ALGER HORATIO JR.

PHIL, THE FIDDLER

Horatio Alger
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Содержание

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PREFACE

Among the most interesting and picturesque classes of street children in New York are the young Italian musicians, who wander about our streets with harps, violins, or tambourines, playing wherever they can secure an audience. They become Americanized less easily than children of other nationalities, and both in dress and outward appearance retain their foreign look, while few, even after several years' residence, acquire even a passable knowledge of the English language.

In undertaking, therefore, to describe this phase of street life, I found, at the outset, unusual difficulty on account of my inadequate information. But I was fortunate enough to make the acquaintance of two prominent Italian gentlemen, long resident in New York—Mr. A. E. Cerqua, superintendent of the Italian school at the Five Points, and through his introduction, of Mr. G. F. Secchi de Casale, editor of the well-known Eco d'Italia—from whom I obtained full and trustworthy information. A series of articles contributed by Mr. De Casale to his paper, on the Italian street children, in whom he has long felt a patriotic and sympathetic interest, I have found of great service, and I freely

acknowledge that, but for the information thus acquired, I should have been unable to write the present volume.

My readers will learn with surprise, probably, of the hard life led by these children, and the inhuman treatment which they receive from the speculators who buy them from their parents in Italy. It is not without reason that Mr. De Casale speaks of them as the "White Slaves" of New York. I may add, in passing, that they are quite distinct from the Italian bootblacks and newsboys who are to be found in Chatham Street and the vicinity of the City Hall Park. These last are the children of resident Italians of the poorer class, and are much better off than the musicians. It is from their ranks that the Italian school, before referred to, draws its pupils.

If the story of "Phil the Fiddler," in revealing for the first time to the American public the hardships and ill treatment of these wandering musicians shall excite an active sympathy in their behalf, the author will feel abundantly repaid for his labors.

NEW YORK, APRIL 2, 1872.

CHAPTER I
PHIL THE FIDDLER

"Viva Garibaldi!" sang a young Italian boy in an uptown street, accompanying himself on a violin which, from its battered appearance, seemed to have met with hard usage.

As the young singer is to be the hero of my story, I will pause to describe him. He was twelve years old, but small of his age. His complexion was a brilliant olive, with the dark eyes peculiar to his race, and his hair black. In spite of the dirt, his face was strikingly handsome, especially when lighted up by a smile, as was often the case, for in spite of the hardships of his lot, and these were neither few nor light, Filippo was naturally merry and light-hearted.

He wore a velveteen jacket, and pantaloons which atoned, by their extra length, for the holes resulting from hard usage and antiquity. His shoes, which appeared to be wholly unacquainted with blacking, were, like his pantaloons, two or three sizes too large for him, making it necessary for him to shuffle along ungracefully.

It was now ten o'clock in the morning. Two hours had elapsed since Filippo, or Phil, as I shall call him, for the benefit of my readers unfamiliar with Italian names, had left the miserable home in Crosby Street, where he and forty other boys lived

in charge of a middle-aged Italian, known as the padrone. Of this person, and the relations between him and the boys, I shall hereafter speak. At present I propose to accompany Phil.

Though he had wandered about, singing and playing, for two hours, Phil had not yet received a penny. This made him somewhat uneasy, for he knew that at night he must carry home a satisfactory sum to the padrone, or he would be brutally beaten; and poor Phil knew from sad experience that this hard taskmaster had no mercy in such cases.

The block in which he stood was adjacent to Fifth Avenue, and was lined on either side with brown-stone houses. It was quiet, and but few passed through it during the busy hours of the day. But Phil's hope was that some money might be thrown him from a window of some of the fine houses before which he played, but he seemed likely to be disappointed, for he played ten minutes without apparently attracting any attention. He was about to change his position, when the basement door of one of the houses opened, and a servant came out, bareheaded, and approached him. Phil regarded her with distrust, for he was often ordered away as a nuisance. He stopped playing, and, hugging his violin closely, regarded her watchfully.

"You're to come in," said the girl abruptly.

"Che cosa volete?"[1] said Phil, suspiciously.

"I don't understand your Italian rubbish," said the girl. "You're to come into the house."

[1] "What do you want?"

In general, boys of Phil's class are slow in learning English. After months, and even years sometimes, their knowledge is limited to a few words or phrases. On the other hand, they pick up French readily, and as many of them, en route for America, spend some weeks, or months, in the French metropolis, it is common to find them able to speak the language somewhat. Phil, however, was an exception, and could manage to speak English a little, though not as well as he could understand it.

"What for I go?" he asked, a little distrustfully.

"My young master wants to hear you play on your fiddle," said the servant. "He's sick, and can't come out."

"All right!" said Phil, using one of the first English phrases he had caught. "I will go."

"Come along, then."

Phil followed his guide into the basement, thence up two flight of stairs, and along a handsome hall into a chamber. The little fiddler, who had never before been invited into a fine house, looked with admiration at the handsome furniture, and especially at the pictures upon the wall, for, like most of his nation, he had a love for whatever was beautiful, whether in nature or art.

The chamber had two occupants. One, a boy of twelve years, was lying in a bed, propped up by pillows. His thin, pale face spoke of long sickness, and contrasted vividly with the brilliant brown face of the little Italian boy, who seemed the perfect picture of health. Sitting beside the bed was a lady of middle age and pleasant expression. It was easy to see by the resemblance

that she was the mother of the sick boy.

Phil looked from one to the other, uncertain what was required of him.

"Can you speak English?" asked Mrs. Leigh.

"Si, signora, a little," answered our hero.

"My son is sick, and would like to hear you play a little."

"And sing, too," added the sick boy, from the bed.

Phil struck up the song he had been singing in the street, a song well known to all who have stopped to listen to the boys of his class, with the refrain, "Viva Garibaldi." His voice was clear and melodious, and in spite of the poor quality of his instrument, he sang with so much feeling that the effect was agreeable.

The sick boy listened with evident pleasure, for he, too, had a taste for music.

"I wish I could understand Italian," he said, "I think it must be a good song."

"Perhaps he can sing some English song," suggested Mrs. Leigh.

