ALGER HORATIO JR.

FROM FARM TO FORTUNE; OR, NAT NASON'S STRANGE EXPERIENCE

Horatio Alger

From Farm to Fortune; or, Nat Nason's Strange Experience

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=34842550
From Farm to Fortune; or, Nat Nason's Strange Experience:

Содержание

Jr. Horatio Alger
From Farm to Fortune; or, Nat Nason's Strange Experience

PREFACE

Nat Nason was a poor country boy with a strong desire to better his condition. Life on the farm was unusually hard for him, and after a quarrel with his miserly uncle, with whom he resided, he resolved to strike out for himself.

Nat was poor and it was a struggle to reach the great city, where the youth trusted that fame and fortune awaited him.

The boy obtained, by accident, a fair sum of money and with this he resolved to go into a business of some kind. But a sharper quickly relieved him of his wealth, and opened Nat's eyes to the fact that he was not as shrewd as he had thought himself to be.

The lesson proved a valuable one, and from that moment the country boy did his best to not alone win success but to deserve it. He worked hard, often in the midst of great difficulties, and what the outcome of his struggle was, will be found in the pages which follow.

In penning this tale the author has endeavored to show the difference between life in a quiet country place and in a great bustling city, and especially as that difference shows itself to the eyes of a country boy. Many country lads imagine that to go to the city and win success there is easy; perhaps they will not think it so easy after they have read of what happened to Nat Nason. More than once, in spite of his grit and courage, Nat came close to making a complete failure of what he had started out to do, and his success in the end was perhaps after all not as great as he had anticipated when first striking out.

CHAPTER I
NAT ON THE FARM

"Nat, where have you been?"

"Been fishing," answered the boy addressed, a sturdy youth of sixteen, with clear blue eyes and sandy hair.

"Fishin'? And who said you could go fishin'?" demanded Abner Balberry, in his high, nervous voice.

"Nobody said I could go," answered the boy, firmly. "But I thought you'd all like to have some fish for supper, so I went."

"Humph! I suppose you thought as how them taters would hoe themselves, eh?" sneered Abner Balberry, who was not only Nat's uncle, but also his guardian.

"I hoed the potatoes," was the boy's answer. "Got through at half-past two o'clock."

"If you got through so soon you didn't half do the job," grumbled the man. "I ain't goin' to have you wastin' your time on no fishin', understand?"

"Can't I go fishing at all?"

"Not when there is work to do on this farm."

"But I did my work, Uncle Abner."

"An' I say it couldn't have been done right if ye didn't take proper time fer it, Nat Nason! I know you! You are gittin' lazy!"

"I'm not lazy!" cried the boy, indignantly. "I work as hard as

anybody around here."

"Don't you talk back to me!" ejaculated Abner Balberry. "I say you are lazy, an' I know. How many fish did ye catch?"

"I only got two. They didn't bite very well to-day."

"Humph! A-wastin' three hours an' more jest to catch two little fish! If I let you go your own way, Nat Nason, you'll be in the poorhouse before you die."

"I don't think I'll ever get to the poorhouse, Uncle Abner."

"Oh, don't talk back! Take your fish to the kitchen an' then git down to the barnyard as quick as you can. You've got to help me milk to-night. An' don't you dare to go fishin' ag'in, unless I give ye permission," added Abner Balberry, as he strode off towards the barn.

A sharp answer arose to Nat Nason's lips, but he checked it and turned toward the kitchen of the farmhouse.

"What luck did you have, Nat?" questioned the did woman who was Abner Balberry's housekeeper.

"Not much luck, Mrs. Felton. They didn't bite very well to-day."

"What was Mr. Balberry saying to you?" went on Mrs. Felton, who had been housekeeper at the place since the death of Mrs. Balberry, two years before.

"He was mad because I went fishing."

"I am sorry to hear that."

"Uncle Abner never wants me to have any sport."

"He's a hard-working man, and always was, Nat. He doesn't

believe in wasting time."

"But a fellow ought to have a little time off."

"That may be true."

"Don't you think I work pretty hard for a boy of my age?"

"I do, Nat."

"Uncle Abner wants to make a regular slave out of a fellow."

"Didn't he say you were to help him milk to-night?"

"Yes, and I might as well get at it right away. If I don't, he'll give me another jawing," answered the boy, and placing his fish on a bench, he strode off toward the barnyard.

Nat Nason was an orphan, the only child of Mr. William Nason, who had been a brother to the late Mrs. Balberry. The boy's father had been killed in a runaway and his mother had never gotten over the shock of the sudden death.

When the youth found himself an orphan he was taken in by his Aunt Mary, who did what she could for him. The Nasons had not been rich, so there was little or no money coming to Nat. From the start he was told that he must earn his own living, and this he proceeded to do to the best of his ability.

The death of his Aunt Mary was almost as much of a blow to the lad as the loss of his mother, for it left him under the entire charge of his uncle, Abner Balberry. The latter had no children of his own and he made Nat work as hard as if he were a full-grown man.

The Balberry farm was located in Ohio, not far from the town of Caswell. It consisted of one hundred acres of good land, with

a house and several outbuildings. Among his neighbors Abner Balberry was considered the meanest man in the district. Abner himself thought he was a pretty good man and he counted himself a real "pillow" of the church, as he expressed it.

For two years life on the Balberry farm had been one continual grind to Nat Nason. He was expected to work from morning to night, and such a thing as a whole day off was utterly unknown to him. He received next to nothing in the way of spending money.

"I'll save the money fer ye," Abner Balberry would say, when questioned on the subject. "'Tain't good fer boys to have too much cash on hand. It makes 'em reckless."

"But you never give me anything," had been Nat's answer.

"Never mind—I'm a-givin' you a good home an' good eatin'," was the answer.

The good home and good fare were something to be questioned. Nat's room was a small one under the roof, his clothing usually made over from the garments worn by Mr. Balberry, and such a thing as an elaborate table was unknown on the farm. Many times Mrs. Felton had wished to cook more, or make some fancy dishes, but Abner Balberry had always stopped her from doing such a thing.

"Plain fare is good enough," he would say. "An' if ye eat too much it only brings on the dyspepsy." More than once Nat went to bed feeling positively hungry.

When Nat reached the barnyard he found his uncle already there with the milk pails and milking an old white cow called

Sukey.

"Go on down the lane and drive up Jule," cried Abner Balberry, without stopping his milking. "She just went down that way."

"All right," answered Nat, and passing through the barnyard he hurried down the lane mentioned.

Jule was a new cow that the farmer had purchased a week before. She did not seem inclined to herd with the other animals and Nat had had quite a good deal of trouble with her before.

