ALGER HORATIO JR.

FRANK'S CAMPAIGN; OR, THE FARM AND THE CAMP

Horatio Alger
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Frank's Campaign; Or, The Farm and the Camp:

Содержание

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CHAPTER I. THE WAR MEETING

The Town Hall in Rossville stands on a moderate elevation overlooking the principal street. It is generally open only when a meeting has been called by the Selectmen to transact town business, or occasionally in the evening when a lecture on temperance or a political address is to be delivered. Rossville is not large enough to sustain a course of lyceum lectures, and the townspeople are obliged to depend for intellectual nutriment upon such chance occasions as these. The majority of the inhabitants being engaged in agricultural pursuits, the population is somewhat scattered, and the houses, with the exception of a few grouped around the stores, stand at respectable distances, each encamped on a farm of its own.

One Wednesday afternoon, toward the close of September, 1862, a group of men and boys might have been seen standing on the steps and in the entry of the Town House. Why they had met will best appear from a large placard, which had been posted up on barns and fences and inside the village store and postoffice.

It ran as follows:

WAR MEETING!

The citizens of Rossville are invited to meet at the Town Hall, on Wednesday, September 24, at 3 P. M. to decide what measures shall be taken toward raising the town's quota of twenty-five men, under the recent call of the President of the United States. All patriotic citizens, who are in favor of sustaining the free institutions transmitted to us by our fathers, are urgently invited to be present.

The Hon. Solomon Stoddard is expected to address the meeting.

Come one, come all.

At the appointed hour one hundred and fifty men had assembled in the hall. They stood in groups, discussing the recent call and the general management of the war with that spirit of independent criticism which so eminently characterizes the little democracies which make up our New England States.

"The whole thing has been mismanaged from the first," remarked a sapient-looking man with a gaunt, cadaverous face, addressing two listeners. "The Administration is corrupt; our generals are either incompetent or purposely inefficient. We haven't got an officer that can hold a candle to General Lee. Abraham Lincoln has called for six hundred thousand men. What'll he do with 'em when he gets 'em? Just nothing at all. They'll melt away like snow, and then he'll call for more men. Give me a third of six hundred thousand, and I'll walk into

Richmond in less'n thirty days."

A quiet smile played over the face of one of the listeners. With a slight shade of irony in his voice he said, "If such are your convictions, Mr. Holman, I think it a great pity that you are not in the service. We need those who have clear views of what is required in the present emergency. Don't you intend to volunteer?"

"I!" exclaimed the other with lofty scorn. "No, sir; I wash my hands of the whole matter. I ain't clear about the justice of warring upon our erring brethren at all. I have no doubt they would be inclined to accept overtures of peace if accompanied with suitable concessions. Still, if war must be waged, I believe I could manage matters infinitely better than Lincoln and his cabinet have done."

"Wouldn't it be well to give them the benefit of your ideas on the subject?" suggested the other quietly.

"Ahem!" said Mr. Holman, a little suspiciously.

"What do you mean, Mr. Frost?"

"Only this, that if, like you, I had a definite scheme, which I thought likely to terminate the war, I should feel it my duty to communicate it to the proper authorities, that they might take it into consideration."

"It wouldn't do any good," returned Holman, still a little suspicious that he was quietly laughed at. "They're too set in their own ways to be changed."

At this moment there was a sharp rap on the table, and a voice

was heard, saying, “The meeting will please come to order.”

The buzz of voices died away; and all eyes were turned toward the speaker’s stand.

“It will be necessary to select a chairman to preside over your deliberations,” was next heard. “Will any one nominate?”

“I nominate Doctor Plunkett,” came from a man in the corner.

The motion was seconded, and a show of hands resulted in favor of the nominee.

A gentlemanly-looking man with a pleasant face advanced to the speaker’s stand, and with a bow made a few remarks to this effect:

“Fellow citizens: This is new business to me, as you are doubtless aware. My professional engagements have not often allowed me to take part in the meetings which from time to time you have held in this hall. On the present occasion, however, I felt it to be my duty, and the duty of every loyal citizen, to show by his presence how heartily he approves the object which has called us together. The same consideration will not suffer me to decline the unexpected responsibility which you have devolved upon me. Before proceeding farther, I would suggest that a clerk will be needed to complete the organization.”

A young man was nominated and elected without opposition.

Doctor Plunkett again addressed the meeting: “It is hardly necessary,” he said, “to remind you of the object which has brought us together. Our forces in the field need replenishing. The Rebellion has assumed more formidable proportions than

we anticipated. It is quite clear that we cannot put it down with one hand. We shall need both. Impressed with this conviction, President Lincoln has made an extraordinary levy upon the country. He feels that it is desirable to put down the Rebellion as speedily as possible, and not suffer it to drag through a series of years. But he cannot work single-handed. The loyal States must give their hearty cooperation. Our State, though inferior in extent and population to some others, has not fallen behind in loyal devotion. Nor, I believe, will Rossville be found wanting in this emergency. Twenty-five men have been called for. How shall we get them? This is the question which we are called upon to consider. I had hoped the Honorable Solomon Stoddard would be here to address you; but I regret to learn that a temporary illness will prevent his doing so. I trust that those present will not be backward in expressing their opinions."

Mr. Holman was already on his feet. His speech consisted of disconnected remarks on the general conduct of the war, mingled with severe denunciation of the Administration.

He had spoken for fifteen minutes in this strain, when the chairman interfered–

"Your remarks are out of order, Mr. Holman. They are entirely irrelevant to the question."

Holman wiped his cadaverous features with a red silk pocket-handkerchief, and inquired, sarcastically, "Am I to understand that freedom of speech is interdicted in this hall?"

"Freedom of speech is in order," said the chairman calmly,

"provided the speaker confines himself to the question under discussion. You have spoken fifteen minutes without once touching it."

"I suppose you want me to praise the Administration," said Holman, evidently thinking that he had demolished the chairman. He looked around to observe what effect his shot had produced.

"That would be equally out of order," ruled the presiding officer. "We have not assembled to praise or to censure the Administration, but to consider in what manner we shall go to work to raise our quota."

Holman sat down with the air of a martyr.

Mr. Frost rose next. It is unnecessary to report his speech. It was plain, practical, and to the point. He recommended that the town appropriate a certain sum as bounty money to volunteers. Other towns had done so, and he thought with good reason. It would undoubtedly draw in recruits more rapidly.

A short, stout, red-faced man, wearing gold spectacles, rose hastily.

"Mr. Chairman," he commenced, "I oppose that suggestion. I think it calculated to work serious mischief. Do our young men need to be hired to fight for their country? I suppose that is what you call patriotism. For my part, I trust the town will have too much good sense to agree to any such proposition. The consequence of it would be to plunge us into debt, and increase our taxes to a formidable amount."

It may be remarked that Squire Haynes, the speaker, was the wealthiest man in town, and, of course, would be considerably affected by increased taxation. Even now he never paid his annual tax-bill without an inward groan, feeling that it was so much deducted from the sum total of his property.

Mr. Frost remained standing while Squire Haynes was speaking, and at the close continued his speech:

"Squire Haynes objects that my proposition, if adopted, will make our taxes heavier. I grant it: but how can we expect to carry on this gigantic war without personal sacrifices? If they only come in the form of money, we may account ourselves fortunate. I take it for granted that there is not a man here present who does not approve the present war—who does not feel that we are waging it for good and sufficient reasons."

Here Mr. Holman moved uneasily in his seat, and seemed on the point of interrupting the speaker, but for some reason forbore.

"Such being the case, we cannot but feel that the burden ought to fall upon the entire community, and not wholly upon any particular portion. The heaviest sacrifices must undoubtedly be made by those who leave their homes and peril life and limb on the battlefield. When I propose that you should lighten that sacrifice so far as it lies in your power, by voting them a bounty, it is because I consider that money will compensate them for the privations they must encounter and the perils they will incur. For that, they must look to the satisfaction that will arise from the

feeling that they have responded to their country's call, and done something to save from ruin the institutions which our fathers transmitted as a sacred trust to their descendants. Money cannot pay for loss of life or limb. But some of them leave families behind. It is not right that these families should suffer because the fathers have devoted themselves to the sacred cause of liberty. When our soldiers go forth, enable them to feel that their wives and children shall not lack for the necessaries of life. The least that those who are privileged to stay at home can do is to tax their purses for this end."

"Mr. Chairman," said Squire Haynes sarcastically, "I infer that the last speaker is intending to enlist."