"Can you sing in English?" she asked.

Phil hesitated a moment, and then broke into the common street ditty, "Shoe fly, don't bouder me," giving a quaint sound to the words by his Italian accent.

"Do you know any more?" asked Henry Leigh, when our hero had finished.

"Not English," said Phil, shaking his head.

"You ought to learn more."

"I can play more," said Phil, "but I know not the words."

"Then play some tunes."

Thereupon the little Italian struck up "Yankee Doodle," which he played with spirit and evident enjoyment.

"Do you know the name of that?" asked Henry.

Phil shook his head.

"It is 'Yankee Doodle.'"

Phil tried to pronounce it, but the words in his mouth had a droll sound, and made them laugh.

"How old are you?" asked Henry.

"Twelve years."

"Then you are quite as old as I am."

"I wish you were as well and strong as he seems to be," said Mrs. Leigh, sighing, as she looked at Henry's pale face.

That was little likely to be. Always a delicate child, Henry had a year previous contracted a cold, which had attacked his lungs, and had gradually increased until there seemed little doubt that in the long struggle with disease nature must succumb, and early death ensue.

"How long have you been in this country?"

"Un anno."

"How long is that?"

"A year," said Henry. "I know that, because 'annus' means a year in Latin."

"Si, signor, a year," said Phil.

"And where do you come from?"

"Da Napoli."

"That means from Naples, I suppose."

"Si, signor."

Most of the little Italian musicians to be found in our streets are brought from Calabria, the southern portion of Italy, where they are purchased from their parents, for a fixed sum, or rate of annual payment. But it is usual for them when questioned, to say that they come from Naples, that being the principal city in that portion of Italy, or indeed in the entire kingdom.

"Who do you live with," continued Henry.

"With the padrone."

"And who is the padrone?"

"He take care of me—he bring me from Italy."

"Is he kind to you?"

Phil shrugged his shoulders.

"He beat me sometimes," he answered.

"Beats you? What for?"

"If I bring little money."

"Does he beat you hard?"

"Si, signor, with a stick."

"He must be a bad man," said Henry, indignantly.

"How much money must you carry home?"

"Two dollars."

"But it isn't your fault, if people will not give you money."

"Non importa. He beat me."

"He ought to be beaten himself."

Phil shrugged his shoulders. Like most boys of his class, to him the padrone seemed all-powerful. The idea that his oppressive taskmaster should be punished for his cruelty had never dawned upon him. Knowing nothing of any law that would protect him, he submitted to it as a necessity, from which there was no escape except by running away. He had not come to that yet, but some of his companions had done so, and he might some day.

After this conversation he played another tune. Mrs. Leigh drew out her purse, and gave him fifty cents. Phil took his fiddle under his arm, and, following the servant, who now reappeared, emerged into the street, and moved onward.

CHAPTER II
PHIL AND HIS PROTECTOR

To a certain extent Phil was his own master; that is, he was at liberty to wander where he liked, provided he did not neglect his business, and returned to the lodging-house at night with the required sum of money. But woe to him if he were caught holding back any of the money for his own use. In that case, he would be beaten, and sent to bed without his supper, while the padrone, according to the terms of his contract with the distant parent would withhold from the amount due the latter ten times the sum kept by the boy. In the middle of the day he was allowed to spend three cents for bread, which was the only dinner allowed him. Of course, the boys were tempted to regale themselves more luxuriously, but they incurred a great risk in doing so. Sometimes the padrone followed them secretly, or employed others to do so, and so was able to detect them. Besides, they traveled, in general, by twos and threes, and the system of espionage was encouraged by the padrone. So mutual distrust was inspired, and the fear of being reported made the boys honest.

Phil left the house of Mr. Leigh in good spirits. Though he had earned nothing before, the fifty cents he had just received made a good beginning, and inspired in him the hope of getting together enough to save him a beating, for one night at least.

He walked down toward Sixth Avenue, and turning the corner walked down town. At length he paused in front of a tobacconist's shop, and began to play. But he had chosen an unfortunate time and place. The tobacconist had just discovered a deficiency in his money account, which he suspected to be occasioned by the dishonesty of his assistant. In addition to this he had risen with a headache, so that he was in a decidedly bad humor. Music had no charms for him at that moment, and he no sooner heard the first strains of Phil's violin than he rushed from the shop bareheaded, and dashed impetuously at the young fiddler.

"Get away from my shop, you little vagabond!" he cried. "If I had my way, you should all be sent out of the country."

Phil was quick to take a hint. He saw the menace in the shopkeeper's eyes, and, stopping abruptly, ran farther down the street, hugging his fiddle, which he was afraid the angry tobacconist might seize and break. This, to him, would be an irreparable misfortune and subject him to a severe punishment, though the fault would not be his.

Next he strolled into a side street, and began to play in front of some dwelling-houses. Two or three young children, who had been playing in the street, gathered about him, and one of them gave him a penny. They were clamorous for another tune, but Phil could not afford to work for nothing, and, seeing no prospects of additional pay, took his violin, and walked away, much to the regret of his young auditors, who, though not rich, were appreciative. They followed him to the end of the block,

hoping that he would play again, but they were disappointed.

Phil played two or three times more, managing to obtain in all twenty-five cents additional. He reached the corner of Thirteenth Street just as the large public school, known as the Thirteenth Street School, was dismissed for its noon intermission.

"Give us a tune, Johnny," cried Edward Eustis, one of the oldest boys.

"Yes, a tune," joined in several others.

This was an invitation to which Phil was always willing to respond. Besides, he knew from experience that boys were more generous, in proportion to their means, than those of larger growth, and he hoped to get enough from the crowd around him to increase his store to a dollar.

The boys gathered around the little minstrel, who struck up an Italian tune, but without the words.

"Sing, sing!" cried the boys.

Phil began to sing. His clear, fresh voice produced a favorable impression upon the boys.

"He's a bully singer," said one. "I can't sing much better myself."

"You sing! Your singing would be enough to scare a dozen tom cats."

"Then we should be well matched. Look here, Johnny, can't you sing something in English?"