At the end of the lane was an orchard and here he found the cow, contentedly eating the fresh grass. She tried to get away from him, but he was too quick for the creature and soon had her turned around and headed up the lane. Then he stopped to get an apple, for his fishing trip had made him hungry and he knew that supper was still a good hour off.

"I wish I had some other kind of a job," he murmured, with a sigh. "Somehow, farming doesn't seem to be just the right thing for me. Wish I was in some big city."

"Hurry up with that cow!" cried Abner Balberry. "Do you think I'm going to stop here all night fer milkin'?"

"I'm coming!" sang out Nat. "Get along, Jule, you old slow poke!"

He gave the cow a slap on the side, and away she flew up the lane. The boy followed, finishing the apple as he went.

As it happened several cows were bunched up near the entrance to the lane and as the new cow appeared, driven by Nat,

the bunch scattered. Then Jule ran directly into the barnyard.

"Hi! hi! stop!" yelled Abner Balberry. "Drat the beast! Stop!"

But the new cow did not stop, and a moment later she stepped into a pailful of milk, and tipped it over. Then she ran against another cow that the farmer was milking. This cow swerved around, and in a twinkling Abner Balberry was thrown on his back and the milk was sent flying over him.

CHAPTER II
A QUARREL IN THE BARNYARD

The sight of Abner Balberry flat on his back, and with the milk flowing over him, was a comical one, and for the instant Nat had to laugh out-right.

"Hi! hi!" roared the farmer. "Git away! Drat the beasts! Now, Nat Nason, jest see what you've done!"

He struggled to his feet, and Nat at once became sober, for he realized that trouble was at hand.

"It's too bad, Uncle Abner–" began the youth.

"Too bad? I should say it was too bad!" cried the farmer. "An' all your fault, too!"

"I can't see how it was my fault. You told me to drive the cow up here."

"Don't tell me, Nat Nason! It's your fault. An' all that fresh milk gone to waste!" Abner Balberry gave a groan. "I don't know most what I'm a-goin' to do with you fer this."

"I can't see how it's my fault."

"You made the cows git frightened."

"No, I didn't."

"Don't tell me! Don't you know that milk is worth money?"

"Yes, but–"

"You scart thet cow out o' her wits," went on the farmer, his

rage growing as he looked at the spilt milk. "Nat Nason, I tell you, you're a bad boy!"

To this the youth made no reply.

"I'm a-goin' to teach ye a lesson fer it!"

"Shall I milk Jule?"

"Yes, an' mind ye don't spill a drop nuther!"

Silently Nat went to work, and milked not only the new cow but also two of the others. By this time milking was over, and the lacteal fluid was carried to the spring-house to cool. Then the cows were allowed to wander down to the pasture for the night.

When Nat approached the kitchen again an appetizing odor of frying fish filled the air. The boy's uncle followed him.

"Supper is ready," said Mrs. Felton, cheerfully. "You had some trouble with the cows, didn't you?" she continued.

"It was Nat's fault," grumbled Abner Balberry. "He made them run around an' upset everything. Nat, I said as how I was going to teach ye a lesson. You wash up an' go to bed at once."

"Go to bed?" queried the boy.

"Thet's what I said, didn't I?"

"Do you mean right after supper?"

"No, I mean before supper," snarled Abner Balberry.

"Oh, isn't he to have his supper first?" put in the housekeeper, timidly.

"No, he ain't."

After this abrupt declaration there was an awkward pause.

"Do you want me to go to bed without my supper?" asked Nat,

slowly.

"That's what I said."

"It isn't fair."

"Ain't it?"

"No, it isn't. It wasn't my fault that the milk was spilt, so there!"

"You say much more to me an' I'll tan yer hide well fer ye!" stormed Abner Balberry.

"Don't you want him to have none of the fish he brought in?" asked the housekeeper.

"The fish ain't worth much."

"Maybe you'd like to have all the fish yourself?" put in Nat, tartly, before he had stopped to think.

Angered at this remark the farmer turned around and caught the youth by the collar and began to shake him.

"I'll teach ye to talk back to me!" he snarled. "I'll teach ye! Now go to bed, an' be quick about it."

"I want my supper!" came doggedly from Nat. He felt that he had earned the meal and he needed it.

"Not a mouthful."

"If you don't give me my supper I won't work for you any more, Uncle Abner!"

"Wot! Goin' to talk to me like this!" screamed the farmer, and caught the boy once again. "Up to your room with ye, before I trounce ye well!"

He shook Nat fiercely, and a struggle ensued between the pair

which came to an end when a chair was overturned and then a side table on which rested some of the things for supper.

"Oh, the eating!" screamed the housekeeper, in alarm. "And the teapot is smashed!" she added, sadly.

"It's all Nat's fault," came from Abner Balberry. "He is a good-fer-nuthin', he is! Off to bed with ye, before I git my horsewhip!"

He opened the door leading to the enclosed stairs, and fearful of another attack Nat retreated. As soon as he was on the stairs, the farmer slammed the door shut and bolted it. A minute later he and Mrs. Felton heard the youth ascend the stairs to his own room.

"It was kind of hard on the boy to make him go to bed without his supper," remarked the housekeeper, as she gathered up the things on the floor.

"It's his own fault," snorted the farmer. "He's got to be took down, he has!"

"He hasn't had a mouthful since noon, and we had a light dinner, too."

"I can't help that, Mrs. Felton. I'm goin' to teach him a lesson."

"Nat is a high-spirited boy, Mr. Balberry. Maybe he won't stand for it."

"He has got to stand fer it," was the answer, from the sink, where the farmer was washing his face and hands.

"But if he won't?"

"Wot can he do, I'd like to know?"

"I'm sure I don't know—but he may do something that you

least expect."

"He won't do nuthin'," said the farmer, and sank down in his seat at the table. "He can't do nuthin'. I give him a good home, but he don't seem to a'preciate it nohow."

To this Mrs. Felton did not reply, but set the food on the table. The fish had not been spoilt, and the farmer ate all he wished of the dish.

"Why don't you eat?" he asked of the housekeeper, seeing that she had abstained from touching the fish.

"I—I don't care for it," she answered. She had in mind to save what was left and give it to Nat for his breakfast.

"That boy is gittin' too big fer his boots," went on Abner Balberry. "He acts like he was of age, an' he is only sixteen. Last week he wanted to know how soon I was goin' to pay him reg'lar wages."

"And what did you tell him?"

"Told him I'd pay him wages when he was wuth it an' not before."

"He does almost a man's work now, doesn't he?"