Mr. Frost's face flushed at this insinuation.

"Squire Haynes chooses to impute to me interested motives. I need enter into no defense before an audience to whom I am well known. I will only inquire whether interested motives have nothing to do with his opposition to voting bounties to our soldiers?"

This was such a palpable hit that Squire Haynes winced under it, and his red face turned redder as he saw the smiles of those about him.

"Impudent puppy!" he muttered to himself; "he seems to forget that I have a mortgage of eight hundred dollars on his farm. When the time comes to foreclose it, I will show him no mercy. I'll sell him out, root and branch!"

Mr. Frost could not read the thoughts that were passing

through the mind of his creditor. They might have given him a feeling of uneasiness, but would not in the least have influenced his action. He was a man loyal to his own convictions of duty, and no apprehension of personal loss would have prevented his speaking in accordance with what he felt to be right.

The considerations which had been urged were so reasonable that the voters present, with very little opposition, voted to pay one hundred and fifty dollars to each one who was willing to enlist as one of the town's quota. A list was at once opened, and after the close of the meeting four young men came forward and put down their names, amid the applause of the assembly.

"I wanted to do it before," said John Drake, one of the number, to Mr. Frost, "but I've got a wife and two little children dependent upon me for support. I couldn't possibly support them out of my thirteen dollars a month, even with the State aid. But your motion has decided me. I could do better by staying at home, even with that; but that isn't the question. I want to help my country in this hour of her need; and now that my mind is at ease about my family, I shall cheerfully enter the service."

"And I know of no one who will make a better soldier!" said Mr. Frost heartily.

CHAPTER II. THE PRIZE

A few rods distant from the Town Hall, but on the opposite side of the street, stood the Rossville Academy. It had been for some years under the charge of James Rathburn, A. M., a thorough scholar and a skilful teacher. A large part of his success was due to his ability in making the ordinary lessons of the schoolroom interesting to his scholars.

Some forty students attended the academy, mostly from the town of Rossville. Mr. Rathburn, however, received a few boarders into his family.

There were three classes in the Latin language; but the majority of those who had taken it up stopped short before they had gone beyond the Latin Reader. One class, however, had commenced reading the Aeneid of Virgil, and was intending to pursue the full course of preparation for college; though in regard to one member of the class there was some doubt whether he would be able to enter college. As this boy is to be our hero we will take a closer look at him.

Frank Frost is at this time in his sixteenth year. He is about the medium size, compactly made, and the healthful color in his cheeks is good evidence that he is not pursuing his studies at the expense of his health. He has dark chestnut hair, with a slight wave, and is altogether a fine-looking boy.

At a desk behind him sits John Haynes, the son of Squire

Haynes, introduced in our last chapter. He is nearly two years older than Frank, and about as opposite to him in personal appearance as can well be imagined. He has a thin face, very black hair is tall of his age, and already beginning to feel himself a young man. His manner is full of pretension. He never forgets that his father is the richest man in town, and can afford to give him advantages superior to those possessed by his schoolfellows. He has a moderate share of ability but is disinclined to work hard. His affectation of Superiority makes him as unpopular among his schoolfellows as Frank is popular.

These two boys, together with Henry Tufts, constitute the preparatory class of Rossville Academy. Henry is mild in his manners, and a respectable student, but possesses no positive character. He comes from a town ten miles distant, and boards with the principal. Frank, though the youngest of the three, excels the other two in scholarship. But there is some doubt whether he will be able to go to college. His father is in moderate circumstances, deriving a comfortable subsistence from a small farm, but is able to lay by a very small surplus every year, and this he feels it necessary to hold in reserve for the liquidation of the mortgage held by Squire Haynes. Frank's chance of attaining what he covets-a college education-seems small; but he is resolved at least to prepare for college, feeling that even this will constitute a very respectable education.

The reader is introduced to the main schoolroom of the Rossville Academy on the morning of the day of which the war

meeting takes place.

At nine o'clock the bell rang, and the scholars took their seats. After the preliminary devotional exercise, Mr. Rathburn, instead of calling up the first class at once, paused a moment, and spoke as follows:

"Scholars, I need not remind you that on the first day of the term, with the design of encouraging you to aim at improvement in English composition, I offered two prizes-one for the best essay written by a boy over fourteen years of age; the other for the best composition by any one under that age. It gives me pleasure to state that in most of those submitted to me I recognize merit, and I should be glad if it were in my power to give three times as many prizes. Those of you, however, who are unsuccessful will feel repaid by the benefit you have yourselves derived from the efforts you have made for another end."

During this address, John Haynes looked about him with an air of complacency and importance. He felt little doubt that his own essay on the "Military Genius of Napoleon" would win the prize. He did not so much care for this, except for the credit it would give him. But his father, who was ambitious for him, had promised him twenty-five dollars if he succeeded, and he had already appropriated this sum in imagination. He had determined to invest it in a handsome boat which he had seen for sale in Boston on his last visit to that city.

"After careful consideration," continued the teacher, "I have decided that the prize should be adjudged to an essay entitled

'The Duties of Boys on the Present National Crisis,' written by Frank Frost."

There was a general clapping of hands at this announcement. Frank was a general favorite, and even his disappointed rivals felt a degree of satisfaction in feeling that he had obtained the prize.

There was one exception, however. John Haynes turned pale, and then red, with anger and vexation. He scowled darkly while the rest of the boys were applauding, and persuaded himself that he was the victim of a great piece of injustice.

Frank's face flushed with pleasure, and his eyes danced with delight. He had made a great effort to succeed, and he knew that at home they would be very happy to hear that the prize had been awarded to him.

"Frank Frost will come forward," said Mr. Rathburn.

Frank left his seat, and advanced modestly. Mr. Rathburn placed in his hand a neat edition of Whittier's Poem's in blue and gold.

"Let this serve as an incentive to renewed effort," he said.

The second prize was awarded to one of the girls. As she has no part in our story, we need say nothing more on this point.

At recess, Frank's desk was surrounded by his schoolmates, who were desirous of examining the prize volumes. All expressed hearty good-will, congratulating him on his success, with the exception of John Haynes.

"You seem mighty proud of your books, Frank Frost," said he with a sneer. "We all know that you're old Rathburn's favorite.

It didn't make much difference what you wrote, as long as you were sure of the prize."

"For shame, John Haynes!" exclaimed little Harvey Grover impetuously. "You only say that because you wanted the prize yourself, and you're disappointed."

"Disappointed!" retorted John scornfully. "I don't want any of old Rathburn's sixpenny books. I can buy as many as I please. If he'd given 'em to me, I should have asked him to keep 'em for those who needed 'em more."

Frank was justly indignant at the unfriendly course which John chose to pursue, but feeling that it proceeded from disappointed rivalry, he wisely said nothing to increase his exasperation. He put the two books carefully away in his desk, and settled himself quietly to his day's lessons.

It was not until evening that John and his father met. Both had been chafed—the first by his disappointment, the second by the failure of his effort to prevent the town's voting bounties to volunteers. In particular he was incensed with Mr. Frost, for his imputation of interested motives, although it was only in return for a similar imputation brought against himself.

"Well, father, I didn't get the prize," commenced John, in a discontented voice.

"So much the worse for you," said his father coldly. "You might have gained it if you had made an effort."

"No, I couldn't. Rathburn was sure to give it to his favorite."

"And who is his favorite?" questioned Squire Haynes, not yet

siding with his son.

"Frank Frost, to be sure."

"Frank Frost!" repeated the squire, rapidly wheeling round to his son's view of the matter. His dislike of the father was so great that it readily included the son. "What makes you think he is the teacher's favorite?"

"Oh, Rathburn is always praising him for something or other. All the boys know Frank Frost is his pet. You won't catch him praising me, if I work ever so hard."

John did not choose to mention that he had not yet tried this method of securing the teacher's approval.

"Teachers should never have favorites," said the squire dogmatically. "It is highly detrimental to a teacher's influence, and subversive of the principles of justice. Have you got your essay with you, John?"

"Yes, sir."

"You may sit down and read it to me, and if I think it deserving, I will take care that you sha'n't lose by the teacher's injustice."

John readily obeyed. He hurried up to his chamber, and, opening his writing-desk, took out a sheet of foolscap, three sides of which were written over. This he brought down-stairs with him. He began to hope that he might get the boat after all.

