ALGER HORATIO JR.

ROUGH AND READY

Horatio Alger

Rough and Ready

Alger H.

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Horatio Alger
Rough and Ready / Life Among the New York Newsboys

Dedication

TO MY DEAR FRIEND,

Theodore Seligman,

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

PREFACE

"Rough and Ready" is presented to the public as the fourth volume of the "Ragged Dick Series," and, like two of its predecessors, was contributed as a serial to the "Schoolmate," a popular juvenile magazine. Its second title, "Life among the New York Newsboys," describes its character and purpose. While the young hero may be regarded as a favorable example of his class, the circumstances of his lot, aggravated by the persecutions of an intemperate parent, are unfortunately too common, as any one at all familiar with the history of the neglected street children in our cities will readily acknowledge.

If "Rough and Ready" has more virtues and fewer faults than most of his class, his history will at least teach the valuable lesson that honesty and good principles are not incompatible even with the greatest social disadvantages, and will, it is hoped, serve as an incentive and stimulus to the young people who may read it.

New York, Dec. 26, 1869.

CHAPTER I.
INTRODUCES ROUGH AND READY

On the sidewalk in front of the "Times" office, facing Printing-House Square, stood a boy of fifteen, with a pile of morning papers under his arm.

"'Herald,' 'Times,' 'Tribune,' 'World'!" he vociferated, with a quick glance at each passer-by.

There were plenty of newsboys near by, but this boy was distinguished by his quick, alert movements, and his evident capacity for business. He could tell by a man's looks whether he wanted a paper, and oftentimes a shrewd observation enabled him to judge which of the great morning dailies would be likely to suit the taste of the individual he addressed.

"Here's the 'Tribune', sir," he said to a tall, thin man, with a carpet-bag and spectacles, who had the appearance of a country clergyman. "Here's the 'Tribune,'—best paper in the city."

"I'm glad you think so, my lad. You may give me one. It's a good sign when a young lad like you shows that he has already formed sound political opinions."

"That's so," said the newsboy.

"I suppose you've seen Horace Greeley?"

"In course, sir, I see him most every day. He's a brick!"

"A what?" inquired the clergyman, somewhat shocked.

"A brick!"

"My lad, you should not use such a term in speaking of one of the greatest thinkers of the times."

"That's what I mean, sir; only brick's the word we newsboys use."

"It's a low word, my lad; I hope you'll change it. Can you direct me to French's Hotel?"

"Yes, sir; there it is, just at the corner of Frankfort Street."

"Thank you. I live in the country, and am not very well acquainted with New York."

"I thought so."

"Indeed! What made you think so?" asked the clergyman, with a glance of inquiry, unaware that his country air caused him to differ from the denizens of the city.

"By your carpet-bag," said the boy, not caring to mention any other reason.

"What's your name, my lad?"

"Rough and Ready, sir."

"What name did you say?" asked the clergyman, thinking he had not heard aright.

"Rough and Ready, sir."

"That's a singular name."

"My right name is Rufus; but that's what the boys call me."

"Ah, yes, indeed. Well, my lad, I hope you will continue to cherish sound political sentiments until the constitution gives you the right to vote."

"Yes, sir, thank you.—Have a paper, sir?"

The clergyman moved off, and Rough and Ready addressed his next remark to a sallow-complexioned man, with a flashing black eye, and an immense flapping wide-awake hat.

"Paper, sir? Here's the 'World'!"

"Give me a copy. What's that,—the 'Tribune'! None of your Black Republican papers for me Greeley's got nigger on the brain. Do you sell many 'Tribunes'?"

"Only a few, sir. The 'World''s the paper! I only carry the 'Tribune' to accommodate a few customers."

"I wouldn't have anything to do with it." And the admirer of the "World" passed on.

"Got the 'Herald'?" inquired the next man.

"Yes, sir, here it is. Smartest paper in the city! Got twice as much news as all the rest of the papers."

"That's where you're right. Give me the 'Herald' for my money. It's the most enterprising paper in America."

"Yes, sir. James Gordon Bennett's a perfect steam-engine!"

"Ever see him?"

"Yes, sir, often. He's a brick!"

"I believe you."

"Paper, sir? 'Tribune,' sir?"

Rough and Ready addressed this question somewhat doubtfully to a carefully dressed and somewhat portly gentleman, who got out of a Fourth Avenue car, and crossed to the sidewalk where he was standing.

"Don't want the 'Tribune.' It's a little too extreme for me. Got the 'Times'?"

"Yes, sir. Here it is. Best paper in the city!"

"I am glad you think so. It's a sound, dignified journal, in my opinion."

"Yes, sir. That's what I think. Henry J. Raymond's a brick!"

"Ahem, my lad. You mean the right thing, no doubt; but it would be better to say that he is a man of statesman-like views."

"That's what I mean, sir. Brick's the word we newsboys use."

Just then a boy somewhat larger than Rough and Ready came up. He was stout, and would have been quite good-looking, if he had been neatly dressed, and his face and hands had been free from dirt. But Johnny Nolan, with whom such of my readers as have read "Ragged Dick" and "Fame and Fortune" are already acquainted, was not very much troubled by his deficiencies in either respect, though on the whole he preferred whole garments, but not enough to work for them.

Johnny was walking listlessly, quite like a gentleman of leisure.

"How are you, Johnny?" asked Rough and Ready. "Where's your blacking-box?"

"Somebody stole it," said Johnny, in an aggrieved tone.

"Why don't you get another?"

"I aint got any money."

"I never knew you when you did have," said the newsboy.

"I aint lucky," said Johnny.

"You won't be till you're a little smarter than you are now. What are you going to do?"

"I dunno," said Johnny. "I wish Mr. Taylor was in this city."

"What for?"

"He used to give me money most every day," said Johnny.

"I don't want anybody to give me money," said Rough and Ready, independently. "I can earn my own living."

"I could get a place to tend a paper-stand, if I had good clo'es," said Johnny.

"Why don't you go to work and earn enough money to buy some, then?" said the newsboy.

"I can't. I aint got no money."

"I've sold sixty papers this morning, and made sixty cents," said Rough and Ready.

"I aint made nothing," said Johnny, despondently.

"Come, I'll tell you what I'll do," said the newsboy. "Here's two 'Tribunes,' two 'Worlds' and 'Times' and three 'Heralds.' Just go round the corner, and sell 'em, and I'll give you all the profits."

"All right!" said Johnny, brightening up at the prospect of making something. "What's the news?"

"Steamboat exploded on the Mississippi! Five hundred people thrown half a mile high in the air! One man miraculously saved by falling in a mud hole! Can you remember all that?"

"Yes," said Johnny. "Give me the papers."

Johnny went round to Nassau Street, and began to cry the remarkable news which had just been communicated to him.

"That ought to sell the papers," said Rough and Ready to himself. "Anyway, Johnny's got it exclusive. There aint any other newsboy that's got it."