"Not much! Besides, don't I feed an' clothe him an' give him a comfortable home? He's got too high-falutin' notions, he has!"

"But don't you think he ought to have some money?" went on Mrs. Felton, who could be a trifle independent herself at times.

"No. Money is the ruination o' young folks. Week before last he wanted a quarter to go to the circus with, but he didn't git it."

"Almost all of the boys in this district went to the circus. Tom

Bradley told me it was very good, too."

"Humph! That Bradley boy is going to the dogs as fast as he can go."

"Deacon Slide thinks he is a very good boy."

"Well, the deacon don't know everything. I'm goin' to make Nat toe the mark until he is twenty-one. After that I'll wash my hands o' him."

The farmer finished his supper and then went out to see that everything was all right around the farm for the night. A little later he took a lamp and went upstairs. Tiptoeing his way through an upper hall he came to a pause in front of Nat's room.

"Asleep, jest as I thought," he told himself, after listening to the boy's breathing. Then he peeped into the room, to behold Nat lying under the cover of the bed, with his face turned to the wall.

"I'll give him another talkin' to in the mornin'," the farmer told himself; and then retired, with no thought of what was going to happen before the sun arose upon another day.

CHAPTER III
NAT LEAVES THE FARM

Farmer Balberry was mistaken; Nat was not asleep, nor was there any thought of sleep in the boy's mind.

The youth had not even gone to bed. He had been sitting on a chair by the open window when he had heard his uncle coming upstairs, and to deceive his relative had jumped into bed and pulled the blanket up over him.

When Nat was thrust up the stairs his mind was in a tumult. He felt that his uncle was not treating him fairly—and he wanted his supper very much.

It is bad enough to have a real grievance of any kind—it is worse when one must bear it on an empty stomach. As he made his way to his room the boy was in a savage humor and fit to do almost any deed.

"Uncle Abner is getting worse every day!" he muttered to himself. "He treats me worse than I would treat a dog!"

Sitting by the open window Nat thought of many things—of the death of his parents, and of the taking off of his aunt—and of how his miserly uncle had treated him ever since.

"It's not fair!" he told himself, over and over again. "Uncle Abner doesn't believe in giving a boy a fair show. I wish I lived with somebody else."

The more he thought over the situation the more he felt that he ought not to stand such treatment. He felt that he was entitled to his supper, and also to some spending money if not to regular wages. At the present time he had not a cent in the world.

"If I had a few dollars I might strike out for myself," he reasoned. "But I haven't even a few cents. Wonder how I could raise a few dollars?"

As said before Nat's worldly possessions were few. In his room he had some trinkets from home and also an old silver watch which had belonged to his father.

"I might sell the watch," he thought, but then decided that it would be best to keep the heirloom.

Then he thought of Jennie, the white and brown cow. As a calf she had been given to Nat by his mother, and she was now a part of the herd on the Balberry farm.

"Jennie ought to be worth twenty or twenty-five dollars," he said to himself. "That's a pile of money, for a start. Wonder how I could manage to sell her?"

Thus speculating, Nat gradually drifted around to the point where he decided that he would leave the farm at once. He had told his uncle that he wanted his supper or he would not work for the man any more, and he meant to keep his word.

By the time all was quiet around the house and he was certain both the housekeeper and his uncle had retired, Nat had settled just what he was going to do.

Making no noise, he slipped off his working clothes and put

on his best suit—something just a trifle better than the others. He also donned a clean shirt and collar and necktie and got out his best hat and shoes. Then, with his other possessions wrapped in a small bundle, and with his shoes under his arm, he tiptoed his way out of the bedchamber, along the hall, and down to the lower floor of the farmhouse.

Nat knew exactly where Mrs. Felton kept the things to eat, so it was not necessary for him to light a lamp. The use of a match revealed as much as he wanted to know, and in a short time he was devouring what was left of the fish and also some bread and butter and a generous quarter of a cherry pie, which the housekeeper had insisted upon baking the day before, somewhat against Abner Balberry's will, for the farmer would rather have sold the cherries at the store.

His meal finished, Nat hesitated for a moment, and then got out an old newspaper. Into this he wrapped half a dozen slices of bread and butter, along with a bit of cheese and two rather stale doughnuts.

"They'll come in handy for breakfast, along with an apple or two," was the way he reasoned. "Especially if I don't happen to sell the cow."

The boy's next move was to leave the house, which he did after tying his clothes and the lunch into one bundle, which he slung on a stick over his shoulder. Once outside, he put on his shoes and then made his way from the house to the barnyard, and then along the lane leading to the pasture.

The late moon was showing over the hills and the heavens were bright with stars, so it was by no means dark. As he entered the lane Nat looked back, to see if his departure from the house had been discovered.

A sight met his gaze which caused his heart to jump. A man was crossing the dooryard and coming toward the barn!

"It must be Uncle Abner!" he thought. "Perhaps he heard me leave after all!"

He looked back again, but could not see the man now, and then broke into a run. Soon a row of trees in the orchard hid both the barn and the house from view. He continued to run, however, and did not slacken his pace until he reached the pasture where the cows were at rest.

Jennie did not relish having her rest disturbed and had to be prodded several times before she would arise and move in the direction he desired. Some of the other cows wished to follow, but he drove them back.

"I only want my own," he murmured half aloud. "I don't want a thing that belongs to Uncle Abner."

Nat had expected to take to the highway which ran directly beside the house. But he was afraid that his uncle was watching for him from the barn, and so he drove Jennie along a back road, leading to another highway which was but little traveled and which had along it only a handful of farmhouses.

"He shan't catch me if I can help it," the boy told himself. "Now I've left I'm going to stay away."

Nat was still very much agitated in his mind, so no thought of sleep came to him as he trudged along, mile after mile, driving the tired cow before him. He met not a soul; and thus he progressed until three o'clock in the morning.

Boy and cow had now been on the road six hours and Jennie refused to go further. Seeing this, he turned into a small patch of woods and there tied the creature to a tree. Then, finding a sheltered nook, he threw himself down to rest and was soon fast asleep.

"Hullo, there, what are you doing here?"

Such was the demand which aroused Nat several hours later, and he sprang up to find himself confronted by a farmer boy of about his own age.

"Hullo, Sam," he answered. "I—I was driving the cow to market and I got so tired I thought I'd take a nap."

"Going to sell the cow?" asked Sam Price.

"Yes, if I can."

"Where?"

"Over to Brookville, if anybody will buy her."

"Jackson the butcher was after cows only day before yesterday."

"Then maybe I'll go and see him."

"You must have got an early start," went on Sam Price.

"I did. But I must hurry along," continued Nat, not caring to answer too many questions. "I slept too long."

