hail* and *rain*. It's only po'try. Do you suppose, Charley Blogson, that when they sing 'Hail Columbia,' they mean anything like a storm?—But I thought of what

you mentioned when I was making it up. First I made it up that way, *hail* and *rain*, and then I was afraid somebody might find fault and I changed it. I've got it written out, here in my pocket. I'll read it as I wrote it the second time.

“God bless our native land all hail!  
Let tyrants bleed hurrah!!  
Sail on thou Ship of Freedom Sail!!!  
O Eagle flap and claw!!!!

“You understand, of course, why I bring in the ship and the eagle? But I don't believe I'll have this hymn sung. After the band plays, I'll read the Declamation of Independence, and then I'll make a big speech about no taxation and the red, white and blue. You mustn't forget to invite all the boys and girls, and maybe you'd better get your mother to bake a pound cake, and we'll have a sort of a picnic.”

At the appointed hour, on the glorious Fourth, a score of children gathered around the grand stand in Blogson's orchard. Tom appeared in the midst, fantastically dressed in what was intended to represent a military costume. Stripes of red tape were sewed to the legs of his pantaloons; his coat was turned inside out; enormous epaulettes decorated his shoulders; a paper hat stuck full of peacock feathers adorned his head, and in his hand flashed a tin sword with a wooden

hilt. His faithful aid-de-camp, Blogson, distributed to the boys and girls who made up the rank and file of the "mass-meeting," such weapons, plumes, and other warlike accoutrements, as he had been able to provide. The forces were ranged in line, the biggest soldier at one end and the smallest at the other, the rest being arranged between in regular gradation according to tallness, and without regard to age, sex or military experience. An awe-compelling feature of the pageant was a make-believe cannon ingeniously constructed by mounting a section of worn-out stove-pipe on a pair of old hand-cart wheels, the grotesque field-piece being drawn by four skittish boys representing restive horses. Captain Tadmore reviewed the column, and ordered Lieutenant Blogson to drill the company. This the subordinate attempted to do, but without much success. Finally the Captain assumed command. Placing himself at the head of the file, with Blogson in the capacity of Brass Band next behind him, he gave the command "March," and strode off gallantly waving his sword. The procession, thus guided, moved onward, under the apple-trees, and around the platform, animated by the inspiring notes of Blogson's musical mouth, and the accompanying clatter of drumstick on an old tin basin. The grand parade being ended, the militia became civilians and sat down on the grass to listen to the oration of the day. So far

everything had gone on satisfactorily and according to the program. But unforeseen mischief was brewing. The unreliable Squinty, though he had given a pledge of secrecy to Tom and Charley, had incautiously betrayed to Seneca Snooks the plans of celebration. So good an opportunity to tease and torment Tom and his friends was not to be lost by Barclay. That notorious leader, carrying on his shoulder the renowned gun which had so often saved his life, sallied forth on Independence Day, accompanied by several of his "gang," including his brother Seneca, Alic Thug and Cuff Chuck. All were supplied with ammunition in the form of mud-balls and stolen eggs. They advanced cautiously and hid behind a barn which stood a short distance from the place of celebration.

Meanwhile, Captain Tadmire, having ascended the platform, took a seat with grave dignity, and the band struck up the air "Three Cheers for the Red, White and Blue," a performance which gave keen delight not only to the mass-meeting, but also to the Goth-and-Vandal audience behind the barn. The band, whose face was very red from violent muscular exertion, sat down, and the orator of the day arose.

"Ladies and Gentlemen: We will begin these divine services by my reading the Declamation of Independence. It is printed in full in the back part of this history of the United



States.—‘When, in the course of human events ——’”

A wild yell broke upon the ears of the speaker, and cut his sentence short. The next minute, Barclay and his gang left their place of concealment and swaggered towards the platform. Captain Tadmore’s hand shook so that he could hardly hold the United States history from which he was attempting to read. He glanced up at the flag which fluttered over his head, and went on—  
“‘When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary ——’”

Barclay Snooks and company here groaned in concert and discharged a volley of mud-balls at the orator. One of these knocked off his peacock feathered hat.

“You go away from here, and let us alone. This is *our* mass-meeting, and this is a free country. You mind *your* business and we’ll ’tend to ours.—Girls, you just keep your seats. I’ll go on and read this Declamation if you’ll stand by me. ‘When, in the course of human events ——’”

“Wipe off your chin,” shouted Barclay.

“Pull down your vest,” piped Seneca.

These insults were emphasized by a shower of mud-balls and eggs. This second discharge bespattered Tom from head to foot. Cuff Chuck advanced to the platform and attempted to tear down the flag. Seneca, who had learned from Squinty the domestic origin of the banner, cried

out derisively, "Hurrah for Han Tad's old frock!"

"Seneca Snooks, you ought to be ashamed of yourself to make fun of the flag of your country. You ought to be respectful to any lady's dress, and consider my feelings, and how would you like it if somebody was to laugh at your sister's dress on a liberty pole."

This appeal to the finer feelings of the Snooks nature failed of its ingenuous object. Making an ugly face, Barclay pointed his finger at the orator and, in a tone of mockery, drawled out:

"Tom Tad's sister,  
A dude kissed her."

The manner in which this poetical gem was delivered enraged Tom beyond all forbearance. Seneca and Cuff Chuck at once repeated the exasperating couplet, adding jeers and hisses. Barclay advanced to within a few feet of the platform, and stood, with his hands in his pockets, staring contemptuously at the small victim of his persecution. It was observed by the mass-meeting that Captain Tadmore's face turned white as ashes. The history of the United States had fallen from his hand. To his right epaulette were clinging elongated drops of egg-yolk, like enormous yellow tears.

"Tom Tad's sister,  
A dude kissed her,"

chanted Barclay again, glancing from Tom to the fluttering emblem on the bean-pole.

“Barclay Snooks,” said Tom, stepping to the edge of the platform, which was so high that his feet were on a level with Barclay’s breast,—“Barclay Snooks, you are a liar! You are an ornery skunk! Now you just get right down on your knees right before that flag and take back what you said, or I’ll knock your durn brains out.”

This unexpected speech produced a momentary silence, which was broken by the voice of Barclay, saying,

“O, rats!”

In the next instant, Captain Tadmore executed a surprising manœuvre,—what might be called in military language, a *coup de main*. With the agility of a tiger, he sprang upon the elder Snooks, striking that gentleman so violently as to produce a most alarming effect. The great Barclay, leader of gangs, wearer of long tails, owner of a shooting iron, and smoker of stogies, was knocked breathless and senseless, and he lay sprawling on the ground. His furious adversary began to pound the fallen enemy in the face, when Seneca came to the rescue, seizing Tom by the hair, and assailing him with claws and teeth. But Charley Blogson pounced upon Seneca, and dragged him by the leg, from the conflict. Cuff Chuck immediately took Seneca’s place, and, as

the colored boy was much stronger and heavier than Tom, it seemed likely that his attack would turn the tide of victory. To the surprise of everybody, including himself, the valiant captain dealt his sable antagonist a blood-fetching blow on the nasal organ. The girls screamed, the boys cheered, Cuff cried "Murder," and "old Barclay," recovering his senses, uttered a groan. At this crisis all parties were astonished by a man whose quiet approach no one had noticed, and who now appeared in the midst of the excited throng. "Doctor Eldon!" was the shrill cry of the girls.

What further vengeance Tom might have taken was prevented by the abject surrender of Barclay, who ignobly muttered, "Enough." The code of honor would not permit the victor to strike another blow after that surrender. Base indeed is the conqueror who grants no quarter to the enemy who confesses before witnesses that he has had "enough." Both the combatants got upon their feet. Barclay took his gun, and, deserted by his brother and Cuff, slunk homeward. Tom, notwithstanding his victory, felt miserable, both in body and in mind. He too slipped away from the company, in sorry plight, and sought his home by way of the stables, the back yard, and the rear entrance.

The children quickly dispersed, and Uncle Felix, carrying in his hand Tom's School His-

tory, walked homeward leisurely, not displeased with the issue of the combat he had just witnessed. The scene of the late demonstration and revolutionary war was deserted. There stood the platform, with its meagre decoration of pitiful rags; there lay Captain Tadmores's torn paper cap, the peacock feathers scattered; there hung languidly in the sultry air the insulted and vindicated banner of liberty, made of sister Han's frock.

Tom wrote to his Cousin Frank a letter giving his version of the story of his Declaration of Independence and its consequences. In this letter, he said:

“On the  $\frac{1}{4}$  of July, as I was saying, we made our arrangements to have a mass-meeting in Charley Blogson's orchard where we fixed up a nostrum for me to make an oration. We had flags and guns out of brooms and wooden swords but mine was tin with red ink for blood on them and plumes out of roosters tails and the procession marched after me with Charley Blogson beating the tin basin for a drum and playing on his mouth to illustrate a band. I kept waving my sword to show them how General Grant looked at the battle of Waterloo and when the crowd came up to the nostrum I hollered out halt! The girls didn't know how to halt but Charley explained to them and after while they got to halting pretty well. Then I rose up and

began to read the Declamation of Independence when old Barclay Snooks and Seneca and Cuff Chuck and a whole lot of them ruffs came hooting out from behind the barn and began to throw mud and eggs at me. you know them Snooks boys have been a bullying me all my life. Barclay is a great big but Seneca is not much bigger than me. Barclay is the feller that went to the circus with the McStaver girls and called me a kid. He is trying to raze a mustash and his voice is changeable and sounds half the time like a bull frog and tother half like a katy-did.

“ Well the band struck up Hell Columbia but them outsiders had no respect for the band. I told them to go away for it was our mass-meeting and this was a free Country. Cuff Chuck tried to haul down our flag. When Barclay found out it was sister Han’s dress he thought hed rattle me and he came right up near in front of the nostrum and sung out first in his bull-frog voice and then in his katy-did voice some mean insultuous verses about Han. Well then I hadn’t a speck of moral curridge left in me and I dove right off the nostrum at him and lit in his stom-ick so hard that it knocked the breath out of him and I began to hit him with all my mite and mane in the face and eyes and shake him till Seneca jumped on me and began to scratch and bite but Charley Blogson went for him and then Cuff Chuck pitched into me and I wasnt a bit

scared but happy and I was a heap stronger than I am and I hit Cuff so hard on the nose that the goar made us both goary when of a sudden there stood Uncle Felix.

“I snuck home and when mother and sister Han and Aunt Tildy saw me all tore up and muddy and eggy mother said ‘shame where was your moral curridge.’ Well Frank then I told them all about it and how when Barclay said that about Han I hadnt a speck of moral curridge left in me and clean forgot about mother and the hickory-oil and my little coffin and my prayers and pitched in. They didn’t say another word but mother kind of laughed and Frank sure as you live sister Han just put her arms around my kneck and gave me the best kiss in her collection.”

## XIV

### TOM LECTURES ON "ANIMALS AND SO FOARTH"

THOMAS TADMORE was not, by choice, a studious and school-going boy. The two things which he held in special aversion were silence and restraint. Give him a wide range and plenty of noise, with some muscular live thing to tussle with, and he was happy. With a sigh, almost a groan, he carried his satchel and shining morning face to the house of instruction when the first of September summoned him from liberty to bondage, and into the presence of Principal Gadmeter and the whole "faculty" of the Forest Glen Union School. This school was considered good of its kind, but the kind was bad, and so the better the worse. At least so thought Uncle Felix, who, with all his good nature, was somewhat critical and sarcastic. He regarded the village school as an educational mill which ground out valueless results only to record the daily grists with automatic regularity. The classification of the pupils was exact, the grading precise, the teaching methodical, but the school lacked vital interest. Principal Gadmeter was intent solely on running the machine and he seemed to look



upon the children as mere material to keep the cogs from rusting. In his view the work of education consisted in pushing or pulling boys and girls through the course of studies according to the printed "rules of the board." Everything he attempted to teach, even morals and religion, he hoped to impart by mechanical processes.

The memoriter system which Uncle Felix contemptuously described as the "goose-liver method," Josephus Gadmeter extolled as the only practical mode of fitting the young for the duties of life. Sometimes, in a public address, when warmed to a high temperature of eloquence and virtue, the Professor delivered thunder to the effect that the Union School of Forest Glen was not only "fitting our youth, male and female, for the duties of this life," but was also "preparing immortal souls for the endless ages of eternity."

Tom submitted to the inevitable, and, with the rest of his class, was daily fitted for life, death and immortality, by machinery. His ready memory, vivid fancy, and voluble tongue gave him advantage over the average boy of his age. He would rattle off a recitation with the unthinking fluency of a parrot or a phonograph and, had it not been, as he complained, that "deportment pulled him down," his percents. would have ranged high in the eighties.

"What did you get in 'rithmetic, Charley?"

he would ask, and without waiting for a reply, "I got 97 in probs. and 90 in g'ografy and 100 in compo., and 100 in declamation. But I only got 42 in spelling, and  $23\frac{1}{2}$  in conduct. That brings me only a little above 75, average. I don't see why they give me so many demerits; —whisperin' I s'pose or laughin' out loud. I can't help laughin' when there's fun goin' on."

The teachers were always under Tom's watchful eye, and he understood them much better than they knew themselves or him. Had he pored upon his books as industriously as he studied the being, actions, and passions of his mentors, what a scholar he might have become! He was well aware that Miss Marks of room B could be influenced by donations of red apples; that Miss Crinkler who had been in the school before the new schoolhouse was built, and before Mr. Gadmeter was elected Principal, was carrying on a flirtation with Professor Ripantare, the elocutionist, who came twice a week to drill the senior class in "vocal gymnastics." Tom was certain that the new teacher in grade F was afraid to "put her foot down on behavior," and that she gave out that the answer in the book was wrong, to avoid owning that she couldn't work the problem. The boys had proof that the answer was right, for Jo Bogus possessed a key to the arithmetic. It is a remarkable fact that every pupil in the school knew that Jo had that

key and used it, while not one of the teachers entertained the slightest suspicion that such was the case. They regarded Jo Bogus as an exceptionally nice and candid boy, who handed in very neat papers, and went to Sunday-school regularly.

There was one instructor in the school, Miss Grace Belmont, whose skill, wisdom, and devotion wrought miracles of inspiration in her pupils, in spite of the unfavorable influence of the "system," and the Procrustean theory of Mr. Gadmeter. This young woman was honored and loved by the entire school; Tom's admiration for her knew no bounds.

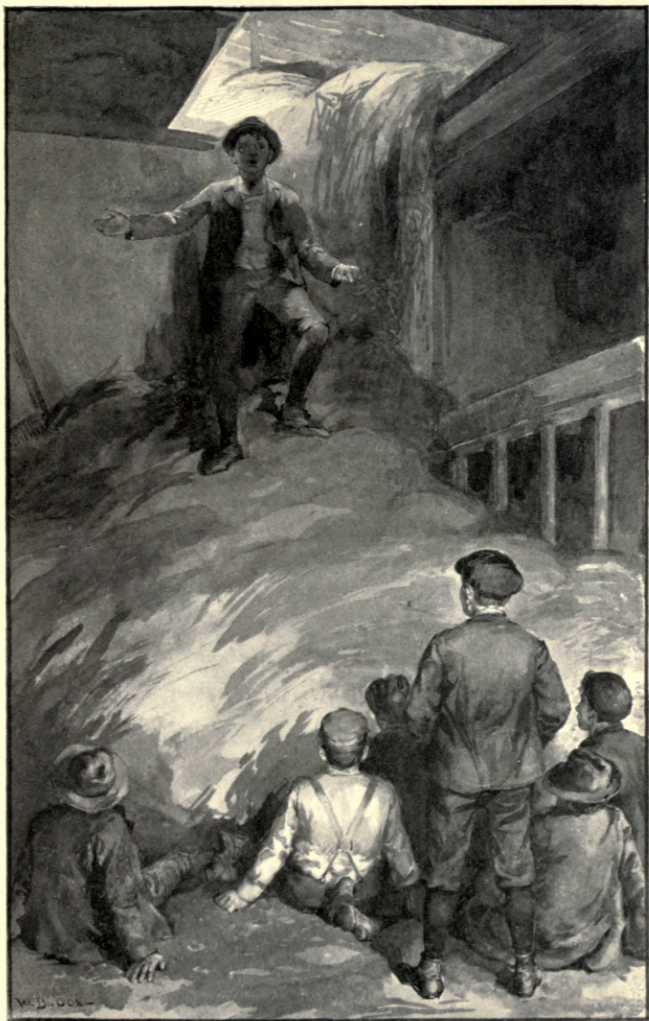
The daily routine at school tasks did not absorb all of Tom's energies. He found plenty of spare time, before and after school hours, and on Saturdays, to pursue the study of natural history, in his peculiar way.

"Sam," said he one day to his friend from the riverside, "I've a mind to make up a kind of funny lecture on animals. You know I've got a heap of animal information from reading and fishing and collecting insects and so on. Then I've heard a good many lectures at the natural hist'ry society with lantern slides, and I re'lize how they do it. Uncle Felix is a curate in the museum; he's a pachyderm, too, you know, and stuffs nearly every day."

"I thought he was a doctor."

“ Yes, he is ; a doctor and a Ph. D. But he is a pachyderm, too. He has piles of stuffed yaks, and owls in the museum, and snakes and horn toads and I don’t know what all, in jars of liquor, and coleopteras on long pins, and books with painted pictures. Science is order reduced to system and pop’lar science is system reduced to disorder, he says.—Don’t you think I’m posted up well enough to lecture the boys ? ”

Not getting as much encouragement as he expected from Sam, the ambitious young savant laid his plans before Charley Blogson who heartily seconded them. Hand bills scrawled in vari-colored ink were prepared, announcing in big capitals, and with many exclamation points, that Thomas Tadmore, junior, would lecture, in Blogson’s barn “ next Saturday afternoon at P. M. Sharp, on Animals and So Foarth.” The price of admission was fixed at six marbles, or three fish hooks, or two sticks of chewing-gum. The bills stated that no girls would be “ aloud ” to attend the meeting. Charley acted as doorkeeper, and sergeant-at-arms, and selected for his assistant Squinty Runkle to whose shirt front was fastened a huge tin-star, the emblem of authority. On the afternoon set apart for Tom’s facetious performance, a frolicksome audience assembled on the threshing floor of the great barn. Blogson had piled up a pedestal of hay from the top of which the speaker was to



TOM NOW CAUSED A SENSATION BY LEAPING FROM THE HAY-PILE.



deliver his oration. When all was in readiness for the speech to begin, Charley, grinning from ear to ear, said, "Gentlemen of the Jury, I introduce you to a man that don't need any introduction."

Tom, who, up to this crisis, had been invisible, now caused a sensation by leaping down to the hay-pile from a mow in which he had lain concealed. He wore an old swallow-tailed coat, had a newspaper spread over his breast to represent a dress shirt, and his nose supported a pair of spectacles with no glass in the rims. After bowing low, to the front, to the right and to the left, he cleared his throat and began :

"Fellow vertebrates :

"Man is an animal and boy is an animal and I am glad to see so many of you animals here. We ought to pursue animals, for they are the mainspring of education, and, as Professor Gadmeter says, they help a heap to develop the manhood and womanhood in a boy, and to draw out character. Boys, you ought to have your character clean drawed out of you, like me and Charley.

"Now pay 'tention. All animals with a few exceptions, is more or less alike. We shall divide them up into two classes: first them that are more alike, and, second, them that are less alike. Fish belongs to the former and birds to the latter. You all know cat-fish and cat-birds.

The cat-fish is a more peculiar quadruped than the cat-bird. Their young are called kit-fish because their favorite haunt is a fish-kit.—The crawfish hasn't any craw. I reckon crabs eat crab-apples.—Hold on; I've got some notes here in my memory random book. O yes! here we are.

“Next to fish comes birds and aves. I've got a collection of them, hard to beat, as far as it goes. I have collected one bird and one ovum. The tropical longitudes is more favorable to the feathered tribes, 'specially ostriches, which lay alligator's eggs. A penquin is a marsupial fowl, so called because the natives use the tail-feathers to make pens like goose quills. A young goose is called a gosling and a young moose is a mosling. Birds chaw with their gizzards.

“And now to sum up. We have explained two halves of our subject, viz., namely, birds and fish. In birds we include two sorts, viz., namely, birds proper and birds improper. Fish is more widespread, but the bulk of them may be slung under two heads, viz., namely, real fish and crawfish. Real fish we divide into big and little, and crawfish into live and dead, which takes them all in.”

At this point the applause became uproarious and the sergeant-at-arms had all he could do to restore silence. The speaker bowed his thanks and continued.



“I am sorry for the boy who reads light reading. Heavy is best. Animals is a fact. Zoology is the most solidifying reading you can get a hold of. It takes brains. But as Professor Gadmeter always tells you, obstacles overcome every effort. Order is heaven’s first law. Genus is the second, and so on.

“There is two kinds of whales—the right whale and the wrong whale. Whales carry harpoons to defend themselves against the icebergs. You think a whale is a big fish, but you are away off, because you don’t know beans about zoology. A whale *is* somewhat like a fish. But he is morewhat unlike a fish. The whale is full of whale-blubber, which is used to feed Eskimos.

“Here I have a picture of the gnu,” (Tom displayed a large charcoal sketch). “It is found in the wilds of Africa and maybe in the tames of Asia. This is an old gnu. I guess it came from the gnu world.

“I could tell you lots more, but you’ve had your chewing-gum’s worth.—There’s a beast called the unicorn. I never saw one in this country though I’ve lived here all my life. Travelers say he eats unicorn cakes.—The rattlesnake is a beautiful provision of nature. They are good to eat. You have to take off their rattles so they can’t bite you.”

The audience greeted this bit of science with prolonged cries of “Ah!”—

“ You think you’ll rattle *me*, do you ? I meant to tell you about sponges and mummies, but I’ll leave that part out. Uncle Felix has a mummy in the museum that he caught on its nest, in the jungles of Egypt. It died on the voyage and is now an extinct specie.”

The good-natured clamor of the boys quite drowned the speech of the mock lecturer.

“ Come to Order,” cried Blogson at the top of his voice.

“ Come to Order,” squeaked Squinty Runkle with a silly grimace.

“ Come to Order,” yelled all the boys together.

“ Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your ears !” shouted Tom. “ I come not here to talk. Let that plebeian talk !” pointing to Squinty. “ But here I come to speak what I do know. And I do know,” cried the orator, jumping down from the hay-pile and stripping off his swallow-tail, “ I do know that the wild grapes are getting ripe in Squire Hoyle’s woods, and I’m hungry, and who’ll follow me ?”

“ I !— I !— I !” answered the boys in concert. The barn was deserted in a moment, and all went scurrying across the fields, and over fences, away, away to the woods of Squire Hoyle, Tom leading the van and Squinty bringing up the rear.

## XV

### A RAID ON SQUIRE HOYLE'S ORCHARD

THE young marauders guided by Tom, found the spot where the wild grape-vines grew, but, to their disappointment, the vines had been rifled of most of the fruit. Broken branches and fresh leaves strewn upon the ground gave evidence that other robbers of the greenwood had very recently been up the trees, and had stolen the coveted purple bunches.

"We are too late," exclaimed Blogson; "somebody's been ahead of us."

"Yander they are," said Squinty.

"Where?"

"Yander I seed Seneca Snooks go in that holler tree, I did."

With a whoop and hallo Tom and his tribe ran to the tree. It was a huge sycamore so much rotted and burned out that the cavity in its trunk formed a room large enough to hold half a dozen boys. Within this sylvan hiding-place three persons were discovered, Seneca Snooks, Barclay, and Cuff Chuck. The spoils of the grape-vines were also there. Barclay was seated with his legs wide apart, and his back resting against

the black wall of the tree: he was smoking a stogie.

Tom was first to look in upon his late foe, whom he had not met since the fight on the Fourth of July.

"What you want?" growled Barclay.

"Grapes," was the prompt reply.

By this time Tom's whole party had gathered at the door of Barclay's house. The great man thought it best to be accommodating.

"There's nothing mean about me," he said, in conciliatory tones. "Of course I'll sheer with my friends. Sineca, give them grapes to Mr. Tadmore, and these gentlemen."

Seneca proceeded to divide the pillaged fruit. The grapes, not half ripe, were fiercely sour, bitter and astringent. But the boys ate them with avidity and called them delicious.

"Where's your gun?" asked Tom, not seeing that precious engine.

"I'm having a new silver plate put on the stock. The gunsmith said he would put one on fer four dollars, and I said, 'Go ahead, I don't keer fer money: put her on if it costs ten dollars.'"

"What will you take for the gun when the plate is on?"

"I don't keer to part with that gun fer no money. My gran'daddy paid five hundred dollars fer it when it was new—wasn't it five hundred, Sineca?"

"That was before I was born," replied Seneca cautiously, for he knew that the boys considered Barclay a notorious stretcher of the truth.

"Guns was mighty dear in them days," remarked Barclay, "I'll let it go to a friend fer fifty dollars. If *you* wanted that gun, Tadmore, I'd let it go fer twenty-five dollars cash."

"I've only got ten dollars, altogether," confessed Tom, "and I want to get me a bicycle and a pony, as well as a gun."

"I need a little hard cash now to lend to a feller, or I'd jist as soon give you that gun. I've loaned out most of my funds. I spend a good deal, too, on hosses and dogs; I've lost scandalous sence we moved down here. You remember Sineca, when we lived up at Christiansburg, we had slathers of money?"

"Lots and gobs," assented Seneca.

"I'd like to go back to the old place, gaul durned if I wouldn't," resumed the great man. "We built a four-story house with eight rooms in every story and a tower. We had butcher's meat every day."

"Gosh!" This from Squinty Runkle.

"And store-tea," Seneca ventured to say.

"We raised our own tea up at Christiansburg, Seneca."

"But tea don't grow in this country," said one of the boys.

"Don't you think I know that?" retorted

Barclay indignantly. "This tea was raised in a hot-house. That's the way we raised our own coffee too—— But, gentlemen, I've been a plannin' fer you."

"How's that?" asked Tom; "plannin' what?"

Barclay emerged from the tree trunk, threw away the stub of his cigar, which Cuff Chuck picked up, and, after a mysterious pause, said in a low voice, "If there's any white-livers in this crowd, let them sneak to their dens." Barclay paused again, and, no one sneaking to a den, the inference was that there were no white-livers present. "If there's any brave men here, let them foller their leader and do what he says." Tom and his friends did not relish the idea of proving their bravery at the sacrifice of owning Barclay for captain. Nevertheless, no one demurred, since they were all curious to learn what enterprise was ahead of them. The courageous Snooks, like some new Robin Hood, headed the little band of foresters, and marched cautiously from the woods, and across a wide field, and finally up along a narrow lane terminating at a set of "bars" in a fence on the other side of which was Squire Hoyle's apple orchard.

"Now you drap onto my plan. I'll stand here and watch out fer the dog, or the Squire, and you boys jist slide over the fence, and slip up to that big tree with the yeller apples."

"No!" protested Tom. "No, I won't steal. Come on, boys; let's go away."

"Why didn't you go away when I gave you a chance in the woods?"

"You didn't tell us you were going to steal. *I'm* no white-liver, Barclay Snooks, and you know it."

"I ain't a callin' you a white-liver. You're a blackenin' my repputation, callin' me a thief."

"Well, you are a thief, if you steal. What is a thief?"

"Well," said Barclay maliciously, "I s'pose a boy that gits grapes that don't belong to him is a thief."

"That's different."

"Yaas, that's different," mocked the large boy. "Gittin' grapes is stealin' without danger, and gittin' apples in a bold way, is stealin' with danger. I'd ruther be a robber nor a sneak-thief."

"I won't steal," said Tom. "You boys can do as you like. I'm going home. Come on, Charley."

"You are too durned good fer this world. Go to your mammies. I'm bound to have some apples. Sineca, you and Cuff climb over and run to that there tree and fetch me your hats full of the biggest."