Phil, in response to this request, played and sang "Shoo Fly!" which suiting the boys' taste, he was called upon to repeat.

The song being finished, Edward Eustis took off his cap, and went around the circle.

"Now, boys, you have a chance to show your liberality," he said. "I'll start the collection with five cents."

"That's ahead of me," said James Marcus. "Justice to a large and expensive family will prevent me contributing anything more than two cents."

"The smallest favors thankfully received," said Edward.

"Then take that, and be thankful," said Tom Lane, dropping in a penny.

"I haven't got any money," said Frank Gaylord, "but here's an apple;" and he dropped a large red apple into the cap.

Phil; watching with interest the various contributions, was best pleased with the last. The money he must carry to the padrone. The apple he might keep for himself, and it would vary agreeably his usual meager fare.

"The biggest contribution yet," said Edward.

"Here, Sprague, you are liberal. What'll you give?"

"My note at ninety days."

"You might fail before it comes due."

"Then take three cents. 'Tis all I have; 'I can no more, though poor the offering be.'"

"Oh, don't quote Shakespeare."

"It isn't Shakespeare; it's Milton."

"Just as much one as the other."

"Here, Johnny," said Edward, after going the rounds, "hold

your hands, and I'll pour out the money. You can retire from business now on a fortune."

Phil was accustomed to be addressed as Johnny, that being the generic name for boy in New York. He deposited the money in his pocket, and, taking his fiddle, played once more in acknowledgment of the donation. The boys now dispersed, leaving Phil to go on his way. He took out the apple with the intention of eating it, when a rude boy snatched it from his hand.

"Give it back," said Phil, angrily.

"Don't you wish you may get it?" said the other, holding it out of his reach.

The young musician had little chance of redress, his antagonist was a head taller than himself, and, besides, he would not have dared lay down his fiddle to fight, lest it might be broken.

"Give it to me," he said, stamping his foot.

"I mean to eat it myself," said the other, coolly. "It's too good for the likes of you."

"You're a thief."

"Don't you call me names, you little Italian ragamuffin, or I'll hit you," said the other, menacingly.

"It is my apple."

"I'm going to eat it."

But the speaker was mistaken. As he held the apple above his head, it was suddenly snatched from him. He looked around angrily, and confronted Edward Eustis, who, seeing Phil's trouble from a little distance, had at once come to his rescue.

"What did you do that for?" demanded the thief.

"What did you take the boy's apple for?"

"Because I felt like it."

"Then I took it from you for the same reason."

"Do you want to fight?" blustered the rowdy.

"Not particularly."

"Then hand me back that apple," returned the other.

"Thank you; I shall only hand it to the rightful owner—that little Italian boy. Are you not ashamed to rob him?"

"Do you want to get hit?"

"I wouldn't advise you to do it."

The rowdy looked at the boy who confronted him. Edward was slightly smaller, but there was a determined look in his eye which the bully, who, like those of his class generally, was a coward at heart, did not like. He mentally decided that it would be safer not to provoke him.

"Come here, Johnny, and take your apple," said Edward.

Phil advanced, and received back his property with satisfaction.

"You'd better eat it now. I'll see that he doesn't disturb you."

Phil followed the advice of his new friend promptly. He had eaten nothing since seven o'clock, and then only a piece of dry bread and cheese, and the apple, a rare luxury, he did not fail to relish. His would-be robber scowled at him meanwhile, for he had promised himself the pleasure of dispatching the fruit. Edward stood by till the apple was eaten, and then turned away.

The rowdy made a movement as if to follow Phil, but Edward quickly detected him, and came back.

"Don't you dare touch him," he said, significantly, "or you'll have to settle accounts with me. Do you see that policeman? I am going to ask him to have an eye on you. You'd better look out for yourself."

The other turned at the caution, and seeing the approach of one of the Metropolitan police quickly vanished. He had a wholesome fear of these guardians of the public peace, and did not care to court their attention.

Edward turned away, but in a moment felt a hand tugging at his coat. Looking around, he saw that it was Phil.

"Grazia, signore," said Phil, gratefully.

"I suppose that means 'Thank you'?"

Phil nodded.

"All right, Johnny! I am glad I was by to save you from that bully."

CHAPTER III
GIACOMO

After eating the apple Phil decided to buy his frugal dinner. He, therefore, went into a baker's shop, and bought two penny rolls and a piece of cheese. It was not a very luxurious repast, but with the apple it was better than usual. A few steps from the shop door he met another Italian boy, who was bound to the same padrone.

"How much money have you, Giacomo?" asked Phil, speaking, of course, in his native tongue.

"Forty cents. How much have you?"

"A dollar and twenty cents."

"You are very lucky, Filippo."

"A rich signora gave me fifty cents for playing to her sick boy. Then I sang for some schoolboys, and they gave me some money."

"I am afraid the padrone will beat me to-night."

"He has not beat me for a week."

"Have you had dinner, Filippo?"

"Yes, I had some bread and cheese, and an apple."

"Did you buy the apple?"

"No; one of the schoolboys gave it to me. It was very good," said Phil, in a tone of enjoyment. "I had not eaten one for a long

time."

"Nor I. Do you remember, Filippo, the oranges we had in Italy?"

"I remember them well."

"I was happy then," said Giacomo, sighing. "There was no padrone to beat me, and I could run about and play. Now I have to sing and play all day. I am so tired sometimes,—so tired, Filippo."

"You are not so strong as I, Giacomo," said Phil, looking with some complacency at his own stout limbs.

"Don't you get tired, Filippo?"

"Yes, often; but I don't care so much for that. But I don't like the winter."

"I thought I should die with cold sometimes last winter," said Giacomo, shuddering. "Do you ever expect to go back to Italy, Filippo?"

"Sometime."

"I wish I could go now. I should like to see my dear mother and my sisters."

"And your father?"

"I don't want to see him," said Giacomo, bitterly. "He sold me to the padrone. My mother wept bitterly when I went away, but my father only thought of the money."