"You'd better hurry. Your uncle ain't the one to let you play,

is he?"

"You're right, Sam."

"What does he want you to get for the cow?"

"It isn't his cow. She belongs to me. I had her from the time she was a little calf, and I've a right to sell her."

"Oh, yes, I remember now. Well, I hope you get a good price for her."

"I'll get as much as I can."

"Want me to go along?"

"You can go along if you wish."

"All right, I haven't anything else to do for a while."

"But I want to tell you one thing, Sam. Can you keep a secret?"

"Can I? Try me and see."

"You won't tell a soul?"

"I'll give you my word. But what's up?"

"I'm not coming back."

"What!"

"It's a fact."

"Do you mean that you are going to run away?"

"That's the plain English of it, Sam. I'm tired of living with my uncle. He doesn't treat me fairly."

"I believe that. My father thinks he is the meanest man in the State of Ohio."

"Well, I don't know about that, but he is pretty mean, I can tell you that. I'm not going to stand it any longer."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't know yet. Most likely to one of the big cities. Somehow, I think I could do better in a city than on a farm."

"Do you? Now I think a country boy has no show in a big city. He don't know the ways, and he is sure to get cheated out of his eyes—so my father says."

"They won't cheat me," said Nat, decidedly.

"Father says every big city is full of sharpers, on the watch for greenies."

"Well, they shan't catch me for a greeny," answered Nat.

Alas for poor Nat! Little did he dream of what was in store for him, and of the little trap into which he was to fall as soon as he arrived in New York City.

CHAPTER IV
ABNER BALBERRY'S DISCOVERY

"Nat!"

Abner Balberry uttered the name in a loud, clear voice and waited fully a minute for an answer.

"Nat!" he repeated. "I want you to answer me, do you hear? Nat!"

Still there was no reply, and now, in some alarm, Abner Balberry turned back into his bedchamber and donned part of his clothing.

"If that boy is moving around this house I'm goin' to know it," he murmured to himself, as he felt his way toward Nat's room. Coming to the door, he threw it open and took a step toward the bed.

As we already know, it was empty. The discovery was something of a shock to the farmer and for the moment he stood stock-still, gazing at the bed and feeling under the covers to make certain that his nephew was not really there.

"Gone!" he muttered at last. "He must be downstairs. More'n likely he went down to git somethin' to eat. Wait till I catch him! I'll tan him well!"

Hoping to catch Nat unawares, he tiptoed his way down the stairs and entered the living room. Then he passed to the kitchen

and the shed, and came back to peer into the parlor. Not a trace of the lad was to be found anywhere.

"I certainly heard him," he reasoned. "I certainly did."

"Mr. Balberry!" The call came from the housekeeper. "Are you up?"

"Yes, I am."

"Oh, all right."

"But it ain't all right! Nat's up too."

"Is he down there with you?"

"No, I don't know at all where he is. I'm a-lookin' fer him."

By this time Mrs. Felton's curiosity was aroused and she lost no time in slipping on her wrapper. When she came down she brought with her a lamp.

"Where do you suppose he went?" she asked.

"How do I know?" snarled Abner Balberry.

The housekeeper happened to glance into the pantry. She was about to utter an exclamation, but checked herself.

"What did you say, Mrs. Felton?"

"I—I didn't say anything."

"He ain't in there, is he?"

"No."

"Has he been at the victuals?"

"Not—not very much," stammered the housekeeper.

"Humph! I guess he ate as much as he wanted. Jest wait till I catch him—I'll tan him harder than he was ever tanned before!"

"Maybe he went to bed again."

"No, I jest looked into his room."

Abner Balberry unlocked the kitchen door and stepped out into the dooryard. As he did this he caught sight of somebody running swiftly down the road.

"Hi! Stop!" he yelled. "Stop, Nat, do you hear?"

To this there was no answer, and the fleeing individual merely ran the faster.

"Was it Nat?" asked the housekeeper.

"To be sure it was. Oh, wait till I lay my hands on him!" And the farmer shook his fist at the figure that was fast disappearing in the gloom.

"What's that light in the barn?" demanded Mrs. Felton, an instant later.

"Light? Where?"

"Up in the haymow."

Abner Balberry gave a glance toward the structure.

"The barn's afire!" he screamed. "Thet good-fer-nuthin' boy has set the place on fire!"

"Oh! oh!" screamed the housekeeper, and began to tremble from head to feet, for to her mind a fire was the most dreadful thing that could happen.

"I've got to git thet fire out," said the farmer, and ran toward the barn with all speed.

"Be careful, or you'll be burnt up!" screamed Mrs. Felton.

"Go on an' git the water pails!" said the farmer. "Fill everything with water. An' bring a rag carpet, an' I'll soak thet

too!"

He already had an old patch of carpet used at the doorstep in his hand, and this he soused in the watering trough as he passed. Then he ran into the open barn and mounted to the loft.

The fire was in a patch of hay at one end of the loft, close to an open window. Regardless of his personal safety, Abner Balberry leaped in and threw part of the hay out of the window. Then he began to beat out the fire with the water-soaked carpet.

"Here's some water," came timidly from below, and Mrs. Felton appeared with two pails full to the brim. He took these upstairs and dashed them on the flames.

"You look out or you'll be burnt up!" cried the housekeeper. She was trembling to such a degree that she could scarcely stand.

"Git some more water," was Abner Balberry's only reply. The thought that his barn might be totally destroyed filled him with dread, for there was no insurance on the structure—he being too miserly to pay the premium demanded by the insurance company.

More water was procured by Mrs. Felton, and at last it was apparent that the farmer was getting the best of the fire. He worked hard and did not seem to mind the fact that his eyebrows were singed and his hands slightly blistered.

"There! now I've got it!" he sighed at last.

"Are you sure?" asked the housekeeper in a faint voice.

"Yes, but I'm a-goin' to hunt around fer sparks. Git some more water."

Additional water was soon at hand, and Abner Balberry began a minute search of the whole loft, on the lookout for stray sparks. A few were found and extinguished, and then the excitement came to an end.

"How thankful I am that the barn didn't burn down," said the housekeeper, as the farmer came below and began to bathe his face and hands.

"It was hot work."

"Are you burnt much?"

"More'n I want to be. Jest wait till I catch Nat!"

"Do you think–" began the housekeeper.

"O' course I do!" snorted Abner Balberry. "Didn't I see him a-runnin' away from the barn?"

"I never thought Nat would be wicked enough to set a barn on fire."

"He was mad because I wouldn't give him no supper. He's a young rascal, he is!"

"But to burn a barn!"

