

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

THE CASH BOY

Horatio Alger
The Cash Boy

«Public Domain»

Alger H.

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Jr. Horatio Alger

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PREFACE

“The Cash Boy,” by Horatio Alger, Jr., as the name implies, is a story about a boy and for boys. Through some conspiracy, the hero of the story when a baby, was taken from his relatives and given into the care of a kind woman.

Not knowing his name, she gave him her husband’s name, Frank Fowler. She had one little daughter, Grace, and showing no partiality in the treatment of her children, Frank never suspected that she was not his sister. However, at the death of Mrs. Fowler, all this was related to Frank.

The children were left alone in the world. It seemed as though they would have to go to the poorhouse but Frank could not become reconciled to that.

A kind neighbor agreed to care for Grace, so Frank decided to start out in the world to make his way.

He had many disappointments and hardships, but through his kindness to an old man, his own relatives and right name were revealed to him.

CHAPTER I

A REVELATION

A group of boys was assembled in an open field to the west of the public schoolhouse in the town of Crawford. Most of them held hats in their hands, while two, stationed sixty feet distant from each other, were “having catch.”

Tom Pinkerton, son of Deacon Pinkerton, had just returned from Brooklyn, and while there had witnessed a match game between two professional clubs. On his return he proposed that the boys of Crawford should establish a club, to be known as the Excelsior Club of Crawford, to play among themselves, and on suitable occasions to challenge clubs belonging to other villages. This proposal was received with instant approval.

“I move that Tom Pinkerton address the meeting,” said one boy.

“Second the motion,” said another.

As there was no chairman, James Briggs was appointed to that position, and put the motion, which was unanimously carried.

Tom Pinkerton, in his own estimation a personage of considerable importance, came forward in a consequential manner, and commenced as follows:

“Mr. Chairman and boys. You all know what has brought us together. We want to start a club for playing baseball, like the big clubs they have in Brooklyn and New York.”

“How shall we do it?” asked Henry Scott.

“We must first appoint a captain of the club, who will have power to assign the members to their different positions. Of course you will want one that understands about these matters.”

“He means himself,” whispered Henry Scott, to his next neighbor; and here he was right.

“Is that all?” asked Sam Pomeroy.

“No; as there will be some expenses, there must be a treasurer to receive and take care of the funds, and we shall need a secretary to keep the records of the club, and write and answer challenges.”

“Boys,” said the chairman, “you have heard Tom Pinkerton’s remarks. Those who are in favor of organizing a club on this plan will please signify it in the usual way.”

All the boys raised their hands, and it was declared a vote.

“You will bring in your votes for captain,” said the chairman.

Tom Pinkerton drew a little apart with a conscious look, as he supposed, of course, that no one but himself would be thought of as leader.

Slips of paper were passed around, and the boys began to prepare their ballots. They were brought to the chairman in a hat, and he forthwith took them out and began to count them.

“Boys,” he announced, amid a universal stillness, “there is one vote for Sam Pomeroy, one for Eugene Morton, and the rest are for Frank Fowler, who is elected.”

There was a clapping of hands, in which Tom Pinkerton did not join.

Frank Fowler, who is to be our hero, came forward a little, and spoke modestly as follows:

“Boys, I thank you for electing me captain of the club. I am afraid I am not very well qualified for the place, but I will do as well as I can.”

The speaker was a boy of fourteen. He was of medium height for his age, strong and sturdy in build, and with a frank prepossessing countenance, and an open, cordial manner, which made him a general favorite. It was not, however, to his popularity that he owed his election, but to the fact that both at bat and in the field he excelled all the boys, and therefore was the best suited to take the lead.

The boys now proceeded to make choice of a treasurer and secretary. For the first position Tom Pinkerton received a majority of the votes. Though not popular, it was felt that some office was due him.

For secretary, Ike Stanton, who excelled in penmanship, was elected, and thus all the offices were filled.

The boys now crowded around Frank Fowler, with petitions for such places as they desired.

“I hope you will give me a little time before I decide about positions, boys,” Frank said; “I want to consider a little.”