The squire, in dressing-gown and slippers, sat in a comfortable armchair, while John in a consequential manner read his rejected essay. It was superficial and commonplace, and abundantly

marked with pretension, but to the squire's warped judgment it seemed to have remarkable merit.

"It does you great credit, John," said he emphatically. "I don't know what sort of an essay young Frost wrote, but I venture to say it was not as good. If he's anything like his father, he is an impertinent jackanapes."

John pricked up his ears, and listened attentively.

"He grossly insulted me at the town meeting to-day, and I sha'n't soon forget it. It isn't for his interest to insult a man who has the power to annoy him that I possess."

"Haven't you got a mortgage on his farm?"

"Yes, and at a proper time I shall remind him of it. But to come back to your own affairs. What was the prize given to young Frost?"

"A blue-and-gold copy of Whittier's Poems, in two volumes."

"Plain binding, I suppose."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. The next time I go to Boston, I will buy you the same thing bound in calf. I don't intend that you shall suffer by your teacher's injustice."

"It wasn't so much the prize that I cared for," said John, who felt like making the most of his father's favorable mood, "but you know you promised me twenty-five dollars if I gained it."

"And as you have been defrauded of it, I will give you thirty instead," said the squire promptly.

John's eyes sparkled with delight. "Oh, thank you, sir!" he

said. “I wouldn’t change places with Frank Frost now for all his prize.”

“I should think not, indeed,” said the squire pompously. “Your position as the son of a poor farmer wouldn’t be quite so high as it is now.”

As he spoke he glanced complacently at the handsome furniture which surrounded him, the choice engravings which hung on the walls, and the full-length mirror in which his figure was reflected. “Ten years from now Frank Frost will be only a common laborer on his father’s farm—that is,” he added significantly, “if his father manages to keep it; while you, I hope, will be winning distinction at the bar.”

Father and son were in a congenial mood that evening, and a common hatred drew them more closely together than mutual affection had ever done. They were very much alike—both cold, calculating, and selfish. The squire was indeed ambitious for his son, but could hardly be said to love him, since he was incapable of feeling a hearty love for any one except himself.

As for John, it is to be feared that he regarded his father chiefly as one from whom he might expect future favors. His mother had been a good, though not a strong-minded woman, and her influence might have been of advantage to her son; but unhappily she had died when John was in his tenth year, and since then he had become too much like his father.

CHAPTER III. FRANK AT HOME

Mr. Frost's farm was situated about three-quarters of a mile from the village. It comprised fifty acres, of which twenty were suitable for tillage, the remainder being about equally divided between woodland and pasture.

Mr. Frost had for some years before his marriage been a painter, and had managed to save up from his earnings not far from a thousand dollars. Thinking, however, that farming would be more favorable to health, he purchased his fifty-acre farm for twenty-eight hundred dollars, payable one thousand down, and the rest remaining on mortgage. At the date of our story he had succeeded in paying up the entire amount within eight hundred dollars, a mortgage for that amount being held by Squire Haynes. He had not been able to accomplish this without strict economy, in which his wife had cheerfully aided him.

But his family had grown larger and more expensive. Besides Frank, who was the oldest, there were now three younger children—Alice, twelve years of age; Maggie, ten; and Charlie, seven.

The farmhouse was small but comfortable, and the family had never been tempted to sigh for a more costly or luxurious home. They were happy and contented, and this made their home attractive.

On the evening succeeding that of the war meeting, Frank was

seated in the common sitting-room with his father and mother. There was a well-worn carpet on the floor, a few plain chairs were scattered about the room, and in the corner ticked one of the old-fashioned clocks such as used to be the pride of our New England households. In the center of the room stood a round table, on which had been set a large kerosene-lamp, which diffused a cheerful light about the apartment.

On a little table, over which hung a small mirror, were several papers and magazines. Economical in most things, Mr. Frost was considered by many of his neighbors extravagant in this. He subscribed regularly for Harper's Magazine and Weekly, a weekly agricultural paper, a daily paper, and a child's magazine.

"I don't see how you can afford to buy so much reading-matter," said a neighbor, one day. "It must cost you a sight of money. As for me, I only take a weekly paper, and I think I shall have to give that up soon."

"All my papers and magazines cost me in a year, including postage, is less than twenty dollars," said Mr. Frost quietly. "A very slight additional economy in dress—say three dollars a year to each of us will pay that. I think my wife would rather make her bonnet wear doubly as long than give up a single one of our papers. When you think of the comparative amount of pleasure given by a paper that comes to you fifty-two times in a year, and a little extra extravagance in dress, I think you will decide in favor of the paper."

"But when you've read it, you haven't anything to show for

your money."

"And when clothes are worn out you may say the same of them. But we value both for the good they have done, and the pleasure they have afforded. I have always observed that a family where papers and magazines are taken is much more intelligent and well informed than where their bodies are clothed at the expense of their minds. Our daily paper is the heaviest item; but I like to know what is passing in the world, and, besides, I think I more than defray the expense by the knowledge I obtain of the markets. At what price did you sell your apples last year?"

"At one dollar and seventy-five cents per barrel."

"And I sold forty barrels at two dollars per barrel. I found from my paper that there was reason to expect an increase in the price, and held on. By so doing I gained ten dollars, which more than paid the expense of my paper for the year. So even in a money way I was paid for my subscription. No, neighbor, though I have good reason to economize, I don't care to economize in that direction. I want my children to grow up intelligent citizens. Let me advise you, instead of stopping your only paper, to subscribe for two or three more."

"I don't know," was the irresolute reply. "It was pretty lucky about the apples; but it seems a good deal to pay. As for my children, they don't get much time to read. They've got to earn their livin', and that ain't done by settin' down and readin'."

"I am not so sure of that," said Mr. Frost. "Education often enables a man to make money."

The reader may have been surprised at the ease with which Mr. Frost expressed himself in his speech at the war meeting. No other explanation is required than that he was in the habit of reading, every day, well-selected newspapers. “A man is known by the company he keeps.”

“So you gained the prize, Frank?” said his father approvingly. “I am very glad to hear it. It does you great credit. I hope none were envious of your success.”

“Most of the boys seemed glad of it,” was the reply; “but John Haynes was angry because he didn’t get it himself. He declared that I succeeded only because I was a favorite with Mr. Rathburn.”

“I am afraid he has not an amiable disposition. However, we must remember that his home influences haven’t been the best. His mother’s death was unfortunate for him.”

“I heard at the store that you and Squire Haynes had a discussion at the war meeting,” said Frank inquiringly. “How was it, father?”

“It was on the question of voting a bounty to our volunteers. I felt that such a course would be only just. The squire objected on the ground that our taxes would be considerably increased.”

“And how did the town vote?”

“They sustained my proposition, much to the squire’s indignation. He doesn’t seem to feel that any sacrifices ought to be expected of him.”

“What is the prospect of obtaining the men, father?”

"Four have already enlisted, but twenty-one are still required. I fear there will be some difficulty in obtaining the full number. In a farming town like ours the young men are apt to go off to other places as soon as they are old enough; so that the lot must fall upon some who have families."

Frank sat for some minutes gazing thoughtfully into the wood-fire that crackled in the fireplace.

"I wish I was old enough to go, father," he said, at length.

"I wish you were," said his father earnestly. "Not that it wouldn't be hard to send you out into the midst of perils; but our duty to our country ought to be paramount to our personal preferences."

"There's another reason," he said, after awhile, "why I wish you were older. You could take my place on the farm, and leave me free to enlist. I should have no hesitation in going. I have not forgotten that my grandfather fought at Bunker Hill."

"I know, father," said Frank, nodding; "and that's his musket that hangs up in your room, isn't it?"

"Yes; it was his faithful companion for three years. I often think with pride of his services. I have been trying to think all day whether I couldn't make some arrangement to have the farm carried on in my absence; but it is very hard to obtain a person in whom I could confide."

"If I were as good a manager as some," said Mrs. Frost, with a smile, "I would offer to be your farmer; but I am afraid that, though my intentions would be the best, things would go on badly

under my administration."

"You have enough to do in the house, Mary," said her husband. "I should not wish you to undertake the additional responsibility, even if you were thoroughly competent. I am afraid I shall have to give up the idea of going."

Mr. Frost took up the evening paper. Frank continued to look thoughtfully into the fire, as if revolving something in his mind. Finally he rose, and lighting a candle went up to bed. But he did not go to sleep for some time. A plan had occurred to him, and he was considering its feasibility.