"Thet boy has got to be taken in hand, Mrs. Felton. I've let him have his own way too much. I'm goin' to lay down the law good an' hard after this."

"Maybe he won't come back," suggested the housekeeper.

This thought startled the farmer and he lost no time in finishing his washing.

"I'm goin' after him," he announced. "If he thinks to run away I'll put a spoke in his wheel putty quick."

Taking another look around, to make certain that the fire was really out, Abner Balberry brought out one of his horses and hitched the animal to a buckboard, in the meantime sending the housekeeper back to the house to get his hat and coat.

"Where do you suppose you'll find him?" asked Mrs. Felton.

"Somewhere along the road most likely."

"Maybe he'll hide on you."

"He had better not. If he does that, I'll call on the squire about him."

"Can you do that?"

"O' course I can. Didn't he try to burn down the barn? The squire can make out a warrant for his arrest."

"It would be awful to have him arrested."

"Well, he brought it on himself," answered Abner Balberry, doggedly. "He had no right to try to set the barn afire. Next thing you know, Mrs. Felton, he'll be a-trying to burn us up in our beds."

"Oh, I don't think Nat would be as bad as that."

"You don't know thet boy as well as I do. He's sly an' stubborn, and he'll do 'most anything when he's crossed. But I'll fix him! Jest you wait an' see!"

"How far will you follow him?"

"As far as it's necessary. If he thinks he can git away from me he'll find out, sooner or later, he is mistaken."

"You don't know when you'll be back?"

"No. It may be I'll have to wait in town till the squire opens

his office—that is, if I can't find Nat."

"But you are going to look for him yourself first?"

"Yes."

With this answer Abner Balberry drove off in the darkness. Mrs. Felton watched him and heaved a long and deep sigh.

"Too bad!" she murmured. "If he catches Nat it will surely go hard with that boy. Well, I didn't think he was bad enough to set fire to a barn!"

CHAPTER V
THE SALE OF A COW

Totally unconscious of what had taken place at the farm after his departure, Nat, in company with his friend, Sam Price, proceeded on his way to Brookville.

On the journey Nat told his friend of many things that had happened to him and of his uncle's meanness.

"I don't wonder you want a change," said Sam. "I'd want a change myself."

At last they came in sight of Brookville, and Nat drove the cow to the yard of Jackson the butcher.

The butcher was a fat, good-natured man of middle age. But he was a shrewd business man and first-class at driving a bargain.

"What do you want, boy?" he asked of Nat.

"Do you want to buy a cow, Mr. Jackson? Sam says you were out looking for cows day before yesterday."

"I did want cows then, but I've got nearly all I want now."

"Oh, then I'll go elsewhere," answered Nat.

"Hold on, not so fast. What do you want for your cow?"

"Thirty dollars."

"Phew! you don't want much."

"She's worth it. You can milk her or use her for meat, just as you choose."

"Whose cow is she?"

"Mine."

"Yours?" And the butcher gazed at Nat curiously.

"Yes. I've owned her ever since she was a little calf."

"And now you are tired of her?"

"Not exactly that, but I want to use the money. Will you buy her?"

"Yes, but not for thirty dollars."

"How much will you give?"

"Twenty dollars."

"I don't care to sell for twenty dollars."

"That's the best I can do."

"Then I'll have to go elsewhere. Come, Jennie," and Nat turned to drive the cow from the butcher's yard again.

"Hold on!" cried the meat man. "I'll give you twenty-two dollars."

"Make it twenty-five and I'll accept. I can't take less. I ought to get thirty dollars."

There was some more talk, and in the end, the butcher agreed to pay twenty-five dollars and did so. He wanted a receipt, and Nat wrote it out for him.

"So you are Nat Nason," said the butcher. "I used to know your father. A very nice man."

"He was a nice man."

"Live with your uncle now, don't you?"

"I have been living with him, yes. Good-day, and much

obliged," returned the boy, and to avoid being questioned further he left the yard at once, followed by Sam.

"You made a good bargain on the cow," said Sam. "I reckon you got every cent she was worth."

"She was a good cow, Sam. I'm rather sorry to part with her. She was almost like a friend."

"What are you going to do next?"

"Strike out for the city."

"I wish you luck."

"You won't tell my uncle?"

"Not a word. But, say."

"Well?"

"When you get to the city write and tell me how you like it."

"I will, Sam, and you must tell me the news from home, and how my uncle gets along without me."

So it was arranged; and a few minutes later the two lads separated, and Sam Price started for home.

Brookville was on a small branch railroad running to Cleveland, and by consulting a time-table Nat learned that a train for Cleveland would leave in ten minutes. He lost no time in purchasing a ticket, and spent the rest of the time in eating some of the lunch he had brought along. With over twenty-three dollars still in his pocket he felt rich, and bought some peanuts and a cake of sweet chocolate.

When the train came along there were scarcely any passengers aboard, so he had little difficulty in getting the seat he wanted.

He sat down by a window, with his bundle beside him, and gave himself up to thinking and to looking at the scenery as it whirled past.

Nat had traveled but little on the cars, so the ride to Cleveland was intensely enjoyable. The different places passed were so interesting that he soon forgot to think about his prospects, or of what he was to do when he arrived at the city on the lake.

"Next stop is Cleveland!" cried the conductor, standing at the open doorway. "All change, for trains east and west!"

A moment later the train rolled into the smoky station, and bundle in hand, Nat left the car and stepped onto the platform. From there he walked to the street, where he gazed in some bewilderment at the crowds of people and the swiftly moving street cars.

"Paper!" cried a newsboy. "Morning paper?"

"No, I don't want any paper," answered Nat.

"All about the big fire in Chicago, boss. Take a paper?"

"Yes, I'll take one," said Nat, and passed over the necessary change. Off darted the newsboy, to be lost in the crowd on the other side of the street. Nat gazed at the paper, to find that a tenement had burned out in Chicago, with the loss of one life.

"That's not such a terrible thing—for a big city like Chicago," he mused, and then noticed that the newspaper was two days old.

"That boy stuck me!" he muttered, and a cloud crossed his face. "I wonder where he is?"

The boy could not be found, and in a moment Nat concluded

it would be a waste of time to look for him.

"He caught me for a greeny, true enough," he thought. "I've got to keep my eyes open after this."

From one street Nat passed to another, gazing into the shop windows, and wondering what he had best do next. He had at first calculated to go to New York without delay, but now thought it would do no harm to remain in Cleveland a day or two.

"Perhaps I'll never get here again," he reasoned. "And I might as well see all there is to see."

Noon found him on one of the main streets. He was now hungry again, and coming to a modest-looking restaurant, he entered and sat down at a side table.