“All right! Take till next week,” said one and another, “and let us have a scrub game this afternoon.”

The boys were in the middle of the sixth inning, when some one called out to Frank Fowler: “Frank, your sister is running across the field. I think she wants you.”

Frank dropped his bat and hastened to meet his sister.

“What’s the matter, Gracie?” he asked in alarm.

“Oh, Frank!” she exclaimed, bursting into tears. “Mother’s been bleeding at the lungs, and she looks so white. I’m afraid she’s very sick.”

“Boys,” said Frank, turning to his companions, “I must go home at once. You can get some one to take my place, my mother is very sick.”

When Frank reached the little brown cottage which he called home, he found his mother in an exhausted state reclining on the bed.

“How do you feel, mother?” asked our hero, anxiously.

“Quite weak, Frank,” she answered in a low voice. “I have had a severe attack.”

“Let me go for the doctor, mother.”

“I don’t think it will be necessary, Frank. The attack is over, and I need no medicines, only time to bring back my strength.”

But three days passed, and Mrs. Fowler’s nervous prostration continued. She had attacks previously from which she rallied sooner, and her present weakness induced serious misgivings as to whether she would ever recover. Frank thought that her eyes followed him with more than ordinary anxiety, and after convincing himself that this was the case, he drew near his mother’s bedside, and inquired:

“Mother, isn’t there something you want me to do?”

“Nothing, I believe, Frank.”

“I thought you looked at me as if you wanted to say something.” “There is something I must say to you before I die.”

“Before you die, mother!” echoed Frank, in a startled voice.

“Yes, Frank, I am beginning to think that this is my last sickness.”

“But, mother, you have been so before, and got up again.”

“There must always be a last time, Frank; and my strength is too far reduced to rally again, I fear.”

“I can’t bear the thought of losing you, mother,” said Frank, deeply moved.

“You will miss me, then, Frank?” said Mrs. Fowler.

“Shall I not? Grace and I will be alone in the world.”

“Alone in the world!” repeated the sick woman, sorrowfully, “with little help to hope for from man, for I shall leave you nothing. Poor children!”

“That isn’t what I think of,” said Frank, hastily.

“I can support myself.”

“But Grace? She is a delicate girl,” said the mother, anxiously. “She cannot make her way as you can.”

“She won’t need to,” said Frank, promptly; “I shall take care of her.”

“But you are very young even to support yourself. You are only fourteen.”

“I know it, mother, but I am strong, and I am not afraid. There are a hundred ways of making a living.”

“But do you realize that you will have to start with absolutely nothing? Deacon Pinkerton holds a mortgage on this house for all it will bring in the market, and I owe him arrears of interest besides.”

“I didn’t know that, mother, but it doesn’t frighten me.”

“And you will take care of Grace?”

“I promise it, mother.”

“Suppose Grace were not your sister?” said the sick woman, anxiously scanning the face of the boy.

“What makes you suppose such a thing as that, mother? Of course she is my sister.”

“But suppose she were not,” persisted Mrs. Fowler, “you would not recall your promise?”

“No, surely not, for I love her. But why do you talk so, mother?” and a suspicion crossed Frank’s mind that his mother’s intellect might be wandering.

“It is time to tell you all, Frank. Sit down by the bedside, and I will gather my strength to tell you what must be told.”

“Grace is not your sister, Frank!”

“Not my sister, mother?” he exclaimed. “You are not in earnest?”

“I am quite in earnest, Frank.”

“Then whose child is she?”

“She is my child.”

“Then she must be my sister—are you not my mother?”

“No, Frank, I am not your mother!”

CHAPTER II

MRS. FOWLER'S STORY

“Not my mother!” he exclaimed. “Who, then, is my mother?”

“I cannot tell you, Frank. I never knew. You will forgive me for concealing this from you for so long.”

“No matter who was my real mother since I have you. You have been a mother to me, and I shall always think of you as such.”

“You make me happy, Frank, when you say that. And you will look upon Grace as a sister also, will you not?”

“Always,” said the boy, emphatically. “Mother, will you tell all you know about me? I don’t know what to think; now that I am not your son I cannot rest till I learn who I am.”