In about half an hour Johnny came back empty handed.

"Sold all your papers?" asked the newsboy.

"Yes," said Johnny; "but was that true about the steamboat?"

"Why?"

"'Cause people looked for it, and couldn't find it, and one man said he'd give me a lickin' if I called out news that wasn't true."

"Well, if it isn't true now, it will be some other day. Explosions is a permanent institution. Anyhow, it isn't any worse for us to cry news that aint true, than for the papers to print it when they know it's false."

Whatever may be thought of the morality of Rough and Ready's views on this subject, it must be admitted that in manufacturing news to make his papers sell, he was only imitating the example of some of our most prominent publishers. The same may be said of his readiness to adopt the political views and prejudices of his customers, for commercial profit. I may as well remark here, that, though Rough and Ready is a favorite of mine, for his energy, enterprise, and generous qualities, I do not mean to represent him as a model boy. I shall probably have to record some things of him which I cannot wholly approve. But then it is to be considered that he is a newsboy, whose advantages have been limited, who has been a familiar witness to different forms of wickedness ever since he was old enough to notice anything, and, notwithstanding, has grown up to be a pretty good boy, though not a model.

In fact, one reason why I do not introduce any model boys into my stories is that I do not find them in real life. I know a good many of various degrees of goodness; but most of them have more failings than one,—failings which are natural to boys, springing oftentimes more from thoughtlessness than actual perverseness. These faults they must struggle with, and by determined effort they will be able, with God's help, to overcome them. They have less excuse than the friendless newsboy, because more care has been bestowed upon their education and moral training.

"Here's eleven cents, Johnny," said the newsboy, after receiving from his assistant the proceeds of his sales. "Isn't it better to earn them than have somebody give them to you?"

"I dunno," said Johnny, doubtfully.

"Well, you ought to, then. I've sold fifteen more. That's seventy-five I've sold this morning. What are you going to do with your money?"

"I got trusted for breakfast at the Lodge this mornin'," said Johnny; "but I must earn some more money, or I can't buy any dinner."

"Which do you like best,—selling papers, or blacking boots?"

"I like blackin' boots. 'Taint so hard work."

"Why didn't you take care of your box?"

"I laid it down in a doorway. I guess some boy stole it."

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Johnny. I'll buy you a new box and brush, and we'll go *whacks*."

"All right," said Johnny.

As the allusion may not be understood by some of my young readers, I will explain that it is a custom among the more enterprising street boys, who are capitalists to a small amount, to set up their more needy fellows in business, on condition that they will pay half their earnings to the said capitalists as a profit on the money advanced. This is called "going whacks." It need hardly be said that it is a very profitable operation to the young capitalist, often paying fifty per cent. daily on his loan,—a transaction which quite casts into the shade the most tempting speculations of Wall Street.

It is noteworthy that these young Bohemians, lawless as they often are, have a strict code of honor in regard to such arrangements, and seldom fail to make honest returns, setting a good example in so far to older business operators.

On receiving Johnny's assent to his proposal, the newsboy proceeded to a street stand on Nassau Street, and bought the necessary articles for his companion, and then the two separated.

Johnny, confiding in his prospects of future profits, stopped at the pie and cake stand at the north-east corner of Nassau and Fulton Streets, and bought of the enterprising old woman who has presided over it for a score of years, a couple of little pies, which he ate with a good appetite. He then shouldered his box and went to business.

CHAPTER II.
LITTLE ROSE

Rough and Ready had sold out his stock of morning papers, and would have no more to do until the afternoon, when the "Evening Post" and "Express" appeared. The "Mail," "Telegram," and "News," which now give employment to so many boys, were not then in existence.

I may as well take this opportunity to describe the newsboy who is to be the hero of my present story. As already mentioned, he was fifteen years old, stoutly built, with a clear, fresh complexion, and a resolute, good-humored face. He was independent and self-reliant, feeling able to work his own way without help, and possessed a tact and spirit of enterprise which augured well for his success in life. Though not so carefully dressed as most of the boys who will read this story, he was far from being as ragged as many of his fellow-newsboys. There were two reasons for this: he had a feeling of pride, which made him take some care of his clothes, and besides, until within a year, he had had a mother to look after him. In this respect he had an advantage over the homeless boys who wander about the streets, not knowing where they shall find shelter.

But, within a year, circumstances had changed with our young hero. His mother had been left a widow when he was nine years old. Two years later she married a man, of whom she knew comparatively little, not from love, but chiefly that she might secure a comfortable support for her two children. This man, Martin, was a house-carpenter, and was chiefly employed in Brooklyn and New York. He removed his new wife and the children from the little Connecticut village, where they had hitherto lived, to New York, where he found lodgings for them.

In the course of a few months, she found that the man she had so hastily married had a violent, and even brutal, temper, and was addicted to intemperate habits, which were constantly interfering with his prospects of steady employment. Instead of her care and labor being lessened, both were increased. The lodgings to which Martin carried his wife, at first, were respectable, but after a while there was a difficulty about the rent, and they were obliged to move. They moved frequently, each time compelled to take dirtier and shabbier accommodations.

Rufus was soon taken from school, and compelled, as a newsboy, to do his part towards supporting the family. In fact, his earnings generally amounted to more than his stepfather's, who only worked irregularly. A year before the date of our story, Mrs. Martin died, solemnly intrusting to her son the charge of his little sister Rose, then six years old.

"Take good care of her," said the dying mother. "You know what your stepfather is. Don't let him beat or ill-treat her. I trust her wholly to you."

"I'll take care of her, mother," said Rufus, sturdily. "Don't be afraid for her."

"God will help you, Rufus," said the poor mother "I am glad you are such a boy as I can trust."

"I aint so good as I might be, mother," said Rufus, touched by the scene; "but you can trust me with Rosie."

Mrs. Martin knew that Rufus was a sturdy and self-relying boy, and she felt that she could trust him. So her last moments were more peaceful than they would have been but for this belief.

After her death, Rufus continued the main support of the household. He agreed to pay the rent, —five dollars monthly,—and fifty cents a day towards the purchase of food. This he did faithfully. He found himself obliged, besides, to buy clothing for his little sister, for his stepfather, who spent his time chiefly in bar-rooms, troubled himself very little about the little girl, except to swear at her when he was irritated.

Rough and Ready gained his name partly from its resemblance in sound to his right name of Rufus, but chiefly because it described him pretty well. Any of his street associates, who attempted to impose upon him, found him a rough customer. He had a pair of strong arms, and was ready to use

them when occasion seemed to require it. But he was not quarrelsome. He was generous and kind to smaller boys, and was always willing to take their part against those who tried to take advantage of their weakness. There was a certain Tom Price, a big, swaggering street-bully, a boot black by profession, with whom Rough and Ready had had more than one sharp contest, which terminated in his favor, though a head shorter than his opponent.