"What will you have?" asked the waiter, coming up to him.

"Give me a regular dinner," said Nat, seeing the sign on the wall:

Regular Dinner, 11 to 2. 30 cents.

The waiter walked off, and presently returned with some bread and butter.

"Pea or tomato soup?" he asked.

"What's that?" questioned the boy.

"Pea or tomato soup?"

"I don't want any soup—I want a regular dinner."

At this the waiter smiled, for he saw that Nat was green.

"We serve soup first—if the customer wants it."

"And what do you serve after that?"

"One kind of meat, vegetables, coffee or milk, and pie or

pudding."

"Oh! Well bring me the meat and other stuff. I never cared for soup anyway."

"Roast beef or lamb?"

"Roast beef."

The waiter went off, and presently Nat was supplied with all he cared to eat. The food was good, and he took his time, finishing off with a piece of lemon meringue pie, a dainty of which he was exceedingly fond, but which Mrs. Felton had seldom dared to make.

"Thirty cents, but I guess it was worth it," he thought, as he left the restaurant.

Nat had never seen Lake Erie, and toward the middle of the afternoon he walked down in the direction of the water. The shipping interested him greatly, and it was dark before he realized that the day was gone without anything definite being accomplished.

"Gracious, how time flies when one is in the city!" he thought. "To-morrow, I must make up my mind what to do next. If I don't, I'll have my money spent, and no job, either."

As it grew darker the boy felt the necessity of looking for accommodations for the night. Seeing a sign on a house, Furnished Rooms by the Day, Week, or Month, he ascended the stoop, and rang the bell. A young Irish girl answered his summons.

"Can I get a bed for to-night?" asked Nat.

"I guess yez can—I'll call Mrs. O'Hara," said the girl.

The landlady soon showed herself, and said she could let Nat have a hall room for fifty cents. To the boy's notion this seemed rather high.

"I can't take less," said Mrs. O'Hara, firmly.

"Very well; I'll take the room for to-night," answered Nat. "Can I put my bundle up there now?"

"To be sure."

Fortunately for Nat, the room proved clean and well-kept, and the bed was better than the one he had used at the farm. Tired out, the boy slept soundly until seven o'clock, when he lost no time in dressing and going below.

"Will you want the room again to-night, Mr. Nason?" asked the landlady.

"I don't think so," answered Nat. It made him feel a foot taller to be addressed as Mr. Nason. "If I want it, I'll let you know by supper time."

"Very well."

With his bundle under his arm, Nat left the house, and walked down the street toward one of the main thoroughfares of Cleveland. Then he stopped at a restaurant for breakfast.

"Now, I've got to make up my mind what to do," he told himself. "Maybe I had better go back to the depot and see about a train and the fare to New York."

After making several false turns, the boy found his way to the depot, and there hunted up the ticket office, and procured a

time-table. He was just looking into the time-table when he felt a heavy hand placed on his shoulder.

"So I've found you, have I?" came harshly from Abner Balberry. "You young rascal, what do you mean by runnin' away?"

CHAPTER VI
NAT ON LAKE ERIE

Nat was so completely astonished by the unexpected appearance of his uncle and guardian, that for the moment he did not know what to say or do.

"Thought you was goin' to run away, didn't you?" continued Abner Balberry, with a gleam of triumph in his small eyes.

"Let go of me," answered Nat, trying to pull away.

"I ain't a-goin' to, Nat Nason. You're a-goin' back with me, an' on the next train."

"I'm not going back, Uncle Abner."

"What!"

"I said I'm not going back, so there," repeated Nat, desperately. "You don't treat me half decently, and I'm going to strike out for myself."

"Jest to hear the boy! You are a-goin' back. Nice doin's, I must say! What did you mean by trying to burn down the barn?"

"Burn down the barn?"

"That's wot I said."

"I never burned down any barn. Is the barn burned down?"

"No; because I put out the fire."

"When was this?"

"You know well enough."

"I don't know a word about it, Uncle Abner."

"You set the barn afire."

"Never!"

"You did! An' you've got to go back."

"Uncle Abner, I never set fire to a thing," gasped Nat. "I left because you worked me to death, and because you wouldn't let me have my supper. After this, I'm going to earn my own living in my own way."

"You're goin' back," snarled the farmer.

For answer, Nat gave a sudden jerk and pulled himself from his uncle's grasp. Then he started to run from the depot at his best speed.

"Hi! stop!" yelled the farmer. "Stop thet boy. I'm his guardian, and he is runnin' away from me."

The cry was taken up on all sides, and soon a crowd of a dozen men and boys were in pursuit of Nat, who by this time had reached the street.

Nat had always been fleet of foot, and now a new fear lent strength to his flying feet. He was accused of setting fire to the barn! Perhaps his uncle would have him arrested and sent to prison.

"He shan't do it," he muttered. "I must get away, somehow."

Down one street after another went poor Nat, with the crowd behind him growing steadily larger. Some thought they were after a thief, and some a murderer, and soon two policemen joined in the chase.

Coming to an alley way, Nat darted through it to a side street, and then around a corner to a thoroughfare leading down to the docks. This threw the crowd off the trail for a moment, and gave him a brief breathing spell.

Reaching the docks fronting the lake, the boy came to a halt. Not far off was a steamboat, getting ready to cast off.

"Where does that boat go to?" he asked of a man standing near.

"That's the boat for Buffalo," was the answer.

"And when does she leave?"

"She is getting ready to leave now."

"Then that's the boat I want," came from Nat, and he rushed to the end of the dock, and up the gangplank with all speed. A moment later the gangplank was withdrawn, and the steamboat started on her trip down Lake Erie.

Trembling with excitement, Nat entered the cabin, and from the window looked back to the dock they had just left. It was not long before he beheld Abner Balberry and several others, on the dock, gazing up and down in perplexity. They did not know whether the boy was on the boat, or in hiding close by.

"What a narrow escape!" thought Nat, when the dock had faded from view. "In another minute Uncle Abner would have collared me, sure."

"Had to run pretty hard to catch the boat, didn't you?" remarked a man sitting beside him.

"Yes," answered Nat.

"Bound for Buffalo, I suppose."

"Yes."

"First visit to that city?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's a fine city to visit, I can tell you. Of course you'll run up to look at Niagara Falls?"

"I hadn't thought of that."

"It's not very far away, you know. The trolley cars run from Buffalo to the Falls and back."

"Then I'll certainly have to go up and look at the Falls," answered the boy.

He was too excited to make up his mind just what to do next, and so walked away from the man. Finding a secluded corner of the deck, he sat down on a camp stool to think the situation over.