The two boys thus ordered, obeyed, though unwillingly, and Squinty could not resist the

temptation to fill *his* hat also. Influenced by the example of these three petty thieves, and by the cries of a ravenous appetite, two of Tom's companions, Wesley Crooke and Jo Bogus, joined the pillagers. Barclay had the discretion to remain outside the orchard. The five foragers with nimble celerity gathered their hats, pockets, and hands full of apples, not failing to utilize their mouths by taking many a "hog-bite." They were about ready to rejoin Barclay, when that vigilant sentinel observed to his dismay, that Squire Hoyle himself was coming down the lane, and was not a hundred feet from the bars. Barclay saw one chance of self-exculpation. Assuming an air of virtuous rage he bawled out,

"Hey there! You young scoundrels. Git out of Squire Hoyle's orchard or I'll thrash every mother's son of you. Hain't you ashamed to steal of such a nice man as Squire Hoyle!—Why, sure as I live, here is the gentleman now. 'Scuse me, Squire Hoyle, I seed a squad of nasty, low-lived boys in your orchard, and I run over here to drive them off."

"You are the scurviest whelp of the pack!" cried the Squire, brandishing a hickory gad and bringing it down with a swish on Barclay's back. "You worthless, sneaking, lying rascal." And he trounced Barclay until the wretched youth was barely able to limp home.

The pilferers escaped, clinging to their plunder.



Once safely out of the orchard, they sped after Tom and his companion. Alas for the weakness of human nature and the power of youthful appetite! This chronicle is sorry to report that the moral virtue which resisted the temptation to steal, yielded to the desire to taste Squire Hoyle's apples, and, like our first parents, Tom and his comrade partook of fruit not only forbidden, but stolen.

## XVI

### PRINCIPAL GADMETER'S SAGACITY

SQUIRE HOYLE made haste to inform the school authorities that his orchard had been pillaged, and to demand that Mr. Gadmeter identify and punish the robbers. This the professor cheerfully consented to do, for he was one of those just men who hold that it is better that ninety and nine innocent boys should suffer than that one guilty should escape. He prided himself on his detective ability, and was in the habit of assuming that he knew all that was going on in the little world over which he ruled; he claimed not only to understand the dispositions, but even to read the thoughts and motives of the boys and girls. "I have eyes in the back of my head," he would say.

The indignant Squire called at the Principal's house on Saturday evening and stated his grievance.

"I'm not a man to make a fuss," were his introductory words. "But I'm not a man that will stand *everything*. I won't stand it to have those tarnal boys steal my apples." And he

proceeded to relate the sad story of the depredations made on his orchard that afternoon.

"I caught one of the ring-leaders, and gave him a trouncing: that was this great lazy Snooks boy, almost a man grown."

"Those Snooks boys are not members of our school, and, in fact, sir, I feel sure that no boy who is a member of our Union School would be guilty of pilfering. That would be contrary to the Rules of the Board, and to the moral instruction which I impart. Character is the main thing we aim to develop. I venture to assure you, sir, that no other school in the State gives so much attention to fitting youths for the duties of life, as does the Union School of Forest Glen."

"That's all right, Mr. Gadmeter, but a pack of your boys robbed my orchard this afternoon, and I want you to find them out and make an example of them."

"How do you know they were from our school? I have told you that the Snooks boys are not."

"I'll tell you; I was coming up the lane and I met a dozen or more youngsters, that I know belong to the school, among them was young Blogson, and that spry little Tommy Tadmore."

"A troublesome boy," said Mr. Gadmeter, twisting his beard. (Josephus Gadmeter wore a ferocious black beard, and so thick a mustache

that no one had ever seen his lips. His white teeth were almost frightfully visible behind the dark fringe on his mouth.) "A troublesome boy, hard to manage, conceited."

"Is he?" queried the Squire, a smile forcing its way though the grimness of his frowning face. "He is an amusing little scamp, as quick as a flash; and well bred too; he was the only boy in the batch that took off his hat to me."

"He puts on a good deal of politeness," answered Gadmeter, "but I fear he is deceitful."

"Another one that I knew was Judge Bogus's son—Jo, I think his name is."

"Joseph Bogus! A nice boy, Squire; an exceedingly promising boy. Manly,—frank,—upright. That boy wouldn't steal a blade of grass. Impossible."

"I don't say that he did, or that any of the crowd did; but I suspect that they knew all about the stealing. I went on to the end of the lane and there I found Snooks, and gave him something to remember me by." Mr. Gadmeter threw back his head and a chuckle came from the gap betwixt his white teeth. The Squire proceeded: "While I was entertaining Mr. Snooks, five or six smaller boys scampered from the orchard with their hats full of apples."

"Ah! I thought so," said Mr. Gadmeter.

"I asked Snooks who they were," continued

the Squire; "he said he wasn't sure, but he thought one of them was Tadmire and another Blogson. When I told him that could not be so, for I had seen those boys in the lane, he said he was sure he knew one of the thieves, a boy of very reckless character, a young desperado named Runkle."

"I never heard the name before," said Gadmeter. "He doesn't belong to our school. We have no desperate characters."

"Well, Mr. Gadmeter," said the Squire, rising to go, "I have given you the clew. I wish you would investigate the matter. Be a little quiet about it, and make some inquiries. You might quiz that boy Josy Bogus."

"Just the thing! I was about to suggest the same idea. Trust me, Squire Hoyle, to ferret out mischief. I know all about the ways of boys. They know it's no use to try to fool me."

The Squire took his leave, and Mr. Gadmeter immediately set about sinking his nets as he termed it. A good part of the Holy Sabbath Day was dedicated to "sinking nets." One of these "nets" was cast around Master Joseph Bogus, who, being invited to call at the Principal's house, made his appearance after tea.

"Joey, step into the library," said Mr. Gadmeter, and he affectionately patted that candid model on the head. "Joey, I think from the present state of the records, that you stand a

first-rate chance of taking the medal for excellence in arithmetic."

"I'm working hard for it, sir."

"Yes, I know you are: working like a beaver. You are on the right track. You neither ask help nor give help. You are fitting yourself for the duties of life, and, I trust, for endless ages of immortality. Joey, where were you yesterday?"

Forewarned is forearmed. Joey was on his guard. "I was at home studying arithmetic most of the day."

"Were you out in the afternoon walking with some of the boys?"

"I was over at Blogson's barn, where Tom Tad was making a speech."

"So I understand," remarked Mr. Gadmeter. Joseph was wary and wily. He doubted whether the professor "understood" so much as he "let on."

"We had a spelling-match after the speech;" Joseph put forth this whopper to test the fullness and accuracy of his honored Principal's understanding. The man swallowed the bait.

"Yes, I know you had. Which of you came out best?" The Principal felt that he had gained a point, and was extremely anxious to get another. He looked at Joseph with an air of paternal pride, which said as plain as words could say, "Now, Joey, don't be modest, but

“speak out and let me share your triumph; you came out best.” Joseph was a mind reader, as well as a consulter of keys and ponies. “I believe, Mr. Gadmeter, that you know everything and see everywhere. As you say, you have eyes in the back of your head, and you seem to look through walls and roofs, and to hear whatever we boys say when we are miles and miles away.” Mr. Gadmeter was flattered.

“Well, well, well!” he said, throwing back his head in his peculiar manner. “I suppose I do have ways and means of finding out what is going on,—ways and means that you boys have no idea of. The birds tell me many a secret. I never go out of my way, Joey, to spy into the conduct of my pupils. I trust them and believe them, and they trust and believe me, and tell me everything.”

“They can't help it,” blandly assented Joseph Bogus; “and if they could, you would find it out anyhow.”

“I think I have the confidence of my pupils; I believe I have *your* confidence. But I don't want to embarrass you in any way, shape, form or manner. Whatever you say to me here, in the privacy of my own house, shall be, as it were, between you and me and the gatepost.”

Joseph felt in his heart, that if he had any secrets to confide, his best course would be to

limit his confidence to the gate-post. But he said very candidly, "Oh, of course."

"I have a special reason for wishing to learn whether my information is correct in regard to what happened *after* you had the spelling-match in the barn. There are stories afloat, Joseph, (lies, no doubt) which touch your character for honesty. Now I advise you to make a clean breast of the whole affair. How was it?"

Joseph was no gudgeon. He thought he saw the meshes of the net.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Where did you go after you left the barn?"

"We went to the woods. Tom wanted to get some wild grapes in Squire Hoyle's woods."

"Yes. Go on."

"We didn't find the grapes on the vines, but we met Barclay Snooks and his brother and they gave us grapes."

"And then?"

"And then we went across the field and down Squire Hoyle's lane, and by his orchard."

"By his orchard? Did any of the boys go into the orchard?"

"Well, I don't know what the others might have done after I came away. I came away and left some of the boys standing there."

"I see, Joseph, I see. It is pretty much as I supposed. You don't need to tell me anything



more. Tadmore, you say, proposed to go to the woods, and there you met the Snooks boys. Yes, yes. Come and see me again, Joseph. Come often."

## XVII

### TOM GETS A FLOGGING

ON Monday morning Mr. Gadmeter notified Miss Grace Belmont that he would come to her room immediately after the opening of school, to inquire into a small matter of discipline.

“You need not call your first class. I shall perhaps wish to occupy half an hour or so questioning the scholars. The case I shall investigate is one which concerns the reputation of the school.”

“What is the nature of it?” inquired Miss Belmont.

“Well, it is a case involving the honesty of one or two of the boys. We must vindicate the character of the school.”

“Would it not be better to investigate the matter privately?”

“No, the more publicly the better. We must show these boys and girls just how we stand on morals. I believe in crowning virtue and crushing vice.”

The bell rang, and the pupils filed to their respective rooms, Tom and Charley unconscious of the disturbance they had created in the Prin-

cipal's mind, and scarcely remembering the events of Saturday, came in at the door as if some rollicking breeze had blown them to school. Tom paused a moment to lay an apple and a sprig of goldenrod on the table,—a morning offering to the divinity of the place. The slight confusion caused by the general seating had scarcely subsided, when Mr. Gadmeter stepped into the room very softly and walked to the platform on which the table stood. He motioned Miss Belmont to be seated, and then opened a small Bible which he carried in his hand.

“We will read for our instruction this morning, a single verse from the twentieth chapter of the Book of Genesis. It is the fifteenth verse of the chapter, and is one of the Ten Commandments. ‘Thou shalt not steal.’” The impressive manner in which the Principal read these four words was dramatic. The scholars were startled. “*Thou shalt not steal,*” repeated Mr. Gadmeter and closed the book.

Tom Tadmore glanced at Charley, who in his turn stole a furtive look at Joseph Bogus. Joseph Bogus was already deeply buried in arithmetic. His seat-mate, Wesley Crooke, was absent that morning.

“It is my painful duty, scholars, to interrupt your lessons long enough to impress upon your minds the paramount importance this school, and we teachers, attach to the virtue of honesty; and,

I may add, the hatred and abhorrence in which we hold dishonesty. There are some present who will realize the hidden meaning of my words. But I do not propose that my meaning shall long remain hidden from any of you. This school exists to fit you for the duties of life, and for the endless ages of eternity. Thomas Tadmore, please step this way."

If Mr. Gadmeter's reading was dramatic, what shall we say of his speech and summons? They were blood-curdling. You could have heard a fly whisper. Tom heard his heart beat so loud that he was provoked at the noise it made; he feared the boy next to him would hear the cowardly thing throb. He rose and came to the front. All eyes were upon him, except those of Jo Bogus, which clung to the arithmetic, page 64, "Discount."

"Thomas."

"Sir?" The way in which Thomas said "sir?" was droll enough though not in the least impudent. Tom couldn't for the life of him think of anything polite to say. So he said "sir?"

"Don't be saucy."

Tom had not meant to be saucy. Now he felt under obligation to be so. But he choked the feeling down and said,

"I beg your pardon."

This phrase offended Mr. Gadmeter still more;

he thought he detected in it a spirit of mocking and contempt of court.

"You may have reason to beg pardon,—my pardon, and that of the school."

Tom stared at the ceiling and his eyes watered. So did those of Miss Belmont. She picked up the sprig of goldenrod and fingered it nervously.

"I am glad to see you have some feeling. Your tears confess your fault. Are you guilty?"

"Yes," said the confused lad sobbing, and absolutely ignorant of the nature of the charge harbored against him. "Yes, he pushed me out of the line and I——"

"That has nothing to do with the matter," interrupted the Principal. "You know well enough that I am referring to the affair of Saturday. Didn't you steal some apples?"

"No!" said Tom in a loud voice, dashing the tears from his eyes, and glancing around the room defiantly. "Who says I did? He tells a lie!"

"Remember where you are," said Mr. Gadmeter, showing signs of temper. "Remember whom you are speaking to, and use proper language. Do you pretend to say you know nothing about the theft of last Saturday, when you and several other boys were in Squire Hoyle's woods, and afterwards in his orchard?"

"I was not in his orchard. There was a lot of us over there, but only a few went into the

orchard, and most of us came away. They can speak for themselves."

"Didn't you touch any of the apples?"

"Yes, the boys gave me three, and I ate two of them."

"Oh, you *did*, did you? They were pretty good apples, weren't they, now?"

Several of the boys laughed at this humorous question and Tom himself joined in the merriment, but in a restrained manner.

"They were good, eh! Thomas?"

"They were first-rate."

This was not an uncivil answer, but to Mr. Gadmeter, who, for some reason, had a strong prejudice against Tom, it smacked of levity and disrespect. The gentleman, forgetting his own dignity, scowled at the boy, and made use of the rather vulgar and trite rebuke, "No more of your sauce!" The expression associating itself with the accusation against Tom, suggested a pun and, his habit of speaking out whatever came into his fancy, prevailing over discretion, he let slip the words "apple sauce." The Principal heard, but restrained his wrath, and resumed his questioning with severe calmness.

"You say the boys gave you three apples and you ate two; what became of the third?"

No answer.

"I say, what became of the third of those good apples?" The culprit involuntarily turned

his face towards Miss Belmont. His eyes met hers; then they rested for a moment upon the big yellow apple which lay in full view on the table. The school instantly translated the pantomime, and a thrill ran from heart to heart. There was an uneasy rustling of dresses on the girls' side of the house.

"This is the stolen apple you did not eat, is it?"

"I did not steal it, Mr. Gadmeter."

"I am not so sure of that. A boy that will steal may speak a falsehood. Besides you received the stolen fruit, and that is the same as stealing. Who *did* actually take the apples from the orchard? Tell me the names of the boys."

A deep silence.

"Will you tell me their names?"

"No, sir, I won't."

"You won't? We shall see. If you think to put your will against mine, young man, we shall see who is the strongest. Joseph, go to my room and bring my rattan."

Joseph Bogus complied with this command, and after handing the rattan to his honored Principal he sat down and opened his arithmetic, reading silently at the top of the page "Compound Interest." Mr. Gadmeter took the rod in his hand and raised it to strike. Melissa Brown, a charming little girl with a profusion of curls,

put her face in her handkerchief and began to weep.

“Will you tell me the names of the boys who stole Squire Hoyle’s apples?”

The hardened criminal shook his head. A blow fell upon his shoulders! another! another! a shower of quick sharp blows! the criminal winced. Miss Belmont stepped to the Principal’s side and touched his elbow.

“Mr. Gadmeter, you are forgetting yourself. You are angry.” This was spoken in a very earnest tone, but so low that none but Tom and the Principal could hear it.

“I know what I am about,” replied the excited man roughly. “Authority must be maintained. Do you suppose I am going to allow a boy to conquer me before the whole school? He must yield.” Schoolmasters are but human. The mildest soul has some savage element. Mr. Gadmeter was not mild, and he had allowed the tiger of his nature to leap to his brain.

“I ask again and for the last time, will you tell me the names?”

All the stubborn blood of the boy cried *No* in his veins. He was of the stuff that martyrs are made of. Such was the lad’s fortitude that at the moment he took a fierce pride in the pain he bore, and his young American courage steeled him to think he would rather die than yield. The thwacking blows of the rattan fell merci-



lessly upon his shoulders and back. Tom's face grew livid. Grace Belmont made an effort to snatch the rod from the Principal's hand.

"Shame!" she said, "this is brutal! The punishment is cruel and unreasonable."

The pupils were upon their feet, one and all, and came crowding forward. Many were crying. The boys clenched their fists. The purple flush forsook Tom's cheeks and he became ghastly pale,—he reeled and caught at a desk to keep from falling to the floor.

Mr. Gadmeter suddenly realized the rashness of his proceeding. Visions of a lawsuit rose in his imagination. He recollected that Thomas Tadmire, senior, was not a person of mild temper. Conscious of defeat, he assumed an air of supreme authority, sternly commanded Tom to take his seat, and himself left the room and went to his private office to reflect on his folly and consider how he might recover lost power and self-respect.

"Please all take your seats," requested Miss Belmont in a low tone, and the boys and girls immediately obeyed. A profound silence prevailed. Tom staggered to his place hardly realizing what had happened, or where he was. He rested his forehead in his hands upon his desk.

"The class in arithmetic will recite."

A large division of pupils came to the recitation benches, Joseph Bogus at the head, but the

work of the forenoon passed off like a funeral service. At recess, Tom took his hat and went to the play-ground as usual. Joseph Bogus prudently stayed at his desk. The boys who were concerned in the doing of Saturday crowded around their hero, who rubbed his shoulders, and said with a ghastly grin, "He fetched the red, boys, but I didn't give you away, did I?"

Miss Belmont, sitting by herself while the boys and girls were at play, did not eat her luncheon. She took Tom's apple in her hand, and the scene of the morning came back so vividly and pathetically, that her breast labored and great tears of pity rolled down her cheeks. Melissa Brown came to the open door and looked in, but spoke not, and soon went away, loving Miss Belmont more than ever. When the school assembled after recess, the teacher's kind face was as serene as usual. And Tom's was ostentatiously cheerful. Incredible as it may seem, the boy, when he went home that evening, said not a word about the flogging he had received. He was rather irritable and uncommunicative and went to bed quite early.

As for the exemplary Joseph Bogus, he escaped the rod of school justice, for none of the boys turned state's evidence against him. But he did not escape the summary vengeance of Sam Noggle who waited for him in the public road, that evening, and thrashed him with the enthusi-

astic ardor of a rough boy who feels it his duty to vindicate injured innocence and to rebuke sneaking hypocrisy.

Mr. Gadmeter was for several days very uneasy for fear of a wrathful visitation from Thomas Tadmire, senior, or from Felix Eldon. But those gentlemen, not hearing of Tom's whipping until a fortnight after it had passed into local history, reflected that the time for retaliation had gone by, and that it would be ridiculous to dig up the hatchet which Tom had so carefully buried. However, they did not think any better of Josephus Gadmeter, or of his method of fitting boys for the duties of life.

## XVIII

### BARCLAY PLAYS THE BEAU

THROUGH the generosity of Dr. Eldon, the Noggle family was enabled to abandon the shanty-boat for more commodious quarters, in a frame house situated very near the Ohio River,—a property belonging to Mr. Tadmore. Grandfather Barton protested against the removal, but his objections were overruled.

About four o'clock in the afternoon of a fine summer day, a young man carrying in his hand a slim, mottled cane, knocked on the door of the Noggle house. Two overgrown girls standing on the river's margin, waved their handkerchiefs towards the young man, who had parted company with them a few minutes before, and was soon to rejoin them.

The elder of the two spoke to the younger very snappishly :

"You needn't do everything I do, Rach. Can't I wave my handkercher without your doing the same thing?"

"I'll do whatever I've a mind to, and not ask you," retorted the other. "You are not my mistress, Beck McStaver. I've got as good a

right to wave my handkercher as you have. He's not your company any more than mine. He asked us both to take a skift-ride with him, and he asked me first."

"Asked you first! You know he would never ask you at all, if you was not my sister. If you think Barclay cares particularly for you, you are mistaken. You shouldn't be forward; it don't look well in a person of your age."

"I hear you but I don't fear you," answered Miss Rachel. "I know I'm not as old as you, nor as ugly; and you ain't as young as me."

"Nor so pretty, why didn't you say, you impudent fright? Yes, you are a beauty! You are a sweet-tempered creature—sweet as lemon juice. Don't make mouths at me! I'd smack your face if we were at home."

"*You would*, would you? *You would*? Temper! My! Everybody knows that you are the worst dispositioned person in Forest Glen. Shut up? I won't shut up. I see he's coming back; but what do I care if he does hear. I'm not ashamed of my words. I'm ashamed of you."

Though Miss Rachel continued to berate her angry sister, she lowered her voice as the young man approached accompanied by Peter Noggle.

Barclay's colloquy with the heads of the Noggle house had been peculiar. In answer to his rap, Mandy had opened the door.

"Where's Sam?"

"Workin' in the board-yard."

"Is your gran'daddy home?"

"He's a-helpin' Sam."

'Is Pete about?"

"Pap's a-smokin' his pipe."

"Tell him I want him."

Mandy disappeared, like a slide in a dissolving view. Mrs. Noggle came to the door and confronted the imperious Snooks. She had been drinking and her eyes glared ominously. Barclay stepped back a pace or two and made a half civil bow.

"Is Pete about the house, Mrs. Noggle?"

"*Mister* Noggle is at home. Who is it that wants him?"

"Tell him there is a gentleman out here," replied Barclay.

"Where *is* the gentleman?" Mrs. Noggle stepped to the door-sill and looked around. "What huzzies are them yonder?" she continued, pointing to the pair on the river-bank.

"You ought to know them," returned Barclay, leering maliciously. "They are Rach and Beck McStaver."

Mrs. Noggle's dignity was diminished. The words, "You ought to know them," was a home thrust. On rare occasions Beck presided at the bar of her father's saloon.

"Yes, I know them," said Mrs. Noggle, step-

ping aside to make room for the inefficient husband who had come down-stairs, having been summoned by Mandy. "I know them, and the whole town knows them."

Barclay poked the ground with his cane. "Say, Pete, I want your skiff fer about an hour. What'll you charge me fer it jist to row over to Kentucky and back with a couple of ladies?"

"Well," answered Peter, scratching the back of his left hand with the stem of his pipe held in his right. "Well, some asks more and some asks less. I reckon we shan't dispute if you're reasonable and I'm reasonable, and we both come to a sort of a fair understanding. Where do you mean to go to?"

"Jest over to Kentucky. Pete, I've got plenty of tin. You needn't be uneasy about that. Jist name yer price and let's have the boat."

"Well, ya-as. Maybe, perhaps somebody or nother might want the boat,—or maybe not—like as anyway; there's no telling. Sam mightn't like it.—Well, never mind. You say you'll be back—in an hour; that is, we understand there is an agreement to that effect?"

"I am willin' to put it down in black and white," affirmed Barclay, as the two contracting parties arrived at the river-bank. "This is Mr. Noggle, ladies. Mr. Peter Noggle, the owner of this here boat, which he agrees to let me have

for half a dollar. That's what you offered, wasn't it, Pete?"

"Well—ya-as—that's about as nigh as you can cipher it down, a half dollar or words to that effect, as the lawyers say." Peter laughed in a subdued way.

The girls got into the skiff and Barclay stepped in after them and took the oars.

"We'll settle up when I come back, and I'm willin' to pay a quarter fer every minute I'm out over time. Pete, give her a shove, will you, for these big gals is hefty."

Peter thought this speech of Barclay's almost as witty as his own concerning the lawyers. The boat was shoved from the beach and Barclay rowed away, while Peter, taking a piece of keel from his vest pocket, started for home, his mind perplexed by an arithmetical calculation. He picked up a shingle which lay in his path, and upon this he scrawled a few uncouth marks, murmuring to himself, "A nought's a nought, and a figger is a figger. I reckon I'll get the money,—or may be not, there's no telling."

The gallant Barclay headed the boat up stream and pulled vigorously keeping near the shore. Then he rested his oars and allowed the craft to drift, while he gave his whole attention to entertaining his amiable companions. The sisters had exchanged their late sour aspect and crabbed



tone for a demeanor, sweet as rose-leaves, and voices gentle as the coo of a dove.

"What a sniptious ring that is on your little finger, Barclay," began Rachel, smirking affectedly. "May I look at it?"

"This *is* a fine ring," admitted the wearer, frankly. "And here's a solid chain to match it. I hadn't really ought to be wearin' this chain around everywheres. It's a temptation to robbers."

"Bless your dear soul, Mr. Snooks, I wouldn't steal your julery, do you think I would?" archly questioned Rebecca, tapping Barclay's shoulder with her fan. Barclay grinned and toyed with his gaudy chain. Rachel gazed demurely into the water and murmured ironically, "No; Becky don't want to steal yer ring; she wants to steal something more precious," and Rachel put her hand upon her heart.

"What does she want to steal?" asked Barclay, ogling the elder sister and steadying the boat by a dip of the left oar. "What does Becky want to get away with?"

"I don't want to steal nothing or nobody. I'm not like Rach. I don't hold out no deceptions to no men, Mr. Snooks. I'm always the same and jest as you see me settin' here now."

Barclay surveyed the demure creature with looks of approval; he also cast an encouraging glance at Rachel; and shifted the topic by again calling attention to his chain.

“What time is it?” inquired Rachel.

“I’ve jist sent my watch to the jewler’s to be fixed up. It takes a fortune to keep one of them French watches in order.”

Rebecca leaned forward with a languishing air. “You spend too much on such things, Mr. Snooks.”

“Wot’s money fer but to be laid out? I’ve got plenty of money.”

“You will be so proud, by and by, Barclay, that you won’t speak to poor folk like us,” said Rebecca.

“’Tain’t boodle, nor fine clothes that I keer fer, Beck, it’s good looks,” said Barclay, with a devouring stare into Rebecca’s face. Rachel withdrew her pensive gaze from the water, and glanced contemptuously at her sister.

“Good looks!” she exclaimed. “What’s your idea of good looks?”

“I’ve seed a good many handsome women in my day. I was invited to that reception or wot’er you call it, up at Tadmores’, and those was fine women there, gals, you bet.”

“Was they as pretty as us?” asked Rachel, pouting winsomely.

“There’s different styles of women, as there is of dogs, and hosses, and guns. Some likes one style best and some likes another. Most of the society fellers would say Hannah Tadmore is the handsomest gal. I always like to call on Hannah

Tadmore. I most generally spend my Sundays up at Tadmores' smokin' with the men and chattin' with the women. By jingo, I must have a smoke now. You don't object to tobaccer, do you, gals?"

Rebecca said, no indeed, she didn't, and Rachel simpered that there was nothing so extremely delightful to her as the smell of a good cigar.

"You bet I don't use no other kind," ejaculated Barclay, and he forthwith lit a "Cuban Beauty," and, puffing voluminously, he grappled the oars and pulled steadily until the boat was safely brought to Kentucky soil. A half hour was spent idling on the shore, where Barclay gathered for each of his blooming partners a flaunting bunch of wild sunflowers. Having lavished these floral tributes, Barclay struck his hand upon his thigh, exclaiming, "I swan! I done clean forgot a date I had with Jedge Bogus, and must go back. Business is business, you know, gals, and I'd ruther drown myself than break my word with the Jedge! But if you say shake him he'll have to wait. If he don't like it he kin lump it!"

"Don't neglect your business on our account, Barclay. Business first and pleasure afterwards, as pa always says."

"It's mighty tough on a man to give up the pleasure I'm having with you two, fer any sort

of business. But if you say so we'll start back."

Barclay, for reasons of his own, landed his buxom passengers at a point below that at which they had embarked and much nearer their own home. The sisters were flattered by this apparent considerateness. Having assisted the girls out of the skiff, the prodigal youth announced that he intended to astonish Peter Noggle by paying him double the amount promised. "I've had a buncome good time, and I'm willin' to pay fer it, like a prince!" said he, thrusting his hand deep into his pocket. Then, feeling successively in his other pockets, he declared, with looks of consternation, that he had lost his purse; that he must have come away from home without it, or else have dropped it in the river by accident. "It's gone! That's sure, and I don't know how the thunder I'll pay Noggle. I do hate to disappoint a poor man. Never mind, I'll give him this chain. It cost me only fifteen dollars wholesale, and I've got a lady's chain wuth twice as much, that I *kin* wear."