To tell the truth, Rough and Ready, in addition to his strength, had the advantage of a few lessons in boxing, which he had received from a young man who had been at one time an inmate of the same building with himself. This knowledge served him in good stead.

I hope my young readers will not infer that I am an advocate of fighting. It can hardly help being brutal under any circumstances; but where it is never resorted to except to check ruffianism, as in the case of my young hero, it is less censurable.

After setting up Johnny Nolan in business, Rough and Ready crossed to the opposite side of the street, and walked up Centre Street. He stopped to buy a red-cheeked apple at one of the old women's stalls which he passed.

"Rosie likes apples," he said to himself. "I suppose she's waiting to hear me come upstairs."

He walked for about quarter of a mile, till he came in sight of the Tombs, which is situated at the north west corner of Centre and Leonard Streets, fronting on the first. It is a grim-looking building, built of massive stone. Rough and Ready did not quite go up to it, but turned off, and went down Leonard Street in an easterly direction.

Leonard Street, between Centre and Baxter Streets, is wretched and squalid, not as bad perhaps as some of the streets in the neighborhood,—for example, Baxter Street,—but a very undesirable residence.

Here it was, however, that our hero and his sister lived. It was not his own choice, for he would have gladly lived in a neat, clean street; but he could not afford to pay a high rent, and so was compelled to remain where he was.

He paused in front of a dilapidated brick building of six stories. The bricks were defaced, and the blinds were broken, and the whole building looked miserable and neglected. There was a grocery shop kept in the lower part, and the remaining five stories were crowded with tenants, two or three families to a floor. The street was generally littered up with old wagons, in a broken-down condition, and odors far from savory rose from the garbage that was piled up here and there.

Crowds of pale, unhealthy-looking children, with dirty faces, generally bare-headed and bare-footed, played about, managing, with the happy faculty of childhood, to show light-hearted gayety, even under the most unpromising circumstances.

Rough and Ready, who was proud of his little sister, liked to have her appear more decently clad than most of the children in the street. Little Rose never appeared without a bonnet, and both shoes and stockings, and through envy of her more respectable appearance, some of the street girls addressed her with mock respect, as Miss Rose. But no one dared to treat her otherwise than well, when her brother was near, as his prowess was well known throughout the neighborhood.

Our hero dashed up the dark and rickety stair case, two stairs at a time, ascending from story to story, until he stood on the fifth landing.

A door was eagerly opened, and a little girl of seven called out joyfully:—

"Is it you, Rufus?"

At home, Rough and Ready dropped his street nickname, and was known by his proper appellation.

"Yes, Rosie. Did you get tired of waiting?"

"I'm always tired of waiting. The mornings seem so long."

"Yes, it must seem long to you. Did you go out and play?"

"Only a few minutes."

"Didn't you want to stay?"

The little girl looked embarrassed.

"I went out a little while, but the girls kept calling me Miss Rose, and I came in."

"I'd like to hear 'em!" said Rufus, angrily.

"They don't do it when you are here. They don't dare to," said Rose, looking with pride at her brother, whom she looked upon as a young hero.

"They'd better not," said the newsboy, significantly. "They'd wish they hadn't, that's all."

"You see I wore my new clothes," said Rose, by way of explanation. "That made them think I was proud, and putting on airs. But they won't do it again."

"Why not?" asked her brother, puzzled.

"Because," said Rose, sadly, "I shan't wear them again."

"Shan't wear them!" repeated Rough and Ready. "Are you afraid to?"

"I can't."

"Why can't you?"

"Because I haven't got them to wear."

Rose's lip quivered as she said this, and she looked ready to cry.

"I don't understand you, Rosie," said the newsboy, looking perplexed. "Why haven't you got them, I should like to know?"

"Because father came home, and took them away," said the little girl.

"*What!*" exclaimed Rough and Ready, quickly. "Took them away?"

"Yes."

"What did he do that for?" said the boy, angrily.

"He said he shouldn't let you waste your money in buying nice clothes for me. He said that my old ones were good enough."

"When did he take them away?" said the boy, his heart stirred with indignation.

"Only a little while ago."

"Do you know where he took them, Rosie?"

"He said he was going to take them to Baxter Street to sell. He said he wasn't going to have me dressed out like a princess, while he hadn't a cent of money in his pocket."

Poor Rufus! He had been more than a month saving up money to buy some decent clothes for his little sister. He had economized in every possible way to accomplish it, anticipating her delight when the new hat and dress should be given her. He cared more that she should appear well than himself, for in other eyes, besides her brother's, Rose was a charming little girl. She had the same clear complexion as her brother, an open brow, soft, silken hair hanging in natural curls, fresh, rosy cheeks in spite of the unhealthy tenement-house in which she lived, and a confiding look in her dark blue eyes, which proved very attractive.

Only the day before, the newsboy had brought home the new clothes, and felt abundantly rewarded by the delight of his little sister, and the improvement in her appearance. He had never before seen her looking so well.

But now—he could not think of it without indignation—his intemperate stepfather had taken away the clothes which he had worked so hard to buy, and, by this time, had probably sold them for one quarter of their value at one of the old-clothes shops in Baxter Street.

"It's too bad, Rosie!" he said. "I'll go out, and see if I can't get them back."

While he was speaking, an unsteady step was heard on the staircase.

"He's coming!" said Rose, with a terrified look.

A hard and resolute look came into the boy's face, as, turning towards the door, he awaited the entrance of his stepfather.

CHAPTER III.
A SUDDEN MOVE

Presently the door was opened, and James Martin entered with an unsteady step. His breath was redolent with the fumes of alcohol, and his face wore the brutish, stupid look of one who was under the influence of intoxication. He was rather above the middle height, with a frame originally strong. His hair and beard had a reddish tinge. However he might have appeared if carefully dressed, he certainly presented an appearance far from prepossessing at the present moment.

Rough and Ready surveyed his stepfather with a glance of contempt and disgust, which he did not attempt to conceal. Rose clung to his side with a terrified look.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Martin, sinking heavily into a chair.

"I'm taking care of my sister," said the newsboy, putting his arm protectingly round Rose's neck.

"You'd better go to work. I can take care of her," said the stepfather.

"Nice care you take of her!" retorted the newsboy, indignantly.

"Don't you be impudent, you young rascal," said Martin, with an unsteady voice. "If you are, I'll give you a flogging."

"Don't talk to him, Rufie," said little Rose, who had reason to fear her stepfather.

"I must, Rosie," said the newsboy, in a low voice.

"What are you muttering there?" demanded the drunkard, suspiciously.

"Where are my sister's new clothes?" asked Rough and Ready.

"I don't know about any new clothes. She aint got any as I know of."

"She had some this morning,—some that I bought and paid for. What have you done with them?"

"I've sold 'em," said Martin, doggedly, his assumed ignorance ceasing. "That's what I've done with 'em."

"What did you sell them for?" demanded the newsboy, persistently.

"What business has she got with new clothes, when we haven't got enough to eat, I'd like to know?"