“I can understand your feelings, Frank, but I must defer the explanation till to-morrow. I have fatigued myself with talking, but to-morrow you shall know all that I can tell you.”

“Forgive me for not thinking of your being tired, mother,” and he bent over and pressed his lips upon the cheek of the sick woman. “But don’t talk any more. Wait till to-morrow.”

In the afternoon Frank had a call from Sam Pomeroy.

“The club is to play to-morrow afternoon against a picked nine, Frank,” he said. “Will you be there?”

“I can’t, Sam,” he answered. “My mother is very sick, and it is my duty to stay at home with her.”

“We shall miss you—that is, all of us but one. Tom Pinkerton said yesterday that you ought to resign, as you can’t attend to your duties. He wouldn’t object to filling your place, I fancy.”

“He is welcome to the place as soon as the club feels like electing him,” said Frank. “Tell the boys I am sorry I can’t be on hand. They had better get you to fill my place.”

“I’ll mention it, but I don’t think they’ll see it in that light. They’re all jealous of my superior playing,” said Sam, humorously. “Well, good-bye, Frank. I hope your mother’ll be better soon.”

“Thank you, Sam,” answered Frank, soberly. “I hope so, too, but she is very sick.”

The next day Mrs. Fowler again called Frank to the bedside.

“Grace is gone out on an errand,” she said, “and I can find no better time for telling you what I know about you and the circumstances which led to my assuming the charge of you.”

“Are you strong enough, mother?”

“Yes, Frank. Thirteen years ago my husband and myself occupied a small tenement in that part of Brooklyn known as Gowanus, not far from Greenwood Cemetery. My husband was a carpenter, and though his wages were small he was generally employed. We had been married three years, but had no children of our own. Our expenses were small, and we got on comfortably, and should have continued to do so, but that Mr. Fowler met with an accident which partially disabled him. He fell from a high scaffold and broke his arm. This was set and he was soon able to work again, but he must also have met with some internal injury, for his full strength never returned. Half a day’s work tired him more than a whole day’s work formerly had done. Of course our income was very much diminished, and we were obliged to economize very closely. This preyed upon my husband’s mind and seeing his anxiety, I set about considering how I could help him, and earn my share of the expenses.

“One day in looking over the advertising columns of a New York paper I saw the following advertisement:

“For adoption—A healthy male infant. The parents are able to pay liberally for the child’s maintenance, but circumstances compel them to delegate the care to another. Address for interview A. M.’

“I had no sooner read this advertisement than I felt that it was just what I wanted. A liberal compensation was promised, and under our present circumstances would be welcome, as it was urgently needed. I mentioned the matter to my husband, and he was finally induced to give his consent.

“Accordingly, I replied to the advertisement.

“Three days passed in which I heard nothing from it. But as we were sitting at the supper table at six o’clock one afternoon, there came a knock at our front door. I opened it, and saw before me a tall stranger, a man of about thirty-five, of dark complexion, and dark whiskers. He was well dressed, and evidently a gentleman in station.

“‘Is this Mrs. Fowler?’ he asked.

“‘Yes, sir,’ I answered, in some surprise

“‘Then may I beg permission to enter your house for a few minutes? I have something to say to you.’

“Still wondering, I led the way into the sitting-room, where your father—where Mr. Fowler—”

“Call him my father—I know no other,” said Frank.

“Where your father was seated.

“‘You have answered an advertisement,’ said the stranger.

“‘Yes, sir,’ I replied.

“‘I am A. M.,’ was his next announcement. ‘Of course I have received many letters, but on the whole I was led to consider yours most favorably. I have made inquiries about you in the neighborhood, and the answers have been satisfactory. You have no children of your own?’

“‘No, sir.’

“‘All the better. You would be able to give more attention to this child.’

“‘Is it yours, sir?’ I asked

“‘Ye-es,’ he answered, with hesitation. ‘Circumstances,’ he continued, ‘circumstances which I need not state, compel me to separate from it. Five hundred dollars a year will be paid for its maintenance.’