The fact that his uncle believed he had tried to burn down the barn filled him with alarm. Certainly, the building must have been set on fire, but who had done the base deed?

"Perhaps that man I took to be Uncle Abner!" he cried to himself. Up to the present time he had forgotten about seeing that individual in the semi-darkness while on the way to get the cow.

The weather was warm and pleasant, and had Nat been less disturbed in mind he would have enjoyed the trip on Lake Erie thoroughly. Even as it was, he gazed at the great lake in wonder.

"If this is only a lake, what must the ocean be!" he mused. "When I get to New York, I'll have to take a trip to Coney Island, or some other ocean beach."

The boat Nat was on carried more freight than passengers, and made half a dozen landings before Buffalo was reached. But the boy thought the craft one of the best on the lake, and wandered over her from end to end with great interest. At noon he purchased a light lunch, and at supper time a sandwich and a glass of milk.

"They charge pretty stiff prices on a boat," he thought, after paying over his money. "I've got to live cheaper after this, or I'll be a beggar before I settle down and find something to do."

It was dark when Buffalo was reached, and here Nat was more bewildered than he had been on arriving at Cleveland. He followed the crowd up from the dock to one of the main streets, and then stood on a corner, not knowing which way to turn, or what to do next.

"What a terrible lot of people and cars!" was his mental comment. "It's enough to make a fellow's head swim."

He felt that it would be useless to try to do anything that night, and so looked around for a cheap lodging house. Soon he found a place where beds could be had for twenty-five cents a night, and he entered.

"I'll take a bed," he said to the clerk at the desk.

"All right; twenty-five cents." And as the money was passed over, the clerk continued: "Leave your valuables at the desk."

"Valuables?" repeated Nat. "You mean my watch?"

"You may leave it if you wish, and your money too."

"No; I'll keep them on me," answered the boy.

He was conducted to an elevator, and soon found himself on the fifth story of the building. Here was a big room containing twenty cots, ten on each side.

"Here you are; No. 134," said the attendant, and left him.

On several of the cots some men were already sleeping. They were not pleasant-appearing individuals, and a few of them smelt strongly of liquor.

"This isn't so nice," thought Nat. "But it's cheap, and that's something."

Before retiring, he placed his bundle and his clothing under his pillow, and stowed away his watch and money on his person.

Nat's actions were closely watched by a man who occupied the next cot on the left. He was a seedy individual, with a face that was horribly pockmarked.

"Reckon he's got a dollar or two," thought this man, who was known among his associates by the name of Checkers.

Despite his surroundings, Nat slept soundly throughout the night, and continued to sleep long after the sun came up.

While it was still early, Bob Checkers arose, dressed himself, and slipped over to the sleeping boy's side. Making certain that nobody was watching him, the fellow began a rapid search of Nat's clothing, and afterwards of the lad's person.

Soon he came in contact with a small roll of bills, which Nat, in the belief that they would be quite secure, had placed in a pocket of his shirt. A thrill of delight shot through the fellow as his hand touched them.

"Dis is de best yet!" he murmured to himself, and placing the bills in his own pocket, he left the lodging house almost on a run.

CHAPTER VII
AN ADVENTURE AT NIAGARA FALLS

When Nat awoke it was so late that he leaped up and dressed with all possible speed.

"I've got to get a hustle on me, if I mean to do anything," he told himself. "It won't do to dream away one day after another."

He was anxious to get to New York, to try his luck, but being so close to Niagara Falls, he decided to run up to that great wonder, and look at it before striking out for the metropolis.

He had some loose change in his pocket, and did not immediately miss the roll of bills which the sneak thief had so cleverly abstracted from his person.

Leaving the lodging house, he looked up a cheap restaurant, where he obtained a cup of coffee and some rolls for ten cents. Then, seeing a car marked Niagara Falls, he jumped on board.

"Do you go to the Falls?" he asked of the conductor.

"Certainly."

Trolley riding was new to him, and he thoroughly enjoyed the trip, which lasted the best part of two hours. The car landed him on the main street of Niagara Falls, and he was told that the Falls themselves were just beyond the public park. Listening, he could readily hear the thunder of the waters—a thunder that goes on

day and night, and has for ages.

Feeling dry, he treated himself to a glass of soda, and then asked permission to leave his bundle in the shop where he made the purchase.

"All right," said the proprietor. "Leave it there, with your name on it," and Nat did as requested.

He was soon down in the public park, and then went out on Goat Island. The great falls were a revelation to him—just as they are to all visitors—and he remained for a long time in one spot, gazing first at the American Falls, and then at the Horseshoe or Canadian Falls.

"What an awful mass of water!" was his thought. "How grand! How very grand!"

From Goat Island, Nat walked over to the Three Sisters. On the last of the Three Sisters he sat down on a great rock to look at the rushing and swirling rapids—a sight which to many is as grand as that of the Falls themselves.

"No boat could ever live in that river," he thought, and he was right.

Sitting on a rock he got to thinking of his financial affairs, and felt in his clothing for his bills, to count them over.

When he realized that the money was gone, a sudden cold sweat came out on his brow. He looked around him, and gave a groan.

"I must have dropped the bills somewhere," he muttered. "But where?" Never once did he imagine that he had been robbed, and

it may be added here, he never learned the truth.

To look for the money would have been a hopeless task, and Nat did not attempt it. Having gazed around on the rocks, he sat down to review the situation.

"Just twenty-two cents left," he mused, as he counted over his change. "That won't do more than buy a dinner. And what am I to do after it is gone? What a fool I was not to take care of my money. I'm a regular greeny, after all!"

Nat was greatly depressed in spirits, and he gave a sigh that seemed to come from his very soul. Then, gazing up once more, he gave a quick cry of alarm.

A fashionably dressed young man had appeared before him, wearing a button-hole bouquet, and light tan gloves. The fellow had a wild look in his eyes, and was on the point of throwing himself headlong into the swiftly flowing rapids.

"Don't!" screamed Nat, and with one mighty leap, he caught the fashionably dressed young man by the arm, and forcibly hauled him backwards.

"Let—let me go!" was the frightened return. "I—I—let me go!"

"You shan't throw yourself in the rapids!" said Nat. He held the young man tightly. "It's death to do that! Don't you know it?"

"Yes, I know it," was the unsteady answer. Then of a sudden the young man sank down in a heap on the rocks. "Great Heavens! what a narrow escape!"

He was close to fainting, and Nat supported him until he

appeared to grow calmer. The wild look left his eyes, and they filled instead with tears.

"I—I was going to—to–" He did not finish. "You—you saved me!"