"If we haven't got enough to eat, it isn't my fault," said the boy, promptly. "I do my part towards supporting the family. As for you, you spend all your money for rum, and some of mine too."

"What business is it of yours?" said the drunkard, defiantly.

"I want you to bring back my sister's clothes. What have you done with them?"

"You're an impudent young rascal."

"That isn't answering my question."

"Do you want me to give you a flogging?" asked Martin, looking angrily at our hero from his inflamed eyes.

"Don't say any more to him, Rufus," said little Rose, timidly.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, stealing a little girl's clothes, and selling them for rum," said the newsboy, scornfully.

This was apparently too much for the temper of Martin, never very good. He rose from his chair, and made a movement towards the newsboy, with the purpose of inflicting punishment upon him for his bold speech. But he had drunk deeply in the morning, and since selling little Rose's clothes, had invested part of the proceeds in additional liquor, which now had its effect. He stood a moment wavering, then made a step forward, but the room seemed to reel about, and he fell forward in the stupor of intoxication. He did not attempt to rise, but lay where he fell, breathing heavily.

"O Rufus!" cried Rose, clinging still more closely to her brother, whom she felt to be her only protector.

"Don't be afraid, Rosie," said the newsboy. "He won't hurt you. He's too drunk for that."

"But when he gets over it, he'll be so angry, he'll beat me."

"I'd like to see him do it!" said the newsboy, his eye flashing.

"I'm so afraid of him, Rufus. He wasn't quite so bad when mother was alive. It's awful to live with him."

"You shan't live with him any longer, Rose."

"What do you mean, Rufus?" said the little girl, with an inquiring glance.

"I mean that I'm going to take you away," said the boy, firmly. "You shan't live any longer with such a brute."

"Where can we go, Rufus?"

"I don't know. Any place will be better than here."

"But will he let me go?" asked Rose, with a timid look at the form stretched out at her feet.

"I shan't ask him."

"He will be angry."

"Let him be. We've had enough of him. We'll go away and live by ourselves."

"That will be nice," said little Rose, hopefully, "somewhere where he cannot find us."

"Yes, somewhere where he cannot find us."

"When shall we go?"

"Now," said the newsboy, promptly. "We'll go while he is lying there, and can't interfere with us. Get your bonnet, and we'll start."

A change of residence with those who have a superfluity of this world's goods is a formidable affair. But the newsboy and his sister possessed little or nothing besides what they had on, and a very small bundle, done up hastily in an old paper on which Rough and Ready had been "stuck," that is, which he had left on his hands, contained everything which they needed to take away.

They left the room, closing the door after them, and went down the rickety stairs, the little girl's hand being placed confidingly in that of her brother. At length they reached the foot of the last staircase, and passed through the outer door upon the sidewalk.

"It's the last time you'll go into that house," said the newsboy. "You can bid good-by to it."

"Where are we going now, Rufus?"

"I am going to see if I can find, and buy back, your new clothes, Rose. We'll walk along Baxter Street, and maybe we'll see them hanging up in some shop."

"But have you got money enough to buy them back, Rufus?"

"I think I have, Rose. Wouldn't you like to have them again?"

"Yes, Rufus; but it is too much money for you to pay. Never mind the clothes. I can get along without them," said Rose, though it cost her a pang to give up the nice dress which had given her so much innocent pleasure.

"No, Rose, I want you to wear them. We are going to live respectably now, and I don't want to see you wearing that old calico dress."

Little Rose was dressed in a faded calico gown, which had been made over, not very artistically, from a dress which had belonged to her mother. It had been long in use, and showed the effects of long wear. It had for some time annoyed the newsboy, who cared more that his sister should appear well dressed than himself. He knew that his sister was pretty, and he felt proud of her. Feeling as he did, it is no wonder that his indignation was aroused by the conduct of his stepfather in selling his little sister's new clothes, which he had bought out of his scanty earnings. While they had been speaking, they had walked to the end of the block and turned into Baxter Street.

Baxter Street is one of the most miserable streets in the most miserable quarter of the city. It is lined with old-clothing shops, gambling-dens, tumble-down tenements, and drinking saloons, and at all times it swarms with sickly and neglected children, bold and wretched women, and the lowest class of men. One building, which goes by the name of Monkey Hall, is said to be a boarding-house

for the monkeys, which during the day are carried about by Italian organ-grinders. It was in this street where Rufus had reason to believe that his sister's clothes might be found.

The two children walked slowly on the west side, looking into the old-clothes shops, as they passed.

"Come in, boy," said a woman at the entrance of one of the shops. "I'll fit you out cheap."

"Have you got any clothes that will do for this little girl?" asked the newsboy.

"For the little gal? Yes, come in; I'll fit her out like a queen."

The shabby little shop hardly looked like a place where royal attire could be procured. Still it might be that his sister's clothes had been sold to this woman; so Rough and Ready thought it well to enter.

The woman rummaged about among some female attire at the back part of the shop, and brought forward a large-figured de laine dress, of dingy appearance, and began to expatiate upon its beauty in a voluble tone.

"That's too large," said Rough and Ready. "It's big enough for me."

"Maybe you'd like it for yourself," said the woman, with a laugh.

"I don't think it would suit my style of beauty," said the newsboy. "Haven't you got anything smaller?"

"This'll do," persisted the woman. "All you've got to do is to tuck it up so;" and she indicated the alteration. "I'll sew it up in a minute."

"No, it won't do," said the newsboy, decidedly. "Come, Rose."

They went into another shop, where a man was in attendance; but here again their inquiries were fruitless.

They emerged from the shop, and, just beyond, came to a basement shop, the entrance to which was lined with old clothes of every style and material. Some had originally been of fine cloth and well made, but had in course of time made their way from the drawing-room to this low cellar. There were clothes of coarser texture and vulgar cut, originally made for less aristocratic customers, which perhaps had been sold to obtain the necessaries of life, or very possibly to procure supplies for the purchase of rum. Looking down into this under-ground shop, the quick eyes of Rose caught sight of the new dress, of which she had been so proud, depending from a nail just inside.

"There it is," she said, touching the newsboy on the arm. "I can see it."

"So it is. Let's go down."

They descended the stone steps, and found themselves in a dark room, about twelve feet square, hung round with second-hand garments. The presiding genius of the establishment was a little old man, with a dirty yellow complexion, his face seamed with wrinkles, but with keen, sharp eyes, who looked like a spider on the watch for flies.

"What can I sell you to-day, young gentleman?" he asked, rubbing his hands insinuatingly.

"What's the price of that dress?" asked Rough and Ready, coming straight to the point.

"That elegant dress," said the old man, "cost me a great deal of money. It's very fine."

"I know all about it," said the newsboy, "for I bought it for my sister last week."

"No, no, you are mistaken, young gentleman," said the old man, hastily, fearing it was about to be reclaimed. "I've had it in my shop a month."