“Five hundred dollars! I heard this with joy, for it was considerably more than my husband was able to earn since his accident. It would make us comfortable at once, and your father might work when he pleased, without feeling any anxiety about our coming to want.

“‘Will that sum be satisfactory?’ asked the stranger.

“‘It is very liberal,’ I answered.

“‘I intended it to be so,’ he said. ‘Since there is no difficulty on this score, I am inclined to trust you with the care of the child. But I must make two conditions.’

“‘What are they, sir?’

“‘In the first place, you must not try to find out the friends of the child. They do not desire to be known. Another thing, you must move from Brooklyn.’

“‘Move from Brooklyn?’ I repeated.

“‘Yes,’ he answered, firmly. ‘I do not think it necessary to give you a reason for this condition. Enough that it is imperative. If you decline, our negotiations are at an end.’

“I looked at my husband. He seemed as much surprised as I was.

“‘Perhaps you will wish to consult together,’ suggested our visitor. ‘If so, I can give you twenty minutes. I will remain in this room while you go out and talk it over.’

“We acted on this hint, and went into the kitchen. We decided that though we should prefer to live in Brooklyn, it would be worth our while to make the sacrifice for the sake of the addition to our income. We came in at the end of ten minutes, and announced our decision. Our visitor seemed to be very much pleased.

“‘Where would you wish us to move?’ asked your father.

“‘I do not care to designate any particular place. I should prefer some small country town, from fifty to a hundred miles distant. I suppose you will be able to move soon?’

“Yes, sir; we will make it a point to do so. How soon will the child be placed in our hands? Shall we send for it?”

“No, no,” he said, hastily. “I cannot tell you exactly when, but it will be brought here probably in the course of a day or two. I myself shall bring it, and if at that time you wish to say anything additional you can do so.”

“He went away, leaving us surprised and somewhat excited at the change that was to take place in our lives. The next evening the sound of wheels was heard, and a hack stopped at our gate. The same gentleman descended hurriedly with a child in his arms—you were the child, Frank—and entered the house.

“This is the child,” he said, placing it in my arms, “and here is the first quarterly installment of your pay. Three months hence you will receive the same sum from my agent in New York. Here is his address,” and he placed a card in my hands. “Have you anything to ask?”

“Suppose I wish to communicate with you respecting the child? Suppose he is sick?”

“Then write to A. M., care of Giles Warner, No. – Nassau Street. By the way, it will be necessary for you to send him your postoffice address after your removal in order that he may send you your quarterly dues.”

“With this he left us, entered the hack, and drove off. I have never seen him since.”

CHAPTER III

LEFT ALONE

Frank listened to this revelation with wonder. For the first time in his life he asked himself, "Who am I?"

"How came I by my name, mother?" he asked.

"I must tell you. After the sudden departure of the gentleman who brought you, we happened to think that we had not asked your name. We accordingly wrote to the address which had been given us, making the inquiry. In return we received a slip of paper containing these words: "The name is immaterial; give him any name you please. A. M.""

"You gave me the name of Frank."

"It was Mr. Fowler's name. We should have given it to you had you been our own boy; as the choice was left to us, we selected that."

"It suits me as well as any other. How soon did you leave Brooklyn, mother?"

"In a week we had made all arrangements, and removed to this place. It is a small place, but it furnished as much work as my husband felt able to do. With the help of the allowance for your support, we not only got on comfortably, but saved up a hundred and fifty dollars annually, which we deposited in a savings bank. But after five years the money stopped coming. It was the year 1857, the year of the great panic, and among others who failed was Giles Warner's agent, from whom we received our payments. Mr. Fowler went to New York to inquire about it, but only learned that Mr. Warner, weighed down by his troubles, had committed suicide, leaving no clew to the name of the man who left you with us."

"How long ago was that, mother?"

"Seven years ago nearly eight."

"And you continued to keep me, though the payments stopped."

"Certainly; you were as dear to us as our own child—for we now had a child of our own—Grace. We should as soon have thought of casting off her as you."

"But you must have been poor, mother."

"We were economical, and we got along till your father died three years ago. Since then it has been hard work."

"You have had a hard time, mother."

