ALGER HORATIO JR.

FROM FARM BOY TO SENATOR

Horatio Alger

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Alger H.

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Содержание

Horatio Alger Jr.
From Farm Boy to Senator / Being the History of the Boyhood and Manhood of Daniel Webter

PREFACE

But thirty years have elapsed since the death of Daniel Webster, and there is already danger that, so far as young people are concerned, he will become an historic reminiscence. Schoolboys, who declaim the eloquent extracts from his speeches which are included in all the school speakers, are indeed able to form some idea of his great oratorical powers and the themes which called them forth; but I have found that young classical students, as a rule, know more of Cicero's life than of his. It seems to me eminently fitting that the leading incidents in the life of our great countryman, his struggles for an education, the steps by which he rose to professional and political distinction, should be made familiar to American boys. I have therefore essayed a "story biography," which I have tried to write in such a manner as to make it attractive to young people, who are apt to turn away from ordinary biographies, in the fear that they may prove dull.

I have not found my task an easy one. Webster's life is so crowded with great services and events, it is so interwoven with the history of the nation, that to give a fair idea of him in a volume of ordinary size is almost impossible. I have found it necessary to leave out some things, and to refer briefly to others, lest my book should expand to undue proportions. Let me acknowledge then, with the utmost frankness, that my work is incomplete, and necessarily so. This causes me less regret, because those whom I may be fortunate enough to interest in my subject will readily find all that they wish to know in the noble Life of Webster, by George Ticknor Curtis, the captivating Reminiscences, by Peter Harvey, the Private Correspondence, edited by Fletcher Webster, and the collection of Mr. Webster's speeches, edited by Mr. Everett. They will also find interesting views of Mr. Webster's senatorial career in the Reminiscences of Congress, by Charles W. March.

If this unpretending volume shall contribute in any way to extend the study of Mr. Webster's life and works, I shall feel that my labor has been well bestowed.

Horatio Alger, Jr.

March 28, 1882.

CHAPTER I.
THE COTTON HANDKERCHIEF

"Where are you going, Daniel?"

"To Mr. Hoyt's store."

"I'll go in with you. Where is 'Zekiel this morning?"

"I left him at work on the farm."

"I suppose you will both be farmers when you grow up?"

"I don't know," answered Daniel, thoughtfully. "I don't think I shall like it, but there isn't anything else to do in Salisbury."

"You might keep a store, and teach school like Master Hoyt."

"Perhaps so. I should like it better than farming."

Daniel was but eight years old, a boy of strik[Pg 9]

[Pg 10]ing appearance, with black hair and eyes, and a swarthy complexion. He was of slender frame, and his large dark eyes, deep set beneath an overhanging brow, gave a singular appearance to the thin face of the delicate looking boy.

He was a farmer's son, and lived in a plain, old-fashioned house, shaded by fine elms, and separated from the broad, quiet street by a fence. It was situated in a valley, at the bend of the Merrimac, on both sides of which rose high hills, which the boy climbed many a time for the more extended view they commanded. From a high sheep-pasture on his father's farm, through a wide opening in the hills, he could see on a clear day Brentney Mountain in Vermont, and in a different direction the snowy top of Mount Washington, far away to the northeast.

He entered the humble store with his companion.

Behind the counter stood Master Hoyt, a tall man, of stern aspect, which could strike terror into the hearts of delinquent scholars when in the winter they came to receive instruction from him.

"Good morning, Daniel," said Master Hoyt, who was waiting upon a customer.

"Good morning, sir," answered Daniel, respectfully.

"I hope you won't forget what you learned at school last winter."

"No, sir, I will try not to."

"You mustn't forget your reading and writing."

"No, sir; I read whatever I can find, but I don't like writing much."

"You'll never make much of a hand at writing, Daniel. Ezekiel writes far better than you. But you won't need writing much when you're following the plough."

"I hope I shan't have to do that, Master Hoyt."

"Ay, you're hardly strong enough, you may find something else to do in time. You may keep school like me—who knows?—but you'll have to get some one else to set the copies," and Master Hoyt laughed, as if he thought it a good joke.