Filippo and Giacomo were from the same town in Calabria. They were the sons of Italian peasants who had been unable to resist the offers of the padrone, and for less than a hundred

dollars each had sold his son into the cruelest slavery. The boys were torn from their native hills, from their families, and in a foreign land were doomed to walk the streets from fourteen to sixteen hours in every twenty-four, gathering money from which they received small benefit. Many times, as they trudged through the streets, weary and hungry, sometimes cold, they thought with homesick sadness of the sunny fields in which their earliest years had been passed, but the hard realities of the life they were now leading soon demanded their attention.

Naturally light-hearted, Filippo, or Phil, bore his hard lot more cheerfully than some of his comrades. But Giacomo was more delicate, and less able to bear want and fatigue. His livelier comrade cheered him up, and Giacomo always felt better after talking with Phil.

As the two boys were walking together, a heavy hand was laid on the shoulder of each, and a harsh voice said: "Is this the way you waste your time, little rascals?"

Both boys started, and looking up, recognized the padrone. He was a short man, very dark with fierce black eyes and a sinister countenance. It was his habit to walk about the streets from time to time, and keep a watch, unobserved, upon his young apprentices, if they may be so called. If he found them loitering about, or neglecting their work, they were liable to receive a sharp reminder.

The boys were both startled at his sudden appearance, but after the first start, Phil, who was naturally courageous,

recovered his self-possession. Not so with Giacomo, who was the more afraid because he knew he had gained but little money thus far.

"We are not wasting our time, padrone," said Phil, looking up fearlessly.

"We will see about that. How long have you been together?"

"Only five minutes."

"How much money have you, Filippo?"

"A dollar and twenty cents."

"Good; you have done well. And how is it with you, Giacomo?"

"I have forty cents."

"Then you have been idle," said the padrone, frowning.

"No, signore," said the boy, trembling. "I have played, but they did not give me much money."

"It is not his fault," said Phil, coming boldly to the defense of his friend.

"Attend to your own affairs, little scrape-grace," said the padrone, roughly. "He might have got as much as you."

"No, padrone; I was lucky. A kind lady gave me fifty cents."

"That is not my affair. I don't care where you get the money. But if you don't bring home all I expect, you shall feel the stick."

These last words were addressed to Giacomo, who understood their import only too well. In the miserable lodging where he herded with thirty or forty others scarcely a night passed without the brutal punishment of one or more unfortunate boys, who

had been unsuccessful in bringing home enough to satisfy the rapacity of the padrone. But of this an account will hereafter be given.

"Now, go to work, both of you," said the padrone, harshly.

The two boys separated. Giacomo went uptown, while Phil kept on his way toward the Astor House. The padrone made his way to the nearest liquor shop, where he invested a portion of the money wrung from the hard earnings of his young apprentices.

Toward the close of the afternoon Phil found himself in front of the Astor House. He had played several times, but was not fortunate in finding liberal auditors. He had secured but ten cents during this time, and it seemed doubtful whether he would reach the sum he wanted. He crossed over to the City Hall Park, and, feeling tired, sat down on one of the benches. Two bootblacks were already seated upon it.

"Play us a tune, Johnny," said one.

"Will you give me pennies?" asked Phil doubtfully, for he did not care, with such a severe taskmaster, to work for nothing.

"Yes, we'll give you pennies."

Upon this, Phil struck up a tune.

"Where's your monkey?" asked one of the boys.

"I have no monkey."

"If you want a monkey, here's one for you," said Tim Rafferty, putting his hand on his companion's shoulder.

"He's too big," said Phil, laughing.

"Hould yer gab, Tim Rafferty," said the other. "It's you that'll

make a better monkey nor I. Say, Johnny, do you pay your monkeys well?"

"Give me my pennies," said Phil, with an eye to business.

"Play another tune, then."

Phil obeyed directions. When he had finished, a contribution was taken up, but it only amounted to seven cents. However, considering the character of the audience, this was as much as could be expected.

"How much have you made to-day, Johnny?" asked Tim.

"A dollar," said Phil.

"A dollar! That's more nor I have made. I tell you what, boys, I think I'll buy a fiddle myself. I'll make more money that way than blackin' boots."

"A great fiddler you'd make, Tim Rafferty."

"Can't I play, then? Lend me your fiddle, Johnny, till I try it a little."

Phil shook his head.

"Give it to me now; I won't be hurtin' it."

"You'll break it."

"Then I'll pay for it."

"It isn't mine."

"Whose is it, then?"

"The padrone's."

"And who's the padrone?"

"The man I live with. If the fiddle is broken, he will beat me."

"Then he's an ould haythen, and you may tell him so, with Tim

Rafferty's compliments. But I won't hurt it."

Phil, however, feared to trust the violin in unskillful hands. He knew the penalty if any harm befell it, and he had no mind to run the risk. So he rose from the seat, and withdrew to a little distance, Tim Rafferty following, for, though he cared little at first, he now felt determined to try the fiddle.

"If you don't give it to me I'll put a head on you," he said.

"You shall not have it," said Phil, firmly, for he, too, could be determined.

"The little chap's showing fight," said Tim's companion. "Look out, Tim; he'll mash you."

"I can fight him wid one hand," said Tim.

He advanced upon our young hero, who, being much smaller, would probably have been compelled to yield to superior force but for an interference entirely unexpected by Tim.

CHAPTER IV
AN INVITATION TO SUPPER

Tim had raised his fist to strike the young fiddler, when he was suddenly pushed aside with considerable force, and came near measuring his length on the ground.

"Who did that?" he cried, angrily, recovering his equilibrium.

"I did it," said a calm voice.

Tim recognized in the speaker Paul Hoffman, whom some of my readers will remember as "Paul the Peddler." Paul was proprietor of a necktie stand below the Astor House, and was just returning home to supper.

He was a brave and manly boy, and his sympathies were always in favor of the oppressed. He had met Phil before, and talked with him, and seeing him in danger came to his assistance.

"What made you push me?" demanded Tim, fiercely.

"What were you going to do to him?" rejoined Paul, indicating the Italian boy.

"I was only goin' to borrer his fiddle."

"He would have broken it," said Phil.