"Oh, Mr. Snooks," cried both the girls in a breath. "Don't pawn your chain. We can lend you the money."

Barclay demurred and shook his head.

"Here is a fix for a Snooks. Wot'll you take me fer? I could crawl through a gimlet hole. Dang it all! I'll have to ex-

plain to sich poor white trash as Pete Nogle."

"No!" insisted Rachel, "I'll be right mad at you if you don't let me lend you the money."

So saying, she took a clasp purse from her pocket, and opening it, picked out several dimes. "How much will you need?" she asked.

"Well, I meant to give the poor chap a dollar; but I only promised a half. If you kin lend me a half a dollar, it will be all right, and I'll send it back to you by Sineca, to-morrow or this evening."

"Here," said Rebecca eagerly, taking the required sum from *her* purse, "let *me* give it to you."

Each damsel eagerly held out an offering of Federal money, five dimes in Rachel's fingers, a half dollar in Rebecca's. Barclay smiled benignantly on both, and his itching palm received the double tribute of shining silver.

"You women must have your way; I can't take from one and insult t'other. Good-bye, gals. You're an almighty elegant couple of ladies, and I'm proud of you."

"Good-bye!" said Rachel, in her softest tone and with her most winning smile. "If you want to part with that lady's chain you might give it to—Beck."

"Or to Rach?" chimed the other sister interrogatively.

“By gum, you’ll have to cut it in two,” said Barclay, throwing a kiss before he stepped into the skiff; and, chuckling to himself, he pushed off from the gravelly shore.

“You hypocritical minx!” sneered Rebecca.

“You old catamount!” retorted Rachel. After which sisterly exchange of compliments the lovely pair walked home to the People’s Saloon.

Barclay reached the Noggle coast and fastened the hired boat to a ring provided for its chain. He thought best not to disturb any of the family, and after casting a cautious glance around, he hastened along the river-bank until he had passed a clump of willows which hid his retreating form from view. Then he slackened his pace, and drawing from his pocket a leathern purse, he dropped into its depths five dimes and a half dollar piece.

As he returned the purse to his pocket, Barclay saw Squinty Runkle squatting on the ground heaping up a pile of sand. With cat-like stealth Snooks advanced exulting to within a few feet of his unsuspecting prey. “Wow!” exclaimed he, seizing the boy by the shoulders from behind. “You are just the coon I’m after. My gang is going in swimmin’ this evenin’ after sundown, here above the willows, and I want you to watch my clothes.”

“Leave me be!” screamed Squinty.

"I'll cut out your tongue! You are to watch *my* clothes! Sineca will be here, and Mike and five or six other fellers. Will you be here? Hey?"

Squinty looked timorously to the right and to the left, then darted away to escape his persecutor; but his foot slipped and down he fell.

"Is that your little game?" said Barclay, grasping the trembling child by the wrists,—one slim wrist in each of his strong, rough hands; and slowly he twisted his victim's arms outwards and backwards. This brought Squinty to his knees and caused him to writhe until his face was almost to the ground.

"Will you come? Hey, will you come?" snarled Barclay.

Squinty cowered and his breast shook with sobs.

"Le' me loose, Barclay—please, le' me go."

"Promise then, or I twist 'em off. Will you come? Promise!"

"Yes; I'll come. Oh, Barclay!"

"Git up then and light out. Don't tell nobody what I done to you, or I'll choke the sneakin' breath out of you. Come at sundown. D'ye hear?"

Yes, Squinty heard. Barclay frowned and started away. Squinty sat down on the sand and cried bitterly.

## XIX

### SQUINTY'S VENGEANCE

ON the afternoon chosen by Barclay Snooks for a gay hour of dalliance with the coquettish McStaver sisters, Tom Tad was moved by a democratic, social impulse, to seek Sam Noggle and ask him to go in swimming. Tom hurried down to his humble friend's house, and found all the folks at home, sitting on the porch to enjoy the river breeze.

"Take a chair," sang out Sam to the welcome visitor from the hilltop. There was a general movement of kindly recognition, and such a hospitable offering of chairs and benches that Tom in embarrassment sat down on the edge of a convenient step.

"I'd just as soon sit here," he said, with natural politeness. "How are you all?"

"Middlin'," answered Peter, speaking for the family. "Middlin', none of us sick, and none of us well, except Sam. Mandy is poorly,—mother is poorly,—I am poorly-like, myself. How's your folks?"

"We are all well, thank you; how do you all



do?" responded Tom, forgetting that he had made that inquiry before.

"Only just middlin'. I've had a tetch of malaria. Is your mother and sister in their usual health?"

Tom began to feel afraid he would never get through the tangle of how-do-you-do salutations with Mr. Noggle, so he made an abrupt change to another topic, by announcing that it was hot, wasn't it?

"It is," replied Peter, impressively, "it *is* hot weather. We've had a long dry spell. I reckon maybe it will rain by and by, or maybe not; I can't say; there's no telling. We've had a dry summer, as you say."

Tom feared that the weather, as Mr. Noggle discussed it, was tangling him up worse than the health question. His only rescue was to cut loose from Peter, and address his conversation to somebody else. "The river is awful low," said he, speaking this time to Grandfather Barton, who was seated beside Mrs. Noggle upon an old sofa upholstered with haircloth.

"Yes," replied the old man. "It's a wonderful river, this Ohio,—in August a mere creek, in April a small ocean. A marvelous stream. I have lived on its waters or its shores for more than eighty-five year, and I have seen strange things in my time."

"Sam says you've seen lots of wild Indians, Mr. Barton."

“Indians? Oh, yes. I was in the Black Hawk War with Lincoln in thirty-two. I remember something about the War of 1812, but I was too young to take part in that. I saw General Lafayette in twenty-six. I helped row his boat across the river from Covington to Cincinnati. I often saw old Tippecanoe. He lived at North Bend, and used to pass up and down on the boats. *You* remember seeing *him*, Nelly, don't you, in thirty-nine or forty, or along there, when he was running for President?”

On hearing the old man address Mrs. Noggle by the familiar name Nelly, Tom's feelings were strangely stirred.

“Yes,” said she, “I recollect you took me to a mass-meeting in a woods, where Harrison was making a speech. You held me up so that I could see over the heads of the people. I must have been nine or ten years old, then.”

“At least that. And a handsome girl you were. Sam looks something like you did then, especially about the eyes, but not a hundredth part so handsome.”

Tom stole a glance at the haggard features of Mrs. Noggle, and wondered how beauty could ever have had its dwelling there.

“They tell me that Sam looks like me,” she said, with complacency, and made a feeble attempt to adjust the fragment of a comb in her back hair.

"That's so," continued her father. "Sam is a Barton; but Mandy is a Noggle, out and out. She is a picture of you, Peter. But let me tell you, Sam, your mother was the finest girl in Kentucky."

The old man paused and gazed meditatively at the hills and the river and the sky. He was lost in the past. "Seems like a dream when I think of the changes that have taken place along this river since I was a boy."

Tom saw the old man reach out a wrinkled hand and gently stroke the gray hair of his daughter. Wash Barton still saw in her the beauty of her girlhood. "Like a dream; like a dream, my dear, poor girl! poor thing! my handsome Nelly!"

Sam broke in upon his grandfather's sentimental reverie, by the abrupt question, "Do you wish you was a boy, gran'dad?"

"Yes, I'd like to be a boy again."

"Then come with us and go in swimmin'," said Tom. "I came down to ask Sam to go in with me."

All laughed at Tom's free and easy manner of joking, and soon afterwards the two lads were on their way to a favorite bathing place near a willow copse which fringed the Ohio, half a mile above Forest Glen. On approaching this familiar locality, they came upon Squinty Runkle seated exactly where Barclay Snooks had left

him, in the full blaze of the sun, upon the glaring sand. He was nursing the wrist of his left arm against his breast, pressing and rubbing the joint with his right hand. His eyes were red and swollen, his face was stained with dirt and tears.

“What’s the matter?” asked Sam.

“Nothin’,” sobbed Squinty. Sam bent down and took hold of the hurt member.

“Ouch!”

“What ails it?” said Tom.

“Tell us,” urged Sam. “Has anybody been bullyraggin’ you? We’ll lick ’em for you,—me and Tom. Your wrist is swelled awful. Come back to the house and mother will put liniment on it.”

“Or arnica,” suggested Tom, “or camphire. Who done it?”

The boys lifted Squinty to his feet and marched him off between them. Arrived at the Noggle house, the trio found Dr. Eldon there on a philanthropic errand. Squinty expressed his emotion in the one powerful word of his vocabulary.

While the doctor examined the strained wrist, he persuaded poor Squinty to tell all about Barclay’s conduct.

As soon as the doctor had gone, Sam and Tom, taking Squinty in charge, conveyed him to the willow copse, and, in secret conclave, opened to his excited mind the details of a dark and desperate plot in the execution of which the claims

of justice would be satisfied and the trodden worm avenged. Squinty, listening with open-mouthed wonder and dread apprehension, was mutely pledged to act some heroic part in a glorious conspiracy.

The long summer day drew to a close, the round red sun went down behind the hills, and twilight brooded over the valley of the Ohio. Barclay and his "gang" kept their appointment, assembling near the thicket of willow bushes. It happened that Charley Blogson had taken a notion to go in, that night; and, by an odd coincidence, Tom Tad and Sam Noggle chanced to come upon the scene.

"Hello, Barclay! is that you?" shouted Tom. "I didn't know you at first; took you for Judge Bogus, you look so tall and serious. How-dy-do, Cuff,—hay Alic, ain't seen you for a coon's age. Who all's goin' in? The water's fine."

Barclay looked about him as if counting his followers.

"Has anybody seed Squinty Runkle anywheres about?"

"He can't come!" answered Sam. "He hurt his arm. He was at our house near about dead. Dr. Eldon set his wrist."

"Is that so?" cried Tom. "How did he hurt himself?"

"Dun know," said Sam, "it's hard to get anything out of Squinty."

“Poor little feller,” drawled Barclay. “I’m goshdurned sorry fer him. Le’s go in, boys. Sineca, somebody ought to stay here and watch our duds. You stand guard—you and Cuff.”

For once Seneca’s soul rose in revolt. “No I won’t, durned if I do.”

“Oh, you won’t? All right, bub. You and me will have a little fun on our way home.”

The youngsters laughed and jeered, but whether at Barclay’s expense or at that of his brother, was doubtful.

Every one of the boys was eager to be in the tempting element. Tom and Sam were among the first to strip and plunge. Barclay undressed with the deliberation proper to his dignity. Softly whistling in an absent way, he divested himself of coat, vest and pantaloons, carefully folding these articles and placing them in a pile under a projecting willow-branch. On the top of the pile he put his new hat, and across the hat he laid his varnished cane. Having completed this prudent arrangement, the great man waded into the tepid water and was soon plunging and splashing among the smaller swimmers.

The lusty fellows luxuriate in the sport! They dive, they float, they tread water, they swim dog-fashion, Indian-fashion, sailor-fashion, they duck one another, they shout, they sing. The climax of delight is reached when the steamer *Tacoma* plows up stream, churning the river with her

wheel, and the long waves from the prow roll to the shore tossing and breaking over the naked lads. Oblivious to everything save the joyous excitement of bathing, the boys ride the billows raised by the passing boat.

But the winking stars see more than the frolic of boys in the river. They see the willows bend and shake though no wind is blowing. What night-prowling, furtive animal creeps out from hiding in the thick bushes, and skips fleetly along the river-bank until he reaches a low bluff at the base of which the current runs swift and deep? It is Squinty Runkle. He is possessed of a mysterious bundle to which, with cheerful alacrity, he adds a good-sized boulder, tying the package with a long piece of twine. These preparations completed to his satisfaction, the miscreant drops the bundle into the depths of the gliding current. The mischievous stars and the conniving moon aid and abet the felony, silently smiling their approval.

Squinty's countenance wreathes and wrinkles with unwonted lines of triumph, and his serious mouth twists itself into a happy grin. For the first time in his young life has he tasted the sweet of personal retaliation. "Gosh," he whispers, then, flitting away like a shadow, he is lost in the silence of the night.

Barclay, disdaining the foolish pranks and porpoise play of his juniors, thought it in keep-

ing with his lofty character, to come out of the water alone and in advance of the rest. Solitary, on the yellow sands, in the light of the moon, he stood awhile, in naked calmness, a lanky Apollo. Ere long he cast his eyes towards the spot upon which his wearing apparel had been carefully deposited. Not a rag of his clothing was to be seen under the bush or elsewhere. Barclay was panic-stricken.

“Who’s been monkeyin’ with my things?” he bawled. The river urchins paused from their noisy sport to harken.

“Say! where’s my clothes at?”

Sam Noggle answered for the crowd: “How should we know? You were the last feller to come in and the first to go out. Nobody seen your duds. What’s the matter with you?”

The swimmers came splashing, pell-mell, to the beach, every one anxious to secure his own shirt and trousers. With eager swiftness they donned their few and simple garments, rejoicing that they had escaped Barclay’s catastrophe. The chieftain’s authority over them had disappeared with his vestments. Friend and foe alike derided him. Cuff Chuck, his lowest henchman, rolled on the sand in a fit of convulsive glee.

“Which way, Barclay?” quizzed Tom. “Are you going to Judge Bogus’s lawn party?”

“Say, Snooks,” halloed Sam. “Better go





FRIEND AND FOE ALIKE DERIDED HIM.



home by way of McStaver's and borry Mike's apron!"

"Here's your cane, Barclay, that's dressy," shouted Blogson.

A chorus of jeering cries applauded these taunts; and, as the boys scampered away, Sam sang out the refrain of a familiar song:

"Good-bye my lover, good-bye!"

This line suggested to Tom the words of another love-lay and that precocious lad made the night air vocal with:

"Roll on, silver moon,  
Guide the trav'ler on his way!"

How under the guidance of the silver moon, Barclay made shift to reach the paternal roof that night, is to this day shrouded in mystery. But certain it is the crestfallen hero lived in retirement for a full fortnight, after which he returned to the scenes of his former glory, a sadder, if not a wiser man.

## XX

### A MODEL SCHOOL EXAMINATION

THE summer months glided away and with them the unchartered freedom which vacation brings to the schoolboy. Once more books claimed five days a week and six hours every day. The routine of study and recitation within brick walls had to be followed instead of the delightful curriculum of do-as-you-please, out of doors, under the illimitable sky. Tom went regularly to the Forest Glen Union School, and with his classmates, was allotted his daily ration of text-book, and ground through the flint-mill of monthly examination.

Tom's inquisitive turn, and habit of employing common sense in his mental operations, caused him much misgiving. He pondered over the blind mystery of the monthly ordeal, with incongruous feelings of amusement and dread. The more he thought about the matter the more he was perplexed. He would go from room to room, in the great school building, and stare at the inscriptions upon the blackboards,—the long lists of conundrums to be answered on paper as a condition of being promoted. His quizzical in-

terest in these wonderful lists increased as he inspected the blackboards in the rooms of the advanced grades.

"Charley," he said to his chum Blogson, "I don't see any sense in the questions, do you?"

"I don't know," was the grave answer. "I never thought of it."

"Where do you s'pose Mr. Gadmeter finds all these queer things to ask? I don't see how he can make them all up; that would be enough to kill him or make him go crazy!"

"I dun know, Tom," said Charley, in a blank and weary tone, which seemed to beg that no more should be asked on the dreadful subject.

"I know," put in Joseph Bogus. "He has books of questions with the answers. I saw, over at his house, a whole shelf full of such books."

"Did you borrow any?" asked Tom.

"I don't need to," answered the evasive Joseph. "I don't borrow and I don't lend. I don't ask help nor give help. Every fellow for himself, is my rule."

"That isn't Tom's rule," retorted Blogson. "He helps me every day. He helped you too, Jo, when you fell through the hole in the ice last winter."

"That's much different," snapped Joseph; and he walked away with an injured look.

The weeks and months passed on, subjecting

the boys to the ordinary humdrum duties of the school. Near the end of the December examinations, and just before the holiday vacation, Tom conceived the whimsical notion of holding an examinatoon for the entertainment of his familiar mates. One day, after Mr. Gadmeter had left the schoolhouse, the boys gathered in that functionary's room, and Tom, having locked the door on the inside, and put the key into his pocket, stepped pompously upon the dais, mimicking the manner and voice of the Principal.

"Boys, let there be perfect order in the room." Here Tom struck the little gong on the table before him violently five or six times, and rolled his eyes severely from side to side, at the same time plucking at his chin as if twisting an imaginary beard. "Young gentlemen, I shall expect absolute silence and decorum. You are all gentlemen and the sons of gentlemen, remember that. Charles Blogson, you impudent monkey, sit down, or I'll tan your hide.

"We are here to be examined in animals. I rejoice that we live in a free country where every American boy is compelled to cram up and pass his grade. Now I want every two-legged biped in this room to take his seat by himself as far apart as you can get. I want to prove to you by your own black ink that you don't know nothing whatever, nor animals either, though you have had all the disadvantages of education, for you

go to school and attend my lectures to boot. You will be stuck on the very first question. I want to encourage you at the start by candidly telling you that you can't squirm through this examination any more than a rhinoceros can crawl through a pipe stem. If any of you happen to answer any of my questions right, I'll be bound that you cheated, for it isn't in you to answer them right. But if you feel sure, beforehand, that you can't answer, and ask me to let you off, then I'll know you are trying to sneak out of your duty.

"Well, now we are about ready to begin the slaughter. Scatter apart, stop whispering, shut your eyes, hold your nose, and put cotton in your ears, for I want to trust to your honesty, and unless I tie it up well it can't be trusted. Of course there are boys that I can trust."

Here Tom cast a glance of exaggerated admiration at Joseph Bogus, whereat the other boys raised a yell of derision.

"Young gentlemen, I am pained at you. Remember that you are all gentlemen and the sons of gentlemen. Samuel Noggle, your conduct is that of a savage. Remove your hat from your feet this instant, or I shall expel you by force! William Henry Bowling, take off your cuffs, sir, and bring them to this table. I can see that you have copied the answers in advance. Ready, all! Sharpen your pencils and prepare to proceed. I

shall put the questions upon the blackboard, and you shall have full time to answer them. Be deliberate and rapid. I shall expect brief and extended answers. Of course I shall take off for spelling and punctuality. One thing more: Do not bother me by asking what the questions mean. That is your lookout, not mine. Your respected teacher is not now being examined. Again, let me warn you, no cheating. You know I have eyes in the back of my head. I shall *compel* you to be honest. And I will remark, just here, that I have already made out your per cents. ahead, and if you don't come up to them, the whole school will know what hypocrites you are."

Having delivered this preliminary address, Tom took a paper from his coat-tail pocket and solemnly read aloud the following :

#### QUESTIONS ON ANIMALS.

1. Classify the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms.
2. Compare mind and matter.
3. What's the mind, and what's the matter ?
4. Describe the universe. Give illustrations.
5. What does the microscope reveal ? Why ?
6. Mention the various functions.
7. Frame ten hard questions on bugs



and tortoises, and answer them on a separate sheet.

7. Which and for what reason?

9. Discuss corpuscles and germs and give specifications.

10. Explain monkeys.

11. What do our best physicians do to cure a trilobite?

12. Is a Peruvian dog's bark good for the ague?

13. Is a ground-hog swine?

14. Where does a flamingo?

15. For what does a porcupine?

16. Can a zebra louder than a donkey?

17. What does Huxley say?

18. Give the biological modus operandi of extinct protoplasm.

19. Define all the scientific terms in the dictionary. Give their meaning.

20. Copy your answers, and parse all the words in full.

These questions being correct as to orthography, and having a decidedly sarcastic method in their madness, it is reasonable to infer that Uncle Felix had something to do with their invention. Tom, with his usual want of forethought, wrote the test sentences upon the blackboard, where Miss Belmont read them the next day, to her infinite amusement. But she rubbed them off before Mr. Gadmeter appeared, and

thus, perhaps saved the self-constituted examiner a second castigation. "However," she meditated, "it is doubtful whether or not the Principal would have discovered anything out of the way in the questions."

## XXI

### THE RAIN DESCENDED AND THE FLOODS CAME

AN unprecedented fall of snow had covered the vast basin of the great stream which flows from the Alleghanies to the Mississippi. The massed flakes driven and heaped upon mountains in Pennsylvania and Virginia, and capping a thousand hills in Ohio and Kentucky, were dissolved by long-continued, violent rains. An enormous quantity of water, hurrying down the frozen surfaces, rushed, by innumerable torrents, and by swollen rivers, to the one gorged outlet, the Ohio. The bottom lands were deeply inundated; fences, barns, houses, were swept away; thousands of cattle perished; and many human lives were lost in the general devastation.

The tenement occupied by Peter Noggle and his family, like hundreds of other buildings, was surrounded by the rising flood, and looked forlorn and desolate standing in a waste of muddy water. The only means of communication with the village was by boat, and the "men-folks," as Mrs. Noggle called them, had been on a voyage to the grocery for a stock of provisions. There was no reason why Peter should have gone, except to

enjoy the ride, and no motive for old Wash Barton's going, save the impulse of adventurous spirit which age had not subdued; but Sam, as the acknowledged head and manager of the house, was bound to go and come, plan and protect; to anticipate, and provide for, all emergencies.

The three, seated in a skiff rowed by Sam, fell into animated conversation as they approached their inconvenient dwelling-place.

"It stands to reason, Peter," said old Wash Barton, "that we sha'n't see another flood such as we had last February. Two such floods don't come near together. I'm an old man, and I've seen many an overflow of this river, but that of last year was the boss flood. It beat them all. I recollect the famous 'pumpkin' flood, when the pumpkins were all washed away from the farmers' fields along the lower bottoms, and carried off looking like the heads of drowning men. I remember what an excitement there was about the destruction of property. It was bad enough, but nothing to compare with the ruination caused last year."

"Seems to me it's bad enough now," said Sam.

"Yes, so it is; but I prophesy the river will fall before many hours."

"She is rising fast," said Sam. "She is rising an inch every hour; and only lacks a foot of coming up to the mark of last year. Here is last year's high water mark." Sam brought the skiff

alongside a window, and placed the end of his dripping oar on the level line. "You see it don't lack much of being as high already."

"I ca'culate the boy is about right, Washington," drawled Peter; "or, maybe not. You're an older man than either of us. There's no telling."

"But there *is* telling," bluntly responded the octogenarian. "The river will go down to-night; take my word for it, and rest easy."

The energetic old man and the flaccid Peter clambered in at the open window, and, treading a plank which crossed the dark waters that half filled the basement rooms, reached the stairway, which they ascended to the upper apartments. Sam made fast the boat and followed, bringing along the basket containing eatables. The rooms to which the pursuing element had driven the Noggle family, with all their goods and chattels, were small and inconvenient. Mandy was frightened and peevish; Mrs. Noggle, sullen, like the unreasonable and frowning tide which eddied around the shaken walls imprisoning her. Deprived of access to the saloon, and tormented by a habitual craving for strong drink, she had grown restive. She sat on the edge of a rumped bed, and gazed out upon the broad river, down whose swift current masses of ice and black fleets of driftwood were hurrying. It was late in the day, and Sam busied himself setting a rude table,

talking as cheerfully as he could under the dismal circumstances.

“This is worse than living in a family-boat, isn’t it, gran’daddy? We have less room and no chance of moving.”

“I like the boat better than any house,” replied the old man. “Life on a boat is free and independent. You’re always on the top of the water, however high it rises; and, if you don’t want to stay in one spot, you can float off to another. Water is safer than land.—Nelly, hadn’t you better lie down? You look pale.”

These last words betrayed an uneasiness that usually haunted Mr. Barton, when Mrs. Noggle in her morbid moods, fixed her contemplation too much on the river. The old man went to his daughter and sat down beside her interposing his body between her and the window. She rose with a peculiar dignity which came to her at uncertain times, met her father’s troubled glance with a smile, and relieved Sam of his cares and tasks, saying, “You need rest, Sam, I will get the supper.”

“I’m not tired a bit, mother; I will help you. Here, Mandy, I bought you some gingerbread. And, oh yes, gran’daddy, I had almost forgot. Dr. Eldon sent you this newspaper, for he knows you like to read, and he thought you couldn’t get to town now.”

“Why not? I’m hale as hickory. Does he

think Wash Barton unable to manage a boat? Not much. Nothing would suit me better than to navigate an old-fashioned broad-horn down the Mississippi."

"I wouldn't resk it," remarked Peter, munching a mouthful of Mandy's gingerbread. "You mought. Seems like I'm pow'ful weak. Tetch of consumption." He took another mouthful, and subsided.

Wash Barton, who could read fine print without spectacles, perused the *Gazette*. He turned to the "River News," and the "Weather Report," and learned that the prospect was for higher water.

"'Rising and raining'—nonsense! It can't be! These newspaper men think they know more about the Ohio River than I do, who have spent over eighty years studying it. It will go down before morning."

They sat down around the table, Barton keeping the newspaper in his hand and glancing over it, while Peter, Sam and Mandy ate. Presently Mrs. Noggle left her place and passed into a small bedroom adjoining the cramped chamber in which the family huddled. Her father stepped to the partition door, and saw that she had cast herself upon a bed.

"That's right, I'll shut the door and do you try and sleep." He closed the door, and, returning to his chair, resumed his newspaper.

“What’s the news?” asked Sam. “I’ll bet they haven’t gathered any news from this town.”

“Well, now, don’t be too certain of that. Here’s California, and Miamiville, and Ripley, and Ridgeville, and Minktown, and Lawrenceburg——”

“Is Christiansburg there, where Barclay Snooks used to live?”

“No, but here, as sure as you’re born, Sam, is Forest Glen.”

“Is it, for a fact? Le’ me see, gran’daddy.” And the boy rather unceremoniously took possession of the *Gazette* and began to read:

“Forest Glen—Society Happenings, etc. Mrs. Judge Bogus gave a delightful little party at her elegant residence on Catalpa Avenue on the evening of Thursday last. Among the guests were Dr. and Mrs. Blumas, and their charming daughter, and Mr. Claude Rockingham.

“Mr. Ichabod Waddle of the firm of Blinks and Waddle has just returned from a trip to the Queen City where he was called to the sick bed of his wife’s uncle, Timothy Jarvis. Mr. Waddle took occasion to lay in a stock of fine dry goods of the latest style.

“It is currently reported that Barclay Snooks, Esq., a young gentleman of wealth and refinement, is to be married to Miss Rachel Rebecca McStaver, daughter of one of our leading politicians.”



"You don't say!" droned Peter. "There is fifty cents a-coming to me fer the boat. I *do* wonder. Did you understand from what you gather that he was engaged to marry them?"

"It says he is to be married to Miss Rachel Rebecca McStaver, but there isn't no such person. There is Rach and Beck both, but they ain't the same girl."

"Does the paper say so?" Peter returned, confusedly. "It reminds me of a circumstance, Washington. There was a party lived up here—I can't jist remember his name,—everybody knowed him though, and *he* had a daughter *too*. Bimeby a young feller comes along, and speaks up and says to this man,—what the mischief was his name?—I'll ketch it, bimeby;—I forgit the words he made use of, but anyway, it didn't turn out to suit him, and he says to this young woman, he says, 'You can't eat yer cake and not eat it,' says he. I've thought over that fer days and days, *and it is so*. What you was reading reminds me of it." Peter grinned a broad appreciation of his "circumstance," and filled his tobacco pipe.

Darkness had stolen upon the group while they were eating and talking, and Mandy had fallen asleep in her chair. Sam lifted his sister and placed her upon the mattress in one corner of the room, then lighted a lamp and stepping to the door of his mother's room he softly opened

it and peered in. The lamplight shone upon an empty bed. Sam entered the room and searched it round for his mother; she was not to be found. To avoid alarming his father or grandfather, he softly closed the partition door; then went to the window, and, holding the light so that it enabled him to see objects on the outside, looked for the boat, but saw only the water lapping against the side of the house. His eye soon caught sight of a rope which dangled from the window, and which was trailing and writhing in the agitated current, like a water-snake. He shuddered at the apprehension that his mother might have drowned herself, but on reflection he took comfort in the likelihood that she had descended by means of the rope to the skiff, and had rowed ashore. "She has gone to town for whiskey," was his bitter conjecture. "I will swim over and bring her back."