"I think I could do it," he said, at last, turning over and composing himself to sleep. "I'll speak to father the first thing to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER IV. FRANK MAKES A PROPOSITION

When Frank woke the next morning the sun was shining into his window. He rubbed his eyes and tried to think what it was that occupied his mind the night before. It came to him in a moment, and jumping out of bed, he dressed himself with unusual expedition.

Hurrying down-stairs, he found his mother in the kitchen, busily engaged in getting breakfast.

"Where's father?" he asked.

"He hasn't come in from the barn yet, Frank," his mother answered. "You can have your breakfast now, if you are in a hurry to get to studying."

"Never mind, just now, mother," returned Frank. "I want to speak to father about something."

Taking his cap from the nail in the entry where it usually hung, Frank went out to the barn. He found that his father was nearly through milking.

"Is breakfast ready?" asked Mr. Frost, looking up. "Tell your mother she needn't wait for me."

"It isn't ready yet," said Frank. "I came out because I want to speak to you about something very particular."

"Very well, Frank, Go on."

"But if you don't think it a good plan, or think that I am foolish in speaking of it, don't say anything to anybody."

Mr. Frost looked at Frank in some little curiosity.

"Perhaps," he said, smiling, "like our neighbor Holman, you have formed a plan for bringing the war to a close."

Frank laughed. "I am not quite so presumptuous," he said. "You remember saying last night, that if I were old enough to take charge of the farm, you would have no hesitation in volunteering?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think I am old enough?" asked Frank eagerly.

"Why, you are only fifteen, Frank," returned his father, in surprise.

"I know it, but I am strong enough to do considerable work."

"It isn't so much that which is required. A man could easily be found to do the hardest of the work. But somebody is needed who understands farming, and is qualified to give directions. How much do you know of that?"

"Not much at present," answered Frank modestly, "but I think I could learn easily. Besides, there's Mr. Maynard, who is a good farmer, could advise me whenever I was in doubt, and you could write home directions in your letters."

"That is true," said Mr. Frost thoughtfully. "I will promise to give it careful consideration. But have you thought that you will be obliged to give up attending school."

"Yes, father."

"And, of course, that will put you back; your class-mates will get in advance of you."

"I have thought of that, father, and I shall be very sorry for it. But I think that is one reason why I desire the plan."

"I don't understand you, Frank," said his father, a little puzzled.

"You see, father, it would require a sacrifice on my part, and I should feel glad to think I had an opportunity of making a sacrifice for the sake of my country."

"That's the right spirit, Frank," said his father approvingly. "That's the way my grandfather felt and acted, and it's the way I like to see my son feel. So it would be a great sacrifice to me to leave you all."

"And to us to be parted from you, father," said Frank.

"I have no doubt of it, my dear boy," said his father kindly. "We have always been a happy and united family, and, please God, we always shall be. But this plan of yours requires consideration. I will talk it over with your mother and Mr. Maynard, and will then come to a decision."

"I was afraid you would laugh at me," said Frank.

"No," said his father, "it was a noble thought, and does you credit. I shall feel that, whatever course I may think it wisest to adopt."

The sound of a bell from the house reached them. This meant breakfast. Mr. Frost had finished milking, and with a well-filled pail in either hand, went toward the house.

"Move the milking:-stool, Frank," he said, looking behind him, "or the cow will kick it over."

Five minutes later they were at breakfast.

"I have some news for you, Mary," said Mr. Frost, as he helped his wife to a sausage.

"Indeed?" said she, looking up inquiringly.

"Some one has offered to take charge of the farm for me, in case I wish to go out as a soldier."

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Frost, with strong interest.

"A gentleman with whom you are well—I may say intimately acquainted," was the smiling response.

"It isn't Mr. Maynard?"

"No. It is some one that lives nearer than he."

"How can that be? He is our nearest neighbor."

"Then you can't guess?"

"No. I am quite mystified."

"Suppose I should say that it is your oldest son?"

"What, Frank?" exclaimed Mrs. Frost, turning from her husband to her son, whose flushed face indicated how anxious he was about his mother's favorable opinion.

"You have hit it."

"You were not in earnest, Frank?" said Mrs. Frost inquiringly.

"Ask father."

"I think he was. He certainly appeared to be."

"But what does Frank know about farming?"

"I asked him that question myself. He admitted that he didn't

know much at present, but thought that, with Mr. Maynard's advice, he might get along."

Mrs. Frost was silent a moment. "It will be a great undertaking," she said, at last; "but if you think you can trust Frank, I will do all I can to help him. I can't bear to think of having you go, yet I am conscious that this is a feeling which I have no right to indulge at the expense of my country."

"Yes," said her husband seriously. "I feel that I owe my country a service which I have no right to delegate to another, as long as I am able to discharge it myself. I shall reflect seriously upon Frank's proposition."

There was no more said at this time. Both Frank and his parents felt that it was a serious matter, and not to be hastily decided.

After breakfast Frank went up-stairs, and before studying his Latin lesson, read over thoughtfully the following passage in his prize essay on "The Duties of American Boys at the Present Crisis:"

"Now that so large a number of our citizens have been withdrawn from their families and their ordinary business to engage in putting down this Rebellion, it becomes the duty of the boys to take their places as far as they are able to do so. A boy cannot wholly supply the place of a man, but he can do so in part. And where he is not called on to do this, he can so conduct himself that his friends who are absent may feel at ease about him. He ought to feel willing to give up some pleasures, if by so

doing he can help to supply the places of those who are gone. If he does this voluntarily, and in the right spirit, he is just as patriotic as if he were a soldier in the field."

"I didn't think," thought Frank, "when I wrote this, how soon my words would come back to me. It isn't much to write the words. The thing is to stand by them. If father should decide to go, I will do my best, and then, when the Rebellion is over, I shall feel that I did something, even if It wasn't much, toward putting it down."

Frank put his essay carefully away in a bureau drawer in which he kept his clothes, and, spreading open his Latin lexicon, proceeded to prepare his lesson in the third book of Virgil's Aeneid.

CHAPTER V. MR. RATHBURN MAKES A SPEECH

Frank's seat in the schoolroom was directly in front of that occupied by John Haynes. Until the announcement of the prize John and he had been on friendly terms. They belonged to the same class in Latin, and Frank had often helped his classmate through a difficult passage which he had not the patience to construe for himself. Now, however, a coolness grew up between them, originating with John. He felt envious of Frank's success; and this feeling brought with it a certain bitterness which found gratification in anything which he had reason to suppose would annoy Frank.

On the morning succeeding the distribution of the prizes, Frank arrived at the schoolhouse a few minutes before the bell rang. John, with half a dozen other boys, stood near the door.

John took off his hat with mock deference. "Make way for the great prize essayist, gentlemen!" he said. "The modern Macaulay is approaching."

Frank colored with annoyance. John did not fail to notice this with pleasure. He was sorry, however, that none of the other boys seemed inclined to join in the demonstration. In fact, they liked Frank much the better of the two.

"That isn't quite fair, John," said Frank, in a low voice.

"I am always glad to pay my homage to distinguished talent," John proceeded, in the same tone. "I feel how presumptuous I was in venturing to compete with a gentleman of such genius!"

"Do you mean to insult me?" asked Frank, growing angry.

"Oh, dear, no! I am only expressing my high opinion of your talents!"

"Let him alone, John!" said Dick Jones, "It isn't his fault that the teacher awarded the prize to him instead of you."

"I hope you don't think I care for that!" said John, snapping his fingers. "He's welcome to his rubbishing books; they don't amount to much, anyway. I don't believe they cost more than two dollars at the most. If you'd like to see what I got for my essay, I'll show you."

John pulled out his portemonnaie, and unrolled three new and crisp bank-notes of ten dollars each.

"I think that's pretty good pay," he said, looking about him triumphantly. "I don't care how many prizes Rathburn chooses to give his favorite. I rather think I can get along without them."

John's face was turned toward the door, otherwise he would have observed the approach of the teacher, and spoken with more caution. But it was too late. The words had been spoken above his ordinary voice, and were distinctly heard by the teacher. He looked sharply at John Haynes, whose glance fell before his, but without a word passed into the schoolroom.

"See if you don't get a blowing-up, John," said Dick Jones.

"What do I care!" said John, but in a tone too subdued to be

heard by any one else. “It won’t do Rathburn any harm to hear the truth for once in his life.”

“Well, I’m glad I’m not in your place, that’s all!” replied Dick.

“You’re easily frightened!” rejoined John, with a sneer.