Daniel listened gravely to the master's prediction, but it seemed to him he should hardly care to be a teacher like Mr. Hoyt, for the latter, though he was a good reader, wrote an excellent hand, and had a slight knowledge of grammar, could carry his pupils no further. No pupil was likely to wonder that "one small head could carry all he knew." Yet the boys respected him, and in his limited way he did them good.

Master Hoyt had by this time finished waiting upon his customer, and was at leisure to pay attention to his two young callers. He regarded them rather as pupils than as customers, for it is quite the custom in sparsely settled neighborhoods to "drop in" at the store for a chat.

Meanwhile Daniel's roving eyes had been attracted by a cotton pocket-handkerchief, which appeared to have something printed upon it.

Master Hoyt noticed the direction of the boy's gaze.

"I see you are looking at the handkerchief," he said. "Would you like to see what is printed on it?"

"Yes, sir."

The handkerchief was taken down and placed in the boy's hands. It was quite customary in those days, when books and papers were comparatively rare and difficult to obtain, to combine literature with plain homely utility, by printing reading matter of some kind on cheap cotton handkerchiefs. Nowadays boys would probably object to such a custom, but the boy, Daniel who was fond of reading, was attracted.

"Is it a story?" he asked.

"No, Daniel; it is the Constitution of the United States—the government we live under."

Daniel's interest was excited. Of the government he knew something, but not much, and up to that moment he had not known that there was a constitution, and indeed he couldn't tell what a constitution was, but he thought he would like to know.

"What is the price?" he asked.

"Twenty-five cents."

Daniel felt in his pocket, and drew out a quarter of a dollar. It represented all his worldly wealth. It had not come to him all at once, but was the accumulation of pennies saved. He may have had other plans for spending it, but now when there was a chance of securing something to read he could not resist the temptation, so he passed over his precious coin, and the handkerchief became his.

"It's a good purchase," said Master Hoyt, approvingly. "Take it home, Daniel, and read it, and you'll know something of the government we're living under. I suppose you've heard your father talk of the days when he was a soldier, and fought against the British?"

"Yes, sir."

"When soldiers were called for, Captain Webster was one of the first to answer the call. But of course you are too young to remember that time."

"Yes, sir; but I have heard father talk about it."

"Ay, ay; your father was selected to stand guard before General Washington's headquarters on the night after Arnold's treason. The general knew he could depend upon him."

"Yes, sir; I am sure of that," said the boy proudly, for he had a high reverence and respect for his soldier father, who on his side was devoted to the best interests of his sons, and was ready when the time came to make sacrifices for them such as would have made most fathers hesitate.

"Ah, those were dark days, Daniel. You are lucky to live in peaceful times, under a free government, but you must never forget how your father and other brave men fought to secure the blessings we now enjoy. Now General Washington is President, and we are no longer a subject colony, but we have a free and independent government."

It is doubtful how far Daniel and his young companion understood the remarks of Master Hoyt, but doubtless a time came further on when the words recurred to him, and in the light of his father's conversations, which from time to time he held with his neighbors, gave him a more adequate idea of the character of that government in which in after years he was to take so prominent a part.

"Are you going, Daniel?" asked William Hoyt, as the boys turned to leave his humble store.

"Yes, sir; father may want me at home."

"Don't forget your learning, my lad. You must be ready to take up your studies next winter. Soon you will know as much as I do."

It was meant for an encouraging remark, but the prospect it held out was not one to dazzle the imagination even of a boy of eight, for as I have already said the good man's acquirements were of the most limited character.

Daniel went home with his precious handkerchief snugly stowed away in his pocket. He was saving it till evening when he promised himself the pleasure of reading it.

After supper by the light of the open log fire he brought out his new possession.

"What have you there, my son?" asked his father.

"It is a handkerchief, father, with the Constitution of the United States printed on it."

"Where did you get it?"

"At Master Hoyt's store."

"Dan spent all his money for it," said Ezekiel.

"Well, well, he might have done worse. It will do him no harm to read the Constitution of his country," said the father, gravely.

Thus assured of his father's approval, the boy devoted himself to the reading of that famous document, of which in after years he was to become the staunch supporter and defender. For this boy was in his manhood to rank among the great men of the earth, and to leave a name and a fame to which his countrymen for centuries to come will point with just and patriotic pride.