Sam prepared to execute his desperate resolve. He came out from his mother's room and closed the door behind him. "Keep still, and don't wake mother. I'll be back in half an hour. I'm going ashore. Gran'daddy, read daddy to sleep, and then go to bed yourself."

Leaving these prompt commands, the boy went half-way down the stairs, walked the plank to the open window, and was about to plunge into the ice-cold river, when a skiff struck the projecting end of the light gangway on which he stood.

“Mother!”

“Sam! don’t kill me!”

“Be still, mother! They don’t know. Give me the end of the boat-chain. Now, step up, and go sit upon the stairs until I come.”

The woman obeyed. Sam reached from the window to find the staple which he had driven into the wall to fasten the boat by. It was several inches under water. Helen Noggle sat shivering upon the stair. Just below her the water, in the main room of the house, as in a black cistern, was creeping up inchmeal, second by second. She moved to the edge of the steps and leaned over the invisible danger. Sam came to her, put his hands on her shoulders, and whispered in her ear:

“Stay where you are; I will come back for you.” Soon he went up as stealthily as a thief in the night. The lamp was burning dim. Peter Noggle sat dozing in his chair; Wash Barton had lain down upon the bed, and his eyes were shut. “Are you awake?” said Sam, in a low voice. The only answer was an irresolute snore from Peter. Sam softly opened the door to his mother’s chamber. Then, with noiseless paces, he made his way back to the object of his painful care. “Now come,” he said, and led her upstairs and through the occupied room. She stared in a bewildered way, at her husband snoring in his chair, at her father slumbering

quietly on the bed ; then she started forward as if walking in her sleep, her staggering motions guided by Sam, who hurried her into her own apartment. There, into the utter darkness, like some haggard phantom of the night, some weird water-witch or Banchee, she vanished. Sam heard a drowsy voice say, "Mammy," and, looking, he saw Mandy half sitting up in her cot. "I thought I saw mammy," she said, and yawning sank back upon her straw pillow. The boy put out the light and followed his mother into her room, but not a word was exchanged. She flung herself upon the bed, and was soon in a drunken sleep. Sam did not lie down. He stationed himself by the window, on a low wooden stool. The rain began to fall, the wintry winds beat the drops against the panes, and caused the house to shake and shudder as if in an ague fit. Sam wrapped about his shoulders an old shawl which he found hanging on a nail near by, and settled himself on his stool for a night's rest. Miserable as his situation was, he employed his will to banish thoughts of present ill and fears of future trouble.

## XXII

### ADRIFT

DREARY was the scene upon which the inmates of the Noggle house looked forth on the morning after the escapade of Sam's mother. The river had risen steadily through the night, and the rain was still descending as if the windows of heaven had been opened to deluge the earth once more. Over the angry Ohio hung a fog through which could be seen, drifting in fleet procession, innumerable objects which, indistinctly outlined in the rain and mist, had a weird and portentous aspect. Forest trees stretching out great gnarled limbs, floated wildly along, like huge giants with many crooked arms, struggling in the flood. Heaps of blackened wood, stacks of hay, sections of bridges, fragments of machinery, and buildings of various kinds, were hurried onward, chasing one another down stream, as if with some mad purpose. Sam, watching with excited interest each curious shape as it hove in view and was carried swiftly across the scope of his vision, beheld a solitary rooster standing in desperate calmness, on the top of a fast-voyaging pile of barnyard straw.

And not long after chanticleer and his straw-pile had vanished from sight in the gloomy distance, a more affecting spectacle brought moisture to the boy's kind eyes. A dog-kennel drifted past, half sunken, and, clinging upon its roof, a dog, with a chain about his neck, howled so loud that the piteous sound was plainly heard above the rush of the waters.

Wash Barton, when he surveyed the surging expanse, ventured no new words of prophecy. Perhaps he wished he had not been so positive the day before. However, he felt no dismay. He rather gloried in the magnificent sweep and overwhelming grandeur of his beloved Ohio River.

"There's a picture for you, Sam! I'm glad I am alive to see this flood. Look! Nelly! Why, it's a regular ocean! I *just tell you*, the Beautiful River beats them all! Isn't she grand! I wish I were out there on a stout boat!"

"Do you think we are safe here," asked Sam, who was very solicitous concerning his mother and sister.

"Safe! Perfectly safe! There's very little current here. Besides ——" He was going to say the river would soon fall, but he recollected his previous wrong guesses, and checked himself.

"We must change our wharf to an upper window," said Sam. "The water is clean to the top

of the one we came in at yesterday. Daddy, hadn't you and Mandy better go ashore and stay a few days at the schoolhouse till the water goes down? There was a good many folks staying there yesterday, from that row of little houses close by Glen Creek. They were afraid they would be drowned out, and the people up in town let them sleep in the schoolhouse and eat there. It's a right nice place."

"Something or other'll have to be done, somehow or other," was the answer. "I don't reckon it would be a bad notion. I'm feeling poorly, this weather, off and on, and not a bit well. Distress in my back."

Peter offering no resistance, he and Mandy were expeditiously shipped to the village, and quarters were secured for them, with other refugees, in the schoolhouse. Sam made many trips to and fro between the house and the shore, and took delight in treating his boy acquaintances to an excursion among the partly submerged houses.

After supper, Thomas Tadmire, by permission of his father, came down to Forest Glen to see the raging river. There was to be a concert at one of the churches in the evening, to raise money for the benefit of flood sufferers, and Tom was expected to attend it, with the understanding that Fritz Haberkorn should drive down at about ten o'clock and bring him home. Tom's interest in the concert was altogether subordinate

to his desire to have a boat ride with Sam Noggle. He was not long in learning Sam's whereabouts, nor did he hesitate to get aboard his friend's light craft, when invited to do so. The two merry comrades made sundry trips, fetching and carrying necessary articles required by Peter and Mandy, on the continent, or by the sea-surrounded occupants of the Noggle mansion. Neither Wash Barton nor Mrs. Noggle would forsake the house and come ashore, though some judged them foolhardy to trust themselves for another night to the mercy of the gnawing and swallowing river. In fact, the Barton blood was of stubborn, not to say obstinate, quality, which age had aggravated in old Wash, and abuse rendered incorrigible in his daughter. The latter had obtained at the "People's Saloon" a supply of liquor, which, in several small flasks, she had cunningly concealed about her person before returning from her furtive expedition.

Apparently indifferent to danger, or unconscious of its existence, she remained in her room during the greater part of the day, half stupefied by alcohol.

As for tough old Wash, he spent the hours in a state of rapture arising from his adoration of the Ohio River which, the more terrific it seemed to others, appeared the more magnificent to him. Oblivious to peril, he stood by the window overlooking the swollen and surging stream, which



was busily digging away the foundation of the house that sheltered him, and incessantly pushing and lifting the strained and unstable structure, with buoyant force. Night was fast coming on, and the Kentucky hills were no longer visible through the rainy atmosphere. But Wash Barton lingered by the window, straining his gaze across the seething water. Suddenly he felt a shock, and heard a sound as of some heavy object striking against the house. A small frame stable had floated from its site not a hundred yards away, and had slowly drifted down and lodged against the Noggle house. A few minutes elapsed and a skiff propelled by Sam, with Tom Tadmore as assistant, came darting from the Ohio shore, and made straight for its port, the upper window of the imperiled tenement. Sam climbed in at the casement and Tom followed him.

“Gran’daddy, you *must* get out of this, right away,—you and mother! We will all go ashore in the skiff. The people say you are crazy to stay here, for the house is sure to drift away before morning. The river is still rising, and the paper says there is a foot or two more coming from Pittsburg. Two houses have been washed away from Glen Creek bottom already, and Jones’s stable is lodged against the end of our house now. Be quick!”

“Pooh! pooh! you are scared, Sam. I thought

you was more of a Barton than to be afraid of a freshet. There's not a bit of danger. I've navigated this blessed old river ——”

“Sam! Sam!” screamed Tom, “look at the chimney! look at the chimney! It's going down!”

The chimney was indeed sinking gradually through the floor! Its foundation had been undermined, and the heavy column settled into the watery chasm. A rattling of bricks falling on the roof, roused Helen Noggle from her drunken slumber. She staggered from her bed and tottered to her father.

“Where are we? Where's Sam's baby?”

“Don't be alarmed,” were the composed words of old Wash Barton. “Be a brave girl, and have your wits about you, or we shall all be drowned. Sam, you are right. We must take to the boat.”

“Drowned?” repeated the woman in a tone of horror. “Drowned! Drowned! Drowned! why do you throw it up to me?”

“Nelly, wake! you are in a nightmare! You are dreaming! Rouse up! I tell you we must take the boat! Sam, bring the skiff under the window.—What ails you? You stand there like a frozen man.”

“The boat is gone!”

“Gone!” echoed Tom. “How will I get back? What will mother say?”

“Keep your heads level, boys. I’ve been in a worse predicament than this. The Ohio River is a good old friend of mine. But I am sorry you let the skiff get away.”

“I thought I fastened the chain; but I must have been careless. Mother, light the lamp!”

This last sentence was uttered in the imperative but quiet voice which Mrs. Noggle had learned to heed as if it were the voice of fate. She came to her senses at once, and, finding a match, struck it on the plastered wall. The match kindled with an explosive snapping, and as it did so, emitting a faint blue light, Wash Barton became aware of a sensation that for the instant appalled even him. The house was afloat, with a motion which was almost imperceptible at first, but which became swift and swifter. Careening now to this side and now to that, the doomed dwelling was driven and whirled into the boiling current of the main channel of the Ohio, while storm and darkness combined to baffle rescue and to hide the work of destruction.

## XXIII

### TO THE RESCUE

THE musical entertainment given in the Congregational Church for the benefit of the flood sufferers was protracted to a late hour. Dr. Eldon, occupying a seat near the middle aisle, turned around more than once during the performance to cast anxious glances in search of Tom who was supposed to be somewhere in the audience. Promptly at ten o'clock Fritz Haberkorn drove up to the sidewalk, in front of the church, for Tom and the doctor. A reckless driver, the hired man did not notice that the wheels of the carriage came within an ace of running over a slim boy who, bareheaded, hurried across the street and flew into the meeting-house. The singers had just finished a chorus, the last number of the program, when Squinty Runkle scurried up the main aisle of the sanctuary, startling the small congregation.

"What's the matter?" said Dr. Eldon, rising and putting a hand on Squinty's narrow shoulders.

"Sam's done gone and Tom!" wailed the bringer of bad tidings, and he gave vent to sobs and tears.

“What does he say?” asked the pastor of the church, waving his hand to check the general commotion in the audience.

Squinty stammered over a broken story, that Sam Noggle and Tom Tad had paddled in a skiff to the Noggle house and that the house had been swept away by the current of the swollen river. The alarming testimony was quickly corroborated by other voices. The building had certainly disappeared, nor could there be a doubt that the boys, together with Grandfather Barton and his daughter, were in the ill-fated building.

Uncle Felix hurried from the church, sprang into the ready carriage, beside Fritz, and said imperatively,

“Drive to the schoolhouse.”

“Vere iss dot Tom?”

“Never mind,—whip up! Drive to the schoolhouse.”

Fritz lashed the horses; they lunged forward and the vehicle rattled over the flinty stones which struck sparks from iron shoes. Arrived at the schoolhouse, Felix rushed in and found the cot assigned to Peter Noggle. That inert refugee was sound asleep. Felix shook and punched him to languorous consciousness.

“Get up! Your house is afloat—washed away by the flood! Your wife and son and father are in it.”

Peter yawned, rubbed his eyes and spoke querulously.

"Something or other'll have to be done somehow or other. I reckon you'd better wake Mandy; or maybe not. Do what you kin as fer as you see yer way."

"Devil take such a man!" exclaimed Eldon, making a hasty exit from the schoolhouse, eager to join Fritz in the carriage.

"Fritz, there is bad news—terrible news! Pete Noggle's house has been carried off by the high water, and Tom is in the house!"

The old soldier gasped.

"Ach! Nein! Dot poy!"

"Yes, Fritz, our Tom—Tom's gone!"

"Mein Gott! Dot leetle Tom? Ich will den knabe right away zu hause bringen!"

So saying, Fritz Haberkorn threw the lines on the dashboard, leaped from the carriage, and rushed away toward the baleful river. Was it madness, was it blind divination, that drove or led him, to a rude jo-boat into which he stumbled? Two tolerably serviceable oars were lying within the rough craft, and these Fritz grasped firmly in his knotty fists. Actuated not by reason nor by duty, but impelled by the force of love, the great-hearted German shoved the clumsy scow from shore and pulled out into midcurrent of the tumultuous flood.

Meanwhile Uncle Felix, bearing in mind the



THE GREAT-HEARTED GERMAN SHOVED THE ROUGH SCOW FROM SHORE.





strange parting words of Fritz, made haste to the telegraph office where he instructed the operator to despatch the fact that a house with four persons in it had been swept away from Forest Glen.

“Keep the wires hot with the message. Send it to all points down the river. Solicit every possible exertion toward rescue. Offer, in my name, a thousand dollars reward for whoever shall save the lives of the four persons.”

Becoming more excited as he more vividly realized what had happened, Dr. Eldon drove up the hill, at a terrific rate, to disclose the dire news to his sister and his brother-in-law. His body throbbed like a fevered pulse. Surging emotions bore him along, even as the swirling waters of the Ohio were hurrying Fritz Haberkorn through stormy darkness.

Mr. Tadmire and his wife sat in the library killing time over the current magazines, when their agitated kinsman abruptly broke in upon their silence. His nervous manner and haggard face startled his sister.

“Didn’t Tommy ride up with you?”

“No, I drove up alone.”

“Why! Where are Tom and Fritz?”

“Fritz is all right. He is looking for Tom. The boy ventured ——; he will soon ——”

“What has happened?”

“Be calm, Eliza. There is no occasion for—

for despair," stammered Felix. But the faltering tongue belied the words.

"What's wrong with Tom?"

"For heaven's sake, Eldon, speak out," demanded Mr. Tadmore.

Hurriedly Dr. Eldon imparted the dismaying facts of Tom's misadventure. The mother stood aghast, staring into her husband's horrified eyes. His groaning words echoed her own anguish.

"Drowned in the Ohio! Good God! Lost in the flood!"

"No," said Felix firmly, "not necessarily lost; the house may hold together; such disasters are not always fatal; possibly he may be saved. There is one chance in a thousand—we will take that chance and make the most of it."

"What can be done?" asked Mr. Tadmore, grasping at a straw of hope.

"What may we not do, if we bestir ourselves in time? We must not lose another minute—not a second. Fritz has already started on his search, I know not by what means."

Tears of gratitude filled the eyes of Tom's mother. Felix continued:

"I have telegraphed to the towns below. People will be on the lookout. You and I must hasten to Cincinnati."

"Yes!" assented Tadmore. "We must go on horseback, the tracks are under water."

"Put on your rubber coat," suggested Eldon.

“Keep a brave heart, Eliza. We’ll find Tom. Don’t alarm Hannah. We’ll telegraph to you. We can avail ourselves of police assistance in the city. There may be a better plan but I can think of none better.”

It was late when the two men set out for Cincinnati, Felix Eldon mounting a spirited roan colt and Mr. Tadmore bestriding an old racer named Rocket. Their route lay along a hillside thoroughfare, far above the bottom-lands of the river. The road was glazed with ice; a cold drizzle blew into the faces of the riders; a double gloom of fog and midnight shrouded the landscape; but the well-shod, sure-footed horses, seeming to comprehend in some dim way belonging to brutes, that issues of supreme import were at stake, kept up a brave gallop, ungoaded by whip or spur. Onward they forged, steadily, stubbornly, covered with a reek of foamy sweat and snorting blood-flecked froth. Keeping in mind the points of the compass, as well as they could, the horsemen struck into Columbia Avenue, by which they might have reached the city easily; but, by mischance, diverging onto Kemper Lane in the wrong direction, they unwittingly were carried to Walnut Hills and thence along Park Avenue into Eden Park. Their tired horses plodded along, breathing hard, following a devious course, and, at length, bore them across a high stone causeway skirting the southern

border of the city reservoir, and onward, up a steep grade, to the brow of a height which seemed to end all hope of further journeying in that direction. The jaded brutes suddenly halted, and the perplexed travelers could only stare about and exchange guesses as to where they were. Within a few seconds the keen eyes of Felix Eldon gave him indubitable evidence of his whereabouts. Instantly he caught his bearings and recovered a degree of the pathfinding faculty. He thought he recognized the shadowy outlines of buildings not unfamiliar to his sight,—the old observatory, the Highland House, and other conspicuous landmarks. The spot upon which the horses paused was the verge of the plateau upon which Rockwood Pottery now stands. By daylight the men might have seen from that lofty level the Queen City, the Ohio River and its bridges, and the bold Kentucky hills.

“We have come far out of our way,” said Felix. “This is Mount Adams, and below us lies Cincinnati. It looks like the Valley of the Shadow of Death. We must have turned off too soon and lost precious time by riding through Eden Park. We must find or make a bridle-path from this place to the city.”

Admonished by the stings of anxiety, the men resumed their journey, relying upon the instinct of the dumb brutes rather than upon their own human sagacity, to choose an available means of

descent. Whether owing to mere good luck, or to blind faith in horse-sense, or to the sure leading of the Divine Hand, they were carried safely down along slippery winding ways to the western border of the Park; and, at length, were borne under the stone archway of Elsinore Gate, into Gilbert Avenue. Their journey was pursued thence slowly along unfamiliar streets, not illuminated by a single public lamp, for the gas-works were under water and the city was left in total darkness. Finally they came to the business centre of the metropolis, just as the bells of St. Peter's Cathedral were chiming one o'clock.

After seeing Rocket and the roan colt in comfortable stalls, the two tired men, gradually losing heart, from a growing consciousness of the futility of their precipitate mission, bent their steps to the nearest newspaper office. Mr. Tadmore procured a copy of the *Daily News*, fresh from the press, and, standing under a swinging oil lamp, scanned the pages for the latest accounts of the flood. His eye soon lit upon an item stating in a few blunt words what he knew too well, namely, that a frame house in which were an old man, a woman, and two boys, had been swept away from Forest Glen on the previous night.

“An old man, a woman, and two boys!” repeated the bereft father, bitterly. “Two boys!”

how lightly the reporter penciled that down. "Two boys! *One* boy!—My little Tom!"

The rain which had been falling intermittently during the night, suddenly began to pour down with violence, a cold pitiless deluge. Eldon noticed that the great drops struck the shiny flagstones, like liquid bullets, splashing up jets of spray from the shallow pools into which their volley fell. The gutters hissed and foamed; the catch-basins overflowed, spouting and gurgling; the flushed streets leading southward were changed into chafing rapids.

Through the hammering rain tramped Tadmore and his companion, bound for the office of the Chief of Police. They accosted a stolid watchman wearing a rubber coat and peering out from under the visor of his black helmet. The officer paused long enough to hear the dismal story of the house, and to answer one or two urgent questions. Then with a shrug, a swing of his club, and a not unsympathetic shake of his head, he moved on saying:

"I don't know anything about it, sir; how the hell do you suppose a policeman can stop a house from drifting down the river?"

The nocturnal pilgrimage to police headquarters elicited no encouraging information. The drowsy lieutenant, who sat in a large swivel chair, on being made acquainted with the nature of their trouble, yawned and said:

“Well, gents, I can’t advise you. Nothing can be done that I know of. You can’t send out a force this time of night, especially on the water. Besides, the house must have drifted past Cincinnati by this time. This current runs faster than you can ride. You’d best go to the Western Union and find if you can learn anything there.”

Tadmore groaned in spirit as he pursued further quest from square to square, in the forlorn hope of gaining some reassuring counsel or some faint rumor which might import the final deliverance of his son. How utterly weak and helpless he felt in the midst of the slumbering city! Most of the public officials whom he attempted to see, were at home in their beds. The operators in the telegraph offices answered questions mechanically, apparently indifferent to the piteous story and eager requests, to which they lent a weary ear.

Once more the despondent father and his kinsman were on the gloomy street, exhausted, aching from cold and wet, but no nearer the accomplishment of their desire, than when they started from home.

“Ah, Felix, there is not a ray of hope! Tom is drowned. We shall never see the boy again.”

Eldon put his hand upon his friend’s shoulder.

“Tadmore, don’t play the woman. No news

is good news. I shan't give up until I know that our thousandth chance has failed. Keep a stiff upper lip. Our long ride was too much for you. You must take a little rest or you'll break down. Somewhere along this row I noticed a place where we may get a cup of hot coffee; here is the sign."

He pointed to a transparency on which Mr. Tadmore read the words:

*LUNCH ROOM.*

*Open all Night.*

*Meals 15c.*

They entered a dingy, narrow room, supplied with a few small tables each spread with oil-cloth and set with plates, salt box and vinegar cruet. On a lunch counter stood a battered coffee urn and behind this was a broad shelf displaying ham-sandwiches, a crock of baked beans and a segment of nondescript pie. In the rear of the "restaurant," a cannon stove, gray from age, showed within its open mouth a chunk of coal spluttering feeble blue blazes through oozing tar.

The proprietor of the resort, a fat Irishman whose left arm was in a sling, welcomed his customers cheerily, kicked the stove door shut to increase the draft, and shoved one of the tables nearer to the fire.



"A bad night, surs. That stove will warm ye fast enough. It heats up, like a woman's temper, and heats down as quick. You are out late, gintlemen. It's nearin' mornin'."

"We came in," said Eldon, "to get a bite to eat and a cup of coffee. Bring us what you have."

The Irishman brought sandwiches, baked beans, and pie; then fetched the coffee, horrible stuff, nauseating to swallow and disgusting in the stomach. Yet the worn-out travelers, to allay headache and stimulate exhausted nerves, forced themselves to sip the coffee and nibble the sandwiches.

"Still rainin' and risin'," remarked the eating-house keeper, feeling it his professional duty to be sociable.

"Seventy feet," continued he, "is purty deep for a river that I could wade across last September. If the clerk of the weather don't shut up the windys of heaven soon, we'll have to build Noah's arks. That minds me of what a man from Covington towld me last evenin'. He was comin' over the Suspension Bridge, and he saw some queer sights on the river. A farmhouse came drifting down, like a boat, and there was an old nigger a settin' on the roof wavin' his arms and hollerin'."

Mr. Tadmore put down his cup and listened intently.

“Well?” he said.

“Well, sur, the house wint whirlin’ under the bridge; there wasn’t time to turn a pancake; nothin’ was to be done for the old black fellow, and the divil knows what became of ’im.”

Felix rose, paid for the refreshment, and, followed by Mr. Tadmore, left the eating-room, glad to return to the open air. The raining had ceased, though the murky clouds continued to lower. The deep gloom of night was beginning to give place to the struggling gray of early morning. The noise of wheels of milk wagons and bakers’ vans, announced the revival of the day’s routine. People were seen coming and going along the drenched pavements, or unlocking the doors of the places of business.

Mournfully did Eldon greet the approaching day, for he was sick at heart and on the verge of despair, though he kept up a show of cheerfulness, to prevent the total collapse of his brother’s self-control. He proposed walking down Vine Street as far as the encroaching high water would permit. A very short walk southward from Fourth Street brought them to the edge of the vast expanse of muddy river. Thus far and no farther could they proceed on foot. It is not possible to imagine a prospect more dismal than that which lay before them. In the haze of fog and coal smoke, they beheld, instead of streets, dreary canals, lapping against brick walls, creep-

ing all around houses, crawling in at upper windows. The melancholy scene was suggestive only of sorrow, destruction and death. Tom Tadmore's father, touching his companion's arm, turned his back upon the scene of desolation and, automatically retracing his steps to Fourth Street, indicated by a gesture his desire to visit once more the *News Building*, which occupied a conspicuous corner not far away. The pair, speaking not a word, but each lost in his own doleful thoughts, forgetting their chilled and exhausted bodies in the keener misery of mind, walked slowly to the newspaper office. A large bulletin board had been placed in front of the counting-room, so that those who ran might read the latest despatches relating to the calamitous flood in which all were interested. A slender young man, with a paste-pot and a brush, was in the act of pasting a large sheet of manila paper upon the board at the moment when Tadmore and Eldon came to the corner. They read these words:

*SHOCKING DISASTER!*

*HORRIBLE FATE OF A FAMILY!*

*Forest Glen Inundated.*

*House Swept Away in the  
Mighty Maelstrom.*

*FOUR PERSONS DROWNED!*

## XXIV

### WASH BARTON'S LAST VOYAGE

A CRY of terror issued from Tom's throat when he realized that he was a castaway on a merciless flood. His impulse was to rush to the window and call for help. But his voice could not be heard on shore over the noise of storm and rushing water, and, had it been heard, who would heed a forlorn voice in the night?

"It's of no use to yell," said Sam Noggle, sustained by the self-possession which never failed him. "It's of no use to yell. Why don't you light the lamp, mother, so we can see what we are about?"

The yellow gleam of the light showed that Sam's cheek was not blanched, nor his lip tremulous. Tom's pride rallied, and he summoned up courage. Wash Barton observed with admiration the conduct of the boys; but the old man was much disquieted to notice that Helen Noggle, contrary to her usual habit, manifested abject fear. Sam, looking at his mother, was more troubled by her ghastly features than by the perils of the flood.

"Sit down, mother," he said gently. "We

must depend on you." She staggered to a chair and sank upon it, bowing her face upon her knees.

"Don't lose heart, Nelly my girl. You are generally the bravest of us all. Remember I am an experienced waterman, and know the tricks of this river. Never say die. The chances are that this craft will hold together many an hour, or many a day, for that matter. I've drifted down to New Orleans on a raft not to compare with this for comfort. You see we float along safely enough now, and why should we be scared out of our wits?"

"Somebody will be sure to see us," said Sam, in the same strain of hope, "and bring us off in a boat. Or if the worst comes, we can swim ashore in the morning. You can swim, can't you, Tom?"

"Yes, I can swim a little," answered Tom, making a strong effort to be as tranquil as Sam appeared to be. "I swam across Glen Creek last summer, and that's about fifty feet wide; but I got the cramps."

"One thing is certain," pursued Sam, trying desperately to be cheerful, "we can't *wade* out. The water is sixty or seventy feet deep below us. How would you like to dive down to the bottom and bring up a bowlder?"

Helen Noggle dropped her hands in her lap, slowly raised her haggard face, and fixed her

bloodshot eyes on her son, rolling them to follow his every motion, and turning her head to keep him in view when he walked about.

“It would take a good swimmer,” said Old Barton, “to keep his head above water in such a rough current as this, considering how cold it is, and how much drift and ice there is.”

Mrs. Noggle shivered, and Sam wrapped a blanket around her shoulders.

“If we get safe past the Dry Docks and the bridges at Cincinnati,” continued Barton, “we’ve little to dread. There are hundreds of brave fellows to rescue us, and they will think it fun to do so. But there *is* a right smart chance of danger from the Dry Docks and from the piers of Newport Bridge. But never cross a bridge till you come to it, and I reckon we’d better not strike the pier till we come to it.”

“Better not strike it at all, nor think of it, gran’daddy. What good will it do to think of it? If we must give up the ship I’ve made up my mind what to do. I’ll swim to the land with mother, and you must do the best you can to tow Tom ashore.”

A grateful smile of wonderful sweetness came over Helen Noggle’s face. It seemed as if she had snatched away a mask from her features and revealed a countenance of radiant beauty; but while Sam was regarding this miraculous visage, the mask covered it again;—he saw a

ghastly, haggard face, and bloodshot eyes, eyes riveted on *him*.

"I am glad daddy and Mandy are not here, anyhow. The fewer passengers the better in such a boat as this. We shan't charge you for your passage, Tom."