Nevertheless, as he entered the schoolroom, and walked with assumed bravado to his seat in the back part of the room, he did not feel quite so comfortable as he strove to appear. As he glanced stealthily at the face of the teacher, who looked unusually stern and grave, he could not help thinking, “I wonder whether he will say anything about it.”

Mr. Rathburn commenced in the usual manner; but after the devotional exercises were over, he paused, and, after a brief silence, during which those who had heard John’s words listened with earnest attention, spoke as follows:

“As I approached the schoolroom this morning I chanced to catch some words which I presume were not intended for my ear. If I remember rightly they were, ‘I don’t care how many prizes Rathburn gives his favorite!’ There were several that heard them, so that I can be easily corrected if I have made any mistake. Now I will not affect to misunderstand the charge conveyed by these words. I am accused of assigning the prizes, or at least, one of them, yesterday, not with strict regard to the merit of the essays presented, but under the influence of partiality. If this is the real feeling of the speaker, I can only say that I am sorry he should have so low an opinion of me. I do not believe the scholars generally entertain any such suspicion. Though I may

err in judgment, I think that most of you will not charge me with anything more serious. If you ask me whether a teacher has favorites, I say that he cannot help having them. He cannot help making a difference between the studious on the one hand, and the indolent and neglectful on the other. But in a matter like this I ask you to believe me when I say that no consideration except that of merit is permitted to weigh. The boy who made this charge is one of my most advanced scholars, and has no reason to believe that he would be treated with unfairness. I do not choose to say any more on this subject, except that I have decided to offer two similar prizes for the two best compositions submitted within the next four weeks. I shall assign them to the best of my judgment, without regard to the scholarship of the writer."

Mr. Rathburn spoke in a quiet, dignified manner, which convinced all who heard him of his fairness. I say all, because even John Haynes was persuaded against his own will, though he did not choose to acknowledge it. He had a dogged obstinacy which would not allow him to retract what he had once said. There was an unpleasant sneer on his face while the teacher was speaking, which he did not attempt to conceal.

"The class in Virgil," called Mr. Rathburn.

This class consisted of Frank Frost, John Haynes, and Henry Tufts. John rose slowly from his seat, and advanced to the usual place, taking care to stand as far from Frank as possible.

"You may commence, John," said the teacher.

It was unfortunate for John that he had been occupied, first,

by thoughts of his rejected essay, and afterward by thoughts of the boat which he proposed to buy with the thirty dollars of which he had become possessed, so that he had found very little time to devote to his Latin. Had he been on good terms with Frank, he would have asked him to read over the lesson, which, as he was naturally quick, would have enabled him to get off passably. But, of course, under the circumstances, this was not to be thought of. So he stumbled through two or three sentences, in an embarrassed manner. Mr. Rathburn at first helped him along. Finding, however, that he knew little or nothing of the lesson, he quietly requested Frank to read, saying, "You don't seem so well prepared as usual, John."

Frank translated fluently and well, his recitation forming a very favorable contrast to the slipshod attempt of John. This John, in a spirit of unreasonableness, magnified into a grave offense, and a desire to "show off" at his expense.

"Trying to shine at my expense," he muttered. "Well, let him! Two or three years hence, when I am in college, perhaps things may be a little different."

Frank noticed his repellent look, and it made him feel uncomfortable. He was a warm-hearted boy, and wanted to be on good terms with everybody. Still, he could not help feeling that in the present instance he had nothing to reproach himself with.

John went back to his seat feeling an increased irritation against Frank. He could not help seeing that he was more popular with his schoolmates than himself, and, of course, this, too, he

considered a just cause of offense against him.

While he was considering in what way he could slight Frank, the thought of the boat he was about to purchase entered his mind. He brightened up at once, for this suggested something. He knew how much boys like going out upon the water. At present there was no boat on the pond. His would hold six or eight boys readily. He would invite some of the oldest boys to accompany him on his first trip, carefully omitting Frank Frost. The slight would be still more pointed because Frank was his classmate.

When the bell rang for recess he lost no time in carrying out the scheme he had thought of.

"Dick," he called out to Dick Jones, "I am expecting my boat up from Boston next Tuesday, and I mean to go out in her Wednesday afternoon. Wouldn't you like to go with me?"

"With all the pleasure in life," said Dick, "and thank you for the invitation."

"How many will she hold?"

"Eight or ten, I expect. Bob Ingalls, would you like to go, too?"

The invitation was eagerly accepted. John next approached Henry Tufts, who was speaking with Frank Frost.

Without even looking at the latter, he asked Henry if he would like to go.

"Very much," was the reply.

"Then I will expect you," he said. He turned on his heel and walked off without taking any notice of Frank.

Frank blushed in spite of himself.

“Don’t he mean to invite you?” asked Henry, in surprise.

“It appears not,” said Frank.

“It’s mean in him, then,” exclaimed Henry; “I declare, I’ve a great mind not to go.”

“I hope you will go,” said Frank hastily. “You will enjoy it. Promise me you will go.”

“Would you really prefer to have me?”

“I should be very sorry if you didn’t.”

“Then I’ll go; but I think he’s mean in not asking you, for all that.”

CHAPTER VI. MR. FROST MAKES UP HIS MIND

"Well, Frank," said his father at supper-time, "I've been speaking to Mr. Maynard this afternoon about your plan."

"What did he say?" asked Frank, dropping his knife and fork in his eagerness.

"After he had thought a little, he spoke of it favorably. He said that, being too old to go himself, he should be glad to do anything in his power to facilitate my going, if I thought it my duty to do so."

"Didn't he think Frank rather young for such an undertaking?" asked Mrs. Frost doubtfully.

"Yes, he did; but still he thought with proper advice and competent assistance he might get along. For the first, he can depend upon Mr. Maynard and myself; as for the second, Mr. Maynard suggested a good man, who is seeking a situation as farm laborer."

"Is it anybody in this town?" asked Frank.

"No, it is a man from Brandon, named Jacob Carter. Mr. Maynard says he is honest, industrious, and used to working on a farm. I shall write to him this evening."

"Then you have decided to go!" exclaimed Frank and his mother in concert.

"It will depend in part upon the answer I receive from this man Carter. I shall feel if he agrees to come, that I can go with less anxiety."

"How we shall miss you!" said his wife, in a subdued tone.

"And I shall miss you quite as much. It will be a considerable sacrifice for all of us. But when my country has need of me, you will feel that I cannot honorably stay at home. As for Frank, he may regard me as his substitute."

"My substitute!" repeated Frank, in a questioning tone.

"Yes, since but for you, taking charge of the farm in my absence, I should not feel that I could go."

Frank looked pleased. It made him feel that he was really of some importance. Boys, unless they are incorrigibly idle, are glad to be placed in posts of responsibility. Frank, though very modest, felt within himself unused powers and undeveloped capacities, which he knew must be called out by the unusual circumstances in which he would be placed. The thought, too, that he would be serving his country, even at home, filled him with satisfaction.

After a pause, Mr. Frost said: "There is one point on which I still have some doubts. As you are all equally interested with myself, I think it proper to ask your opinion, and shall abide by your decision."

Frank and his mother listened with earnest attention.

"You are aware that the town has decided to give a bounty of one hundred and fifty dollars to such as may volunteer toward

filling the quota. You may remember, also, that although the town passed the vote almost unanimously, it was my proposition, and supported by a speech of mine."

"Squire Haynes opposed it, I think you said, father."

"Yes, and intimated that I urged the matter from interested motives. He said he presumed I intended to enlist."

"As if that sum would pay a man for leaving his home and incurring the terrible risks of war!" exclaimed Mrs. Frost, looking indignant.

"Very likely he did not believe it himself; but he was irritated with me, and it is his habit to impute unworthy motives to those with whom he differs. Aside from this, however, I shall feel some delicacy in availing myself of a bounty which I was instrumental in persuading the town to vote. Though I feel that I should be perfectly justified in so doing, I confess that I am anxious not to put myself in such a position as to hazard any loss of good opinion on the part of my friends in town."

"Then don't take it," said Mrs. Frost promptly.

"That's what I say, too, father," chimed in Frank.

"Don't decide too hastily," said Mr. Frost. "Remember that in our circumstances this amount of money would be very useful. Although Frank will do as well as any boy of his age, I do not expect him to make the farm as profitable as I should do, partly on account of my experience being greater, and partly because I should be able to accomplish more work than he. One hundred and fifty dollars would procure many little comforts

which otherwise you may have to do without."