"You mustn't do anything like that," said Nat. "It's awful to even think about it."

"But I haven't got anything to live for," was the jerked-out answer.

"Oh, yes, you have." And Nat glanced at the well-dressed fellow, with his gold watch and chain, and his large diamond stud. "You're not poor like I am."

"Are you poor?"

"Am I? Wouldn't you think a fellow with only twenty-two cents was poor?"

"Is that all you have?"

"Yes. I had some bank bills, but I lost them. Twenty-two cents is all I've got, but I wasn't going to commit suicide on that account."

The fashionably dressed young man gave a shiver.

"Don't mention it," he whispered. "I must have been clean crazy for the minute. Let us go away from the river and the falls."

"I'm willing," answered Nat, and walked from the islands to the shore park. Here they seated themselves on a bench, some distance away from the water.

"What is your name, if I may ask?"

"Nat Nason. What's yours?"

"Paul Hampton. So you've only got twenty-two cents to your name? Well, you are worse off than I am, after all. I've got money a-plenty."

"What made you dream of doing such a thing?" asked Nat, curiously.

"Would you like to hear my story? Well, it won't do any harm to tell it to you, an utter stranger, and it will relieve my mind. Maybe you can give me some advice."

"If I can I certainly will," answered Nat, promptly.

"Well, to start with," began Paul Hampton, "I am a graduate of Yale University, and a lawyer by profession. I suppose you don't think I look much like a lawyer."

"I don't know much about lawyers," answered Nat, cautiously.

"I practice in Niagara Falls, and also in Buffalo. I have not paid as much attention to the profession in the past as I intend to pay in the future."

"Maybe you don't need the money."

"That is one reason. But there is another, Nat. I fell desperately in love. The fever is at an end now. You drove it out of me, when you stopped me from jumping into the rapids."

Paul Hampton paused long enough to light a cigar. Then he leaned back, and blew a cloud of smoke into the air.

"I was a big fool. I can realize it now," he went on. "I should have passed Grace by long ago."

"Was that the name of the girl?"

"Yes. Her father is well-to-do, and gives her everything her

heart desires. Consequently, she has been leading me around like a puppy dog tied to a string."

"I see. That is not very pleasant."

"I thought I loved her, but I fancy now that I was too good for her," continued the fashionably dressed young man. "But let me tell you the whole story.

"I called on Grace for over a month, and finally told her that I loved her. She said she thought her father would never consent to our marriage. Then I asked her if she was willing to elope with me.

"I believe that angered her, but she didn't show it. She said she would think it over, and the next day sent a note saying she would be ready any time I fixed. Oh, what a fool I was to believe her!"

"And she wouldn't elope?" asked Nat.

"It was arranged that she should be in readiness the next morning at four o'clock, and that I should procure a carriage and call for her. We would drive to a minister in the next town, and be married, and then ask her father's forgiveness."

"And she backed out?"

"The morning dawned dark and misty. I had obtained from a livery stable the night before a carriage with a span of horses. At half-past three I drove within a few yards of the house, when, according to agreement, I saw a white handkerchief waving from a window.

"Very soon Grace made her appearance at the door. She was heavily cloaked and veiled, and refused to speak while I hurried

her into the carriage. Off we went at a trot towards the next town. We drew up at the door of the leading minister of the place, and I tried to assist my companion to alight from the carriage, when she fell and hurt her ankle on the curb."

"Well, that was too bad," said Nat, sympathetically.

"I asked her if she was hurt, when to my amazement she broke out into a rich Irish brogue: 'It's almost kilt I am!' said she."

"Was she Irish?"

"Irish? No! It was not Grace at all, but her cook. She had put up a cruel joke on me. And that wasn't the worst of it. Grace had told Biddy that I was in love with her, and the ignorant cook believed it."

"And what did you do then?"

"What could I do? I told Biddy it was a trick, and I had to give her ten dollars to keep from making a complaint to the police. Wasn't it dreadful?"

"Yes, it was, but if I were you, Mr. Hampton, I'd consider myself lucky to get rid of such a girl. Supposing she had married you? You would most likely be miserable all your life with her."

At these words, Paul Hampton stared at Nat.

"You are right," he answered, presently. "I was a big fool. After this I shall drop her entirely and stick to my law business."

"Perhaps some day she'll be sorry she treated you so unfairly —when she sees how you are rising in your profession."

"Hope she does. But I don't want any more to do with her," went on Paul Hampton, decidedly. "Let us talk about something

else," he added, after a pause. "Did you tell me you were worth only twenty-two cents?"

"I did."

"Do your folks live around here?"

"My parents are dead."

"Oh! Well, I want to reward you for what you did for me."

"I don't ask any reward."

"Nevertheless, you must accept something," answered the fashionably dressed young man.

CHAPTER VIII
A FRESH START IN LIFE

Nat and his newly-found friend sat in the Niagara Falls Park until nearly one o'clock, talking their affairs over. Then Paul Hampton asked the boy to go with him for dinner.

"I want to prove to you that I am not as crazy as I seemed," said the young man. "That was a sudden fit, that's all."

"Well, take my advice and don't get any more such fits," answered our hero.

Paul Hampton led the way to one of the leading hotels of the town, and showed Nat where he could wash and brush up before dining. Then the two entered the dining hall, and the youth was treated to the finest spread he had ever tasted.

"I didn't expect this, Mr. Hampton," said he, when the repast was over.

"Oh, that is not much. Do you smoke?"

"No, sir."

"I am glad to hear it. I think I smoke too much. Now, to get to business. Where are you going to from here?"

"I am going to try my luck in New York, if I can manage to get there."

"I see. Well, I'll buy you a railroad ticket. How does that strike you?"

"You are very kind."

"When do you want to start?"

"I am not particular."

"Then supposing you make it to-morrow morning? You can spend the balance of the day and the night with me. I want to do something more for you."

Nat demurred, but the young man would not listen, and in the end our hero agreed to remain in Niagara Falls until the next morning. A railroad ticket was purchased, and handed to the boy, and with it Paul Hampton passed over a five-dollar bill.

"That is for running expenses," he said. "No, don't try to refuse it, or I shall be angry with you."

As Nat's shoes were worn, the young man insisted upon purchasing another pair, and then purchased the boy some collars and a necktie, and also a new hat.

"There, now you are fixed to go to New York," said he, "and I wish you the best of luck when you get there."

"Thank you very much."

"If you have time, write to me and let me know how you are making out."

"I will."

The night was spent in a hotel close to the railroad station, and early in the morning Paul Hampton saw Nat on the train. All of the boy's possessions had been put in a neat dress-suit case, also a present from the young man.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.