"No harder on your account. You have been a great comfort to me, Frank. I am only anxious for the future. I fear you and Grace will suffer after I am gone."

"Don't fear, mother, I am young and strong; I am not afraid to face the world with God's help."

"What are you thinking of, Frank?" asked Mrs. Fowler, noticing the boy's fixed look.

"Mother," he said, earnestly, "I mean to seek for that man you have told me of. I want to find out who I am. Do you think he was my father?"

"He said he was, but I do not believe it. He spoke with hesitation, and said this to deceive us, probably."

"I am glad you think so, I would not like to think him my father. From what you have told me of him I am sure I would not like him."

"He must be nearly fifty now—dark complexion, with dark hair and whiskers. I am afraid that description will not help you any. There are many men who look like that. I should know him by his expression, but I cannot describe that to you."

Here Mrs. Fowler was seized with a very severe fit of coughing, and Frank begged her to say no more.

Two days later, and Mrs. Fowler was no better. She was rapidly failing, and no hope was entertained that she would rally. She herself felt that death was near at hand and told Frank so, but he found it hard to believe.

On the second of the two days, as he was returning from the village store with an orange for his mother, he was overtaken by Sam Pomeroy.

“Is your mother very sick, Frank?” he asked.

“Yes, Sam, I’m afraid she won’t live.”

“Is it so bad as that? I do believe,” he added, with a sudden change of tone, “Tom Pinkerton is the meanest boy I ever knew. He is trying to get your place as captain of the baseball club. He says that if your mother doesn’t live, you will have to go to the poorhouse, for you won’t have any money, and that it will be a disgrace for the club to have a captain from the poorhouse.”

“Did he say that?” asked Frank, indignantly.

“Yes.”

“When he tells you that, you may say that I shall never go to the poorhouse.”

“He says his father is going to put you and your sister there.”

“All the Deacon Pinkertons in the world can never make me go to the poorhouse!” said Frank, resolutely.

“Bully for you, Frank! I knew you had spunk.”

Frank hurried home. As he entered the little house a neighbor’s wife, who had been watching with his mother, came to meet him.

“Frank,” she said, gravely, “you must prepare yourself for sad news. While you were out your mother had another hemorrhage, and—and—”

“Is she dead?” asked the boy, his face very pale.

“She is dead!”

CHAPTER IV

THE TOWN AUTOCRAT

“The Widder Fowler is dead,” remarked Deacon Pinkerton, at the supper table. “She died this afternoon.”

“I suppose she won’t leave anything,” said Mrs. Pinkerton.

“No. I hold a mortgage on her furniture, and that is all she has.”

“What will become of the children?”

“As I observed, day before yesterday, they will be constrained to find a refuge in the poorhouse.”

“What do you think Sam Pomeroy told me, father?”

“I am not able to conjecture what Samuel would be likely to observe, my son.”

“He observed that Frank Fowler said he wouldn’t go to the poorhouse.”

“Ahem!” coughed the deacon. “The boy will not be consulted.”

“That’s what I say, father,” said Tom, who desired to obtain his father’s co-operation. “You’ll make him go to the poorhouse, won’t you?”

“I shall undoubtedly exercise my authority, if it should be necessary, my son.”

“He told Sam Pomeroy that all the Deacon Pinkertons in the world couldn’t make him go to the poorhouse.”

“I will constrain him,” said the deacon.

“I would if I were you, father,” said Tom, elated at the effect of his words. “Just teach him a lesson.”

“Really, deacon, you mustn’t be too hard upon the poor boy,” said his better-hearted wife. “He’s got trouble enough on him.”

“I will only constrain him for his good, Jane. In the poorhouse he will be well provided for.”

Meanwhile another conversation respecting our hero and his fortunes was held at Sam Pomeroy’s home. It was not as handsome as the deacon’s, for Mr. Pomeroy was a poor man, but it was a happy one, nevertheless, and Mr. Pomeroy, limited as were his means, was far more liberal than the deacon.

“I pity Frank Fowler,” said Sam, who was warm-hearted and sympathetic, and a strong friend of Frank. “I don’t know what he will do.”

“I suppose his mother left nothing.”