"You don't know how to play," said Paul. "You would have broken his fiddle, and then he would be beaten."

"I would pay for it if I did," said Tim.

"You say so, but you wouldn't. Even if you did, it would take

time, and the boy would have suffered."

"What business is that of yours?" demanded Tim, angrily.

"It is always my business when I see a big boy teasing a little one."

"You'll get hurt some day," said Tim, suddenly.

"Not by you," returned Paul, not particularly alarmed.

Tim would have gladly have punished Paul on the spot for his interference, but he did not consider it prudent to provoke hostilities. Paul was as tall as himself, and considerably stronger. He therefore wisely confined himself to threatening words.

"Come along with me, Phil," said Paul, kindly, to the little fiddler.

"Thank you for saving me," said Phil, gratefully. "The padrone would beat me if the fiddle was broke."

"Never mind about thanks, Phil. Tim is a bully with small boys, but he is a coward among large ones. Have you had any supper?"

"No," said Phil.

"Won't you come home and take supper with me?"

Phil hesitated.

"You are kind," he said, "but I fear the padrone."

"What will he do to you?"

"He will beat me if I don't bring home enough money."

"How much more must you get?"

"Sixty cents."

"You can play better after a good supper. Come along; I won't

keep you long."

Phil made no more objection. He was a healthy boy, and his wanderings had given him a good appetite. So he thanked Paul, and walked along by his side. One object Paul had in inviting him was, the fear that Tim Rafferty might take advantage of his absence to renew his assault upon Phil, and with better success than before.

"How old are you, Phil?" he asked.

"Twelve years."

"And who taught you to play?"

"No one. I heard the other boys play, and so I learned."

"Do you like it?"

"Sometimes; but I get tired of it."

"I don't wonder. I should think playing day after day might tire you. What are you going to do when you become a man?"

Phil shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know," he said. "I think I'll go back to Italy."

"Have you any relations there?"

"I have a mother and two sisters."

"And a father?"

"Yes, a father."

"Why did they let you come away?"

"The padrone gave my father money."

"Don't you hear anything from home?"

"No, signore."

"I am not a signore," said Paul, smiling. "You may call me

Paul. Is that an Italian name?"

"Me call it Paolo."

"That sounds queer to me. What's James in Italian?"

"Giacomo."

"Then I have a little brother Giacomo."

"How old is he?"

"Eight years old."

"My sister Bettina is eight years. I wish I could see her."

"You will see her again some day, Phil. You will get rich in America, and go back to sunny Italy."

"The padrone takes all my money."

"You'll get away from the old rascal some day. Keep up good courage, Phil, and all will come right. But here we are. Follow me upstairs, and I will introduce you to my mother and Giacomo," said Paul, laughing at the Italian name he had given his little brother.

Mrs. Hoffman and Jimmy looked with some surprise at the little fiddler as he entered with Paul.

"Mother," said Paul, "this is one of my friends, whom I have invited to take supper with us."

"He is welcome," said Mrs. Hoffman, kindly. "Have you ever spoken to us of him?"

"I am not sure. His name is Phil—Phil the fiddler, we call him."

"Filippo," said the young musician.

"We will call you Phil; it is easier to speak," said Paul. "This

is my little brother Jimmy. He is a great artist."

"Now you are laughing at me, Paul," said the little boy.

"Well, he is going to be a great artist some day, if he isn't one yet. Do you think, Jimmy, you could draw Phil, here, with his fiddle?"

"I think I could," said the little boy, slowly, looking carefully at their young guest; "but it would take some time."

"Perhaps Phil will come some day, and give you a sitting."

"Will you come?" asked Jimmy.

"I will come some day."

Meanwhile Mrs. Hoffman was preparing supper. Since Paul had become proprietor of the necktie stand, as described in the last volume, they were able to live with less regard to economy than before. So, when the table was spread, it presented quite a tempting appearance. Beefsteak, rolls, fried potatoes, coffee, and preserves graced the board.

"Supper is ready, Paul," said his mother, when all was finished.

"Here, Phil, you may sit here at my right hand," said Paul. "I will put your violin where it will not be injured."

Phil sat down as directed, not without feeling a little awkward, yet with a sense of anticipated pleasure. Accustomed to bread and cheese alone, the modest repast before him seemed like a royal feast. The meat especially attracted him, for he had not tasted any for months, indeed seldom in his life, for in Italy it is seldom eaten by the class to which Phil's parents belonged.

"Let me give you some meat, Phil," said Paul. "Now, shall we drink the health of the padrone in coffee?"

"I will not drink his health," said Phil. "He is a bad man."

"Who is the padrone?" asked Jimmy, curiously.

"He is my master. He sends me out to play for money."

"And must you give all the money you make to him?"

"Yes; if I do not bring much money, he will beat me."

"Then he must be a bad man. Why do you live with him?"

"He bought me from my father."

"He bought you?" repeated Jimmy, puzzled.

"He hires him for so much money," explained Paul.

"But why did your father let you go with a bad man?" asked Jimmy.

"He wanted the money," said Phil. "He cared more for money than for me."

What wonder that the boys sold into such cruel slavery should be estranged from the fathers who for a few paltry ducats sell the liberty and happiness of their children. Even where the contract is for a limited terms of years, the boys in five cases out of ten are not returned at the appointed time. A part, unable to bear the hardships and privations of the life upon which they enter, are swept off by death, while of those that survive, a part are weaned from their homes, or are not permitted to go back.

"You must not ask too many questions, Jimmy." said Mrs. Hoffman, fearing that he might awaken sad thoughts in the little musician.

She was glad to see that Phil ate with a good appetite. In truth he relished the supper, which was the best he remembered to have tasted for many a long day.

"Is Italy like America?" asked Jimmy, whose curiosity was excited to learn something of Phil's birthplace.

"It is much nicer," said Phil, with a natural love of country. "There are olive trees and orange trees, and grapes—very many."

"Are there really orange trees? Have you seen them grow?"

"I have picked them from the trees many times."

"I should like that, but I don't care for olives."

"They are good, too."

"I should like the grapes."