"No, you haven't," said the newsboy, bluntly; "you bought it this morning of a tall man, with a red nose."

"How can you say so, young gentleman?"

"Because it's true. The man took it from my sister, and carried it off. How much did you pay for it?"

"I gave two dollars and a half," said the old man, judging from the newsboy's tone that it was useless to persist in his denial. "You may have it for three dollars."

"That's too much. I don't believe you gave more than a dollar. I'll give you a dollar and a half."

The old man tried hard to get more, but as Rough and Ready was firm, and, moreover, as he had only given fifty cents for the dress an hour before, he concluded that he should be doing pretty well in making two hundred per cent. profit, and let it go.

The newsboy at once paid the money, and asked if his sister could put it on there. A door in the back part of the shop was opened, revealing an inner room, where Rose speedily made the change, and emerged into the street with her old dress rolled up in a bundle.

CHAPTER IV.
A FORTUNATE MEETING

"Where are we going, Rufus?" asked Rose, as they left the subterranean shop.

"That's what I'm trying to think, Rose," said her brother, not a little perplexed.

To tell the truth, Rough and Ready had acted from impulse, and without any well-defined plan in his mind. He had resolved to take Rose from her old home, if it deserved the name, and for reasons which the reader will no doubt pronounce sufficient; but he had not yet had time to consider where they should live in future.

This was a puzzling question.

If the newsboy had been a capitalist, or in receipt of a handsome income, the question would have been a very simple one. He would only need to have bought a "Morning Herald," and, from the long list of boarding and lodging houses, have selected one which he judged suitable. But his income was small, and he had himself and his sister to provide for. He knew that it must be lonely for Rose to pass the greater part of the day without him; yet it seemed to be necessary. If only there was some suitable person for her to be with. The loss of her mother was a great one to Rose, for it left her almost without a companion.

So Rough and Ready knit his brows in perplexing thought.

"I can't tell where we'd better go, Rose, yet," he said at last. "We'll have to look round a little, and perhaps we'll come across some good place."

"I hope it'll be some place where father won't find us," said Rose.

"Don't call him father," said the newsboy, hastily. "He isn't our father."

"No," said Rose, "I know that,—that is not our own father."

"Do you remember our own father, Rose? But of course you don't, for you were only a year old when he died."

"How old were you, Rufus?"

"I was nine."

"Tell me about father. Mother used to tell me about him sometimes."

"He was always kind and good. I remember his pleasant smile whenever he came home. Once he was pretty well off; but he failed in business, and had to give up his store, and, soon after, he died, so that mother was left destitute. Then she married Mr. Martin."

"What made her?"

"It was for our sake, Rose. She thought he would give us a good home. But you know how it turned out. Sometimes I think mother might have been alive now, if she hadn't married him."

"Oh, I wish she was," said Rose, sighing.

"Well, Rose, we won't talk any more of Mr. Martin. He hasn't got any more to do with us. He can take care of himself, and we will take care of ourselves."

"I don't know, Rufie," said the little girl; "I'm afraid he'll do us some harm."

"Don't be afraid, Rose; I aint afraid of him, and I'll take care he don't touch you."

The little girl's apprehensions were not without good reason. They had not done with this man Martin. He was yet to cause them considerable trouble. What that trouble was will be developed in the course of the story. Our business now is to follow the course of the two orphans.

They had reached and crossed the City Hall Park, and now stood on the Broadway pavement, opposite Murray Street.

"Are we going to cross Broadway, Rufus?" asked his little sister.

"Yes, Rose. I've been thinking you would feel more comfortable to be as far away from our old room as possible. If we can get a lodging on the west side of Broadway somewhere, we shan't be so apt to meet Mr. Martin. You'd like that better, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, yes, I should like that better."

"Now we'll cross. Keep firm hold of my hand Rose, or you'll get run over."

During the hours of daylight, except on Sunday, there is hardly a pause in the long line of vehicles of every description that make their way up and down the great central thoroughfare of the city. A quick eye and a quick step are needed to cross in safety. But the practised newsboy found no difficulty. Dodging this way and that, he led his sister safely across.

"Let us go up Broadway, Rufus," said the little girl, who, living always in the eastern part of the city, was more used to Chatham Street and the Bowery than the more fashionable Broadway.

"All right, Rose. We can turn off higher up."

So the newsboy walked up Broadway, on the west side, his little sister clinging to his arm. Occasionally, though they didn't know it, glances of interest were directed towards them. The attractive face of little Rose, set off by her neat attire, and the frank, open countenance of our young hero, who looked more manly in his character of guardian to his little sister, made a pleasant impression upon the passers-by, or at least such as could spare a thought from the business cares which are apt to engross the mind to the exclusion of everything.

"If I only had two such children!" thought a childless millionaire, as he passed with a hurried step. His coffers were full of gold, but his home was empty of comfort and happiness. He might easily have secured it by diverting a trifling rill, from his full stream of riches, to the channel of charity; but this never entered his mind.

So the children walked up the street, jostled by hurrying multitudes, little Rose gazing with childish interest at the shop windows, and the objects they presented. As for Rough and Ready, Broadway was no novelty to him. His busy feet had traversed every portion of the city, or at least the lower part, and he felt at home everywhere. While his sister was gazing at the shop windows, he was engaged in trying to solve the difficult question which was still puzzling him,—"Where should he find a home for his sister?"

The solution of the question was nearer than he anticipated.

As they passed a large clothing-house, the little girl's attention was suddenly attracted to a young woman, who came out of the front entrance with a large bundle under her arm.

"O Miss Manning," she cried, joyfully, "how do you do?"

"What, little Rose!" exclaimed the seamstress, a cordial smile lighting up her face, pale from confinement and want of exercise.

"How are you, Miss Manning?" said the newsboy, in an off-hand manner.

"I am glad to see you, Rufus," said the young woman, shaking hands with him. "How you have grown!"

"Have I?" said Rough and Ready, pleased with what he regarded as a compliment. "I'm glad I'm getting up in the world that way, if I can't in any other."

"Do you sell papers now, Rufus?"

"Yes. I expect all the newspaper editors would fail if I didn't help 'em off with their papers."

"You are both looking fresh and rosy."

"Particularly Rose," said the newsboy, laughing. "But you are not looking very well, Miss Manning."

"Oh, I'm pretty well," said the seamstress; "but I don't get much chance to get out into the air."

"You work too hard."

"I have to work hard," she replied, smiling faintly. "Sewing is not very well paid, and it costs a great deal to live. Where are you living now?"

"We are not living anywhere," said Rose.

"We are living on Broadway just at present," said Rough and Ready.

The seamstress looked from one to the other in surprise, not understanding what they meant.

"Where is your father now?" she asked.

"I have no father," said the newsboy.

"Is Mr. Martin dead, then?"

"No, he's alive, but he isn't my father, and I won't own him as such. If you want to know where he is, I will tell you. He is lying drunk on the floor of a room on Leonard Street, or at least he was half an hour ago."