The wind had risen, and was blowing fitfully up stream, and a heavy gust buffeted the house and caused it to tip considerably to one side.

"She's top-heavy, boys. We've too much freight on the upper deck. Best dump some of the furniture into the hold, or throw it overboard. Here, help me heave this stove down the gangway."

The boys set to work with old Wash and the stove was tumbled down the stairs, and fell with an ominous splash and plunge into the watery basement. Other articles were likewise thrown down to the lower room. Mr. Barton advised a general clearance of the "cabins," as he called the apartments above stairs, and the boys even took down the bedsteads and consigned them to the "hold." "Now, shipmates," said the old voyager, "she is in ballast trim." It was a good thing for Tom that he engaged in this active work, which distracted his mind temporarily from awful apprehensions. But when everything that the room contained, excepting the table, the chairs and the bedding, was pitched down, and there was no more work to do, he

naturally gave way to dreadful thoughts. His reason told him there was scarcely a possibility that the frail, shackling frame of an old house, held together by a few nails, could long withstand the destructive rage of wind and wave, even should it escape demolition by crashing against some obstacle. Besides, he was convinced that Sam had no real hope, and he ascribed Old Barton's composure not to assurance of safety but to contempt of danger. Instinctive terror swept through him, like a chilling blast, as he suddenly realized the full horror of his situation. That he must perish seemed inevitable—must drown in the Ohio—must strangle to death in the cold, black water, and never more be seen or heard of. The faces of the dear ones at home rose vividly in his mind; all were there—not excepting Fritz. Even the dog's trustful eyes were fixed upon him. He heard his mother's gentle voice, he heard the notes of "Home, Sweet, Sweet Home," played softly on the piano by Sister Han. Vision succeeded vision in his whirling brain; the sound of weltering eddies and swashing waves mixed with far-away voices which seemed to say, "Don't be foolhardy, my son! Keep away from the river." Overpowered by remorse and dread, the lad sank to his knees in paralyzing despair.

The doomed house drifted on. How fast it was going who could tell? How long it had



been floating none of its inmates could say. They had lost the faculty of estimating the length of an hour. It seemed to Tom that an eternity had elapsed since the dire voyage was begun. He silently prayed God to comfort his mother and father, and strove to fix his hope on heaven.

A crash! A shock! A swirl! A confusion of rushing noises! The lamp slides from the up-tilted table and falls to the floor shivered to fragments, and all is dark! No one uttered a cry; each felt that the end had come. But it was not so. The projecting porch of the house had struck a pier of the Newport Bridge, and was torn from the main building, causing a general loosening of timbers, and a change in the centre of gravity which made the floor dip at an angle of eight or ten degrees. Wash Barton guessed what had happened, and, on groping to the window and looking out, he was confirmed in his conclusion.

“All right, boys! That was Newport Bridge! Thank your lucky stars that we have got past it, and past the Dry Docks. We are opposite Cincinnati. We will soon swoop under the great Suspension Bridge. No danger then, or now, unless we run into a boat. But there is one more pier bridge to pass,—the Southern Railroad Bridge. If we miss the piers there, we are safe!”

“Let's holler for help, gran'daddy,” said Sam, in a high fever of excitement.

“Help! Help! Hallo!”

“Help! Help! Ho!” echoed Tom. Old Barton also joined in the cry, and so did Helen Noggle, and the four continued to shout and scream while their rocking prison sped down the middle of the river. Many heard their wild halloos, and, as the hurrying mass of wall and roof was gliding under the Suspension Bridge, two men in a skiff made an attempt to pull alongside.

“Help! Help! Help!”

“My God! Bill, it’s a house with people in it!” exclaimed one of the men in the boat to his companion.

“Let ’em rip!” answered the other in a gruff voice, and with an oath. “Look out for number one!”

“We might save their lives, Bill. Hear the woman screech!”

“We’ve got to save our own bacon, and get away from the cops. Let ’em rip, I say!”

“Help! Help! Help!”

The cry came faintly over the water from the hoarse throats of the boys.

The doomed house drifted on, past the twinkling lights, past the threatening piers of the lower bridge, past Cincinnati, past many a farm and many a lone cottage, until, at length its motion was suddenly arrested by some lodged obstruction. The castaways, though unable to discern what stopped them, were none the less

rejoiced to realize that they no longer drifted, but were somehow at anchor, albeit their ship was sorely tossed and shaken by the embroiled element that still heaved and grumbled around and beneath it.

"I told you we would come through all right, boys. We've got into some sort of a port. All we've to do is to keep up our spirits and wait till morning.—Where are you, Nelly?—I can hardly see my hand before my eyes in this dungeon. But I think I saw a glimmer of light away off yonder. Sam, come here; can you make out what it is?"

"I see a light," exclaimed Tom. "Look, Sam, there it shines, like a candle."

"That must be in Kentucky," said Sam. "Maybe it is a lamp shining from some window. Don't you wish we were there? Mother, come and see the light!"

Mrs. Noggle did not answer. She was at that moment putting to her lips a flask.

"Nelly, is anything ailing you, child?" A prolonged shriek pierced the darkness and appalled Tom's ears. It was succeeded by another, and another still more terrific. The utterance of three such violent cries seemed to exhaust the woman's strength, for after the effort she was heard to pant like one outdone in a race for life. The old man's voice when he next spoke, was husky and hollow.

"She has the delirium again! How did she come by liquor at such a time? My poor Nelly! My pet! My little beauty!—Sam! Sam! Sam! Listen to me! Keep away from whiskey as from hell-fire and damnation! See to what it has brought your poor mother, my darling Nelly, my pretty innocent girl!" The old man dropped his head upon Sam's shoulder and gave way to sobs, hearing which, the insane woman murmured:

"Stop crying, Sam! Sh! It's not your fault! We only called it your baby because you took care of it. No, no, no, no! the rats and fishes shan't have it!"

Sam disengaged himself from his grandfather's arms and went to his mother, who was attempting to rise.

"Mother! sit still; don't try to get up."

He placed a hand upon her shoulder, and she, grasping his arm, pulled him down beside her where she crouched upon the floor.

"Hush! Listen! Hear them plunging and hissing under the boat! There comes a gar with red eyes and a long tail like a black snake, crawling up—crawling up—crawling up! There's another! There's a thousand all wriggling and hissing! Keep them off!" Shrieking as she had done before, the dipsomaniac struggled to her feet and made frantic efforts to break away from Sam who called aloud:

“Help me hold her! She will jump into the river!”

With his grandfather's assistance, Sam succeeded in placing the wretched woman upon a heap of bedding which had been cast upon the floor when the bedsteads were taken down. The old man sat down on one side of his daughter and Sam on the other, and each held one of her hands. She continued to rave and scream intermittently, but at length became passive and lay quiescent. Hoping that she had fallen asleep, her attendants remained silent, and Tom, still standing by the window and gazing at the light on the Kentucky shore, heard no other sound than the growl and swirl of the water which rushed around and through the wreck. The rain had ceased but the wind was blowing a gale, up stream. In a lull of the gust, Mrs. Noggle was heard to murmur incoherently the words, “Come! Come!”

“What does she say?” whispered Sam.

“I say come—tell father to come.”

“He is here, mother. I am with you, too, and Tom Tadmore,—you remember him.”

No answer came from the unhappy woman, the deep breathing of whose weary breast indicated slumber. But after a brief interval, she again started up with a wailing cry: “The baby! It's sinking! It's sinking! Let me go! I'll dive to the bottom and bring it back! Let me loose!”

Helen Noggle's cries and struggles, except in occasional spells of exhaustion, were thus repeated throughout the remainder of the night.

When morning dawned, and objects began to show their dim outlines through the mist, it was discovered that a great part of the house had been pounded to pieces by the flood, and what remained was a mere rickety shell which shook and swayed in the wind, threatening to break away at any moment from the grapnelling limbs of a gigantic sycamore tree, by which it had been stopped in its fateful course. Lodged in a branch of the same tree were two objects which had drifted together, a wheelbarrow and an empty coffin. All this the boys observed with dismay, but their spirits revived when, straining anxious eyes towards the Kentucky hills, they made out the shape of a human habitation. They hoped that some inmate of that shadowy house might see their plight and come to their rescue. Wash Barton would not desert his post beside his daughter, but the fatigue and care of his long watch had so worn his aged body that, in spite of his will, he dropped into a doze while he sat with Nelly's hand in his.

Sam fastened to a stick a piece of muslin torn from a sheet, and this he waved constantly to attract attention from the shore, should any one be stirring. What words can convey an idea of his emotions when he saw or fancied he saw an

answering signal flutter from the top of the house on the hill! Tears gushed to his eyes and blinded him, and his heart throbbed so fast that he could only gasp out the words, "Tom, look there!" Tom saw the signal, and, throwing his arms about Sam, sobbed joyously, "They see us! They will save us!"

Before the boys had sufficiently recovered self-possession to know what next to do or say, they heard a halloo and beheld a man running down to the river shore. They saw him get into a boat and pull towards them, up stream, against the strong current. What a shout they raised! Wash Barton started from his nodding sleep, and came to the window.

"See, gran'daddy! a boat! The man is coming to save us!"

"I told you all along that it would be so. I'll trust myself on the Ohio River in a soup plate."

A creaking noise and a dull crash of wet plaster falling at his feet interrupted Barton's cheery words.

"The floor is coming apart!" screamed Tom. "The house is splitting to pieces!"

A heavy log had driven against the wreck and knocked away the principal braces that held it together. One side of the roof came down, and the water swept over the broken floor. Helen Noggle, aroused by this awful catastrophe, sat

up; the foam flew around her, blown from the invading waves.

“The baby! Sam’s baby! I’ll bring it back!”

“Mother! Mother! Hold fast to the roof! See! there’s a boat coming to save us!”

The distracted woman gave no heed to her son’s words. With the swiftness of a leopard she sprang away and plunged into the river. Sam instantly jumped after her.

“Nelly! oh my child!”

With this broken cry of anguish Wash Barton leapt headlong after his daughter whom he vainly hoped to save. He was swallowed from sight, but, a moment later, the man’s gray head appeared above the surface, and Sam, buffeting the surge, caught a glimpse of his mother’s face veiled in the frothing waves. He saw her arms clasp the neck of her father, and the two sank and were never more seen by human eye.

The wreck swung loose from the sycamore tree; the tumultuous current, heaped in chopping waves by the wind, bore away the roof and scattered timbers;—Tom was within the jaws of the flood. The skiff from the Kentucky shore had approached the tree, and the man who was rowing strained every nerve and muscle.—In vain! He cannot rescue the drowning boys.—God pity them!

But see! What craft rides the rough river,





FRITZ SEIZED SAM'S ARM.



tossing and pitching like some unwieldy box? The frail scow bears a man with shaggy head, and the oars are in his knotty hands. His boat leaps and plunges down the turbulent stream,—it spins around in the whirling vortex caused by the ruin of the house. The man with the shaggy head reaches out his knotty hands and drags up from the hissing water Tom Tadmire, numb with cold and half strangled. “Gott in Himmel,” says Fritz Haberkorn, “I bring tzu hause unser leetle poy!” At that instant Sam Noggle’s blue hand shot above the water and clutched the edge of the providential Jo-boat. Fritz seized Sam’s arm and was drawing the shivering boy into his craft when a staunch skiff hove alongside, and a cheerful voice said:

“Let me have hold of one. Hold your ship steady, colonel, and I’ll lift the other boy into my long-boat.—Now then! Steady!—Jump in yourself, sir, and take your seat there in the stern.”

Fritz did as directed, and the floundering scow in which he had voyaged from Forest Glen drifted away empty in company with a wheelbarrow and a coffin.

## XXV

### HOME AGAIN

MAJOR CASSIUS VERNON, the stalwart Kentuckian whose timely efforts came to the rescue of the boys and of their heroic saviour, plied his strong oars steadily and soon succeeded in bringing the skiff to shore near a large, old-fashioned country mansion. Two women and a group of children stood waiting, in anxious suspense, to receive whomever the Major should chance to bring to land. By the aid of the women, the half-drowned boys were carried to the house where their vitality was restored by every art known to domestic nursing and medication.

Fritz Haberkorn was in almost as much need of warmth and stimulation as were Tom and Sam, nor were his wants neglected. Major Vernon, having seen the boys hopefully reviving under the ministrations of his wife and the housemaid, hastily returned to the uncomplaining German, bearing in hand a big decanter taken from the sideboard.

“Here!” said he, pouring into a tumbler a stream so copious that the liquor overflowed, spilling upon the parlor carpet. “Drink it

down! do you good; the best old Bourbon Whiskey in God's universe."

Fritz, though he needed no urging, did not forget the demands of courtesy. Before putting the goblet to his bearded lips, he made a military salute: "Here iss your goot healt unt your lady. By golly! dot Schnapps schmect goot! A leetle not hurt dose poy, eh?"

Major Vernon immediately sent a messenger to the nearest telegraph office with despatches to Tom's father and also to the Cincinnati press, giving brief information that the boys were safe, and that Washington Barton and Mrs. Noggle had herished in the flood.

Fritz was impatient to return to Forest Glen and restore Tom to the home folks, as he had pledged Uncle Felix that he would do so; and though Major Vernon assured him over and over again that a telegram would relieve the anxiety of the Tadmores, the German had doubts.

"By golly, Fritz vas der beste telegraph, eh Tom? Not? Ha, ha, ha."

"Well, if you will not stay over with us until to-morrow, and the boys are able to travel, there is a relief boat going up and I will pilot you to Cincinnati."

This proposition was accepted gratefully. A small government transport ascended the river that day and upon this the two men took pas-

sage, each in charge of a boy,—the Major took care of Sam, and Fritz rarely permitted Tom's hand to escape from his own jealous grip. The government boat landed its passengers on a floating dock from which they were conveyed in a broad-bottomed-yawl to solid footing, on the paving stones of Vine Street, near the Burnet House.

Thomas Tadmire, senior, and Dr. Felix Eldon, waiting on the sidewalk, saw the yawl coming up the street, like a gondola in Venice. They swallowed their thumping hearts and tried to look dignified and undemonstrative. Now the fine art of affecting a nonchalant air, to hide strong emotion, often unattainable by the wise and great, may be mastered by babes and sucklings. Tom out-faced his father and his uncle, at their own false game. He jumped out of the boat with a look of unconcern, as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, and sang out, in a chipper tone,

“Hello, pop, is that you? Hey, Uncle Felix!”

“You ought to be thrashed!” responded pop, with grim tenderness. “Your mother——” The paternal voice broke and old Fritz relieved himself of a Teutonic guttural.

On his arrival at home, the lost lamb who had been found by Fritz, abandoned every pretense of indifference when his mother hugged him in fond arms, and he heard his sister sobbing with

hysterical joy. Haberkorn knuckling rainy eyes, rumbled :

“Don't I pring him, by golly, shust vot I told?”

Tom twisted himself out of his mother's exclusive embrace.

“Fritz got me by the hair and pulled me out. Guess he was mad at me. He wanted me back here to help him do the work and to talk German with.”

Uncle Felix laughed in a lachrymal fashion. “After all,” said he, “don't you forget we are indebted to Squinty Runkle for Tom's life; Squinty proclaimed aloud in church that the scamp had drifted away.”

“How was that?” asked Tom and his mother in the same breath.

Felix gave the particulars of Squinty's appearance at the concert. Fritz listened with open ears, eyes and mouth.

“By golly,” said he, “I vish dot leetle Shquinty Gosh vas live somevare.”

With characteristic resignation, Peter Noggle received the intelligence that his wife and father-in-law were drowned. The dismal news spread about the village and Peter heard it before Sam and Tom had returned. Uncle Felix called on the widower to talk over plans for the care of Sam and Mandy.

“I don't reckon, probably, we could git along without Sam,” complained the bereaved philosopher. “Mandy is poorly, and I'm weakish about

the chist, this damp spell, and now Washington *he's* not here to do the chores." Here Peter sniffled.

"But, Mr. Noggle, you ought to be willing to do the best you can by your son. Major Vernon will give him a fine start in life."

"Ya-a-a-s; but seems like Sam ort to stick by us; or maybe not. It's all this-a-way, or that-a-way, as you might say, and no telling how anything might turn out in the long run, Dr. Eldon, as *you* kin see yourself. Dear me, dear me; what time mought it be by your watch?"

Felix felt like pulverizing Noggle for this inopportune question. The imperturbable mourner went on in his maundering monotone, "And there's to be no buryin', they tell me, for the corpses didn't come up. I'd a like to have saw her laid out, for Helen was a spry woman. And *he* was an able-bodied man. This flood's a heavy slam on me."

After the high water went down, temporary quarters were found for the Noggles, in a tenement near the lumber-yard. Sam found employment in the Buckeye Planing Mill; Mandy helped her father keep house; Peter, habitually shirking domestic responsibility, spent most of his time fishing or polishing mussel shells, by which precarious industries he occasionally earned as much as four "bits" in twenty-four hours. The income sufficed to feed his corncob pipe.



## XXVI

### SWEET GIRL GRADUATES

SPRING slipped away and the school year reached its terminus. Every preparation had been made for the graduating exercises which took place early in June. The senior class of the Forest Glen High School consisted of eight girls and one boy.

With what pride and pleasure did the honored nine wear the class pin and sport the class colors, a rosette of narrow ribbon, purple and gold! What swelling emotion tightened their young bosoms when first they saw the little folios of cardboard bearing on the front page the words :

#### *COMMENCEMENT*

*Forest Glen High School*

*at*

*Boomer's Opera Hall*

*8 o'clock P. M.*

The second page displayed, in large gilt letters, the names of the graduates: Miss Cornelia Genevieve Atkinson, Miss Blanchie Snyder Everton

Bopp, Miss Minnie Culpepper, and so on to the last name, Mr. Albert St. Clair Blumas. The roster was headed,

*CLASS OF 1884.*

The third page presented the order of exercises, comprising prayer, music, essays, orations, presentation of diplomas and an address by Hon. Philander Borewell. The last tablet of the program was enriched with the Class Song, composed by Miss Sadie Smythe, and set to music by Herr Von Schlag.

An hour before the time announced for the ceremonies to begin, Boomer's was crowded to its utmost capacity. Besides the kinfolk and acquaintances of the graduates, many "friends of education" were present, from the village and its vicinity. Most of these had received engraved cards of special invitation, but not a few less favored citizens, jealous of their democratic rights, ignoring class distinction, managed to press into the very choicest seats, in spite of the vociferous protests of dapper ushers with rosebuds in their buttonholes. Among those neglected in the distribution of complimentary tickets, was Barclay Snooks who, nevertheless, scrouged through the throng at the door and elbowed his way to a choice sitting. Squinty Runkle timidly slipped in and squeezed himself close in a corner of the hall where he looked as

flat and motionless as the outline figure of a satyr in the wall-paper behind him.

The annual commencement was an affair to which almost every family in the school district looked forward with the pride of personal and tax-paying interest. Society regarded the event as an amateur entertainment of elevated character, free to all classes; and all classes availed themselves of their inalienable rights. The "people" came out in full force and they were enthusiastically happy.

What a murmuring chorus of amiable talk! What a fluttering of fans! and, dear me! what a craning of necks! what a rising and bowing near the front of the auditorium when Mrs. Blumas and Mrs. Bogus, sailing down the middle aisle, followed by their distinguished husbands, the Doctor and the Judge, rustled to their reserved chairs over which three ushers had been standing guard. Before taking his seat, the Judge turned his ample face toward the audience and stood for several seconds, surveying the living scene with grave and lofty approval.

The Blumases and the Boguses having arrived, there was no necessity for further delay, and all eyes were now fixed on the stage. Never before, in the recollection of the oldest commencement-goer in Forest Glen, had the rostrum and the scenery environing it, presented so charming a spectacle. The potted palms, the flags, the

hangings, the class-motto: *LABOR OMNIA VINCIT*, done in great cardboard capitals covered with arbor vitæ, looked just splendid in the light of a dozen gas jets reinforced by feebler rays from a line of oil lamps ranged footlight-wise along the front of the stage. Such was the brilliant setting for the academic performance; but O, you should have beheld the living actors to whom all the decorations served but as a foil! The audience thrilled like one great heart when, to slow march music timed on a square piano by Herr Von Schlag, the twice four graceful girls and the solitary gawky boy came filing in from a side room and took possession of the numbered chairs allotted to them. The pageant was hailed with continuous clapping of hands and stamping of boys' feet, emphasized by a few cat-calls of emphatic indorsement. Before Albert St. Clair Blumas could find his assigned seat, the "Faculty," a solemn procession, moved upon the platform, headed by Principal Gadmeter, conveying Rev. Joshua Ennydox and Hon. Philander Borewell. The rear of the column was brought up by Professor Ripantare who escorted Miss Crinkler. There being no chair left unoccupied, the Professor balanced himself upon the piano stool where he posed uncomfortably, and gloomed like an embarrassed Hamlet.

After nodding and mumbling aside, first to the Honorable and then to the Reverend, the

Principal arose, threw back his head, waved his hand, and announced that we would now listen to the exercises of the evening as indicated on the program in our hands. Before proceeding, however, with the formal exercises, he deemed it his duty to say a few words. Words came very readily to Josephus Gadmeter; he spoke with the I-go-on-forever fluency of Tennyson's brook. The audience, though good-natured to a degree, began to show symptoms of impatience which the speaker mistook for applause, but when a falsetto voice, not unfamiliar to the orator, cried out "Time!" provoking a ripple of laughter, the Principal, in some confusion and much wrath, broke off abruptly and took his seat. Judge Bogus instantly stood up, frowning official rebuke upon everybody, and there is no telling what judicial charge he might have delivered had not his wife, twitching at his coat-tails, wisely whispered him down. And now, Mr. Gadmeter, half-rising, made a nervous gesture in the direction of Preacher Ennydox, who tiptoed forward at the signal and recited a very pretty and solemn discourse in the form of prayer, giving the Almighty a deal of gratuitous advice about education.

The piano music which followed the invocation brought general relief and many of the auditors joined in buzzing conversation to the infinite disgust of Herr Von Schlag who scowled

right and left and shook his maestro locks while he belabored the unoffending keys.

“What a shame!” expostulated Mrs. Bogus, “what a shame that the parents of these young people permit their children to behave with such discourtesy to an artist who can play like that!”

Mrs. Blumas nodded her agreement, though she admitted, under her breath, that she herself didn't really enjoy classical music; it was so heavy. For her part, give her “Monastery Bells,” or “The Battle of Waterloo.”

The graduating essays were not remarkable for simplicity or coherence, but they gave evidence that the writers were “in touch” with the encyclopedia and were surprisingly apt at quotation, drawing largely upon Emerson, Carlyle and Plato. What these rhetorical efforts lacked in pith and sincerity was made up for by a superabundance of ornamental words. It was not the fault of the young folks that they followed the advice of their elders, imitated their predecessors, and studied to be artificial.

Every sensible person in Boomer's Hall—and most people have good common sense,—knew well enough that the eight pretty girls and the one self-conscious boy, were innocent victims of a persistent convention, and that their essays and orations ought not to be taken seriously as any measure of real intelligence or power, but merely as “graduation exercises,” cut according to es-

tablished fashion, and just as essential to propriety as are the two surviving buttons on a man's coat-tail.

The Hon. Philander Borewell's address, abounding in anecdotes and trite generalizations, was cautiously conservative and piously patriotic. Having concluded his discourse with sentences of counsel and exhortation to the class, the great man conferred the diplomas ceremoniously, and closed the solemnity by shaking hands with the breathless nine, beginning with the valedictorian and finishing with Albert Blumas.

The last musical number was played, the benediction was pronounced and the exercises were over. The unanimous verdict of the audience declared the commencement to be the "nicest" the High School of Forest Glen had ever "gotten up."

On the day after the commencement, Tom scribbled a long confidential letter, to his Cousin Frank in St. Louis. So full was the writer's memory and imagination, that he unburthened himself impetuously, letting his words flow along the channel of "least resistance." In the headlong hurry of composition, he gave little heed to rules of any kind, but, like Mark Antony, only spoke right on.

"We had a big time last Wensday night at Boomer's Hall where my sister Hannah and a squad of elite other girls from the best families

took their graduation exercises being well lit up and much crowded with gas light and floral designs. Pa he had ordered up a spring wagon load of flowers made up in ships and baskets and all sorts with slithers of Marshall Kneel roses and Smile axes and wire stems to be sent up to the stage for a reward of merit to Han when she got through. There is so much to say that I cant tell which first nor fast enough but just as it comes back to my mind. but anyhow sooner or later Claude Rockingham also he sent a beukay too with his card tied on to Han with his compliments. But there was roses and pinks whole sail for all the ballance of the sweet girl graduates as Han calls herself and Claude said afterwards he was disgusted because his beukay was small potatoes beside the magnificent display of exoteric hot house vegetation some had. You couldn't hardly tell which was flowers and which was commencers for all them diplomatists and specially the Gush girls Amy in particular was dressed up mostly in bunches of roses and had so much culer on her face that I said she was a piny and made Charley Blogson bust out.

“ Well Sir Frank the hall was full to stuffocation and the platform was so thick you couldn't see the piano, well old Gadmeter he made the first brake he steps out a smiling with his programmme in his hand and spoke about immortal soles and how all these young ladies would now



orate their own orations composed entirely out of their own heads and own hearts without any help or aid or any touching up by nobody whatever that had any education.

“But I know that Sister Han’s Peace had of been submitted to Professor Snipson the literary teacher for to look over and he marked it with red ink so much that Han cried and Uncle Felix and mother said Snipsie had clean took the sense all out of Han’s Peace. I thought so too. her Peace was about Good English but he changed the heading so as to read Appropriate Methods of Employing the Vernacular in Written Expression.

“But I must drive on. As I said old Gadmeter made a long obituary to begin to start the commencement and after he had strung it out about a mile I got tired and hollered time and made Judge Bogus mad as a Mandril.

“Well then next came something else lets see, yes our new minister prayed a splendid benedictionary and then Hair Von Slog came forward dressed in a white shirt bosom and gloves and rended a Nockturnal Fantazee in nine movements by himself which made me that sleepy I purty near tumbled off of the seat and Mrs. Bogus looked round at me savage.

“then came two private pupils of Hair Von Slog fixed up awful fine with corsages and all that and moved on to the piano works and exe-

cuted a duet for two with a flute obligation for one mouth only by Claude Rockingham Doc Blumas nephieu. In about a month the executioners quit but Doctor Blumas he kept hammering on the floor with his cane for an oncore until old Gadmeter didnt know what to do and pushed Al Blumas into the ring to orate, Al is the only boy in the Grade and feels big but he is a slimleg Nancy with soft mussel and runs after Sadie Smithe. His theseus was on American Institutions all about railroads telegraphs and success in life. when he pulled up and sat down Judge Bogus and his wife kept on clapping hands like an idiot and Doc Blumas he just grinned for he is Albert's daddy.

“Then came a solo for one voice by Miss Sadie Smithe called Ah! Oh! I long to be longing, with a good many thrills in it. We boys stamped for her oncore and she came out again and sang Alas the days of Yore my love! She looked awful pretty!!

“I can't take time by the fetlock to tell you near all but I will say right here Frank that every one of the eight girls looked awful pretty and Han if she is my own sister I will say candidly she was the best looking of the batch and didnt wear half so much juels and lace as some did but when she got up there so shy and scared like and began to preach off her essay with her music-box voice blamed if it didn't make me cry.

“You ought to heard Amy Gush elocute her perduction. She takes lessons in vocal Deliverance. Her peace was about Æsthetic Culture of the Rennaisance. I copied the name off the Programmeme. Mrs Bogus says Amy’s peace was lovely but mother and me couldn’t catch on to it but Amy did look awful pretty I will say so even if she hasn’t got half sense.