"There are other things in Italy which you would like better, Jimmy," said Paul.

"What do you mean, Paul?"

"The galleries of fine paintings."

"Yes, I should like to see them. Have you seen them?"

Phil shook his head. The picture galleries are in the cities, and not in the country district where he was born.

"Sometime, when I am rich, we will all go to Italy, Jimmy; then, if Phil is at home, we will go and see him."

"I should like that, Paul."

Though Jimmy was not yet eight years old, he had already exhibited a remarkable taste for drawing, and without having received any instruction, could copy any ordinary picture with great exactness. It was the little boy's ambition to become an

artist, and in this ambition he was encouraged by Paul, who intended, as soon as he could afford it, to engage an instructor for Jimmy.

CHAPTER V
ON THE FERRY BOAT

When supper was over, Phil bethought himself that his day's work was not yet over. He had still a considerable sum to obtain before he dared go home, if such a name can be given to the miserable tenement in Crosby Street where he herded with his companions. But before going he wished to show his gratitude to Paul for his protection and the supper which he had so much and so unexpectedly enjoyed.

"Shall I play for you?" he asked, taking his violin from the top of the bureau, where Paul had placed it.

"Will you?" asked Jimmy, his eyes lighting up with pleasure.

"We should be very glad to hear you," said Mrs. Hoffman.

Phil played his best, for he felt that he was playing for friends. After a short prelude, he struck into an Italian song. Though the words were unintelligible, the little party enjoyed the song.

"Bravo, Phil!" said Paul. "You sing almost as well as I do."

Jimmy laughed.

"You sing about as well as you draw," said the little boy.

"There you go again with your envy and jealousy," said Paul, in an injured tone. "Others appreciate me better."

"Sing something, and we will judge of your merits," said his mother.

"Not now," said Paul, shaking his head. "My feelings are too deeply injured. But if he has time, Phil will favor us with another song."

So the little fiddler once more touched the strings of his violin, and sang the hymn of Garibaldi.

"He has a beautiful voice," said Mrs. Hoffman to Paul.

"Yes, Phil sings much better than most of his class. Shall I bring him up here again?"

"Any time, Paul. We shall always be glad to see him."

Here Phil took his cap and prepared to depart.

"Good-by," he said in English. "I thank you all for your kindness."

"Will you come again?" said Mrs. Hoffman. "We shall be glad to have you."

"Do come," pleaded Jimmy, who had taken a fancy to the dark-eyed Italian boy, whose brilliant brown complexion contrasted strongly with his own pale face and blue eyes.

These words gave Phil a strange pleasure. Since his arrival in America he had become accustomed to harsh words and blows; but words of kindness were strangers to his ears. For an hour he forgot the street and his uninviting home, and felt himself surrounded by a true home atmosphere. He almost fancied himself in his Calabrian home, with his mother and sisters about him—in his home as it was before cupidity entered his father's heart and impelled him to sell his own flesh and blood into slavery in a foreign land. Phil could not analyze his own emotions,

but these were the feelings which rose in his heart, and filed it with transient sadness.

"I thank you much," he said. "I will come again some day."

"Come soon, Phil," said Paul. "You know where my necktie stand is. Come there any afternoon between four and five, and I will take you home to supper. Do you know the way out, or shall I go with you?"

"I know the way," said Phil.

He went downstairs and once more found himself on the sidewalk. It was but six o'clock, and five or six hours were still before him before he could feel at liberty to go home. Should he return too early, he would be punished for losing the possible gains of the hour he had lost, even if the sum he brought home were otherwise satisfactory. So, whatever may be his fatigue, or however inclement the weather, the poor Italian boy is compelled to stay out till near midnight, before he is permitted to return to the hard pallet on which only he can sleep off his fatigues.

Again in the street, Phil felt that he must make up for lost time. Now six o'clock is not a very favorable time for street music; citizens who do business downtown have mostly gone home to dinner. Those who have not started are in haste, and little disposed to heed the appeal of the young minstrel. Later the saloons will be well frequented, and not seldom the young fiddlers may pick up a few, sometimes a considerable number of pennies, by playing at the doors of these places, or within, if they should be invited to enter; but at six there is not much to be done.

After a little reflection, Phil determined to go down to Fulton Ferry and got on board the Brooklyn steamboat. He might get a chance to play to the passengers, and some, no doubt, would give him something. At any rate, the investment would be small, since for one fare, or two cents, he might ride back and forward several times, as long as he did not step off the boat. He, therefore, directed his steps toward the ferry, and arrived just in time to go on board the boat.

The boat was very full. So large a number of the people in Brooklyn are drawn to New York by business and pleasure, that the boats, particularly in the morning from seven to nine, and in the afternoon, from five to seven, go loaded down with foot passengers and carriages.

Phil entered the ladies' cabin. Though ostensibly confined to ladies' use, it was largely occupied also by gentlemen who did not enjoy the smoke which usually affects disagreeably the atmosphere of the cabin appropriated to their own sex. Our young musician knew that to children the hearts and purses of ladies are more likely to open than those of gentlemen, and this guided him.

Entering, he found every seat taken. He waited till the boat had started, and then, taking his position in the center of the rear cabin, he began to play and sing, fixing at once the attention of the passengers upon himself.

"That boy's a nuisance; he ought not to be allowed to play on the boat," muttered an old gentleman, looking up from the

columns of the Evening Post.

"Now, papa," said a young lady at his side, "why need you object to the poor boy? I am sure he sings very nicely. I like to hear him."

"I don't."

"You know, papa, you have no taste for music. Why, you went to sleep at the opera the other evening."

"I tried to," said her father, in whom musical taste had a very limited development. "It was all nonsense to me."

"He is singing the Hymn of Garibaldi. What a sweet voice he has! Such a handsome little fellow, too!"

"He has a dirty face, and his clothes are quite ragged."

"But he has beautiful eyes; see how brilliant they are. No wonder he is dirty and ragged; it isn't his fault, poor boy. I have no doubt he has a miserable home. I'm going to give him something."

"Just as you like, Florence; as I am not a romantic young damsel, I shall not follow your example.'"