“I understood,” said Mr. Pomeroy, “that Deacon Pinkerton holds a mortgage on her furniture.”

“The deacon wants to send Frank and his sister to the poorhouse.”

“That would be a pity.”

“I should think so; but Frank positively says he won’t go.”

“I am afraid there isn’t anything else for him. To be sure, he may get a chance to work in a shop or on a farm, but Grace can’t support herself.”

“Father, I want to ask you a favor.”

“What is it, Sam?”

“Won’t you invite Frank and his sister to come and stay here a week?”

“Just as your mother says.”

“I say yes. The poor children will be quite welcome. If we were rich enough they might stay with us all the time.”

“When Frank comes here I will talk over his affairs with him,” said Mr. Pomeroy. “Perhaps we can think of some plan for him.”

“I wish you could, father.”

“In the meantime, you can invite him and Grace to come and stay with us a week, or a fortnight. Shall we say a fortnight, wife?”

“With all my heart.”

“All right, father. Thank you.”

Sam delivered the invitation in a way that showed how strongly his own feelings were enlisted in favor of its acceptance. Frank grasped his hand.

“Thank you, Sam, you are a true friend,” he said.

“I hadn’t begun to think of what we were to do, Grace and I.”

“You’ll come, won’t you?”

“You are sure that it won’t trouble your mother, Sam?”

“She is anxious to have you come.”

“Then I’ll come. I haven’t formed any plans yet, but I must as soon—as soon as mother is buried. I think I can earn my living somehow. One thing I am determined about—I won’t go to the poorhouse.”

The funeral was over. Frank and Grace walked back to the little house, now their home no longer. They were to pack up a little bundle of clothes and go over to Mr. Pomeroy’s in time for supper.

When Frank had made up his bundle, urged by some impulse, he opened a drawer in his mother’s bureau. His mind was full of the story she had told him, and he thought it just possible that he might find something to throw additional light upon his past history. While exploring the contents of the drawer he came to a letter directed to him in his mother’s well-known handwriting. He opened it hastily, and with a feeling of solemnity, read as follows:

“My Dear Frank: In the lower drawer, wrapped in a piece of brown paper, you will find two gold eagles, worth twenty dollars. You will need them when I am gone. Use them for Grace and yourself. I saved these for my children. Take them, Frank, for I have nothing else to give you. The furniture will pay the debt I owe Deacon Pinkerton. There ought to be something over, but I think he will take all. I wish I had more to leave you, dear Frank, but the God of the Fatherless will watch over you—to Him I commit you and Grace.

“Your affectionate mother,

“RUTH FOWLER.”

Frank, following the instructions of the letter, found the gold pieces and put them carefully into his pocketbook. He did not mention the letter to Grace at present, for he knew not but Deacon Pinkerton might lay claim to the money to satisfy his debt if he knew it.

“I am ready, Frank,” said Grace, entering the room. “Shall we go?”

“Yes, Grace. There is no use in stopping here any longer.”

As he spoke he heard the outer door open, and a minute later Deacon Pinkerton entered the room.

None of the deacon’s pompousness was abated as he entered the house and the room.

“Will you take a seat?” said our hero, with the air of master of the house.

“I intended to,” said the deacon, not acknowledging his claim. “So your poor mother is gone?”

“Yes, sir,” said Frank, briefly.

“We must all die,” said the deacon, feeling that it was incumbent on him to say something religious. “Ahem! your mother died poor? She left no property?”

“It was not her fault.”

“Of course not. Did she mention that I had advanced her money on the furniture?”

“My mother told me all about it, sir.”

“Ahem! You are in a sad condition. But you will be taken care of. You ought to be thankful that there is a home provided for those who have no means.”

“What home do you refer to, Deacon Pinkerton?” asked Frank, looking steadily in the face of his visitor.

“I mean the poorhouse, which the town generously provides for those who cannot support themselves.”

This was the first intimation Grace had received of the possibility that they would be sent to such a home, and it frightened her.

“Oh, Frank!” she exclaimed, “must we go to the poorhouse?”