This boy with slender form, swarthy face, and dark eyes, was Daniel Webster.

CHAPTER II.
DANIEL AND HIS FATHER

Daniel's family had not lived many years at Elms Farm. Captain Webster first occupied a log house which he had himself built, and in this humble dwelling Ezekiel and one of his sisters were born. He was poor in worldly goods, but rich in children, having had ten born to him, five by the second marriage. Daniel was the youngest but one, and Sarah the youngest of all.

When the war of the American Revolution broke out Daniel's father was one of the first to take up arms. He himself drew up, and induced eighty-four of his townsmen to sign, the following patriotic pledge:

"We do solemnly engage and promise that we will, to the utmost of our power, at the risk of our lives and fortunes, with arms, oppose the hostile proceedings of the British fleets and armies against the United American Colonies."

Daniel was proud of his descent from such a man, and in the last year of his life declared that "this is sufficient emblazonry for my arms; enough of heraldry for me."

Ebenezer Webster, Daniel's father, is described as "a man of great firmness, whose bearing and manner were decisive; tall and erect, with a full chest, black hair and eyes, and rather large and prominent features." He had never attended school, but his natural powers, supplemented by his own persistent efforts for education, qualified him for a high and influential place in the community in which he lived. But in one thing he was lacking, the ability to make money, and was obliged to practise the utmost frugality in his household. Though he filled various important positions, his compensation was of the smallest. He charged the town for important services but three or four shillings a day—a sum which even the most modest of office-holders nowadays would regard as quite beneath their acceptance.

How he succeeded in wresting a subsistence for his large family from his sterile acres must remain a mystery. He was willing to live poorly, but there was one subject which cost him anxious thought. How was he to provide his family, and especially the two youngest boys, with the educational advantages which had been denied to him? There were no good schools near home, and without money he could not send his boys out of town to school.

Help came in an unexpected way.

One day the stalwart farmer entered his house with a look of satisfaction on his dark and rugged features.

"Wife," he said, "I have been appointed Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the county."

"Indeed!" said his wife, naturally pleased at the honor which had been conferred upon her husband.

"It will bring me three to four hundred dollars a year," said Mr. Webster, "and now I can hope to educate my boys."

This was his first thought, and hers. It was not proposed to improve their style of living, to buy new furniture or new clothes, but to spend it in such a way as would best promote the interests of those whom God had committed to their keeping.

Three or four hundred dollars! It was a very small sum, so most of my boy readers will think; and so it was, but in a farmer's household on the bleak acres of New Hampshire it would go a considerable way. Every dollar in Ebenezer Webster's hands brought its money's worth, and as we shall see hereafter it brought rich interest to the investor.

But Daniel was still too young for any immediate steps to be taken in the desired direction. He was sent to the small town schools, where he learned what the master was able to teach him. Sometimes he had two and a half and three miles to walk to school, but the farmer's boy, though

delicate, was not thought too delicate for such a walk. Indeed the boy's delicacy was in his favor, for he was thought not robust enough to work on the farm steadily, and was sent to school, as an elder half-brother, Joseph, laughingly said, "to make him equal with the rest of the boys." It was hard for those who saw him in later years, in his majestic proportions, to believe that he had been a delicate boy. The tender sapling had become a stately oak, with not a trace of feebleness or lack of strength.

One day when Daniel was at work in the hayfield, about the middle of the forenoon, Judge Webster, for this was his designation now, saw a carriage approaching.

"Some one to see you, father," suggested Daniel.

"Yes," said his father, preparing to leave his work; "it is the Congressman from our district."

"What is his name?"

"Hon. Abiel Foster, my son. He lives in Canterbury."

But the Congressman descended from his carriage and entered the field where Daniel and his father were at work. "Don't let me interrupt you, Judge Webster," said the visitor. "I merely wished to exchange a few words on public affairs."

Daniel was old enough to have some notion of the office of a Congressman and his duties, and he regarded the honorable gentleman with attention, and perhaps with reverent respect, though he is said not to have been endowed with more than average ability, notwithstanding he had been educated at college, and had once been a minister.

When the conversation was over the Congressman got into his carriage and rode away. Judge Webster looked thoughtfully after him.