By this time the song was finished, and Phil, taking off his cap, went the rounds. None of the contributions were larger than five cents, until he came to the young lady of whom we have spoken above. She drew a twenty-five-cent piece from her portemonnaie, and put it into Phil's hand, with a gracious smile, which pleased the young fiddler as much as the gift, welcome though that undoubtedly was.

"Thank you, lady," he said.

"You sing very nicely," she replied.

Phil smiled, and dirty though his face was, the smile lighted it up with rare beauty.

"Do you often come on these boats?" asked the young lady.

"Sometimes, but they do not always let me play," said Phil.

"I hope I shall hear you again. You have a good voice."

"Thank you, signorina."

"You can speak English. I tried to speak with one of you the other day, but he could only speak Italian."

"I know a few words, signorina."

"I hope I shall see you again," and the young lady, prompted by a natural impulse of kindness, held out her hand to the little musician. He took it respectfully, and bending over, touched it with his lips.

The young lady, to whom this was quite unexpected, smiled and blushed, by no means offended, but she glanced round her to see whether it was observed by others.

"Upon my word, Florence," said her father, as Phil moved away, "you have got up quite a scene with this little ragged musician. I am rather glad he is not ten or twelve years older, or there might be a romantic elopement."

"Now, papa, you are too bad," said Florence. "Just because I choose to be kind to a poor, neglected child, you fancy all sorts of improbable things."

"I don't know where you get all your foolish romance from—not from me, I am sure."

"I should think not," said Florence, laughing merrily. "Your worst enemy won't charge you with being romantic, papa."

"I hope not," said her father, shrugging his shoulders. "But the boat has touched the pier. Shall we go on shore, or have you any further business with your young Italian friend?"

"Not to-day, papa."

The passengers vacated the boat, and were replaced by a smaller number, on their way from Brooklyn to New York.

CHAPTER VI
THE BARROOM

Phil did not leave the boat. He lingered in the cabin until the passengers were seated, and after the boat was again under way began to play. This time, however, he was not as fortunate as before. While in the midst of a tune one of the men employed on the boat entered the cabin. At times he would not have interfered with him, but he happened to be in ill humor, and this proved unfortunate for Phil.

"Stop your noise, boy," he said.

Phil looked up.

"May I not play?"

"No; nobody wants to hear you."

The young fiddler did not dare to disobey. He saw that for the present his gains were at an end. However, he had enough to satisfy the rapacity of the padrone, and could afford to stop. He took a seat, and waited quietly till the boat landed. One of the lady passengers, as she passed him on her way out of the cabin, placed ten cents in his hand. This led him to count up his gains. He found they amounted to precisely two dollars and fifty cents.

"I need not play any more," he thought. "I shall not be beaten to-night."

He found his seat so comfortable, especially after wandering

about the streets all day, that he remained on the boat for two more trips. Then, taking his violin under his arm, he went out on the pier.

It was half-past seven o'clock. He would like to have gone to his lodging, but knew that it would not be permitted. In this respect the Italian fiddler is not as well off as those who ply other street trades. Newsboys and bootblacks are their own masters, and, whether their earnings are little or great, reap the benefit of them themselves. They can stop work at six if they like, or earlier; but the little Italian musician must remain in the street till near midnight, and then, after a long and fatiguing day, he is liable to be beaten and sent to bed without his supper, unless he brings home a satisfactory sum of money.

Phil walked about here and there in the lower part of the city. As he was passing a barroom he was called in by the barkeeper.

"Give us a tune, boy," he said.

It was a low barroom, frequented by sailors and a rough set of customers of similar character. The red face of the barkeeper showed that he drank very liberally, and the atmosphere was filled with the fumes of bad cigars and bad liquor. The men were ready for a good time, as they called it, and it was at the suggestion of one of them that Phil had been invited in.

"Play a tune on your fiddle, you little ragamuffin," said one.

Phil cared little how he was addressed. He was at the service of the public, and what he chiefly cared for was that he be paid for his services.

"What shall I play?" he asked.

"Anything," hiccoughed one. "It's all the same to me. I don't know one tune from another."

The young fiddler played one of the popular airs of the day. He did not undertake to sing, for the atmosphere was so bad that he could hardly avoid coughing. He was anxious to get out into the street, but he did not wish to refuse playing. When he had finished his tune, one of those present, a sailor, cried, "That's good. Step up, boys, and have a drink."

The invitation was readily accepted by all except Phil. Noticing that the boy kept his place, the sailor said, "Step up, boy, and wet your whistle."

Phil liked the weak wines of his native land, but he did not care for the poisonous decoctions of be found in such places.

"I am not thirsty," he said.

"Yes, you are; here, give this boy a glass of brandy."

"I do not want it," said Phil.

"You won't drink with us," exclaimed the sailor, who had then enough to be quarrelsome. "Then I'll make you;" and he brought down his fist so heavily upon the counter as to make the glasses rattle. "Then I'll make you. Here, give me a glass, and I'll pour it down his throat."

The fiddler was frightened at his vehemence, and darted to the door. But the sailor was too quick for him. Overtaking Phil, he dragged him back with a rough grasp, and held out his hand for the glass. But an unexpected friend now turned up.

"Oh, let the boy go, Jack," said a fellow sailor. "If he don't want to drink, don't force him."

But his persecutor was made ugly by his potations, and swore that Phil should drink before he left the barroom.

"That he shall not," said his new friend.

"Who is to prevent it?" demanded Jack, fiercely.

"I will."

"Then I'll pour a glass down your throat, too," returned Jack, menacingly.

"No need of that. I am ready enough to drink. But the boy shan't drink, if he don't want to."

"He shall!" retorted the first sailor, with an oath.

Still holding Phil by the shoulder with one hand, with the other he took a glass which had just been filled with brandy; he was about to pour it down his throat, when the glass was suddenly dashed from his hand and broke upon the floor.

With a fresh oath Jack released his hold on Phil, and, maddened with rage, threw himself upon the other. Instantly there was a general melee. Phil did not wait to see the result. He ran to the door, and, emerging into the street, ran away till he had placed a considerable distance between himself and the disorderly and drunken party in the barroom. The fight there continued until the police, attracted by the noise, forced an entrance and carried away the whole party to the station-house, where they had a chance to sleep off their potations.