The newsboy spoke with some bitterness, for he never could think with any patience of the man who had embittered the last years of his mother's life, and had that very morning nearly deprived his little sister of the clothing which he had purchased for her.

"Have you left him, then?" asked the seamstress.

"Yes, we have left him, and we do not mean to go near him again."

"Then you mean to take the whole care of your little sister, Rufus?"

"Yes."

"It is a great responsibility for a boy like you."

"It is what I have been doing all along. Mr. Martin hasn't earned his share of the expenses. I've had to take care of us both, and him too, and then he didn't treat us decently. I'll tell you what he did this morning."

Here he told the story of the manner in which his little sister had been robbed of her dress.

"You don't think I'd stand that, Miss Manning, do you?" he said, lifting his eyes to hers.

"No, Rufus; it seemed hard treatment. So you're going to find a home somewhere else?"

"Yes."

"Where do you expect to go?"

"Well, that is what puzzles me," said the newsboy. "I want some place in the west part of the city, so as to be out of Martin's way. Where do you live?"

"In Franklin Street, not far from the river."

"Is it a good place?"

"As good as I can expect. You know that I am poor as well as you."

"Is there any chance for us in the house?" asked Rufus, with a sudden idea touching the solution of the problem that had troubled him.

"No, there is no room vacant, I believe," said the seamstress, thoughtfully. "If there were only Rose, now," she added, "I could take her into the room with me."

"That's just the thing," said Rufus, joyfully. "Rose, wouldn't you like to be with Miss Manning? Then you would have company every day."

"Yes," said Rose, "I should like it ever so much; but where would you be?" she asked, doubtfully.

"I'll go to the Newsboys' Lodging House to sleep, but I'll come every afternoon and evening to see you. I'll give Miss Manning so much a week for your share of the expenses, and then I'll feel easy about you. But wouldn't she be a trouble to you, Miss Manning?"

"A trouble," repeated the seamstress. "You don't know how much I shall enjoy her company. I get so lonely sometimes. If you'll come with me now, I'll show you my room, and Rose shall find a home at once."

Much relieved in mind, Rough and Ready, with his sister still clinging to his arm, followed the seamstress down Franklin Street towards her home near the river.

CHAPTER V.
A NEW HOME

Miss Manning paused before a house, not indeed very stylish, but considerably more attractive than the tenement house in Leonard Street.

"This is where I live," she said.

"Is it a tenement house?" asked the newsboy.

"No, there's a woman keeps it,—a Mrs. Nelson. Some of the rooms are occupied by boarders, but others only by lodgers. I can't afford to pay the board she asks; so I only hire a room, and board my self."

While she was speaking, the two children were following her upstairs.

The entries were dark, and the stairs uncarpeted, but neither Rough and Ready nor his sister had been used to anything better, and were far from criticising what might have been disagreeable to those more fastidious.

Miss Manning kept on till she reached the fourth story. Here she paused before a door, and, taking a key from her pocket, opened it.

"This is where I live," she said. "Come in, both of you."

The room occupied by the seamstress was about twelve feet square. Though humble enough in its appearance, it was exquisitely neat. In the centre of the floor was a strip of carpeting about eight feet square, leaving, of course, a margin of bare floor on all sides.

"Why, you've got a carpet, Miss Manning!" said Rose, with pleasure.

"Yes," said the seamstress, complacently; "I bought it at an auction store one day, for only a dollar and a half. I couldn't well spare the money; but it seemed so nice to have a carpet, that I yielded to the temptation, and bought it."

"It seems more respectable to have a carpet," said the newsboy.

"It's more comfortable," said Miss Manning, "and it seems as if the room was warmer, although it doesn't cover the whole floor."

"What a nice little stove!" said Rose, admiringly, "Can you cook by it?"

She pointed to a small square stove, at one end of the apartment.

"Oh, yes, I can boil eggs, and do almost anything. I bought it at a junk-shop for only two dollars. I don't have a fire all the time, because I can't afford it. But it is pleasant, even when I am feeling cold, to think that I can have a fire when I want to."

In the corner of the room was a bedstead. There was also a very plain, and somewhat battered, bureau, and a small glass of seven inches by nine hanging over it. On a small table were placed half-a-dozen books, including the Bible, which years ago Miss Manning had brought from her country home, the gift of a mother, now many years dead. The poor seamstress never let a day pass without reading a chapter in the good book, and, among all her trials and privations, of which she had many, she had never failed to derive comfort and good cheer from it.

"How nice your room looks, Miss Manning!" said Rose, admiringly.

"Yes, it's jolly," said the newsboy.

"I try to make it as comfortable as I can; but my means are small, and I cannot do all I wish."

"And are you willing to let Rose come and live with you?"

"I shall be very glad to have her. She will be so much company for me."

"You'd like to come, Rosie, wouldn't you?"

"Ever so much," said the little girl; "that is, if I can see you every day."

"Of course you will. I'll come up to see how you're gettin' along."

"Then it's all settled," said the seamstress, cheerfully. "Take off your bonnet, Rose, and I'll tell you where to put it."

"It isn't all settled yet," said Rough and Ready. "I must find out about how much it's going to cost for Rose, and then I can pay you so much every week. How much rent do you pay for this room?"

"It costs me a dollar a week."

"Maybe they'll charge more if there are two in it."

"I think not much. I could go and ask Mrs. Nelson."

"I wish you would."

The seamstress went downstairs, and saw the landlady. She returned with the intelligence that Mrs. Nelson would be willing to have her receive Rose on the payment of twenty-five cents additional.

"That will make a dollar and a quarter for the two," said the newsboy. "Then I'll pay sixty-two cents a week for Rose's share."

"No," said the seamstress,—"only twenty-five cents. That is all that is charged extra for her."

"Rose must pay her half of the expenses," said the newsboy, decidedly. "That'll be sixty-two cents a week for the rent."

"But you've got yourself to provide for, as well as your little sister," said the seamstress.

"I can do it," said Rough and Ready, confidently. "Don't you worry about that."

"But it seems as if I was making money out of Rose."

"No more'n she is making money out of you. It's the same for both, as far as I can see," said the newsboy. "Now, how much does it cost you for eatin' a week?"

"About a dollar and a quarter," said the seamstress, after a little thought.

"That's a very little. What can you get for that?"

"There's a small loaf of bread every day. I get that at the baker's round the corner. I don't often get butter, but I keep a little on hand, so that when my appetite is poor I can use it. When eggs are cheap, I boil one for my breakfast."

"Don't you ever eat meat?"

"Sometimes I buy half a pound of steak at the market. That lasts me two days. It strengthens me up wonderfully."

"Half a pound of meat in two days!" repeated Rough and Ready, wonderingly. "I guess you don't know what it is to have a newsboy's appetite."

"No," said the seamstress, smiling. "I never was a newsboy that I remember."