Then he said to Daniel, "My son, that is a worthy man; he is a Member of Congress; he goes to Philadelphia, and gets six dollars a day, while I toil here. It is because he had an education which I never had. If I had had his early education I should have been in Philadelphia in his place. I came near it as it was. But I missed it, and now I must work here."

"My dear father," answered Daniel, not without emotion, "you shall not work. Brother and I will work for you, and will wear our hands out, and you shall rest."

The boy was much moved, and his breast heaved, for he knew well how hard his father had toiled for him and for all the family.

"My child," said Judge Webster, "it is of no importance to me. I now live but for my children. I could not give your elder brothers the advantages of knowledge, but I can do something for you. Exert yourself, improve your opportunities, learn, learn, and when I am gone you will not need to go through the hardships which I have undergone, and which have made me an old man before my time."

These words made a profound impression upon the boy. A man's character and life add weight to the words which he utters, and wise and judicious advice coming from a trifler or a shallow person falls often unheeded, and with reason. But Daniel knew how much his father had accomplished without education—he knew how high his rank was among his neighbors, and no man ever probably received from him a tithe of that reverence which he felt for his plain, unlettered parent.

By this time he knew that his father had been largely instrumental in inducing New Hampshire to ratify that Constitution of which he obtained his first knowledge from the cheap cotton handkerchief which he had purchased at Master Hoyt's store. The acceptance was by no means a foregone conclusion. Many of the delegates to the convention had been instructed to vote against acceptance, and among them Ebenezer Webster himself. But he obtained permission later to vote according to his own judgment, and the speech which he made in favor of this important action has been preserved. Just before the vote was taken, he rose and said:

"Mr. President, I have listened to the arguments for and against the Constitution. I am convinced such a government as that Constitution will establish, if adopted—a government acting directly on the people of the States—is necessary for the common defence and the public welfare. It is the only government which will enable us to pay off the national debt—the debt which we owe for the Revolution, and which we are bound in honor fully and fairly to discharge. Besides, I have followed the

lead of Washington through seven years of war, and I have never been misled. His name is subscribed to this Constitution. He will not mislead us now. I shall vote for its adoption."

No wonder that Daniel inherited from his father a reverent attachment for that Constitution which Judge Webster by word and deed had helped to secure and establish. His father was a grave and earnest man, but he was not stern nor ascetic. His strength was softened by good humor, and his massive features were often lighted up by a contagious laugh which endeared him to his family, who loved no less than they respected him.

CHAPTER III.
A MEMORABLE BATTLE

Daniel, as well as his father, had a love of fun, and a sportive humor, which he always preserved. It is said that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." It is certainly a mistake when a boy is shut out from the innocent sports which boys delight in. John Stuart Mill, who was set to learning while little more than an infant, and who actually began to study Greek at four years of age—lamented in after years that he had never known what boyhood was.

It was not so with Daniel. Though his father's poverty made it necessary for all to work, Daniel, partly because of his early delicacy, had plenty of time allowed him for amusement. The favorite companion of his leisure hours was not a boy, but a veteran soldier and near neighbor, named Robert Wise. He had built a little cottage in the corner of the Webster farm, and there with his wife he lived till extreme old age. He was born in Yorkshire, had fought on both sides in the Revolutionary struggle, had travelled in various parts of Europe, and had a thousand stories to tell, to all of which the boy listened with avidity. Though he had twice deserted from the English king, his heart still thrilled with pride when Daniel read to him from the newspaper accounts of battles in which the English arms were victorious. He had never learned to read, and Daniel became his favorite because he was always ready to read to him as they sat together at nightfall at the cottage door.

"Why don't you learn to read yourself, Robert?" asked Daniel one day.

"It's too late, Dan. I'm gettin' an old man now, and I couldn't do it."

"What will you do when I am grown up, and gone away?"

"I don't know, Dan. It will be dull times for me."

When that time came the old man picked up a fatherless boy, and gave him a home and a chance to secure an education, in order that he might have some one to read the newspaper to him.

Whenever Daniel had a day or a few hours to himself he ran across the fields to his humble neighbor's house.

"Come, Robert," he would say, "I've got nothing to do. Let us go fishing."