“The valediction speech was the best of the shooting match by a big blonde senior of the brunet style of complexion. She looked skrumptious next to Sister in my humble opinion. Her whole name is Miss Blanchie Snyder Everton Bopp and I hope she will change the last part for a name that goes better with her handsomeness and talens. It didn’t seem to match that a valedictory graduate with distinction should have so bunty a name as Bopp, But pa says the Boppses and the Tadmores are bound to rise up in this free country for they belong to pedagreeable society. Miss Bopp’s speach was printed in the newspaper this morning. it ends up nice but Han wont let me have it so Ill copy the last part for you leavin out only a little bit.

#### END OF MISS BOPP’S SPEACH.

“Friends, Schoolmates, Teachers, the time has come for us to depart for far distant climbs, and

we meet, alas, once more, for the final separation to say, farewell, fare thee well forever. Some will go hence to the higher walks of duty, some to the golden pearly links of wedlock, some will continue to pursue and be pursued. But think not, lovely Teachers, that we will ever, ever, ever neglect the thorny rocks of the hill of Science, and the gentle meanderings of learning where we have so long cemented ties.

“To you, dear classmates, I can only say fit yourselves for the duties of life. Let us cling together! Let us persevere! To us belong the glamour and the glory. These classic halls of Glen Forest shall no more echo to our frivolous tread but yonder, yonder, on the slopes and shoals of woman’s higher sphere, are wreathes more enduring than marble halls, and crowns more purple than the evening twilight! Be firm, be true! Falter not in your mission, but remember the words of the poet

There’s no such word as fale.”

## XXVII

### LITERARY DIVERSIONS

DOCTOR ELDON enjoyed poetry. It was a habit of his to while away summer afternoons, seated, book in hand, with chair tilted back against a small sassafras tree which grew upon the lawn, in front of the Tadmore house. He was seated thus, in post-prandial ease, on the day following that of the commencement. So completely was he abstracted from "sense and outward things," by the charm of what he read, that he did not hear the importunate appeal of the ambitious catbird, which, on a neighboring maple, was performing all the parts of an exquisite operetta, for Eldon's sole delight.

Tom came sauntering over the lawn trying to fix a crooked arrow to the string of a home-made hickory bow.

"Look out! uncle, or I'll slay thee, villain, as William Tell did Gesler. Put an apple on your head, and play Albert. Le'me try if I can knock that book out of your hand. Wish I had a gun 'stead of a bow 'n arrow."

"What would you do with a gun?"

“Kill game and things, and fire salutes, and drill. Fritz could teach me bay’net exercises and light artillery. This is how the soldiers do: Shoulder—arms! Carry—arms! Present—arms! Order—arms!”

The boy, handling his bow as a gun, gave and executed these military commands with an energy surprising to his uncle and quite alarming to his mother who, with her sewing, came out to the veranda to see what was going on. Tom gave her a military salute, then flung the bow aside and, casting himself on the grass near his uncle, lay sprawling, in order to “cool off.”

“What you reading, uncle?”

“Wordsworth’s Poems. Shall I read aloud to you?”

“Wordsworth? That’s the Harry Gill feller, isn’t it? There’s a piece in the Rhetorical Guide by him. I don’t know only but one verse.”

“You don’t know only but one verse?” repeated Tom’s mother. “That’s a very faulty sentence, my son.”

“Yes, it’s false syntax, for the pupil to avoid. I said it a-purpose to see if you’d detect the error.—That verse I was a-going to tell you of, we had to commit for Professor Ripantare. It’s good for the vocal organs of the pharynx.”

“Larynx.”

“That’s what I say. And to strengthen the abominable muscles. The verse goes this way:

“And fiercely by the arm he took her,  
And by the arm he held her fast,  
And fiercely by the arm he shook her,  
And cried, “I’ve caught you then at last!””

That’s nice po’try, mother; isn’t it, Uncle Felix? I like the rhymes ‘tooker’ and ‘shooker.’ You yellocute them in the oritund swell. Professor Ripantare makes a splendid Harry Gill—‘specially when his teeth chatter and when he jumps out from behind a rick of barley to grab old Goody and fiercely by the arm he shook her.”

“There are better poems than ‘Goody Blake,’ in this volume,” said the Doctor. “Shall I read you one?”

“’Spect there are, but ne’mind readin’ ’em. *You* can write better ones, can’t you, uncle? I bet you can beat old Wordsworth with your left hand tied behind you. Gee whiz! *I* can make po’try myself. S’posin’ you and me yank out some feet, pentameter or diameter or anything you say! You make up a selection about me and I’ll compose one about you. Mother will be empire.”

“Umpire, you mean.”

“Yep; mother will be umpire and ump which piece is best.”

“All right,” laughed the good-natured Doctor. “Bring on the literary tools.”

Tom ran into the library and brought back paper and pencils. Then with sober brow he essayed

his part in the competitive trial. Prone on the sward in the shade of the spicy sassafras, he lay many minutes, agonized with the throes of invention, his toes digging the sod, his features twisting, his eyes rolling, his entire body tense, in sympathy with the prodigious labor of his brain. Meanwhile Felix scribbled down a score of jingling lines recalling in playful ridicule, a recent mishap his nephew had suffered while prosecuting experimentally his favorite study of animate nature. Discouraged by the tardiness of his own slow paced muse Tom presently called out,

“How you getting on, uncle?”

“I’m through,” was the answer. “What luck are you having? Do the numbers flow? Stand and deliver what you’ve written so far.”

Tom slowly got upon his feet, took a Henry Clay attitude, made a comical grimace aside to his mother, and read:

“Felix Eldon is my uncle,  
And he doctored Squinty Runkle,  
And he swore at Peter Noggle,  
Who does smoke a pipe, and sproggle.”

“What’s that last word, Tommy?” said the lad’s mother. The uncle also had a curiosity about the uncommon word.

“Sproggle,” said Tom, “s-p-r-o-g-g-l-e.”

“Sproggle? I’m afraid that is a forced rhyme.



What do you mean by 'sproggle'? Is it a noun or a verb?"

"Don't you catch on to the meaning of sproggle? You can tell the sense by the way I use it. Sproggle is a transitory verb and it means sort of gape and look poorly and make a body tired. Pete smokes his pipe and that's all he can do except sproggle."

"My child, how silly! There's no such word in the dictionary," protested Mrs. Tadmore.

"Well, what if there isn't? Professor Snipson says a real poet makes up something out of nary nothing and gives it a nabitation and a name. He says that's just what makes Shakespeare a big poetry gun. You don't like the sarcasm in my piece, uncle, and that's what pinches you. Let's hear yours about me."

Dr. Eldon gravely intoned the following lines:

THE BOY AND THE BUMBLE BEE.

Mesaw a humble Bumble Bee  
Eneasting in a pumpkin flower;  
Methought that me would look and see  
The busy way that he, that he  
Improves each shining hour.

Meshut him in the pumpkin bloom,  
Meheard him sizz and bizz within,  
Mesaid, "O Bumble Bee, thy doom  
It is to bizz and sizz and boom,  
And glad me with thy din."

Meheld him to my happy ear,  
 Mesang, "His cage is yellow gold;"  
 Meloved his bothered buzz to hear;  
 Mequoth "Sweet insect, do not fear,  
 But bumble loud and bold."

Eftsoons me heard a sudden wail,  
 Meheard myself to howl!  
 Clean through that pumpkin blossom pale,  
 Mefelt him stick his fiery tail,  
 Mefelt him sting my jowl.

"Good for you, uncle!" cried Tom. "That knocks mine all hollow! I never could write po'try. There don't seem to be a grea' deal of sense in po'try anyway. Wish I could write a true fiction founded on facts, like David Copperfield and Huck Finn. How do authors make up real facts out of nothing?"

"They don't exactly make them up out of nothing. They put their lives into their books. They tell what they really know."

"Gee whiz! Uncle, I *know* lots and gobs. But I can't compose worth a cent. How do you go to work to put your life in a book? I'm just full of ideas, but ——"

"Write them down," advised Dr. Eldon, "just as they rise in your mind. State facts exactly as they happen. Use the plainest words and tell your story clearly so that no one can fail to get your true meaning."

"But I don't hardly know what to write on," said Tom.

“Write on paper.”

“That’s not a good joke. You understand me well enough. I mean I can’t think up a good wonderful story that is a real fact. Mother, Uncle Felix says I ought to aim high and be a great author like *Ibid.* Would you like me to be a bully scholar, or a general or what? I can’t choose.”

“I wish you to lead your class in all your studies.”

“Professor Ripantare says I’m the best declaimer in the whole school, and he always wants me to speak ‘*Rienzi*’ at the exhibitions. But I think ‘*Spartacus*’ is a better piece, don’t you? I like to let out my voice on that part where it says, ‘That very night the Romans landed on our coast. I saw the breast that had nourished me trampled by the hoof of the war horse,—the bleeding body of my father flung amidst the blazing rafters of our dwelling.’” Tom assumed a tragic attitude to recite these harrowing sentences. He gesticulated and contorted his face in a manner truly terrific.

“I don’t understand why you should want to speak such shocking words, my son. Why don’t you select a prettier piece?”

“Mother, you don’t get into the soul of these grand savage speeches: I reckon it is because you are a woman.—You ought to hear Professor Ripantare throw himself into ‘*Spartacus*,’ when

he says 'If ye are beasts, then stand there like fat oxen waiting for the butcher's knife! If ye are men, follow me!' Why, I don't believe we could hear thunder while he was saying, 'follow me!' Charley Blogson was sitting on the window-sill and when Professor Ripantare yelled 'follow me!' he lunged at Charley and scared him so he tumbled off of the window and said 'Shet up!' and the whole audience laughed. It takes a mightly eloquent man to make it seem so real to the boys as that!"

"Are the Professor's favorite recitations usually so violent? Has he no selections of the quiet kind?"

"Nothing but 'Bingen on the Rhine'; that's tolerable quiet,—'specially where the dying soldier lays dead. There's a dandy quiet speech in 'Spartacus' that always makes me solemn and think of past ages of happiness and all that, when I was a child."

"You are not so very old yet, are you? Not too old to learn. I am glad you are doing nicely in elocution. How do you rank in your composition work?"

"That's just what bothers me, mother. I usen't to get the hang of composing. But Uncle Felix gave me a private lecture and I believe I've caught onto it at last. Hello! here they come!"

This exclamation announced the noisy approach

of a covey of boys and girls unexpected except by Tom who hastily informed his mother that he had invited the children to come up that afternoon to play Scoomfoozle.

## XXVIII

### SCOOMFOOZLE

"Soomy! Soomy! Soomy!" shouted the juvenile invaders as they advanced swarming over the lawn and surrounded the sassafras tree.

"Uncle Felix, they mean *you*; you're to be Scoomfoozle; better hustle right away and fix yourself up!" A chime of girls' tongues pleaded, "Please, Doctor Eldon," and a peal of boys' voices sang out, "Oh, come on!"

"You have to, uncle, for I gave my word and honor you would."

"May I not respectfully decline?"

"Naw!" grumbled the boys, relentless as a council of savages condemning a prisoner to the stake.

"No-sir-ee-bob!" added the imperative nephew. "You shan't decline respectfully or unrespectfully.—You need the exercise and the fun, same as we do."

"Wait then till I put my book away; I'll be back in a minute."

At these words the little women danced for glee and the small men fell to pommeling one another in sheer delight. The amiable promoter

of their childish pleasures, stepped into the library, where he metamorphosed himself by putting on an old dressing-gown and a hideous yellow mask. Then going out by a back door he stole unobserved toward the heedless children, and lay awhile in ambush behind a sweet-scented shrub.

Meanwhile Tom disclosed to Melissa Brown the mystery and the meaning of the game in which she was to participate for the first time.

“The Scoomfoozle is a—Scoomfoozle—he is something like the Blackman, but horribler. It isn’t a person nor an ogre nor a ghost—it’s a wild Scoomfoozle who makes you feel squirmy when it looks your way and makes you wither up and turn green outside and inside, if he touches you !”

“How do you know *inside* ?” queried Melissa.

“How do you know your soul?—You can’t *see* it. The Scoomfoozle’s finger turns you green as scum on a frog pon’ :—you don’t show green—that’s the magic—but you realize the minute he touches you, you *are* wrinkly and green through and through.—Maybe when he catches you he’ll chaw you up and swallow you or play the bandola on you ——”

“I guess I’ll only look on and see the others play.”

“No, no ; everybody must join in. You will like the risk—there’s lots of fun in being scared

if you can only bear the suspense and not get rattled.—Soomy isn't a fact, no more than Santa Claus. But sometimes I 'magine it is a real bonyfied Scoomfoozle and I just *die!*—Say; stop your cuttin' up and all go a good piece away from the porch. This porch is *home* and, when the Scoomfoozle comes towards you, you try to get home without him grabbing you.—Why don't uncle get a move on him? He said he'd be back right away."

Melissa, catching sight of a hideous face peering from behind the shrub, screeched the discovery to her huddled playmates who sent up one choral cry of crazy joy and lapsed into dead silence. The uncouth shape, the grotesque motions, the threatful mumblings of the goblin from the bushes, filled every breast with that "pleasing pain" which mock danger inspires. All yielded to the hypnotism of make-believe, and courted the ecstasy of feigned terror.

Toward his prey advanced the Scoomfoozle; it pawed the turf, it lurched, it snorted, it quivered, it stood stock still in strange slumber.

"Let's run home!" gasped Melissa.

"No!" whispered Tom; "not yet! Watch him! He sleeps when he's awake and he's awake when he sleeps. Watch out for him!"

Truly the manœuvres of "Soomy" surpassed all expectation. No one could foretell at what moment the wily Thing might fall into a fit of



blind rage, or spring nimbly into the air, or prance like a kangaroo, or howl like a gorilla, or make an impossible rush in several directions at once. Perhaps, while wriggling its baleful fingers towards one of the boys, it would dart sideways or backwards and fly at a girl before she had time even to turn green or to expire.

The explosive jargon of the boys, the volleyed screams of the misses, the nondescript noises made by Scoomfoozle, aroused Miss Hannah Tadmore from an afternoon nap and brought her to the piazza to learn what caused the commotion.

She greeted the children with nods of personal recognition and with welcoming smiles.

“Come and play, sister.”

“I’m too old, Tom.”

“That comes of your graduating. But you are not older than uncle,—I mean Scoomy. Playin’ ’ll make you young again, like Ponthe de Leon.” Tom clapped to his lips a broad leaf and made it pop by suction. “We’re a-waiting for you,” he said, and turned a cart-wheel.

Hannah yielded to the importunity of her brother, though reluctant to engage in violent exercise. The exacting tasks of school had broken her health, and the extra strain of commencement night had entailed a series of nervous headaches. However she went into the sport with cheerful looks.

The dramatic glamour again enveloped the scene and clothed the Scoomfoozle with his wonted terrors. Now one, now another reckless lad, fell a victim to It and each captive shrank into a green manikin, and supplied living food to the yellow-jawed monster. Once, Melissa Brown was sure she should be caught, but Tom, hazard-ing his life and his natural color, had the desperate courage to save her by plucking at Scoomy's gabardine.

Suddenly, to the consternation of girls and boys, their common enemy, venting a ferocious whoop, dashed through their midst, straight towards Hannah. She saw him coming, screamed, fled like a hunted fawn, flew like a frightened dove. The boys encouraged her by wild cheers. The girls stood speechless with bated breath, in palpitating sympathy. Mrs. Tadmore dropped her sewing and hastened to the middle of the lawn, to note the progress and the result of the chase.

Never before had the Scoomfoozle produced such a sensation among the small folks. Maybe, after all, he was not Uncle Felix! There might be a Scoomfoozle! There might be anything! Tom remembered reading in the mythology how Pan sometimes makes his appearance among the frightened shepherds.

In and out among shade trees, around flower beds, through tangles of low shrubbery, flitted

the white-robed fugitive, pursued by the grisly shape with the yellow, grinning face. Is he gaining ground? Will her strength hold out? Can she escape untouched? She skims over the greensward, she flutters past the rose hedge and the white-fringe tree,—she is nearing the sassafras,—she will soon reach home!—Yes!—No!—a panic dismay seizes the girl—she sinks upon the grass, faint and dizzy. The Scoomfoozle had her in his power. He was bending over to claim his own, when, raising her right hand, two fingers of which made the sign of the cross, she stayed him with the words:

“King’s Ex!”

“King’s Ex!” echoed the boys and girls, in quick chorus.

“You can’t catch her now, Uncle Felix!” interposed Tom with earnestness approaching to solemnity; “‘King’s Ex’ means King’s Excuse—she is excused by the king, and nobody darst touch her, darst they, Han?”

“No!” gasped Hannah, recovering her breath,—“you can’t catch me now!”

## XXIX

### BARCLAY'S GUN

BARCLAY SNOOKS, carrying his "shooting iron," and accompanied by Seneca, made an exploration to ascertain the condition of the cherry crop, and to test the quality of the strawberries in the neighborhood of Forest Glen. The boy pilferers knew the situation of every orchard for miles around, and took note of the ripening of all delicious fruits. Perhaps they were not so grateful as they should have been for the privilege of enjoying the results of the labor and pains of those who cultivated trees and planted vineyards and berry patches. Instead of showing thankfulness for the bounties of agriculture, these scorers of honest toil complained bitterly of the meanness and stinginess of the farmers who objected to their stealing, or who took measures to prevent trespass.

"Seneca, git yer basket, and you kin go along with me 'n scoop some of them chirries we seed at Bopp's. Them sweet chirries is almost too ripe already. Bopp is a-goin' away to Cincinnati to-day, and the ole woman ain't able to be up."

"Let's don't go there, Barclay, they've got a bulldog. Let's go to Hine's new strawberry patch jist above the holler. I bet I kin sneak out and pick a quart of berries before anybody sees me, and not git caught. You know Hine has a wooden leg and can't run worth a cent."

"I don't keer a durn for strawberries this morning, Sineca. I've had strawberries and strawberries till I'm sick of 'em. But I've got a bigness for amber chirries, and amber chirries we'll git or bust. Who keers for bulldogs? Hain't I got this here gun? You kin jist slide over the fence and climb the tree while I stand guard, and if ary bulldog shows hisself, I'll give him a dose of cold lead. So come along, and hurry up."

"Le'me stand guard oncet, and you try the climbin'. You allus make me run the resk, Barclay. You promised to stand guard that time we went over to Squire Hoyle's orchard. Why didn't you come and help us out of that scrape?"

"I hadn't no gun, you know; I did help you out. If I hadn't walloped old Hoyle, you would have been snatched up and put in jail. While I was a-chokin' him you saved your skin and run away."

"Did you wallop Squire Hoyle, Barclay? The boys all said he pounded you with a club."

"Who tole you that? Jist show me the feller that tole you that!" Here Barclay gritted his

teeth and glared at his brother with a ferocity altogether too terrible to describe. Seneca balanced the basket upon his head, and led the way towards the premises of Mr. Bopp. An artist on the lookout for a picturesque subject to paint could not have wished for anything better than that moving group of two—Barclay with his gun, and Seneca with the basket poised on his head. The pair shambled along the by-road that led to the Bopp domain. Then they slackened their pace and looked carefully around them in all directions. The farmer's cottage, surrounded by evergreens, was within a stone's throw of the cherry trees. But nobody seemed to be at home, and there were no signs of the dog.

“Now is yer chance, Sineca; be quick and I'll whistle if I see any danger.”

Seneca stooped low and glided on, keeping a fence between himself and the cottage until he came near the tree. Then he straightened himself up boldly; but the moment his eyes glanced upward he beheld an object the sight of which weakened his knees. He turned and fled to the presence of his noble kinsman and protector. “There's a man!—a man up the tree!”

“Is that so?” exclaimed he of the gun. “Are you sure? Squat down here in the grass and we'll watch him.”

Fully half an hour did they lie in ambush, without seeing any semblance of a man; nor did



BARCLAY WITH HIS GUN, AND SENECA WITH THE BASKET.





they hear any sound or observe the least motion in the branches of the tree. Barclay began to ridicule and abuse Seneca for his groundless terror.

"There ain't no man there! You're a white-liver, and that's w'at's the matter with you. You're a low-born coward, Sineca."

"I'm no lower born than you are. If you think your liver is redder than mine, go yourself and see if there ain't a man up the tree. I dare you to."

"I won't take no dare," retorted Barclay, blustering. "I'll walk bold right along the middle of the road, you'll see, and if there *is* a man, who keers? I'm not afeard of no man livin'."

Rising from his nest in the grass, with these words on his lips, Barclay happened to glance towards the cottage, and to his consternation he beheld Miss Blanchie Bopp in the door-yard, calmly watching his motions. Both he and Seneca started off at a gait more rapid than was usual with them. As they hurried past the cherry-tree and stole a side look at the amber sweets on which they had set their hearts' and stomachs' desire, they caught a startling view of a fantastic figure—a scarecrow, flapping empty coat-sleeves in the wind.

An attempt to snatch a free lunch from Mr. Hine's strawberry garden also failed. Not only was there a barbed wire fence around the enclo-

sure; the owner himself happened to be picking berries.

Barclay fared onward in the pessimistic mood of a noble nature which feels the world's injustice, his small eyes roving over the landscape, when

“—by the way he chanced to espy  
One sitting idle on a sunny bank.”

The solitary figure was that of Cuff Chuck, who had been amusing his leisure by playing mumblety-peg, all alone. Seeing the Snooks boys draw near, Cuff thrust into his pocket the jack-knife with which he had been driving the peg. Barclay observed the hasty motion and craftily foresaw an opportunity to profit by a mode of traffic always in vogue among boys of his stripe.

“Hi, Cuff; wot's up? Hain't you lost? Got anything to trade? Marvles or slings? How'd ye like to swap knives, sight unseen?”

The negro boy was offish and reticent.

“You allus cheat,” he blurted out.

“How the thunder kin a man cheat when he swaps knives sight unseen? I'm not a-hankering to make myself equals with tar and wool. I only took a notion to treat you white, and you suspicion me.”

Barclay's resentment produced the effect he desired. Cuff slowly drew from his pocket the old jack-knife, concealed within the grasp of his

large fist. The elder Snooks, in like manner, held out a hand tightly closed around a piece of cutlery lacking two rivets and one bone side-piece, and having a very feeble back-spring and a single pot-metal blade.

“Now, Seneca, take his knife in yer right hand and mine in yer left, and change 'em over fair and square.”

Seneca, with a gravity which did honor to the memory of the stoic whose name he wore, complied with his brother's orders. With a triumphant roll of his white eyeballs, Cuff received the broken-handled treasure, which, worthless as it looked, was of more value than that which Barclay got in exchange—a knife with only half a blade.

Barclay's dignity was outraged.

“Light out of here, you black thief, or I'll put a load of slugs in you.—Git!”

Cuff ran away, yawping derisively, pursued by Seneca's blackguard shouts of

“Nigger! nigger! pull the trigger!  
Cock the gun and shoot the nigger!”

Fate seemed adverse to Barclay and his brother. They extended their excursion to the river; thence climbed the hills to the Big Woods, and finally sauntered to the borders of the Tadmore estate. Sitting down to rest under the shadow of a great oak, the Emperor, Barclay re-

membered a speculation he had long desired to consummate at the expense of Thomas Tadmire, junior. This was of no less magnitude than the sale of the famous shooting-iron. Knowing that Tom was eager to possess the historic weapon, Barclay hoped to induce the boy to buy it for an amount of cash some twenty times its true value.

"Seneca," commanded the elder brother, using the time-honored prerogative of the first-born son, "Scud over to Tadmire's and tell Tom I want him. Tell him I'll sell my gun as cheap as dirt."

"What'r you goin' to take for it?"

Barclay grinned and winked. "You jist play into my hands, Seneca, and we kin cheat him out of his eyes. The gun ain't wuth shucks. I never hit nothin' with it in my life, except by accident. It ain't wuth old iron."

"I knowed it wasn't," said Seneca, gleefully. "But I'll stuff Tom and make him b'lieve it's the best gun in the world."

"Yes, stuff him; and, mind you, don't go back on anything I say. Help me bamboozle him, and I'll give you an even quarter of it."

"A quarter, Barclay, will you?"

"I swow I will; now skedaddle."

Seneca's feet took wings on which he flew to seek Tom. That ingenuous youth was catching beetles in the meadow. Seneca shouted "Hello!" Tom returned the same salute. The boys went towards each other and met to parley.

Seneca explained the nature of his mission, and the two trudged away to the woods, and found Barclay still seated under the oak, a king beside an Emperor.

"How are you, Tadmore?" asked the king, condescendingly.

"I'm all right. Seneca says you want to sell your gun."

"Did you say that, Sineca? I don't want to sell it. I'd ruther buy a gun or two than sell ary gun I've got."

"Have you got more than one? I never saw you carry any but this."

"I generally carry this, fer I'm attached to this gun. I know I use this gun too much fer its own good. A gun ort to rest, like a hoss. I'd ruther not sell any of my guns, but as I said to Sineca, says I, 'Ef Tom Tadmore wants that gun, he shall have it dirt cheap.' Didn't I tell you that, Sineca?"

"Yes; you said seein' it was him, you would let it go as cheap as old iron."

"Ef I said that, I won't go back on my word. But I do hate to part with gran'daddy's shooting-iron. It's been in the family so long. It's sich a good reliable family gun, too. Jist the thing fer a boy. Why, a child kin handle that gun and bring down whatever he aims at. Look'e here, now. Do you see that there leaf on that buckeye tree?"

Tom saw a good many leaves on the tree, but he was not sure whether he saw just that particular leaf which Barclay sighted, or not. Barclay did not wait for a definite answer but, raising the gun and cocking it, he pointed towards the thick foliage and fired. A heavy charge of shot went rattling among the greenery, and a shower of leaves came floating to the earth.

“There! Do you see that? Here’s the leaf I aimed at.” And he picked up an oak leaf. Seneca saw the mistake, and without Tom’s noticing the manœuvre, he thrust a buckeye leaf into his brother’s hand. Tom was so anxious to possess any sort of gun, that he was not critical. All that troubled him was the price. He was mightily pleased with the noise that Barclay’s gun made—and the smoke.

“What’s the lowest you will take for it?” was his eager question. Barclay exchanged sly winks with Seneca.

“What would you say, Sineca?”

“If it was mine,” said Seneca, meditating as large a sum as his imagination could easily conceive, “if it was mine I wouldn’t let it go for less than twelve dollars.”

Tom’s countenance fell. Barclay gave a long whistle. “You put it mighty cheap, Sineca, but I am willin’ to jist give it away to sich a friend as Mr. Tadmore.”

“We ain’t very good friends,” said Tom.

"You used to treat me real mean. Don't you know you tried to shoot me? But since we had that fight last Fourth of July, you've behaved pretty decent."

This speech took Barclay aback. He was losing ground, and made haste to recover his advantage.

"Do you know I've allus liked you sence that day. You're no coward, Tadmore. You jumped onto me like a gentleman. You've got good blood. I know I'm none of your equals, but Barclay Snooks is your friend in his fur down way, and if you ever have any fightin' to do that's beneath you he'll do it fer you, and be proud to do it. Have a cigar?"

"No, I thank you. I don't smoke."

"Well, you'll learn. Stick that in your vest-pocket and smoke it when you feel like it. That's a good cigar."

Tom hesitatingly received the proffered gift and put it into his vest pocket.

"That's a good cigar, sir. None better is made or sold. I allus use that cigar fer my own smokin'. It's a 'Cuban Beauty.' They come high, but a man must have fust class tobaccer. Come on, Sineca, hadn't we better be startin' back?"

"You didn't say how much you would take for the gun?" said Tom, betraying anxiety.

"I told you I was willin' to sell it fer next

to nothing. What do you say to eight dollars?"

"I'm afraid I can't raise that much. But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you six dollars, cash down, if you will come round by our house and get the money and leave the gun."

Barclay, with affected reluctance, agreed to this, and the contracting parties went towards Tom's house. The Snooks boys stopped out on the lawn, while their deluded victim ran to his room, and, emptying a toy safe, brought his hoard of coin in dollars, halves, dimes, nickels and cents. The entire sum amounted to five dollars and fifty-one cents.

"You owe me forty-nine cents," said Barclay, putting the cash into his pocket and handing the gun to Tom.