Freed from immediate danger, the young fiddler kept on his

way. He had witnessed such scenes before, as he had often been into barrooms to play in the evening. He had not been paid for his trouble, but he cared little for that, as the money would have done him no good. He would only have been compelled to pass it over to the padrone. These boys, even at a tender age, are necessarily made familiar with the darker side of metropolitan life. Vice and crime are displayed before their young eyes, and if they do not themselves become vicious, it is not for the want of knowledge and example.

It would be tedious to follow Phil in his wanderings. We have already had a glimpse of the manner in which the days passed with him; only it is to be said that this was a favorable specimen. He had been more fortunate in collecting money than usual. Besides, he had had a better dinner than usual, thanks to the apple, and a supper such as he had not tasted for months.

About ten o'clock, as he was walking on the Bowery, he met Giacomo, his companion of the morning.

The little boy was dragging one foot after the other wearily. There was a sad look on his young face, for he had not been successful, and he knew too well how he would be received by the padrone. Yet his face lighted up as he saw Phil. Often before Phil had encouraged him when he was despondent. He looked upon our young hero as his only friend; for there was no other of the boys who seemed to care for him or able to help him.

"Is it you, Filippo?" he said.

"Yes, Giacomo. What luck have you had?"

"Not much. I have only a little more than a dollar. I am so tired; but I don't dare go back. The padrone will beat me."

An idea came to Phil. He did not know how much money he had; but he was sure it must be considerably more than two dollars, Why should he not give some to his friend to make up his deficiencies, and so perhaps save him from punishment?

"I have had better luck," he said. "I have almost three dollars."

"You are always luckier than I, Filippo."

"I am stronger, Giacomo. It does not tire me so much to walk about."

"You can sing, too. I cannot sing very much, and I do not get so much money."

"Tell me just how much money you have, Giacomo."

"I have a dollar and thirty cents," said Giacomo, after counting the contents of his pockets.

Meanwhile Phil had been doing the same thing. The result of his count was that he found he had two dollars and eighty cents.

"Listen, Giacomo," he said. "I will give you enough to make two dollars."

"But then you will be beaten."

"No; I shall have two dollars and five cents left. Then neither of us will get beaten."

"How kind you are, Filippo!"

"Oh, it is nothing. Besides, I do not want to carry too much, or the padrone will expect me to bring as much every day, and that I cannot do. So it will be better for us both."

The transfer was quickly made, and the two boys kept together until they heard the clock strike eleven. It was now so late that they determined to return to their miserable lodging, for both were tired and longed for sleep.

CHAPTER VII
THE HOME OF THE BOYS

It was a quarter-past eleven when Phil and Giacomo entered the shabby brick house which they called home, for want of a better. From fifteen to twenty of their companions had already arrived, and the padrone was occupied in receiving their several contributions. The apartment was a mean one, miserably furnished, but seemed befitting the principal occupant, whose dark face was marked by an expression of greed, and alternately showed satisfaction or disappointment as the contents of the boys' pockets were satisfactory or otherwise. Those who had done badly were set apart for punishment.

He looked up as the two boys entered.

"Well, Filippo," he said, harshly, "how much have you got?"

Phil handed over his earnings. They were up to the required limit, but the padrone looked only half satisfied.

"Is that all you have?" he asked, suspiciously.

"It is all, signore."

"You have not done well this afternoon, then. When I met you at twelve o'clock you had more than a dollar."

"It was because a good signora gave me fifty cents."

The padrone, still suspicious, plunging his hands into Phil's pockets, but in vain. He could not find another penny.

"Take off your shoes and stockings," he said, still unsatisfied.

Phil obediently removed his shoes and stockings, but no money was found concealed, as the padrone half suspected. Sometimes these poor boys, beset by a natural temptation, secrete a portion of their daily earnings. Whenever they are detected, woe betide them. The padrone makes an example of them, inflicting a cruel punishment, in order to deter other boys from imitating them.

Having discovered nothing, he took Phil's violin, and proceeded to Giacomo.

"Now for you," he said.

Giacomo handed over his money. The padrone was surprised in turn, but his surprise was of a different nature. He had expected to find him deficient, knowing that he was less enterprising than Phil. He was glad to get more money than he expected, but a little disappointed that he had no good excuse for beating him; for he had one of those hard, cruel natures that delight in inflicting pain and anguish upon others.

"Take care that you do as well to-morrow," he said. "Go and get your supper."

One of the larger boys was distributing bread and cheese to the hungry boys. Nearly all ate as if famished, plain and uninviting as was the supper, for they had been many hours without food. But Phil, who, as we know, had eaten a good supper at Mrs. Hoffman's, felt very little appetite. He slyly gave his bread to one of the boys, who, on account of the small sum he brought

home, had been sentenced to go without. But the sharp eyes of the padrone, which, despite his occupation, managed to see all that was going on, detected this action, and he became suspicious that Phil had bought supper out of his earnings.

"Why did you give your bread to Giuseppe?" he demanded.

"Because I was not hungry," answered Phil.

"Why were you not hungry? Did you buy some supper?"

"No, signore."

"Then you should be hungry."

"A kind lady gave me some supper."

"How did it happen?"

"I knew her son. His name is Paolo. He asked me to go home with him. Then he gave me a good supper."

"How long were you there? You might have been playing and brought me some more money," said the padrone, who, with characteristic meanness, grudged the young fiddler time to eat the meal that cost him nothing.

"It was not long, signore."

"You can eat what is given you, but you must not waste too much time."

A boy entered next, who showed by his hesitating manner that he did not anticipate a good reception. The padrone, accustomed to judge by appearances, instantly divined this.

"Well, Ludovico," he said, sharply, "what do you bring me?"

"Pardon, padrone," said Ludovico, producing a small sum of money.

“I could not help it.”

“Seventy-five cents,” repeated the padrone, indignantly. “You have been idle, you little wretch!”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.