So the two would go down to the banks of the Merrimac, and embark in a boat which belonged to the old man, and paddle up and down the river, sometimes for an entire day. Daniel never lost his love of fishing, but in after years, when the cares of statesmanship were upon him, dressed in suitable style he would take his fishing pole and lie in wait for his finny victims, while perhaps he was mentally composing some one of his famous speeches, destined to thrill the hearts of thousands, or direct the policy of the government. These happy days spent in the open air corrected his native delicacy, and gradually imparted physical strength and vigor, and in time knit the vigorous frame which seemed a fitting temple for his massive intellect.

Even the most trivial circumstances in the boyhood of such a man as Daniel Webster are noteworthy, and I am sure my boy-readers will read with interest and sympathy the account of a signal victory which the boy gained, though it was only over a feathered bully.

Belonging to a neighbor was a cock of redoubtable prowess, a champion whose fame was in all the farmyards for miles around. One day Daniel, coming home from school, beheld with mortification the finish of a contest in which a favorite fowl of his own came off decidedly second best. The victorious rooster strutted about in conscious and complacent triumph.

"It's too bad, Zeke!" said Daniel in genuine vexation, as he saw the crestfallen look of his own vanquished fowl. "I should like to see that impudent bully get well whipped."

"There isn't a rooster about here that can whip him, Dan."

"I know that, but he will meet his match some time."

"At any rate I'll drive him away. He'll have to run from me."

Dan picked up a stone, and pelted the victor out of the yard, but the feathered bully, even in his flight, raised a crow of victory which vexed the boy.

"I'd give all the money I've got, Zeke, for a rooster that would whip him," said Dan.

There came a time when Daniel had his wish.

He was visiting a relation at some distance when mention was made casually of a famous fighting cock who had never been beaten.

"Where is he to be found?" asked the boy eagerly.

"Why do you ask?"

"I would like to see him," said Dan.

"Oh, well, he belongs to Mr.–."

"Where does he live?"

The desired information was given.

Shortly after Daniel was missed. He found his way to the farm where the pugnacious fowl resided. In the yard he saw the owner, a farmer.

"Good morning, sir," said Dan.

"Good morning, boy. What can I do for you?" was the reply.

"I hear you have a cock who is a famous fighter."

"Yes, he's never been beaten yet!" said the farmer complacently.

"Can I see him?"

"There he is," said the owner, pointing out the feathered champion.

Daniel surveyed the rooster with great interest.

"Will you sell him?" he asked.

"I don't know. Why do you want to buy him?"

Daniel explained his object frankly.

"How much are you willing to give?" asked the farmer, for he was a Yankee, and ready for a trade.

Daniel drew from his pocket half a dollar. It represented his entire cash capital.

"Here is half a dollar," he said. "I'll give you that."

"Haven't you got anymore money?" asked the farmer, who had a keen scent for a bargain.

"No, sir; it is all I have. I'd give you more if I had it."

Half a dollar in those days was a considerable sum of money, particularly in the eyes of a farmer, who handled very little money, his income being for the most part in the shape of corn, hay and vegetables. Having satisfied himself that it was all he could get, he gave a favorable answer to the boy's application.

Daniel's eyes sparkled with delight, and he promptly handed over his fifty cent piece.

"When do you want to take it?" asked the farmer.

"Now," answered Dan.

"Very well."

The fowl was caught, and Daniel carried it back to the house of his relative in triumph.

"I'm going home," he said abruptly.

"Going home? Why, you have only just come."

"I'll come again soon, but I want to take this cock home, and see if he can't whip Mr. –'s. I want to teach the little bully a lesson."

So in spite of all that could be said Daniel started on his way home.

When he had gone a short distance he passed a yard stocked with poultry, where a large cock was strutting about defiantly, as if throwing down the gage of battle to any new comers.

A boy was standing near the fence.

"Will your cock fight?" asked Dan.

"He can whip yours," was the reply.

"Are you willing to try it?"

"Yes, come along."

The trial was made, and Dan's new purchase maintained his reputation, by giving a sound drubbing to his feathered rival.

Dan surveyed the result with satisfaction.

"I guess he'll do," he said to himself.