“No, Grace; don’t be frightened,” said Frank, soothingly. “We will not go.”

“Frank Fowler,” said the deacon, sternly, “cease to mislead your sister.”

“I am not misleading her, sir.”

“Did you not tell her that she would not be obliged to go to the poorhouse?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then what do you mean by resisting my authority?”

“You have no authority over us. We are not paupers,” and Frank lifted his head proudly, and looked steadily in the face of the deacon.

“You are paupers, whether you admit it or not.”

“We are not,” said the boy, indignantly.

“Where is your money? Where is your property?”

“Here, sir,” said our hero, holding out his hands.

“I have two strong hands, and they will help me make a living for my sister and myself.”

“May I ask whether you expect to live here and use my furniture?”

“I do not intend to, sir. I shall ask no favors of you, neither for Grace nor myself. I am going to leave the house. I only came back to get a few clothes. Mr. Pomeroy has invited Grace and me to stay at his house for a few days. I haven’t decided what I shall do afterward.”

“You will have to go to the poorhouse, then. I have no objection to your making this visit first. It will be a saving to the town.”

“Then, sir, we will bid you good-day. Grace, let us go.”

CHAPTER V

A LITTLE MISUNDERSTANDING

“Have you carried Frank Fowler to the poorhouse?” asked Tom Pinkerton, eagerly, on his father’s return.

“No,” said the deacon, “he is going to make a visit at Mr. Pomeroy’s first.”

“I shouldn’t think you would have let him make a visit,” said Tom, discontentedly. “I should think you would have taken him to the poorhouse right off.”

“I feel it my duty to save the town unnecessary expense,” said Deacon Pinkerton.

So Tom was compelled to rest satisfied with his father’s assurance that the removal was only deferred.

Meanwhile Frank and Grace received a cordial welcome at the house of Mr. Pomeroy. Sam and Frank were intimate friends, and our hero had been in the habit of calling frequently, and it seemed homelike.

“I wish you could stay with us all the time, Frank—you and Grace,” said Sam one evening.

“We should all like it,” said Mr. Pomeroy, “but we cannot always have what we want. If I had it in my power to offer Frank any employment which it would be worth his while to follow, it might do. But he has got his way to make in the world. Have you formed any plans yet, Frank?”

“That is what I want to consult you about, Mr. Pomeroy.”

“I will give you the best advice I can, Frank. I suppose you do not mean to stay in the village.”

“No, sir. There is nothing for me to do here. I must go somewhere where I can make a living for Grace and myself.”

“You’ve got a hard row to hoe, Frank,” said Mr. Pomeroy, thoughtfully. “Have you decided where to go?”

“Yes, sir. I shall go to New York.”

“What! To the city?”

“Yes, sir. I’ll get something to do, no matter what it is.”

“But how are you going to live in the meantime?”

“I’ve got a little money.”

“That won’t last long.”

“I know it, but I shall soon get work, if it is only to black boots in the streets.”

“With that spirit, Frank, you will stand a fair chance to succeed. What do you mean to do with Grace?”

“I will take her with me.”

“I can think of a better plan. Leave her here till you have found something to do. Then send for her.”

“But if I leave her here Deacon Pinkerton will want to put her in the poorhouse. I can’t bear to have Grace go there.”

“She need not. She can stay here with me for three months.”

“Will you let me pay her board?”

“I can afford to give her board for three months.”

“You are very kind, Mr. Pomeroy, but it wouldn’t be right for me to accept your kindness. It is my duty to take care of Grace.”

“I honor your independence, Frank. It shall be as you say. When you are able—mind, not till then—you may pay me at the rate of two dollars a week for Grace’s board.”

“Then,” said Frank, “if you are willing to board Grace for a while, I think I had better go to the city at once.”

“I will look over your clothes to-morrow, Frank,” said Mrs. Pomeroy, “and see if they need mending.”

“Then I will start Thursday morning—the day after.”

About four o’clock the next afternoon he was walking up the main street, when just in front of Deacon Pinkerton’s house he saw Tom leaning against a tree.

“How are you Tom?” he said, and was about to pass on.

“Where are you going?” Tom asked abruptly.