"I know that," said Mrs. Frost quickly. "But do you think I should enjoy them, if there were reports circulated, however unjustly, to your prejudice? Besides, I shall know that the comforts at the camp must be fewer than you would enjoy at home. We shall not wish to fare so much better than you."

"Do you think with your mother, Frank?" asked Mr. Frost.

"I think mother is right," said Frank, proud of having his opinion asked. He was secretly determined, in spite of what his father had said, to see if he could not make the farm as profitable as it would be under his father's management.

Mr. Frost seemed relieved by his wife's expression of opinion. "Then," said he, "I will accept your decision as final. I felt that it should be you, and not myself, who should decide it. Now my mind will be at ease, so far as that goes."

"You will not enlist at once, father?" asked Frank.

"Not for three or four weeks. I shall wish to give you some special instructions before I go, so that your task may be easier."

"Hadn't I better leave school at once?"

"You may finish this week out. However, I may as well begin my instructions without delay. I believe you have never learned to milk."

"No, sir."

"Probably Carter will undertake that. Still, it will be desirable that you should know how, in case he gets sick. You may come out with me after supper and take your first lesson."

Frank ran for his hat with alacrity. This seemed like beginning in earnest. He accompanied his father to the barn, and looked with new interest at the four cows constituting his father's stock.

"I think we will begin with this one," said his father, pointing to a red-and-white heifer. "She is better-natured than the others, and, as I dare say your fingers will bungle a little at first, that is a point to be considered."

If any of my boy readers has ever undertaken the task of milking for the first time, he will appreciate Frank's difficulties. When he had seen his father milking, it seemed to him extremely easy. The milk poured out in rich streams, almost without an effort. But under his inexperienced fingers none came. He tugged away manfully, but with no result.

"I guess the cow's dry," said he at last, looking up in his father's face.

Mr. Frost in reply drew out a copious stream.

"I did the same as you," said Frank, mystified, "and none came."

"You didn't take hold right," said his father, "and you pressed at the wrong time. Let me show you."

Before the first lesson was over Frank had advanced a little in the art of milking, and it may as well be said here that in the course of a week or so he became a fair proficient, so that his father even allowed him to try Vixen, a cow who had received this name from the uncertainty of her temper. She had more than once upset the pail with a spiteful kick when it was nearly full.

One morning she upset not only the pail, but Frank, who looked foolish enough as he got up covered with milk.

Frank also commenced reading the Plowman, a weekly agricultural paper which his father had taken for years. Until now he had confined his readings in it to the selected story on the fourth page. Now, with an object in view, he read carefully other parts of the paper. He did this not merely in the first flush of enthusiasm, but with the steady purpose of qualifying himself to take his father's place.

"Frank is an uncommon boy," said Mr. Frost to his wife, not without feelings of pride, one night, when our hero had retired to bed. "I would trust him with the farm sooner than many who are half a dozen years older."

CHAPTER VII. LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

"Well, father, I've got some news for you," said John Haynes, as he entered his father's presence, two or three days later.

"What is it, John?" inquired the squire, laying down a copy of the New York Herald, which he had been reading.

"Who do you think has enlisted?"

"I do not choose to guess," said his father coldly. "If you feel disposed to tell me, you may do so."

John looked somewhat offended at his father's tone, but he was anxious to tell the news. "Frost's going to enlist," he said shortly.

"Indeed!" said the squire, with interest. "How did you hear?"

"I heard him say so himself, just now, in the store."

"I expected it," said Squire Haynes, with a sneer. "I understood his motives perfectly in urging the town to pay an enormous bounty to volunteers. He meant to line his own pockets at the public expense."

"He says that he doesn't mean to accept the bounty," continued John, in a tone which indicated a doubt whether Mr. Frost was in earnest.

"Did you hear him say that?" asked Squire Haynes abruptly.

"Yes, I heard him say so to Mr. Morse."

"Perhaps he means it, and perhaps he doesn't. If he don't take

it, it is because he is afraid of public opinion. What's he going to do about the farm, while he is gone?"

"That is the strangest part of it," said John. "I don't believe you could guess who is to be left in charge of it."

"I don't choose to guess. If you know, speak out."

John bit his lip resentfully.

"It's that conceited jackanapes of his—Frank Frost."

"Do you mean that he is going to leave that boy to carry on the farm?" demanded Squire Haynes, in surprise.

"Yes."

"Well, all I can say is that he's more of a fool than I took him to be."

"Oh, he thinks everything of Frank," said John bitterly. "He'll be nominating him for representative next."

The squire winced a little. He had been ambitious to represent the town in the legislature, and after considerable wire-pulling had succeeded in obtaining the nomination the year previous. But it is one thing to be nominated and another to be elected. So the squire had found, to his cost. He had barely obtained fifty votes, while his opponent had been elected by a vote of a hundred and fifty. All allusions, therefore, recalling his mortifying defeat were disagreeable to him.

"On the whole, I don't know but I'm satisfied," he said, recurring to the intelligence John had brought. "So far as I am concerned, I am glad he has made choice of this boy."

"You don't think he is competent?" asked John, in surprise.

"For that very reason I am glad he has been selected," said the squire emphatically. "I take it for granted that the farm will be mismanaged, and become a bill of expense, instead of a source of revenue. It's pretty certain that Frost won't be able to pay the mortgage when it comes due. I can bid off the farm for a small sum additional and make a capital bargain. It will make a very good place for you to settle down upon, John."

"Me!" said John disdainfully. "You don't expect me to become a plodding farmer, I trust. I've got talent for something better than that, I should hope."

"No," said the squire, "I have other news for you. Still, you could hire a farmer to carry it on for you, and live out there in the summer."

"Well, perhaps that would do," said John, thinking that it would sound well for him, even if he lived in the city, to have a place in the country. "When does the mortgage come due, father?"

"I don't remember the exact date. I'll look and see."

The squire drew from a closet a box hooped with iron, and evidently made for security. This was his strong-box, and in this he kept his bonds, mortgages, and other securities.

He selected a document tied with red ribbon, and examined it briefly.

"I shall have the right to foreclose the mortgage on the first of next July," he said.

"I hope you will do it then. I should like to see them Frosts

humbled."

"THEM Frosts! Don't you know anything more about English grammar, John?"

"Those Frosts, then. Of course, I know; but a feller can't always be watching his words."

"I desire you never again to use the low word 'feller,'" said the squire, who, as the reader will see, was more particular about grammatical accuracy than about some other things which might be naturally supposed to be of higher importance.

"Well," said John sulkily, "anything you choose."

"As to the mortgage," proceeded Squire Haynes, "I have no idea they will be able to lift it. I feel certain that Frost won't himself have the money at command, and I sha'n't give him any grace, or consent to a renewal. He may be pretty sure of that."

"Perhaps he'll find somebody to lend him the money."

"I think not. There are those who would be willing, but I question whether there is any such who could raise the money at a moment's warning. By the way, you need not mention my purpose in this matter to any one. If it should leak out, Mr. Frost might hear of it, and prepare for it."

"You may trust me for that, father," said John, very decidedly; "I want to see Frank Frost's proud spirit humbled. Perhaps he'll feel like putting on airs after that."

From the conversation which has just been chronicled it will be perceived that John was a worthy son of his father; and, though wanting in affection and cordial good feeling, that both were

prepared to join hands in devising mischief to poor Frank and his family. Let us hope that the intentions of the wicked may be frustrated.

CHAPTER VIII. DISCOURAGED AND ENCOURAGED

In a small village like Rossville news flies fast. Even the distinctions of social life do not hinder an interest being felt in the affairs of each individual. Hence it was that Mr. Frost's determination to enlist became speedily known, and various were the comments made upon his plan of leaving Frank in charge of the farm. That they were not all favorable may be readily believed. Country people are apt to criticize the proceedings of their neighbors with a greater degree of freedom than is common elsewhere.

As Frank was on his way to school on Saturday morning, his name was called by Mrs. Roxana Mason, who stood in the doorway of a small yellow house fronting on the main street.

"Good morning, Mrs. Mason," said Frank politely, advancing to the gate in answer to her call.

"Is it true what I've heard about your father's going to the war, Frank Frost?" she commenced.

"Yes, Mrs. Mason; he feels it his duty to go."

"And what's to become of the farm? Anybody hired it?"

"I am going to take charge of it," said Frank modestly.

"You!" exclaimed Mrs. Roxana, lifting both hands in amazement; "why, you're nothing but a baby!"