"Rufie can sell papers as fast as anything," said Rose, who had a high appreciation of her brother's merits. "I stood by him one morning when he was selling. He knew just what paper everybody wanted, and made them buy, whether they wanted to or not."

"Oh, I'm a rouser at selling papers," said the newsboy. "I can sell more in a mornin' than any boy on the street."

"You look like a smart boy."

"Do I? I wish other people thought so; but I tried for a place once, and the man looked at me as if he thought I'd start off early some mornin' with his cash-box, and declined engagin' me. Maybe he thought I looked too smart."

"Rufie wouldn't steal for anything!" said Rose, with indignant emphasis.

"I don't know about that. I've stolen you this mornin'. I expect Mr. Martin will open his eyes wider'n usual when he finds you are gone. I'll tell you what I'll do, Miss Manning," he continued, turning to the seamstress. "As near as I can make out, Rose will cost about three dollars a week."

"That's too much. Sixty-two cents and a dollar and a quarter make not quite two dollars."

"I know that, but you will want to live a little better than you have done. You must have meat oftener, and will want fire all the time when it's cold. Then it won't do you any hurt to have a good cup of tea every night."

"But three dollars seem a good deal for you to pay," expostulated Miss Manning.

"Don't trouble yourself about that. I can work more cheerful, if I know that Rose is comfortable. Maybe, if I'll buy her a book, you'll teach her a little every day."

"I will, and with great pleasure."

"Then I'll bring the book along to-night."

"Oh, there's one thing more," said Rough and Ready, suddenly. "Don't you want to take another boarder?"

"Another boarder?"

"Yes, I'd like to come round, and take supper with you every night. Breakfast I'll get at the Lodgin' House, and dinner at a restaurant, but it would be pleasant to come round, and eat supper with you and Rose."

"It would be pleasant for us also," said Miss Manning.

"I guess that'll cost you a dollar a week more, so I'll pay you four dollars a week."

"I don't like to have you pay so much. I feel as if I were making money out of you."

"I'll take care you don't. You don't know what an appetite I've got. I'll come round at six every evening, or before; only six can be the hour for supper."

"Very well, Rufus, but you must promise me one thing."

"What is it?"

"That if you find it is too hard on you to pay so much money, you will let me know."

"All right. So it's all settled?"

"Yes."

"Good!" said the newsboy, with an air of satisfaction. "Now I must be goin' to business. I don't know exactly what time it is, as I left my gold watch lyin' on the sofy in Leonard Street."

"Oh, what a story, Rufie!" said Rose. "He hasn't got any gold watch, Miss Manning, and we didn't have any sofy in Leonard Street."

"That's the way she's always exposin' me, Miss Manning," said the newsboy, laughing.

"Well, Rosy, good-by. It's time for the evenin' papers to be out, and I must be on hand, as the other boys."

He kissed his little sister, and hurried downstairs. As he was making his way towards the offices of the evening papers, he felt great satisfaction in thinking of his unexpected good fortune in finding so desirable a home for his little sister. Hitherto he had felt a great deal of anxiety about her, during his necessary absence during the day, knowing only too well the character of his stepfather. He had known that there was danger of little Rose being abused in his frequent fits of intoxication, and more than once his heart was filled with apprehension, as he ascended the stairs to the cold and cheerless room in Leonard Street, which he had been forced to call home for the lack of a better.

But now there was a great change for the better. He knew that Miss Manning would be kind to little Rose, and would take good care of her, as well as provide her with pleasant company, while he was on the street selling papers. It was pleasant to him also to reflect that the arrangement would be an advantageous one for the seamstress. He had noticed her pale cheek, and he felt sure that it proceeded, not only from steady and confining work, but also from a lack of nourishing food. She would now be able to live better and more comfortable, and without exceeding the sum which she had hitherto been accustomed to expend. In the first place, she would have to pay thirty-eight cents less weekly for rent, and though this may seem a very small sum to the boys and girls who may read my story, it represented to the poor seamstress the proceeds of an entire day's work, beginning at early morning, and extending for fourteen hours. So, while Rough and Ready thought principally of his sister, it pleased him to feel that in benefiting her he was also benefiting the one who had agreed to take charge of her.

Then, as to himself, although he would pass his nights at the Lodging House, and eat breakfast there, once a day he would be at the little room in Franklin Street, and this would make him feel that he had some share in his sister's home.

He made his way to the offices of the evening papers, obtained a supply, and was soon busily engaged in disposing of them. While he is thus engaged, we must go back to Leonard Street, which the newsboy and his sister have left, as they hope, forever.

CHAPTER VI.
MARTIN'S AWAKENING

James Martin lay in a drunken stupor for about an hour after Rough and Ready and his sister left the room. Then he roused a little, and muttered "Rose."

But there was no answer.

"Rose," he repeated, not stirring from his recumbent position, "have you got anything to eat in the house?"

But the little girl whom he addressed was already in her new home on Franklin Street.

"Why don't you answer?" demanded he, angrily. "I'll give you a licking."

As this threat also elicited no response, he turned over and rose slowly.

"The gal isn't here," he said, after looking about him. "She's gone out with her scamp of a brother. He's an obstinate young rascal. I'll give him a flogging some time."

Martin had often had the disposition to inflict punishment upon our hero, but there was a sturdy courage and firmness about Rough and Ready that promised a determined opposition. So he had escaped where a weaker and more timid boy would have suffered bad treatment.

Though Martin missed Rose he had no idea yet that she had left him for good, as the saying is. He supposed that she had gone out to stand by her brother when he was selling papers. He had often been drunk before, and probably expected to be often again. He felt no particular shame at disposing of the little girl's clothes for rum. He had somehow formed the idea that it was the newsboy's duty to support the family, and felt that he had no business to spend so much money on his sister's dress. He could not understand, therefore, why Rough and Ready should be so angry.

"Dressing up Rose like a princess!" he muttered. "We're too poor to spend money on good clothes I have to go about in rags, and why shouldn't she?"

Martin wore a suit which had done long and hard service. He wore a jacket of green cloth, frayed and dirty, while his other garments, originally black, were stained and patched. He wore no collar or necktie. On his head was a tall hat, which had already reached that outward condition when it is usually considered fit only to supply the place of a broken pane.

Such was the stepfather of the newsboy and his sister, and when to the description I add inflamed eyes, a red face, and swollen nose, I think my young readers will hardly wonder that the children had long lost all respect and attachment for him, if indeed they had ever felt any. When I think of the comfortable home he might have had, for he was a skilful workman and capable of earning good wages, I feel out of patience with him for preferring to lead a life so degraded and useless, doing harm both to himself and to others. But, in a great city like New York, there are many men who lead lives no better than James Martin, who, for the brief pleasure of the intoxicating cup, throw away their own happiness and welfare, and spoil the happiness of others. Think of this picture, boy-reader, and resolve thus early that such a description shall never apply to you!

Feeling hungry, Martin looked into the cupboard, and discovered part of a loaf of bread. He was disappointed to find no cold meat, as he had hoped.