"I'll pay the balance as soon as I get the money," said Tom, joyfully. "Good-bye."

"Then the gun will be your'n," replied Barclay.

"We skinned him, didn't we?" whispered Seneca, snickering. "Let's git into the woods where we kin laugh."

"I thought I could take him in," was the remark of the dignified elder brother, walking away and rattling his wealth in his pocket.

"Now give me the dollar and a half you promised me."

"I didn't promise you no dollar and a half."



"You said if I helped you you would give me a quarter of what you got."

"I meant a quarter of a dollar, you idiot, not a quarter of the whole pile. He owes me forty-nine cents, and when you collect that I'll give you yer quarter. But don't git sassy, bub, or you shan't have a durn cent."

## XXX

### THE CAROL OF A MEADOW LARK

MAN seems to be by nature a shooting animal. Tom, having become the reckless possessor of a shot-gun, reverted to the savage state. Bang! Bang! Bang! He fired not only at rabbits, squirrels, quails and all other small game which cruel custom sacrifices to the wanton pleasure of the sportsman; he blazed away at fishes in the brook, innocent hop-toads, and even butterflies and "snake-feeders." Seldom indeed did his practice result in serious injury to the objects shot at. Whether his failure to hit the mark was owing to inaccuracy of aim, or to the perverseness of the gun, he never knew.

The young Nimrod noticed with perplexity that the unerring fire-arm, though discharged with every precaution, produced effects contrary to his intention and quite inexplicable by any rule of sportsmanship. Once, when he fired at a red squirrel not ten feet from the muzzle of his gun, Tom was astonished that bun ran up the tree chattering and barking in a manner unmistakably derisive, while Squire Hoyle's white cow received a shower of leaden rain in her surprised side.

Not unfrequently the capricious piece went off before the trigger was drawn; and it had an exasperating habit of snapping the cap without going off, when prompt action was essential. The moral character of the gun was very bad from long association with Barclay Snooks. Tom couldn't trust to its veracity in the least.

One day, a few weeks after Tom made his purchase, he started out very early in the morning to hunt in the Big Woods. He had been told that the best time to find squirrels is at early dawn, when they are seeking their breakfast, and while yet the leaves and grass remain moist with the vapors of night. Tom set the alarm clock of his will to arouse him at four, and he was up on time. Taking his precious gun (which he had named Snooksie) and a supply of powder and shot, he started out. The woods were very still and solemn, and the cool, sweet air of the June morning was delightful to breathe. Tom looked up at the majestic oaks, maples, elms, walnuts and beeches, which, like the huge columns of a Gothic temple, rose on every side and seemed to lift the sky upon arches of leafy boughs. For the first time in his life he was conscious of a sense of awe in the presence of those trees. They appeared to him intelligent things—sublime, dumb creatures with wise, great thoughts and virtues. Their lofty dignity and calm strength impressed him strangely. Many a little

bird flitted through the green solitude, and the bushes hid from sight many another that twittered or sang, but no game-bird was visible, and no game beast, however small. Tom's eyes, searching the branches of a lightning-stricken, top-broken linn, caught sight of something that was not agreeable to look at. A monstrous black-snake, with tail coiled around a dead limb, was swinging in the air, like a prodigious animated cork-screw, in irregular motion.

"What if that black-snake had dropped on me?" mused the hunter, peering around him with an uncomfortable suspicion that the trees were all harboring snakes just ready to fall. He immediately resolved to dispatch the reptile by venting upon it the contents of "Snooksie." Raising the death-dealing engine to his shoulder, he "took sight" at the dangling black-snake. He pulled the trigger, and "Snooksie" responded with thunder and the usual scatterment of ammunition. When the smoke cleared away, no snake was to be seen, either on the tree, or on the earth beneath, or in the heavens above. The subtle beast had vanished utterly.

Pondering on this extraordinary incident, Tom reloaded "Snooksie" and trudged forward, on slaughter bent. But luck was against him. After wandering for nearly two hours in the woods, he began to feel hungry, and concluded to return home. By climbing over a rail fence he

came into a meadow belonging to Squire Hoyle, through which he could take a well-known and favorite "short cut" to his father's farm. His spirits rose as he mounted the fence and surveyed the fresh beauty of the open field, which was much more cheerful than the shadowy forest, to the darkness of which the mysterious black-snake had added a hue of terror. Facing the morning sunshine, Tom jumped from the fence to the ground and began to whistle. With his gun upon his shoulder, shot-pouch and powder-flask hanging at his side, he started briskly to cross the field. Through blue grass and blooming clover, still sparkling with wasting diamonds of sunlit dew, the lad went whistling on his way. A delicious fragrance was shed from the honeyed blossoms of the field, which the wild bees were already robbing. The sky was deep blue and without a cloud.

After blowing a few merry notes from his puckered lips, Tom paused to take breath, and just at that instant the melodious music of a joyous bird came fluting to his ear; and gazing in the direction from which the sound proceeded, Tom beheld a lark poised on the topmost branch of a small sugar-tree that stood in the midst of the meadow. Tom hurriedly cocked his gun, and moved with stealthy paces towards the tree, keeping his eye upon the unsuspecting songster. One might fancy that the happy vocalist of the

treetop was melting his tremulous heart in morning praise and thanksgiving to the spirit of love and beauty. The ecstasy of the matin solo was not restrained when the crouching biped with the gun approached to within twenty feet of the tree, and raised the murderous tube to his shoulder. The bird seemed to notice Tom with friendly regard, and redoubled its ravishing efforts. Now the tiny singer stretched its grateful head towards the blue sky and warbled to God; anon, it peeped down to the green earth and caroled to Tom. The boy hears with his ear—faintly hears with his heart. A feeble compunction whispers “forbear,” but the hunter’s instinct, the hereditary barbarism surviving in his blood from ancient ancestors, prevails over the still small voice of gentleness within his breast. Bang! A puff of blue smoke, a whiff of viewless shot—the song is silenced forever. The stricken lark dropped fluttering through the leaves, and fell at the sportsman’s feet on the pitying grass. Tom threw down his gun, and stooped to pick up his game. As he reached towards it, the poor thing quivered with new terror and strove to fly as from a betraying foe recognized too late. But it could not rise from the grass. Tom held the dying creature tenderly in his hand—tenderly in that hand which had pulled the fatal trigger. How hot were the drops of bright red blood that fell like seals of

condemnation upon his naked feet. The little heart still beat—the slayer felt it pounding upon his conscience. Once the bird uttered a faint, sad chirping, as if to say: “Let me go, and I will sing, if I can.” Then the wings relaxed, the blood-stained victim trembled, gasped and died. Tom stood for a long time watching the lifeless lark as it lay in his hand. Selfishly, wantonly, cruelly, he had blown to destruction, song-bird and song,—sacred life—matchless music. Yes, he had shot the winged minstrel while it was in the very act of trying to delight him with its most enchanting note. The All-seeing Eye had witnessed the unforgivable deed. Not a sparrow falls to the ground uncared for by Him who made all things. How could Tom make peace with his own accusing conscience? Tears filled his eyes. Through those blessed drops of childish remorse, he tried to look to heaven for comfort; but the sky wore a frown, and the air whispered “for shame!” and the wild bees humming over the clover heads seemed buzzing to one another their condemnation and abhorrence. While Tom was suffering these pangs of soul, the insensate gun which lay near him was hateful to his eyes. He was so unreasonable as to hold the death-dealing instrument accountable for the evil he had wrought with it. For a moment he felt moved to break the odious thing in pieces. But reflecting that

"Snooksie" was not to blame, he picked up that unreliable servant, and, walking onward in a pensive mood, crossed the meadow, and, following a foot-path through his father's sugar-camp, was soon within call of home.

There stood in the edge of the grove a rude shed, which served as a shelter for the furnace and for a large wooden cistern used in the process of sugar-making. As Tom was passing this shed he was accosted by Barclay Snooks, who was lounging on a bench within the enclosure.

"Hold on a bit, pardner," said Barclay, "I was on the lookout fer you."

Tom obligingly checked his pace, turned from the path, and walked up to the sugar-house. Barclay insolently surveyed him from head to foot, and then again from foot to head, at the same time slowly sending from his nostrils a quantity of tobacco smoke. The paragon performed this wonderful feat self-approvingly, with the air of one to whom such pneumatic miracles were easy.

"How do you like the gun?"

Tom replied that it was a pretty good bird gun, and a tolerable snake gun, but not very reliable as a squirrel killer.

"You don't hold her right," said Barclay, rising from the bench. "Le'me show you how to handle her."

Tom, glad to ease his muscles, gave the weapon into the big boy's hand. Barclay begged



Tom just to let him load the bully old shooting-iron once more, in pure affection; and began to ram its long, black gullet half full of powder, tow and shot.

"It does me good to git holt of her oncet agin," half soliloquized Barclay. "I s'pose you've made up yer mind to keep her, Tadmore, now that you've given her a fair trial."

"Keep!" exclaimed Tom. "What do you mean? Of course I mean to keep the gun. Why not?"

"I let you have it on credit, you recollect," said Barclay, deliberately. "I'm not in any particular hurry about the money, but I do feel sorry on your account, bub, fer boys ort to be honest about their money matters."

"Why, Barclay, you know well enough that I paid you for the gun, all but the forty-nine cents that I paid to Seneca, who told me you sent him for it."

"Did Sineca tell you that? Somebody's got a bad memory, my son, either me er you. Have you any witness? It's a good idee to have yer witnesses nigh. I've got mine here behind the sugar-cistern. You kin come out, Sineca."

Very dramatic was the situation, when the guileless younger brother, emerging from the shadow of the cistern, confronted Master Tadmore.

"Now, it lays between you two," resumed

Barclay. "Here is brother Sineca, he kin speak for hisself."

Tom, in high excitement, appealed to the common witness. "Didn't I, Sineca? Didn't I pay Barclay five dollars and fifty-one cents, and afterwards give you forty-nine cents?"

Seneca glanced at Barclay who, fixing a cap on the gun, grinned and said:

"Tell the truth, Sineca, like a Snooks, and don't beat about the bush."

"I didn't know you ever clean gave up the gun, Barclay," was the deliberate falsehood of the hopeful Seneca. "He was to pay up the forty-nine cents."

"You lie! You both lie!" cried Tom, white with rage. "I did pay—you are thieves. Give back the gun!"

The loudness and fierceness of these exclamations were heard at the Tadmire mansion, not by its human inmates, but by Hugo, the magnificent English mastiff that Barclay was so desirous of killing. The excited animal, roused by Tom's voice, came bounding from his kennel, barking loud, and stormed towards the sugar-house.

Barclay in terror raised the gun to his shoulder, hurriedly aiming at the dog. Seneca screamed and mounted in a twinkling to the top of the shed. The dog was within a hundred feet of Barclay when that quaking youth pulled the trigger and—"Snooksie" exploded, flying to

flinders with a stunning report and a cloud of smoke that obscured the sun. The dog, frightened, turned a summerset in his sudden effort to stop running. Barclay sustained no greater injury than a scratched and blackened face, a much bruised shoulder, and the dislocation of two fingers. Bellowing with pain and fright, the bully fled, leaving Seneca solitary upon the roof of the shed.

Tom called the dog from pursuing Barclay, and, hastening homeward, he said to himself: "I'm glad Barclay's gun blowed up."

## XXXI

### THE UNION PICNIC

THE churches of Forest Glen held a Union Picnic, on spacious grounds including that corner of the Big Woods called Yellow Oaks, and the adjacent level pasture belonging to the Tadmore farm.

The clerk of the weather mixed up the elements, warm, cool, moist, dry, in accordance with his recipe for making heavenly June days in southern Ohio; and the result was perfection. Charley Blogson, one of the first to arrive on the picnic grounds, voiced the opinion of boydom when he said to Tom Tadmore and Sam Noggle, "It's a rip-snortin' fine morning!" to which Sam answered, "Awful nice!" Miss Belmont, also an early comer to the woodland heights, with her Sunday-school contingent, could not refrain from reciting the "memory gem":

"O Gift of God! O perfect day  
Whereon shall no man work, but play;  
Whereon it is enough for me,  
Not to be doing, but to be!"

Many of the public school-teachers who taught also in Sabbath-school or sang in church choirs,

were at the picnic. Conspicuous among the school ma'ams, Miss Crinkler, not the least nor the youngest member of the High School "faculty," tripped along skittishly beside Professor Ripantare, fanning him with a palm leaf fan and imposing upon him the custody of her gaudy parasol. The Professor had strained his principles by appearing at a function sustained by the clergy, for he made no bones of confiding to educated people that he was an agnostic, and he shocked Miss Crinkler by asking, in deep chest tones, if she had read Bob Ingersol's "The Mistakes of Moses" ?

Herr Von Schlag, notwithstanding the fact that he played the organ in the Unequivocal Church, also surprised certain gossipy folks by showing his bushy mane and big eye-glasses at a religious jubilation ; for he was known to sympathize with Ripantare's heresies, and both men were acknowledged pessimists.

Josephus Gadmeter failed not in his proverbial punctuality ; he pervaded the grove and patrolled the meadow, a self-constituted committee of the whole. Of course all the village pastors were there, Reverend Ennydox, Parson Jones, Preacher Brown and the rest. Besides these local ministers, the Reverend Ingot Bullion came from a neighboring town, with his ruddy wife and seven children. Everybody loved this rough and ready evangelist, on account of his genuine goodness

and absolute sincerity. He had an amusing way of referring to sects, by abbreviations, as though they were so many railroads. "I was raised," he would say, "among the U. B.'s, in Pennsylvania, but my father was an M. E., and one of my uncles an M. P. But I extend the right hand of fellowship to any preacher of the gospel. I exchanged pulpits last Sunday with a C. P., although you all know I'm an out and out B. G.—one of the Broadest Gauge."

It seemed as if everybody had been invited to the Union Picnic. Who would have believed that the neighborhood was so populous and the Sabbath-school so popular? No leading family within a circuit of five miles was unrepresented. The Smythes came out in full force, the Hoyles, the Atkinsons, the Bopps, the Culpeppers, the Gush girls, Amy and her sister,—everybody. And everybody was "having a real good time."

Somewhat aloof from the throng stood Mrs. Bogus and the Judge, under a spreading beech, upon the smooth bole of which their son Joey was carving the letters J. B. The ubiquitous Mr. Gadmeter spied the trio and rushed up to shake hands and to make them feel at home. Joey, sensitive to the push of some telepathic repulsion, saw the principal coming and fled, leaving the initials unfinished. The Judge received Josephus with cordiality, but the lady, who counted herself as the "four hundred" of

Forest Glen, put out a single finger, and, in a manner at once condescending and aristocratic, inquired,

“How is the school?”

What Mrs. Bogus meant as a refined snub, Josephus took as an invitation to familiarity; he squeezed the one finger assuringly and spoke in a glow of confidence.

“Joey is making magnificent progress, madam, in mental and in written; and he ranks number one in rules and principles.—That son of yours, Judge, is a prodigy; he has the brain of a young Webster, madam. I’m proud of your Joey—a model scholar—deportment 100; all industry, all character, a born medal-winner, you may say.”

“Joseph *is* a remarkable child,” murmured the mother, thawing perceptibly in the eyes. “I never knew him to do a wrong or ungentlemanly act.”

“Blood, ma’am, blood. The son of a gentleman always shows his good breeding.”

The Judge felt considerably relieved to see Dr. Blumas coming slowly towards the beech-tree. The doctor carried a big black cane, and his great burly head was bent forward abstractedly. A hearty salutation from the Judge, awakened him to things external. Mrs. Bogus beamed affability.

“We didn’t expect the pleasure of meeting *you* here.”

The doctor touched the brim of his soft felt hat, which was not new nor well-brushed, and as he did so the lady's critical eye took note that he had on two collars. There must be something very serious the matter, to bring about such an extreme state of absent-mindedness, thought Mrs. Bogus.

"It is almost by accident that I find myself here," explained the physician. "I suppose I moved automatically;—I thought I was going the other way, until I heard the shouting. I have just left the bedside of a very sick girl,—a very sick girl;—and I hope this noise won't distress her."

Many eager listeners had quietly gathered around the tree, but not near enough to the doctor to catch all his words. "How is she?" they asked of one another in suppressed voices. "How does he say she is?" The doctor's troubled eye, glancing around the circle of anxious faces, lighted up with a kindly parental sympathy, and he spoke in grave tones:

"The case is serious but not yet dangerous. We have not reached the crisis of the disease."

The deep silence in which all had harkened to these words was broken by Josephus Gadmeter, who, as if demanding official information for the public weal, bluntly inquired,

"What ails her? What's the matter with Hannah Tadmore?"



"Nervous prostration," answered Doctor Blumas, curtly. "Overtaxed brain—too little rest—too much study."

The principal felt morally bound to enter a sweeping protest against the medical man's hypothesis.

"Begging your pardon, I never knew an instance of overtaxed brain, in all my educational experience. No, sir! Bosh! Hard study brings good health; the harder the study the better the health! I know what I'm talking about—it's my business to know. The facts are against you, my dear doctor. Look at statistics!"

Judge Bogus stared upward as if the multitudinous leaves overhead were statistics, and the rest of the company blinked aloft to see what the Judge was looking at. The doctor poked the ground with his cane, and Mr. Gadmeter, waxing eloquent, and jabbing his forefinger at the rotund front of the Judge, argued on.

"Look at statistics! You dare not face cold statistics, Dr. Blumas. They knock you down. You are a physician—an M. D.—you have your degree and this community respects you. But we are discussing a question of pedagogics. Pedagogics. It is a psychic question, I admit, but a pedagogico-psychic not a therapeutico-psychic question.—It is not hard study, my friends, which destroys your children's healths; it isn't 'rithmetic, and grammar, and science, and

lit'ratoor, ruins these boys and girls, but it's dancing, and overeating, and oversleeping, and fashion, and frivolity, which uses up their bodies and their immortal souls.—I ask Reverend Ennydox if that's not so?—Nervous prostration! Nervous moonshine! I'm a practical educator—I have no patience with sentimental theories!”

“Thomas Gradgrind is not yet dead,” remarked Dr. Blumas aside to the Judge.

“How? What's that?” interposed Gadmeter.

“I say Thomas Gradgrind is not yet dead.”

“Gradgrind? Who's he?”

“I refer to a character in Dickens's *Hard Times*.”

“Eh? O yes. Fiction. I seldom read novels. Of course a man in my position must dip into those sort of books now and then, as a clergyman must visit the slums.” Gadmeter looked a-squint at Ennydox. “I pulled through a play or two of Shakespeare, in the translation.”

There was much laughing in the sleeve at Mr. Gadmeter's expense, and many wondered how it ever happened that the School Board came to elect such a man to fit the youth of Forest Glen for “the duties of this life and the joys of eternity.” Dr. Blumas strode away, chuckling, and the throng which had clustered around him to hear tidings of Hannah, had begun to scatter, when a rattle of buggy wheels was heard and

who should drive into the grove but Claude Rockingham, with Sadie Smythe by his side!

An urchin band of barbarians, intruding on the borders of Christendom, hailed this gay turnout with jeers and a salvo of clods.

"Swell head! Swell head!" bawled one of the heathen horde. "Puttin' on style!"

"Big bugs!" cried another. "Think they're the whole shootin' match!"

A lad belonging to Miss Crinkler's Bible class yelled, "Whip behind! Yer hoss is blind!" Claude, thus admonished, did "whip behind," but not quickly enough to sting with his keen lash the slim body of Squinty Runkle, who leapt nimbly from the very narrow and uncomfortable perch on which he had been hooking a ride. The waif took to his heels, Seneca Snooks and Cuff Chuck barking on his track, like mongrels chasing a scared kitten.

Squinty, eluding his pursuers, sought refuge in the camp of the civilized, where he flitted about among the bushes, an alien in a strange country. He could not classify himself either with the wolves or with the lambs.

Many efforts had been made by Miss Belmont and other missionaries, to lure the timorous little pagan to Sunday-school, but the only time he ever entered a church was on the memorable night when he brought the news that Noggle's house was "done gone." Once he told Tom that

he was afraid of the sound of church bells, and that on Sundays he hid in the hollow sycamore in the Big Woods. Three tickets were presented to Squinty, requesting his attendance at the picnic, and these he hoarded away with the programs and dead flowers he had picked up on the night of the commencement.

Being now driven within the picnic purlieus, he gradually mustered courage to slip unobserved to the very shadow of the lemonade barrel. Sam Noggle, in the act of dipping a tin-cup into the arctic sweets, felt a slight pulling at the skirts of his linen coat, and, turning around, saw the unclassified creature winking and grinning unspeakable gratification.

“Why, how d’ye do, Squinty?” said Sam, taking the boy’s hand, which was thin and limber, and shaking it cordially.

“I’m glad to see you enjoying yourself. Had any lemonade?”

“Gosh! it’s you!” said Squinty, still grinning, and gazing at Sam with foolish fondness.

“How have you been this long time?” inquired Sam, slightly embarrassed by the extravagant gladness of his idolatrous worshipper.

“Gosh! you’re here!”

These two exhaustive sentences were all that could be drawn from the laconic Runkle. But though he could not, or would not, converse, he was sociable to a fault, much of the time keep-

ing at Sam's heels, perfectly satisfied only to be near his protecting divinity.

Novel and astounding were the scenes and sounds of picnic revelry. Never had Squinty associated the idea of Sunday-school with sport. Here was a free show under the blue canopy. All sorts of merry games were going on. The air was filled with stimulating noises,—the knock-knock of croquet mallets, the thud of balls and bats, the cheerful buzz of chat among the men and women, the shouts and laughter of boys, the shrilling and singing of girls, the babble of babies, and the holiday flutter of green leaves to the dance music of June breezes. This Union Picnic was almost as amusing as a circus, and almost as confusing. It made a light head dizzy, to see such flocks and swarms of gaily clad girls, whirling grace-hoops, skipping ropes, sailing half way up to heaven in grape-vine swings.

The much-hazing big-boy world had not altogether excluded hapless Runkle from participation in its insidiously humorous sports. He had been initiated into the mystery of "Sockabout," "Hatball," and "Stink Baste." As "endman," he had been hurled senseless in playing "Crack the Whip." He had been crushed flat under the weight of a dozen boys playing "More-on-the-Saw-Mill."

Other and less "strenuous" games, in which the softer sex participated, he now witnessed for

the first time in his life, and some of these pastimes made him open his eyes and his mouth, very wide. The intricate mazes of "Drop the Handkerchief," and of "Hindmost of Three," puzzled his brain; he could hardly make head or tail of "King Charles's Bridge," though the game tickled him immensely. He wished himself in the train of King Charles that he too might "pass through" when they sang

"Open the Gates high as the Sky."

But to his unsophisticated instinct, the conduct of Sam, Tom and Charley, in the flirtatious game of "Here Come Three Dukes A-Roving," was inexplicable. He would not have believed, without the testimony of his own eyes, that Sam Noggle could ever act the "gal-boy"; but there Sam was, chanting in response to a bevy of giggling hoydens:

"O our good will is to marry!  
To marry! to marry!  
O our good will is to marry!  
With a ran-sa-tan-sa-tee!"

The Three Dukes, having each chosen a partner, proposed to substitute for the reckless pleasure of roving, the more reputable and sanctioned joys of Copenhagen.

Sam Noggle was, by acclamation, selected to enter the ring first. He paced around, with great good humor, playfully scrutinizing the faces

of the fair candidates for his favor, and now and then making a gesture, as if about to fix his choice, which at length fell upon Miss Crinkler. The moment that Mattie felt her hand softly stricken, she uttered a screech, and made such frightened haste to scramble under the rope, that Sam forgot to try to kiss her,—or seemed to forget,—until it was too late. When it came Tom's turn to try his luck, he felt the blood mounting to his face as he lightly touched the fingers of Melissa Brown. Melissa, blushing also, and letting go of the rope, fled, expecting to elude pursuit and return suddenly to the ring by the safest and surest route. But, in her excitement, she ran farther than she intended, and Tom overtook her just at the moment when, fluttering and half-exhausted, she tripped and fell, crying, "Don't kiss me! You shan't!"

"You think I'd go to the trouble of running after you for nothing?" said Tom, and putting his arms around Melissa's neck, he took what was his lawful due. For weeks that kiss tasted sweet on his lips.

The tide of picnic pleasure was at the flood, the universal appetite was impatient for the spreading of the lunch cloths on the sward, the lemonade was sinking low in the barrel and the mercury rising high in the thermometer,—when Mr. Barclay Snooks arrived at Yellow Oaks, accompanied by two ladies. One of these clung

to his left side, her jeweled fingers hooked firmly within the sharp angle which his gallant elbow made. This favored woman was Mrs. Rebecca Snooks, three weeks a bride. On the gentleman's right, lacking a pace or two of keeping abreast of the newly married pair, and appearing rather neglected and "out of sorts," walked Miss Rachel McStaver.

Barclay's "loud" wedding suit and his wife's gorgeous headgear, attracted much attention as the couple strolled awkwardly, but with ostentatious airs, from place to place. Their conspicuous vanity provoked much subdued merriment. Claude Rockingham conspired with Amy Gush and other mischievous spirits, to flatter the pair by fulsome compliments and congratulations. Barclay received the demonstrations as sincere and suitable—just what he expected; but the keen-minded Rebecca, conscious of being made ridiculous, drew her husband aside and proposed taking a loverly walk and talk. The pair presently strolled away to a quiet nook, sufficiently far from the "madding crowd," and both sat down on a convenient log.

"Don't you know they were making fools of us? Haven't you a mite of sense?"

"That's no way to talk to *me*, Beck! Do you s'pose caze I married you, you kin sass *me*, like you do Rach?"

"I'll talk to you jest what way I please, and



if you don't like it, you can lump it. Do you reckon I married you to be made a laughing stock of?"

"Beck, I've had about enough of your hen-peckin' remarks. This ain't the fust time you've gone too fur. I'm a-gettin' riled. Rach is right about it—you need takin' down a peg. You've had a low bringin' up. You hain't used to good society."

Mrs. Rebecca Snooks breathed hard. She bit her lip till the blood came.

"You fool! They were making fun of us I tell you! I heard that pink girl in the white dress giggling behind my back; and that dude that bowed almost to the ground whispered to somebody that my rings were copper! I heard him as plain as you hear me now!"

"Did he say they was copper?" snickered the fond young husband, taking his dear one's hand in his and feeling the rings, as if to test their genuineness by touch. "He was 'way off, Beck; they ain't copper, they's brass."

Rebecca's face turned ashen white. She looked up and faltered,

"Are you in earnest?"

"You kin bet your last hairpin."

"And you lied to me about your money!"

"It's consarned little money I ever had to lie about, by hokey. I hain't got money, but I've got brains, and I've got Beck."

Mrs. Rebecca Snooks, three weeks a bride, arose from her seat on the log, a "new woman." There was no trace of pallor on her cheek,—her countenance suggested not ashes but flame.

"What did you marry me for?"

"To wait on me," grunted Barclay.

"What if I won't do it?"

"I'll make you: I'll hoss-whip you." The new woman thought of her late promise to "love, honor and obey," and her soul rose insurgent.

"Barclay Snooks, git up!"

"Beck, don't take on. We're hooked together fer better or wuss. Of course I expect to be minded. It's natural. The man's the boss."

"Did you hear me say 'Git up'?" Barclay saw in his wife's eyes that which made him remember her sister's word, "Wolferine."

"Git up from that log!" A forced grin displayed Barclay's irregular tobacco-stained teeth to great disadvantage.

"This ain't no place for highsterics and tantrums."

"Git up, I say!" This third repetition of Becky's order was accompanied by a sounding slap on the cheek of her spouse. He muttered a coarse imprecation and pulled out a big pocket knife.

"Gi'me that!" demanded the vixen, snatching the knife from his grip, and flinging it away. Then, doubling up her fist, false-knuckled with

rings, she thrust it under her lord's nose, and uttered the contemptuous taunt,

"Smell your master!"