"I'm a baby of fifteen," said Frank good-humoredly, though his courage was a little dampened by her tone.

"What do you know about farming?" inquired the lady, in a contemptuous manner. "Your father must be crazy!"

"I shall do my best, Mrs. Mason," said Frank quietly, but with heightened color. "My father is willing to trust me; and as I shall have Mr. Maynard to look to for advice, I think I can get along."

"The idea of putting a boy like you over a farm!" returned Mrs. Roxana, in an uncompromising tone. "I did think your father had more sense. It's the most shiftless thing I ever knew him to do. How does your poor mother feel about it?"

"She doesn't seem as much disturbed about it as you do, Mrs. Mason," said Frank, rather impatiently; for he felt that Mrs. Mason had no right to interfere in his father's arrangements.

"Well, well, we'll see!" said Mrs. Roxana, shaking her head significantly. "If you'll look in your Bible, you'll read about 'the haughty spirit that goes before a fall.' I'm sure I wish you well enough. I hope that things'll turn out better'n they're like to. Tell your mother I'll come over before long and talk with her about it."

Frank inwardly hoped that Mrs. Roxana wouldn't put herself to any trouble to call, but politeness taught him to be silent.

Leaving Mrs. Mason's gate, he kept on his way to school, but had hardly gone half a dozen rods before he met an old lady, whose benevolent face indicated a very different disposition from that of the lady he had just parted with.

"Good morning, Mrs. Chester," said Frank cordially,

recognizing one of his mother's oldest friends.

"Good morning, my dear boy," was the reply. "I hear your father is going to the war."

"Yes," said Frank, a little nervously, not knowing but Mrs. Chester would view the matter in the same way as Mrs. Mason, though he felt sure she would express herself less disagreeably.

"And I hear that you are going to try to make his place good at home."

"I don't expect to make his place good, Mrs. Chester," said Frank modestly, "but I shall do as well as I can."

"I have no doubt of it, my dear boy," said the old lady kindly. "You can do a great deal, too. You can help your mother by looking out for your brothers and sisters, as well as supplying your father's place on the farm."

"I am glad you think I can make myself useful," said Frank, feeling relieved. "Mrs. Mason has just been telling me that I am not fit for the charge, and that discouraged me a little."

"It's a great responsibility, no doubt, to come on one so young," said the old lady, "but it's of God's appointment. He will strengthen your hands, if you will only ask Him. If you humbly seek His guidance and assistance, you need not fear to fail."

"Yes," said Frank soberly, "that's what I mean to do."

"Then you will feel that you are in the path of duty. You'll be serving your country just as much as if you went yourself."

"That's just the way I feel, Mrs. Chester," exclaimed Frank eagerly. "I want to do something for my country."

"You remind me of my oldest brother," said the old lady thoughtfully. "He was left pretty much as you are. It was about the middle of the Revolutionary war, and the army needed recruits. My father hesitated, for he had a small family depending on him for support. I was only two years old at the time, and there were three of us. Finally my brother James, who was just about your age, told my father that he would do all he could to support the family, and father concluded to go. We didn't have a farm, for father was a carpenter. My brother worked for neighboring farmers, receiving his pay in corn and vegetables, and picked up what odd jobs he could. Then mother was able to do something; so we managed after a fashion. There were times when we were brought pretty close to the wall, but God carried us through. And by and by father came safely home, and I don't think he ever regretted having left us. After awhile the good news of peace came, and he felt that he had been abundantly repaid for all the sacrifices he had made in the good cause."

Frank listened to this narrative with great interest. It yielded him no little encouragement to know that another boy, placed in similar circumstances, had succeeded, and he just felt that he would have very much less to contend against than the brother of whom Mrs. Chester spoke.

"Thank you for telling me about your brother Mrs. Chester," he said. "It makes me feel more as if things would turn out well. Won't you come over soon and see us? Mother is always glad to see you."

"Thank you, Frank; I shall certainly do so. I hope I shall not make you late to school."

"Oh, no; I started half an hour early this morning."

Frank had hardly left Mrs. Chester when he heard a quick step behind him. Turning round, he perceived that it was Mr. Rathburn, his teacher.

"I hurried to come up with you, Frank," he said, smiling. "I understand that I am to lose you from school."

"Yes, sir," answered Frank. "I am very sorry to leave, for I am very much interested in my studies; but I suppose, sir, you have heard what calls me away."

"Your father has made up his mind to enlist."

"Yes, sir."

"And you are to superintend the farm in his absence?"

"Yes, sir. I hope you do not think me presumptuous in undertaking such a responsibility?"

He looked up eagerly into Mr. Rathburn's face, for he had a great respect for his judgment. But he saw nothing to discourage him. On the contrary, he read cordial sympathy and approval.

"Far from it," answered the teacher, with emphasis. "I think you deserving of great commendation, especially if, as I have heard, the plan originated with you, and was by you suggested to your father."

"Yes, sir."

The teacher held out his hand kindly. "It was only what I should have expected of you," he said. "I have not forgotten your

essay. I am glad to see that you not only have right ideas of duty, but have, what is rarer, the courage and self-denial to put them in practice."

These words gave Frank much pleasure, and his face lighted up.

"Shall you feel obliged to give up your studies entirely?" asked his teacher.

"I think I shall be able to study some in the evening."

"If I can be of any assistance to you in any way, don't hesitate to apply. If you should find any stumbling-blocks in your lessons, I may be able to help you over them."

By this time they had come within sight of the schoolhouse.

"There comes the young farmer," said John Haynes, in a tone which was only subdued lest the teacher should hear him, for he had no disposition to incur another public rebuke.

A few minutes later, when Frank was quietly seated at his desk, a paper was thrown from behind, lighting upon his Virgil, which lay open before him. There appeared to be writing upon it, and with some curiosity he opened and read the following:

"What's the price of turnips?"

It was quite unnecessary to inquire into the authorship. He felt confident it was written by John Haynes. The latter, of course, intended it as an insult, but Frank did not feel much disturbed. As long as his conduct was approved by such persons as his teacher and Mrs. Chester, he felt he could safely disregard the taunts and criticisms of others. He therefore quietly let the paper drop to

the floor, and kept on with his lesson.

John Haynes perceived that he had failed in his benevolent purpose of disturbing Frank's tranquillity, and this, I am sorry to say, only increased the dislike he felt for him. Nothing is so unreasonable as anger, nothing so hard to appease. John even felt disposed to regard as an insult the disposition which Frank had made of his insulting query.

"The young clodhopper's on his dignity," he muttered to himself. "Well, wait a few months, and see if he won't sing a different tune."

Just then John's class was called up, and his dislike to Frank was not diminished by the superiority of his recitation. The latter, undisturbed by John's feelings, did not give a thought to him, but reflected with a touch of pain that this must be his last Latin recitation in school for a long time to come.

CHAPTER IX. THE LAST EVENING AT HOME

Three weeks passed quickly. October had already reached its middle point. The glory of the Indian summer was close at hand. Too quickly the days fled for the little family at the farm, for they knew that each brought nearer the parting of which they could not bear to think.

Jacob Carter, who had been sent for to do the heavy work on the farm, had arrived. He was a man of forty, stout and able to work, but had enjoyed few opportunities of cultivating his mind. Though a faithful laborer, he was destitute of the energy and ambition which might ere this have placed him in charge of a farm of his own. In New England few arrive at his age without achieving some position more desirable and independent than that of farm laborer. However, he looked pleasant and good-natured, and Mr. Frost accounted himself fortunate in securing his services.

The harvest had been got in, and during the winter months there would not be so much to do as before. Jacob, therefore, "hired out" for a smaller compensation, to be increased when the spring work came in.

Frank had not been idle. He had accompanied his father about the farm, and received as much practical instruction in the art

of farming as the time would admit. He was naturally a quick learner, and now felt impelled by a double motive to prepare himself as well as possible to assume his new responsibilities. His first motive was, of course, to make up his father's loss to the family, as far as it was possible for him to do so, but he was also desirous of showing Mrs. Roxana Mason and other ill-boding prophets that they had underrated his abilities.

The time came when Mr. Frost felt that he must leave his family. He had enlisted from preference in an old regiment, already in Virginia, some members of which had gone from Rossville. A number of recruits were to be forwarded to the camp on a certain day, and that day was now close at hand.