“To Mr. Pomeroy’s.”

“How soon are you going to the poorhouse to live?”

“Who told you I was going?”

“My father.”

“Then your father’s mistaken.”

“Ain’t you a pauper?” said Tom, insolently. “You haven’t got any money.”

“I have got hands to earn money, and I am going to try.”

“Anyway, I advise you to resign as captain of the baseball club.”

“Why?”

“Because if you don’t you’ll be kicked out. Do you think the fellows will be willing to have a pauper for their captain?”

“That’s the second time you have called me a pauper. Don’t call me so again.”

“You are a pauper and you know it.”

Frank was not a quarrelsome boy, but this repeated insult was too much for him. He seized Tom by the collar, and tripping him up left him on the ground howling with rage. As valor was not his strong point, he resolved to be revenged upon Frank vicariously. He was unable to report the case to his father till the next morning, as the deacon did not return from a neighboring village, whither he had gone on business, till late, but the result of his communication was a call at Mr. Pomeroy’s from the deacon at nine o’clock the next morning. Had he found Frank, it was his intention, at Tom’s request, to take him at once to the poorhouse. But he was too late. Our hero was already on his way to New York.

CHAPTER VI

FRANK GETS A PLACE

“So this is New York,” said Frank to himself, as he emerged from the railway station and looked about him with interest and curiosity.

“Black yer boots? Shine?” asked a bootblack, seeing our hero standing still.

Frank looked at his shoes. They were dirty, without doubt, but he would not have felt disposed to be so extravagant, considering his limited resources, had he not felt it necessary to obtain some information about the city.

“Yes,” he said, “you may black them.”

The boy was on his knees instantly and at work.

“How much do you make in a day?” asked Frank.

“When it’s a good day I make a dollar.”

“That’s pretty good,” said Frank.

“Can you show me the way to Broadway?”

“Go straight ahead.”

Our hero paid for his shine and started in the direction indicated.

Frank’s plans, so far as he had any, were to get into a store. He knew that Broadway was the principal business street in the city, and this was about all he did know about it.

He reached the great thoroughfare in a few minutes, and was fortunate enough to find on the window of the corner store the sign:

“A Boy Wanted.”

He entered at once, and going up to the counter, addressed a young man, who was putting up goods.

“Do you want a boy?”

“I believe the boss wants one; I don’t. Go out to that desk.”

Frank found the desk, and propounded the same question to a sandy-whiskered man, who looked up from his writing.

“You’re prompt,” he said. “That notice was only put out two minutes ago.”

“I only saw it one minute ago.”

“So you want the place, do you?”

“I should like it.”

“Do you know your way about the city?”

“No, sir, but I could soon find out.”

“That won’t do. I shall have plenty of applications from boys who live in the city and are familiar with the streets.”

Frank left the store rather discomfited.

He soon came to another store where there was a similar notice of “A Boy Wanted.” It was a dry goods store.

“Do you live with your parents?” was asked.

“My parents are dead,” said Frank, sadly.

“Very sorry, but we can’t take you.”

“Why not, sir?”

“In case you took anything we should make your parents responsible.”

“I shouldn’t take anything,” said Frank, indignantly.

“You might; I can’t take you.”

Our hero left this store a little disheartened by his second rebuff.

He made several more fruitless applications, but did not lose courage wholly. He was gaining an appetite, however. It is not surprising therefore, that his attention was drawn to the bills of a restaurant on the opposite side of the street. He crossed over, and standing outside, began to examine them to see what was the scale of prices. While in this position he was suddenly aroused by a slap on the back.

Turning he met the gaze of a young man of about thirty, who was smiling quite cordially.

“Why, Frank, my boy, how are you?” he said, offering his hand.

“Pretty well, thank you,” said our hero bewildered, for he had no recollection of the man who had called him by name.

The other smiled a little more broadly, and thought:

“It was a lucky guess; his name is Frank.”

“I am delighted to hear it,” he continued. “When did you reach the city?”

“This morning,” said the unsuspecting Frank.

“Well, it’s queer I happened to meet you so soon, isn’t it? Going to stay long?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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