"O come, now, Beck,—simmer down! Wot'll folks say if they see you cuttin' up this a-way? I know I'm high tempered and that's why I'm fond of you.—We're jist alike."

"You coward! You bully! Wait on you, must I? Nary a time! D'you hear!—Git up!"

Barclay yielded to the force of circumstances over which he had rashly lost control. Hardly had he scrambled to his feet, when, to his complete discomfiture, Miss Rachel McStaver came towards him with mincing steps and simpering smiles.

"Had a little tiff?"

"Viper!" said Beck.

"Dovey dear!" said Rach.

"Take me home, Barclay," said Beck. Then she whispered, "Don't let on anything has happened."

Barclay was himself again. He crooked his elbow *à la mode*.

"I should think you might offer your sister-in-law your t'other arm, Barclay. Have you forgotten your manners, now you're spliced to Beck?"

"No, he hain't forgot his manners, Rach; it's you that don't know what's good form. You ought to have more sense, than to tag yourself

on to us. Nobody invited you. Didn't you ever hear that two is company, and three's a crowd?"

"Hold your clack, Beck. I was addressing my words to Mr. Snooks."

"Mr. Snooks and me is one."

"That's so," said Barclay. "You and Rach better kiss and make up. That's the way I'd fix it."

"I hope you're not going to take sides against your own wife," snapped Rebecca, reproachfully.

"Beck, what do you take me fer? When I sot my heart on you, I slung away every other woman. I am a Snooks. When a female marries into our family, they know they are marrying a gentleman. I haven't no objection to allow Rach to go with us in a mere sister-in-law way, but ef Mrs. Snooks says 'no,' then Miss McStaver has got to drop out of the game."

The committee on arrangements declared it was time for the picnickers to go home; the croquet wickets were pulled up, the grape-vine swings were abandoned to the play of the wind, the empty baskets were gathered together, the picnic revels were ended. Before sundown, a farm wagon, the great box-bed of which was half full of fragrant hay, had transported from the grove to the village the last party of youths and maidens, under the indulgent chaperonage of Miss Crinkler. These belated junketers, as soon

as the wagon started home, began singing the parody :

“Hold the forks, the knives are coming,  
Spoons are on the way;  
Slam the dishes on the table,—  
Pass the hash this way.”

On nearing the Tadmire homestead, which stood a few rods back from the road, the driver lifted his hand, and, at the signal, every voice was instantly stilled. Slowly the vehicle moved past the house, the pensive young folks on the lookout to catch a chance glimpse of some member of the well-beloved family ; but the only living creature in view was Hugo, the mastiff, sitting on his haunches, under the sassafras-tree, motionless as an image in bronze. Tom lingered in the woods alone long after the big jolt wagon had rumbled away, down the dusty road. Now when all were gone, when darkness and silence stole in upon the deserted scene of the day's merriment, a sense of strange melancholy, like a brooding cloud, came over the spirit of Hannah Tadmire's brother. The long shadows of the trees looked like dim paths leading to infinity. A lone cricket chirped a single thin shrill note in the grass. A light breeze ran whispering in the dusky foliage,—then suddenly ceased, and the hush which ensued was as the hush of death.

Slowly the boy left the woods and bent his steps homeward, treading the grass grown border

of the road. A few faint stars glimmered to his vision, like far off, tiny taper lights struggling to keep aflame. As faint and uncertain, twinkled now and again the pale ascending lamps of wandering fireflies, hovering over dank grasses of the ravine. The evening air, warm and languorous, carried heavy odors of woodbine and of rose. A tiger-moth flitted over Tom's head, as it were a humming-bird of the night, flying on muffled wings. From the depth of the woods, lately resounding with jubilant echoes, the tremulous wail of a screech owl came. The desolate cry stirred in Tom a vague sensation of terror; he quickened his pace, passed through the dooryard gate, hurried across the lawn and stepped onto the veranda. There he found Dr. Eldon sitting on a rustic bench, still as a ghost. It struck Tom as a thing unnatural and ominous that his uncle sat thus gloomily in the twilight, without pipe or cigar.

"How is sister?"

"No better, Tom."

The boy stood silent, choking down his heart. At length he said,

"I'd like to see her."

Eldon took his nephew's hand.

"Wait a day or two, then she may be well enough to see you. Not to-night.—Don't go near the room, now. Make no noise——"

"No, I won't, uncle.—Good-night."

"Good-night, my boy."

## XXXII

### KING'S EX

TWICE a day Doctor Blumas climbed the hill to the Tadmore house to visit Hannah; and while the genial practitioner noted her temperature, her variable respiration and feeble pulse, he cheered his patient with playful questions and droll jokes.

“You are looking peart this morning; not quite so head-achey, eh? That’s right, my lady! Take it easy; eat, drink and sleep;—sleep like Rip Van Winkle and the Seven Sleepers, and we’ll bring you out of the kinks before you know it!”

Hannah would respond to these playful sallies, with an evanescent smile, and her languid eyes would follow the doctor as he moved about the room with hands locked behind him, or sat penciling one prescription after another, the which he afterwards tore up and cast out of the window.

“All right! I’ll be up in the afternoon as usual.—Give her the powders every three hours, and the drops as directed.”

After this oft-repeated advice, the conscientious

physician would pull his slouch hat over his iron gray hair and plod his way towards the village, frowning upon the side-walk.

Scarcely an hour passed without bringing to the Tadmore threshold some friend or messenger, to inquire how the sick girl was. A basket filled with choice fruit and sealed glasses of dainty jelly came from the Hoyle farm and a bottle of fragrant blackberry cordial, from Hine's cellar. The recent graduates of the Forest Glen High School united in sending the fever-smitten girl a box of roses, with a card inscribed in the handwriting of Blanchie Bopp, "To our beloved class-mate, Hannah Tadmore."

Mrs. Bogus, in her new rockaway, was driven up the hill by a colored coachman, to make inquiries and suggest remedies; but the good lady stayed rather too long, talked too loud, and, in leaving, depressed Mrs. Tadmore by religiously remarking, "We must all come to it sooner or later. Dust thou art."

One hot afternoon, Charley Blogson trudged up the dusty road, bearing in his hand a tin fruit can filled and oversquirring with crawfishes which he had captured from their hiding in slippery crevices along the bed of Blue Clay Creek. "I thought, mebby," he said to Tom who met him on the lawn,— "I thought mebby your sister Han-ner would like to plague 'em." Tom appreciated his friend's notion of sensations subtly agreeable,



and was grateful. Hesitatingly he received the proffered gift, but explained apologetically: "She's not like us, Charley; she don't like to tease anybody or any animal." Tears stood in Blogson's big, blue eyes while he waited for Tom to carry the living testimonial to Mrs. Tadmire, who happened to come to the front door. Tom, on explaining Charley's errand, was surprised that his mother, instead of refusing, took the offering, and said earnestly, "Tell Charley it is very kind of him to think of sister, and thank him, Tom, in my name and in hers."

The following Sunday morning, while the church bells were ringing, Fritz Haberkorn, in a hesitating manner, approached Dr. Eldon who was meditatively strolling on the lawn. The old soldier held in his rough fingers a piece of brown paper in which lay a few succulent sprigs of sheep-sorrel and a bit of the inner bark of sassafras root.

"Py golly, you must exguse me.—Shquinty Roonkle kommt efery day mit shtuft like dees, und he say, 'Bleeze shall he geef it Tom's Schwester.' He dinkt dees schmect goot."

Uncle Felix took charge of Squinty's choice edibles, and Fritz clumped away to the barn, blowing his nose.

The sanitary precaution which forbade Tom to enter the apartment in which his sister lay, greatly grieved him and offended his boyish

sense of his importance to her and of her dependence on him. Though waved from the portals of the sick room more than once by Dr. Blumas, and though distinctly advised by Uncle Felix to keep away from the house, Tom would hang about the premises and look in wistfully through a window, or sit down upon a doorstep, in deep dejection. At length his longing for some interchange of sympathy with Hannah, through speech or sight, became so intense that he made a pathetic appeal to his mother.

“Mother, don’t she ask for me? The doctor needn’t know.—Let me go in, a little while, with you!”

The mother shook her head, and, kissing Tom, gently disengaged his hand from her sleeve to which it clung.

“Mayn’t I just peep in and see how she looks and throw her a kiss?”

“No, my dear, no; not now. She would not recognize you; she is out of her mind.”

Awed into silence, yet bitterly protesting in his heart, Tom turned away. The mild denial, reluctantly spoken, his sore heart construed as unreasonable and unkind. He had been humiliated by the doctor, rebuffed by Uncle Felix, and banished by his mother. How could he bear up under this weight of wretchedness! Not a soul understood his love and his grief. The “Grandfather’s Clock” which stood at the end

of the hall, had been stopped because its ticking troubled Hannah. It seemed to the boy as if time itself had stopped stock still.

Tom went up to his own room, hoping to find solace in his customary amusements. He had whiled away many a happy afternoon arranging and labeling the treasures of what he called his "Cabinet": a shelf of fossils; a collection of copper coins in a cigar box; an album of postage stamps; a stuffed moleskin; a thousand-legs in a bottle of alcohol; and a prodigious hornet's nest to which was attached a placard bearing the learned words, *Vespa Sylvestris*. Tom's eyes wandered from one curiosity to another, but he was unable to awaken in himself the faintest enthusiasm for his usual pursuits. He turned to his books, but not one of the familiar titles now appealed to his fancy. The spell of romance had lost its hold. Whether he loitered in the palace of Aladdin, or drifted down the Mississippi on a raft with Huck Finn, his thoughts were with Han,—all his heart was with his sister. It was of no use to read, or to try any kind of work or play, within doors. Tom descended the stairs to the lower hall, took his cap from its peg on the rack, tiptoed to the lawn, and thence stole away to the Big Woods. Long and far did he ramble, tramping up and down hill-slopes and through dingles where shrunken rivulets fed the roots of flowering weeds. He paused to amuse himself

with the ripe seed-pods of the wild touch-me-not, which, when slightly pressed, burst open, scattering a shower of tiny pellets upon the leaves of silvery green. The pastime was too trivial for Tom's serious mood, which seemed to reproach him for his idle self-indulgence at such a time. Wheresoever he strayed he could not escape morbid meditations. Under the shadow of oak and beech and elm he stood, oppressed by the ever-deepening umbra eclipsing his soul.

The burden of his solitary grief was greater than he could bear,—an overwhelming necessity for relief rushed in upon him, and he fell upon his knees on the rough ground and petitioned the Omnipotent in a burst of prayer: "O God! make her well; make sister Han well. You know how good and kind she is to everybody and how she loves thee, O God, and I love her. Make her better to-night; or let me be sick instead of Hannah, dear God, for I am a boy and I can bear the fever better than her; and O! I would rather die than have her be so sick, she is so good."

Tom rose from his supplication comforted, for he had laid his sorrow upon the bosom of Infinite Pity. Out of the gloom of his Gethsemane he came forth, and a new light shone around him. But what philosophy or religion can prevent the flow and ebb of young emotions or analyze the blended piety and perverseness which

confuse the conscience and thwart the will of the growing boy? That very evening, after Tom had gone to bed, there came into his mind an unruly impulse which soon took the form of definite, disobedient intention. "In the morning I will get up early and, without asking leave of Dr. Blumas or of any one, I will watch my chance and slip into sister's room and speak to her, or, at least, look upon her face." With this resolve in his heart, Tom fell into the sweet oblivion vouchsafed only to robust youth.

While he slept a deeper slumber was stealing over the senses of his sister. Soon after sunset, Uncle Felix, alarmed by signs that her vitality was failing fast, sent in haste for Dr. Blumas. The devoted physician, when he arrived and took Hannah's pale wrist between his thumb and finger-tips, had no cheery word to utter. In vain the mother scanned his countenance for the trace of an encouraging smile; the slow shake of his head spoke the language of defeated skill and love. Clinging, however, to the forlorn adage "While there is life there is hope," he counted the minutes, waiting possible good effects from stimulants administered as a last resort. The patient gave faint signs of animation, whereupon the doctor, in his kind, familiar manner, spoke her name. She looked at him in a half-conscious, bewildered way, and her lips moved murmuring inaudible words; and when he bent his head

close to her pillow, she asked, in a scared whisper: "Do you think I'll pass? I studied so hard." A tear stole down the old doctor's cheek. "She takes me for Gadmeter," he said; "poor child."

Again Hannah lapsed into lethargy, and the yearning watchers by her bedside all stood gazing upon her, in unavailing anguish. The ticking of the doctor's watch intruded upon the dumb stillness like a preternatural sound never heard before. Midnight came and the solemn tongue of a church bell, in a steeple far away, was heard slowly tolling the hour.—Doctor Blumas involuntarily lifted a finger, and a momentary shade crossed his face. An awful intuition drew the mother closer to the first-born child laboring now in the last feeble struggles to die. The father stood motionless, rigid with the paralysis of woe. Uncle Felix whispered aside to the doctor.

Should they rouse Tom and bring him downstairs? Ah! what would his presence avail for the departing soul or for his own bleeding heart? Spare him the bitter anguish. Let him sleep on until the morning.—But there is old Fritz, who, this night, has sat for six hours out on the dark veranda, his shaggy head bowed upon his hands,—call Fritz in.

So still did Hannah lie and so faintly did she breathe that not even Dr. Blumas could be cer-

tain whether she was sleeping or dying. Her uncle, with strokings womanly tender, wiped the gathering death dew from her forehead. The fondling touch, or some mysterious quickening of the habit of the brain, re-kindled consciousness. Her eyelids opened wearily and her lips gave feeble utterance to a few syllables,—something about “children” and “play.” Uncle Felix pieced out the meaning of the broken sentence. “She thinks of children playing on the lawn.” A faint flush overspread Hannah’s cheek, a spiritual light came into her eyes. Tremulously her right hand lifted, her fingers made the sign of the cross, and she gasped, “You can’t catch me—you can’t catch me now!—King’s Ex!—King’s Ex!”

Excused by the King of Kings,—Hannah had received everlasting immunity from pain and terror and tribulation. King’s Ex!—The dizzying game of life was ended. She had fallen at the feet of Divine Love, Which, heeding her tremulous appeal, lifted her and bore her Home.

Before sunrise of the following morning, Tom awoke, and, on the instant, remembered his fixed purpose. He sprang from bed, dressed quickly, descended the stairs with noiseless tread, and, skipping lightly out upon the lawn, culled a bunch of roses. “She likes these Celestials,” he said to himself; “I will fetch them to her for a surprise.” With the dewy offering in his hand he glided back to the house, which he entered in

breathless silence, and, as if by stealth, made his way to the forbidden sick room. The door was closed. The boy softly turned the knob and pushed forward into the chamber, feeling a mounting thrill of triumph. But the window shades were drawn down; there was hardly enough light to enable the eye to distinguish objects clearly. Tom paused in the middle of the room, and, arching a hand above his mouth, ventured the smothered question, "Han! are you awake?" She answered not, and her brother, after a little hesitation, approached nearer and nearer to the couch upon which she lay so strangely still. Once more he asked, in a stifled voice, but with fond eagerness, "Han! Sister Han!—are you awake?" Not a word, not a breath came to him in reply, and Tom thought, "She sleeps so soundly, she must be better, and that is why they have left her here alone." But why that white cloth over her face?—A sudden misgiving struck him to the heart,—the roses fell unheeded upon the floor; he was on his knees by the bedside and, with tremulous dread, he softly removed the coverlet from the pallid face, the stilled breast and folded hands. Dear, dearest one, there on her white finger, was the simple ring he had given her,—the ring she preferred to wear. Caressingly Tom put his hand upon that of his sister, but instantly recoiled. The appalling revelation came to him in a blind-



ing nash. Asleep? No, no, not sleeping! this was not sleep,—this is death! Pitiless God, deaf to prayer, had come in the night and taken away his sister's life. "Hannah! Hannah!" he moaned, sinking his face upon the cold bosom which could never more respond by a single heart-throb or one loving sigh.

## XXXIII

### TOM DISCOVERS NEW WORLDS

MORBID and unconsolable, Tom religiously strove to adjust himself to the conditions of his changed world, in a life the pleasures and pains of which could not be shared with his sister. He wandered lonely and heart-sore, like one in a vain search for lost joy. To him the roses of June seemed not to yield so sweet a fragrance as they used to exhale; the ripe dew-berries lacked a flavor remembered in those which melted upon his tongue a year ago, when Hannah walked the green lanes and wandered afield, with him. How desolate now appeared the play-house she had helped him contrive, in the vine-canopied nook they had named Fairy-land.

Summer, in dusty robes, paced the Ohio Valley, and drank away the waters until every brook was gone and the broad, deep river was shrunken to a narrow stream winding among bars of scorched sand. The yellow feathers of the golden-rod faded to flaxen plumes; the floral crown of the hardy iron-weed lost its purple glory; the field-thistle sent forth a

thousand tiny parachutes to wander in upper air; September, October, November, came and lingered and passed; Thanksgiving Day was over, and Christmas was not far off—Merry Christmas, the Love Feast of the World.

“Mother, it will not seem like holidays this year. I couldn’t bear to trim a Christmas tree, or to light the candles, or to start her music-box a-going,—as she always did, you know.—I can’t help thinking she has only gone away for a while on a visit, like you went to Los Angeles, and that she will come home by and by, and tell us about where she has been.”

“Yes, my dear; I feel as you do; it is hard to reconcile ourselves to God’s will.”

Tom, sitting down on a low stool at his mother’s feet, looked wistfully into her face:

“We are more alike than I thought, mother. Do you kind of feel that maybe she is homesick there, and wants us just as much as we want her?”

The mother, though herself unreconciled, yearned to pour into her son’s heart the balm of resignation. It gave her comfort to repeat the sublime assurances of the Book:

“God is Love.—God is Love, and sister is happy in heaven.”

Tom heard in silence, fingering the needle-work which lay neglected in his mother’s lap. After a while, he asked,

“Does the Bible tell anything much about heaven?”

“Yes. The Bible says, ‘Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.’”

“I’d like to hear that again,” said Tom, looking up; and Mrs. Tadmire repeated the passage. Tom listened, nodding his head reflectively.

“I wonder what He has prepared for Hannie?—I s’pose the Bible’s true, but I believe you *can* see and hear angels, once in a long while.—I saw sister up in heaven.”

“My son!”

“I did! I saw her in the sky,—in a starry part of the sky,—she was white as snow, and I saw her crown, but I couldn’t make out her wings. She *was* happy, and I almost heard her say so, in a dim far-away voice, a million miles away.—Sometimes on an awful still day, I hear angel music,—it sounds like a flute or more like a violin playing a sad tune on the other side of the river.”

“This is imagination, Tom,” the mother replied, mournfully.

“Is it? how do you know? Have you got it too? Can you hear the angel music? How do you tell when it is imagination and when it is a mystery?—Mother, don’t you recollect the tex’

that the preacher read at the funeral, about the last trumpet and the dead shall rise up?—He said it was a mystery.—Do you know *that* verse by heart?”

Mrs. Tadmore slowly enunciated the solemn words: “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

“That’s not imagination, mother,—that’s in the Bible. If the dead can hear the last trumpet, why can’t I hear the angel music? It don’t come often.—I wish God would let Hannah come down sometimes, don’t you?”

A tear-drop from the mother’s eye fell upon Tom’s uplifted face.

“She would like to come,” continued the boy, with simplicity. “Hannah won’t forget us.—Why, nobody forgets her, in church, or at school, or anywhere. They keep flowers on the desk that used to be hers.”

“Yes, Tom, every one loved her. Your father and I went to the cemetery to-day, and when we came within sight of our lot, and were going down along the path through the evergreens, we noticed some one standing by sister’s grave; it was that foolish, forlorn creature you call Squinty.”

“What!” exclaimed Tom, with a cry-and-laugh look of commiseration. “Squinty Runkle? What did he say?”

“Quite alone he stood there in rags, and with naked feet, and the snow was beginning to fall. When he saw us, he hurried away.”

“That’s what Squinty most generally always does,—runs away.”

“We ought to do something for him, Tom; if you and Uncle Felix can manage to catch him, we may, at least, fit him out with good shoes and a warm coat.”

“That’s a grand idea!” cried Tom, rising from the stool. “We’ll dress him up fine and stuff him with roast turkey and plum puddin’, and then we’ll all pitch in and save his soul.”

His mother’s philanthropic suggestion turned Tom’s mind upon ways and means of capturing the object of his deep designs, and the course decided upon was to entice Squinty into the Tadmore mansion, on Christmas Eve, and then, as it were, to spring the trap of benevolence upon him. Fritz Haberkorn, being in the secret, insisted on procuring a Christmas tree. Knowing of a certain gnarly elm which stood on the bank of Blue Clay Creek and which bore on its limbs many straggling bunches of mistletoe, Fritz, accompanied by Tom, went, with ax and handsaw, to commit sanctionable robbery. He found the elm, climbed its rough trunk, and succeeded in

cutting off a bough which nature had lavishly adorned with emerald leaves and waxen pearls.

On the way homeward, as Tom and Fritz were passing a ramshackle house, they caught sight of a person who, bending under the weight of a great basket filled with dirty linen, looked like Christian bearing the bundle of sins. Tom quickly recognized one of his oldest acquaintances.

“Wie geht’s, Barclay? How does your corporosity seem to sagatiate?”

Barclay set his burden down upon a stump, and regarded his questioner with a supercilious stare.

“What you carrying in that basket?” asked Tom.

“Where did you git yer manners, young man? When I was a kid of your size, I tuk off my hat when I met a gentleman.”

“Oh pshaw, now, Barclay, don’t get mad at me. How are you getting along?” Before Barclay could reply, a voice of shrill and angry impatience was heard calling from the porch of the shanty:

“Hurry up with them clothes, you lazy hulk!”

Barclay muttered a vulgar imprecation, cast a hang-dog look of chagrin at Tom, and, lifting the basket to his shoulders, sulkily obeyed the imperious order of his dear Rebecca.

The bough of elm, which nature had bedecked in holiday green, was carried home and set up in the parlor where, in due time, it was mysteriously laden by Santa Claus with glittering tokens from that good-giver's magic sleigh. A few of Tom's special friends shared in the Christmas merry-making. The party would not have been complete without Sam Noggle, by whose persuasion, and in whose company, Squinty Runkle was induced to enter the house and witness the festal show.

Squinty was abashed when ushered into the brilliantly lighted drawing-room, but seeing kind faces only, and hearing only gentle and sympathetic voices, he soon felt that he was among friends and had nothing to fear. While he sat gazing upon the beautiful objects around him, and listening to the medley of happy voices, he was not aware that Mr. and Mrs. Tadmore were plotting to retain him permanently under their protecting roof. Their plans were subsequently carried into effect: Squinty Runkle was clothed, fed, and put to school. Moreover, he was installed as first assistant-general to Fritz Haberkorn.

Tom, by his parents' permission, had invited Sam Noggle to stay all night with him, the intimacy of the boys having greatly increased since their perilous adventure on the river. Accordingly, after the other guests had gone home, the young cronies went up to Tom's bedroom,



feeling very jolly and altogether certain that life is worth living.

While Tom slowly drew off his coat,—his first move in the process of getting ready for bed,—Sam took a look at the curiosities.

“V-e-s-p-a, vespa,” he began to spell aloud,—“s-y-l—what’s this, Tom? I can’t make out the last letters.”

“Vespa Sylvestris; that’s latin. It means Hornet’s Nest.”

“Then you ort to label it Hornet’s Nest.”

“You oughtn’t to say ‘ort,’ Sam; you ort to say ‘ought.’”

“Ort to say ‘ought,’ ort I?” laughed Sam. “What ought you ort to say?”

“I ort to ought to say, ‘excuse me for correcting your mistake.’ You ought to ort to punch my head for my bad manners.—Don’t you want that centipede?—Just put the bottle in your pocket while you think of it.—You may have that old moleskin, too.—Maybe you are a philopelist, if that’s what you call it;—I’d just as lief you took that album of stamps along,—I don’t want it any more.”

Sam, in silent disgust, viewing the ugly “thousand-legs,” and the decayed moleskin, answered politely, “I haven’t got any place to keep curiosities.—Anyhow, you’ll want ’em back before long.”

“No; I hate the sight of them, Sam. I’ve

quit the business. I'd sell my old mikerscope there for half what I ask for it.—I don't care for zoology like I used to.—I haven't told Uncle Felix, though, for he'll be sorry I've gone back on Natural History. But I have. You couldn't hire me to stick a pin through a butterfly or a beetle. No, I'm not goin' to be a naturalist."

"What *are* you goin' to be?" asked Sam, sitting down to untie his shoestrings.

"I don't hardly know. I'll travel, maybe. I might act,—Professor Ripantare says I have dramatic genus.—Oratory suits me pretty well, but I don't know which is most eloquent, the pulpit or the bar.—I'd like to be a reformer."

"That wouldn't suit me!" interrupted Sam, kicking off one of his shoes. "I'll tell you what my idee is. I'm bound to be one of these here men that makes things hum,—a boss that people can't help but mind; and I'll stand by the people and run politics and railroads and everything as it ort to be run. I'll tear down everything that is wrong and help on everything right. I won't let nobody do nothing mean, or impose on anybody, or sell any cussed liquor, when I'm boss."

"I guess," said Tom, approvingly, "I guess you mean you want to be a reformer."

"Don't care what you call me," answered Sam, jumping up and walking about the room. "I'll make things git.—I want to go ahead and *do*



GRAPPLING EACH OTHER IN A ROUGH-AND-TUMBLE WRESTLING BOUT.



something,—find the north pole or smash the Turks.—Sometimes I just ache to be a general and lead a big army of brave soldiers,—strong and brave, but all good,—good and kind, Tom, as your mother,—and every man ready to do what I say,—and I'll march with cannons and swords, from one end of the world to the other, and set things right!—But first of all I must git rich,—I'll need piles and piles of money."

After this burst of confidence, Sam sat down again upon the edge of the bed and listened to Tom, who, while mechanically taking off his vest and trousers, gave tongue to his flighty meditations.

"I don't care much about getting rich, nor being a mighty boss, nor a fighter.—I'll tell you what I've made up my mind to be, Sam, if I live. I'd like to make up books that people would read, and keep on reading after you was dead; books that will make 'em feel sort of shivery happy all over, and sad too, mixed up with thinking and laughing and crying. I've read books like that. Or I'd like to paint splendid pictures that when you look at them you can't ever go away, and when you *do*, the picture comes along, and you can see it with your eyes shut, like you see angels when you dream. Or maybe I'll be a wonderful musician, that can play on all kinds of harps and flutes and pianos and organs, and can play so sweet, or so lovely, or so every wonderful way,

that when you listen you are all vanished away and turned into something else.”

“ All right, Tom ! let’s do it !—”

The boys shook hands quite solemnly, but a sense of humor quickly checked further sentimental demonstration and prompted them to ratify this agreement by grappling each other in a rough-and-tumble wrestling bout, after which they rolled into bed and, in less than no time, sank into deep slumber. They slept to awaken to the light of Christmas morning and to the renewed “ gladness of living,” which is the heritage of boyhood.

“ To be ! to live !  
What being, what living,  
What largess of living  
The blood of the boy can give ! ”

As the months went by, Thomas Tadmore increased in stature and in understanding. His intellectual horizon widened as he rose to higher moral and spiritual levels. The habit of reading grew upon him, and became a source of infinite pleasure. Often he would go to the Big Woods and, sitting under the “ Emperor,” would pore upon the printed page. It chanced, one day, that he carried a magical volume to his favorite haunt, and there, under the greenwood tree, he was captured, engrossed, enchanted, by the witchery of “ Midsummer Night’s Dream.”

Never until that rapturous day had he felt the complete power and blissfulness of the poetic mood. Tom walked homeward, wrapt in a rosy-golden mist of imagination. Meeting his mother in the flower garden, he told her he had changed his intentions in regard to a vocation in life.

“I do not mean to be an artist, or a musician, or a novelist, mother; I have decided to be a poet, like Shakespeare.”

“Very well, my dear; I have no objection.”

THE END









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