"This is pretty poor living," he muttered. "That boy must pay me more money. He don't work hard enough. How can he expect three people to live on fifty cents a day?"

It did not seem to occur to Martin that he ought to have contributed something himself to the support of the family. So, while he was eating the bread, he continued to rail against our hero, and resolved to exact from him in future sixty cents daily.

"He can pay it,—a smart boy like him," he muttered. "He's lazy, that's what's the matter. He's got to turn over a new leaf."

Having eaten up the bread, and feeling still hungry, he explored the contents of his pocket-book. It contained twenty-five cents, being half of the money he had received from the old-clothes dealer for the little girl's dress.

"That'll buy me a drink and a plate of meat," he thought; "only there won't be any left. Money don't go far in these days."

But persons who get money as this was got, are not very apt to be disturbed much by economical thoughts. "Easy come, easy go," is an old adage and a true one. So Martin, reflecting that the newsboy was out earning money, of which he would receive the benefit, saw nothing to prevent his using the balance of the money to gratify the cravings of appetite.

He accordingly went to a neighboring saloon, where he soon invested his money, and then, thrusting his hands in his empty pockets, strolled listlessly about the streets. Passing through the City Hall Square, he saw Rough and Ready, at a little distance, selling his papers.

"Rose isn't with him," said Martin to himself. "Maybe she's gone home."

However, this was a point in which he felt very little interest. There was no particular object in addressing the newsboy on the subject, so he wandered on in a listless way wherever caprice led.

Strolling down Broadway, he turned into Dey Street, though he had no definite object in so doing. All at once he felt a touch upon his shoulder.

"Well, Martin, how goes it?" said a stout, active-looking man, of much more respectable appearance than Martin himself.

"Hard luck!" said Martin.

"Well, you don't look very prosperous, that's a fact. Where are you at work now?"

"Nowhere."

"Can't you find work?"

"No," said Martin.

The fact was that he had not tried, preferring to live on the earnings of his stepson.

"That's strange," said the new-comer. "Carpenters are in demand. There's a good deal of building going on in Brooklyn just now. I'll give you employment myself, if you'll come over to-morrow morning. I'm putting up three houses on Fourth Avenue, and want to hurry them through as soon as possible, as they are already let, and the parties want to move in. Come, what do you say?"

"I didn't think of going to work just yet," said Martin, reluctantly. "The fact is, I don't feel quite strong."

"Perhaps there's a reason for that," said the other, significantly.

"I don't feel well, and that's all about it."

"Perhaps you drink a little too often."

"I don't drink enough to hurt me. It's all that keeps me up."

"Well, that's your affair, not mine. Only, if you make up your mind to go to work, come over to-morrow morning to Brooklyn, and I'll have something for you to do."

To this Martin assented, and the builder, for such was his business, passed on. Martin had very little thought of accepting the proposal; but, as we shall see, circumstances soon brought it to his mind, and changed his determination.

It is not necessary to follow Martin in his afternoon wanderings. He took no more drink, for the simple reason that he was out of money, and his credit was not good; so when evening came he was comparatively free from the influence of his earlier potations. About six o'clock he went back to the room in Leonard Street. It was about that time that Rough and Ready usually went home to eat his supper, and, as he was still hungry, he proposed to eat supper with the children.

But when he opened the door of the room, he was surprised to find it empty. He expected to find Rose there, at all events, even if her brother had not yet returned home.

"Rose," he cried out, "where are you?"

There was no answer.

"If you're hiding anywhere, you'd better come out, or I'll give you something you don't like."

"This is strange," he said to himself when again there was no reply.

He went across the landing, and knocked at the door opposite.

A stout woman, with her sleeves rolled up, opened the door.

"Have you seen anything of my two children, Mrs. Flanagan?" asked Martin.

"I saw them this morning."

"I mean since morning."

"No; the boy took the little girl out about the middle of the day, and I haven't seen either one of 'em since."

"They didn't say anything to you about going out, did they?"

"Shure they didn't, and why should they? They go out every day, for that matter."

"Well, it's time for them to be home now."

"They'll be comin' soon, it's likely;" and Mrs. Flanagan closed her door, and went back to washing,—for this was her business.

Martin returned to the lonely room, not altogether satisfied with what he had learned. It was, as he knew, quite unusual for Rose to be gone out all the afternoon, or, at any rate, not to be back at this hour. Besides, as he called to mind, she was not with Rough and Ready when he saw him in the afternoon. Where, then, could she be?

It was from no particular affection for Rose that Martin put to himself these queries. But it was through Rose that he retained his hold upon Rufus and his earnings. Besides, Rose, though only seven years old, had been accustomed to get the supper, and make tea at times when Martin had not money enough to buy any beverage more stimulating. So, on the whole, he felt rather uncomfortable, and resolved to go out and find the newsboy, and learn from him where Rose was. He descended the stairs, therefore, and made his way to the sidewalk in front of the "Times" office, where Rough and Ready was usually to be found. But here he looked for him in vain. The fact was that our hero had sold off his papers, and a large number of them, with greater rapidity than usual, and was at this very moment sitting at Miss Manning's little table with Rose, eating a comfortable, though not very extravagant, supper.

Martin went back to Leonard Street, therefore, still with a vague hope that he might find the children at home. But he was destined to be disappointed. The room was as dark and cheerless and lonely as ever.

"What does it all mean?" thought Martin. "Has the young rascal given me the slip?"

He had been in the room only five minutes, when there was a knock at the door.

It proved to be the landlord's agent, who collected the rent.

"Your month's rent is due, Mr. Martin," he said.

"I haven't got any money."

"That answer won't do," said the man, shortly.

"You'll have to come again to-morrow, at any rate. My boy's got the money for the rent, and he isn't in now."

"You must be ready to-morrow, or move out."

"I guess it'll be move then, if the boy doesn't come back," muttered Martin. "One good thing, he can't escape me. I can catch him to-morrow morning when he's selling papers. Rent or no rent, I'll get one more night's rest in this room."

Although it was yet early he lay down, and did not rise till the morning light entered the room. Then, feeling the cravings of appetite, he got up, and went out in search of the newsboy.

"He won't find it quite so easy to get rid of me as he thinks for," muttered Martin, with a scowl.

CHAPTER VII.
THE NEWSBOY AND HIS STEPFATHER

Rough and Ready passed the night at the Lodging House, as he had previously determined. The bed which he obtained there was considerably better than the one he had usually rested upon in the room in Leonard Street. He slept soundly, and only awoke when the summons came to all the boys to get up. As our hero lifted up his head, and saw the rows of beds, with boys sitting up and rubbing their eyes, the thought of his freedom from the sway of his stepfather recurred to his mind, and he jumped up in very good spirits. He breakfasted at the Lodge, paying only six cents for the meal, and then hastened to the offices of the morning papers to secure a supply of merchandise.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.