Let me introduce the reader to the farmhouse on the last evening for many months when they would be able to be together. They were all assembled about the fireplace. Mr. Frost sat in an armchair, holding Charlie in his lap—the privileged place of the youngest. Alice, with the air of a young woman, sat demurely by her father's side on a cricket, while Maggie stood beside him, with one hand resting on his knee. Frank sat quietly beside his mother, as if already occupying the place which he was in future to hold as her counselor and protector.

Frank and his mother looked sober. They had not realized fully until this evening what it would be to part with the husband and father—how constantly they would miss him at the family meal and in the evening circle. Then there was the dreadful uncertainty of war. He might never return, or, if spared for that,

it might be with broken constitution or the loss of a limb.

"If it hadn't been for me," Frank could not help thinking, "father would not now be going away. He would have stayed at home, and I could still go to school. It would have made a great difference to us, and the loss of one man could not affect the general result."

A moment after his conscience rebuked him for harboring so selfish a thought.

"The country needs him more even than we do," he said to himself. "It will be a hard trial to have him go, but it is our duty."

"Will my little Charlie miss me when I am gone?" asked Mr. Frost of the chubby-faced boy who sat with great, round eyes peering into the fire, as if he were deeply engaged in thought.

"Won't you take me with you, papa?" asked Charlie.

"What could you do if you were out there, my little boy?" asked the father, smiling.

"I'd shoot great big rebel with my gun," said Charlie, waxing valiant.

"Your gun's only a wooden one," said Maggie, with an air of superior knowledge. "You couldn't kill a rebel with that."

"I'd kill 'em some," persisted Charlie earnestly, evidently believing that a wooden gun differed from others not in kind, but in degree.

"But suppose the rebels should fire at you," said Frank, amused. "What would you do then, Charlie?"

Charlie looked into the fire thoughtfully for a moment, as if

this contingency had not presented itself to his mind until now. Suddenly his face brightened up, and he answered. "I'd run away just as fast as I could."

All laughed at this, and Frank said: "But that wouldn't be acting like a brave soldier, Charlie. You ought to stay and make the enemy run."

"I wouldn't want to stay and be shooted," said Charlie ingenuously.

"There are many older than Charlie," said Mr. Frost, smiling, "who would doubtless sympathize entirely with him in his objection to being shooted, though they might not be quite so ready to make confession as he has shown himself. I suppose you have heard the couplet:

> "'He who fights and runs away
> May live to fight another day.'"

"Pray don't speak about shooting," said Mrs. Frost, with a shudder. "It makes me feel nervous."

"And to-night we should only admit pleasant thoughts," said her husband. "Who is going to write me letters when I am gone?"

"I'll write to you, father," said Alice.

"And so will I," said Maggie.

"I, too," chimed in Charlie.

"Then, if you have so many correspondents already engaged, you will hardly want to hear from Frank and myself," said his

wife, smiling.

"The more the better. I suspect I shall find letters more welcome than anything else. You must also send me papers regularly. I shall have many hours that will pass heavily unless I have something to read."

"I'll mail you Harper's Weekly regularly, shall I, father?" asked Frank.

"Yes, I shall be glad enough to see it. Then, there is one good thing about papers—after enjoying them myself, I can pass them round to others. There are many privations that I must make up my mind to, but I shall endeavor to make camp-life as pleasant as possible to myself and others."

"I wish you were going out as an officer," said Mrs. Frost. "You would have more indulgences."

"Very probably I should. But I don't feel inclined to wish myself better off than others. I am: willing to serve my country in any capacity in which I can be of use. Thank Heaven, I am pretty strong and healthy, and better fitted than many to encounter the fatigues and exposures which are the lot of the private."

"How early must you start to-morrow, father?" inquired Frank.

"By daylight. I must be in Boston by nine o'clock, and you know it is a five-mile ride to the depot. I shall want you to carry me over."

"Will there be room for me?" asked Mrs. Frost. "I want to see the last of you."

"I hope you won't do that for a long time to come," said Mr. Frost, smiling.

"You know what I mean, Henry."

"Oh, yes, there will be room. At any rate, we will make room for you. And now it seems to me it is time for these little folks to go to bed. Charlie finds it hard work to keep his eyes open."

"Oh, papa, papa, not yet, not yet," pleaded the children; and with the thought that it might be many a long day before he saw their sweet young faces again, the father suffered them to have their way.

After the children had gone to bed Frank and his father and mother sat up for a long time. Each felt that there was much to be said, but no one of them felt like saying much then. Thoughts of the approaching separation swallowed up all others. The thought kept recurring that to-morrow would see them many miles apart, and that many a long to-morrow must pass before they would again be gathered around the fire.

"Frank," said his father, at length, "I have deposited in the Brandon Bank four hundred dollars, about half of which I have realized from crops sold this season. This you will draw upon as you have need, for grocery bills, to pay Jacob, etc. For present purposes I will hand you fifty dollars, which I advise you to put under your mother's care."

As he finished speaking, Mr. Frost drew from his pocketbook a roll of bills and handed them to Frank.

Frank opened his portemonnaie and deposited the money

therein.

He had never before so large a sum of money in his possession, and although he knew it was not to be spent for his own benefit—at least, no considerable part of it—he felt a sense of importance and even wealth in being the custodian of so much money. He felt that his father had confidence in him, and that he was in truth going to be his representative.

"A part of the money which I have in the bank," continued his father, "has been saved up toward the payment of the mortgage on the farm."

"When does it come due, father?"

"On the first of July of next year."

"But you won't be prepared to meet it at that time?"

"No, but undoubtedly Squire Haynes will be willing to renew it. I always pay the interest promptly, and he knows it is secured by the farm, and therefore a safe investment. By the way, I had nearly forgotten to say that there will be some interest due on the first of January. Of course, you are authorized to pay it just as if you were myself."

"How much will it be?"

"Twenty-four dollars—that is, six months' interest at six per cent. on eight hundred dollars."

"I wish the farm were free from encumbrance," said Frank.

"So do I; and if Providence favors me it shall be before many years are past. But in farming one can't expect to lay by money quite as fast as in some other employments."

The old clock in the corner here struck eleven.

"We mustn't keep you up too late the last night, Henry," said Mrs. Frost. "You will need a good night's sleep to carry you through to-morrow."

Neither of the three closed their eyes early that night. Thoughts of the morrow were naturally in their minds. At last all was still. Sleep—God's beneficent messenger—wrapped their senses in oblivion, and the cares and anxieties of the morrow were for a time forgotten.

CHAPTER X. LITTLE POMP

There was a hurried good-by at the depot

"Kiss the children for me, Mary," said her husband.

"You will write very soon?" pleaded Mrs. Frost.

"At the very first opportunity."

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor.

With a shrill scream the locomotive started.

Frank and his mother stood on the platform watching the receding train till it was quite out of sight, and then in silence our young hero assisted his mother into the carryall and turned the horse's head homeward.

It was one of those quiet October mornings, when the air is soft and balmy as if a June day had found its way by mistake into the heart of autumn. The road wound partly through the woods. The leaves were still green and abundant. Only one or two showed signs of the coming change, which in the course of a few weeks must leave them bare and leafless.

"What a beautiful day!" said Frank, speaking the words almost unconsciously.

"Beautiful indeed!" responded his mother. "On such a day as this the world seems too lovely for war and warlike passions to

be permitted to enter it. When men might be so happy, why need they stain their hands with each other's blood?"

Frank was unprepared for an answer. He knew that it was his father's departure which led his mother to speak thus. He wished to divert her mind, if possible.

Circumstances favored his design.

They had accomplished perhaps three-quarters of the distance home when, as they were passing a small one-story building by the roadside, a shriek of pain was heard, and a little black boy came running out of the house, screaming in affright: "Mammy's done killed herself. She's mos' dead!"

He ran out to the road and looked up at Mrs. Frost, as if to implore assistance.

"That's Chloe's child," said Mrs. Frost. "Stop the horse, Frank; I'll get out and see what has happened."

Chloe, as Frank very well knew, was a colored woman, who until a few months since had been a slave in Virginia. Finally she had seized a favorable opportunity, and taking the only child which the cruel slave system had left her, for the rest had been sold South, succeeded in making her way into Pennsylvania. Chance had directed her to Rossville, where she had been permitted to occupy, rent free, an old shanty which for some years previous had been uninhabited. Here she had supported herself by taking in washing and ironing. This had been her special work on the plantation where she had been born and brought up, and she was therefore quite proficient in it. She found

no difficulty in obtaining work enough to satisfy the moderate wants of herself and little Pomp.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.