He kept on his way till he got within sight of home.

"What brings you home so soon, Dan?" asked Zeke.

"See here, Zeke!" said Dan eagerly." Here is a cock that will whip Mr. –'s all to pieces."

"Don't be too sure of it!"

"I've tried him once, and he's game."

The boys did not have long to wait for the trial.

Over came the haughty intruder, strutting about with his usual boastful air.

Dan let loose his new fowl, and a battle royal commenced. Soon the tyrant of the barnyard found that he had met a foe worthy of his spur. For a time the contest was an open one, but in ten minutes the feathered bully was ignominiously defeated, and led about by the comb in a manner as humiliating as had ever happened when he was himself the victor.

Daniel witnessed the defeat of the whilom tyrant with unbounded delight, and felt abundantly repaid for his investment of all his spare cash, as well as the cutting short of his visit. Probably in the famous passage at arms which he had many years after with Mr. Hayne, of South Carolina, his victory afforded him less satisfaction than this boyish triumph.

CHAPTER IV.
AN IMPORTANT STEP

"What are you thinking about, Dan?" asked his mother one evening as the boy sat thoughtfully gazing at the logs blazing in the fireplace.

"I was wishing for something to read," answered the boy.

Indeed that was his chief trouble in those early days. Libraries were scarce, and private collections equally scarce, especially in small country places. So the boy's appetite for books was not likely to be satisfied.

Daniel's words attracted the attention of his father.

"I have been speaking to some of our neighbors to-day," he said, "about establishing a small circulating library which we could all use. I think we shall do something about it soon."

"I hope you will, father," said Dan eagerly.

"If we all contribute a little, we can make a beginning. Besides we can put in some books we have already."

A week or two later Judge Webster announced that the library had been established, and it may be easily supposed that Daniel was one of the first to patronize it. It was a small and, many of my boy friends would think, an unattractive collection. But in the collection was the "Spectator," in reading which Daniel unconsciously did something towards forming a desirable style of his own. He was fond of poetry, and at an early age could repeat many of the psalms and hymns of Dr. Watts.

There was another poem which so impressed him that he learned to repeat the whole of it. This was Pope's "Essay on Man," a poem which I fear is going out of fashion, which is certainly a pity, for apart from its literary merits it contains a great deal of sensible advice as to the conduct of life. As it is not of so much importance how much we read as how thoroughly, and how much we remember, there is reason to think that Daniel got more benefit from his four books than most of the boys of to-day from their multitude of books.

Once, however, Daniel's literary enthusiasm came near having serious consequences. A new almanac had been received, and as usual each of the months was provided with a couplet of poetry. After going to bed Daniel and Ezekiel got into a dispute about the couplet at the head of the April page, and in order to ascertain which was correct Dan got out of bed, went down stairs, and groped his way to the kitchen, where he lighted a candle and went in search of the almanac. He found it, and on referring to it ascertained that Ezekiel was right. His eagerness made him careless, and an unlucky spark from the candle set some cotton clothes on fire. The house would have been consumed but for the exertions and presence of mind of his father. It may be a comfort to some of my careless young readers to learn that so great a man as Daniel Webster occasionally got into mischief when he was a boy.

Somewhere about this time a young lawyer, Mr. Thomas W. Thompson, came to Daniel's native town and set up an office.

As he was obliged to be absent at times, and yet did not wish to close his office, he proposed to Daniel to sit in his office and receive callers in his absence. Though boys do not generally take kindly to confinement, the office contained one attraction for the boy in a collection of books, probably of a miscellaneous character such as a young man is likely to pick up.

Daniel's time was not otherwise occupied, for he had no service to render, except to stay in the office and inform callers when Mr. Thompson would be back, and he was therefore at liberty to make use of the books. He made a selection unusual for a boy. There was an old Latin grammar, which the young lawyer had probably used himself in his preparatory course. This book Daniel selected, and began to study by himself. His employer offered to hear him recite in it, and soon had occasion to

be surprised at the strong and retentive memory of his office boy. Probably none of the law books attracted the future lawyer. It would have been surprising if they had.

"Judge Webster," said Thompson, on meeting the father of his young employee, "Dan will make a fine scholar if he has the chance."

"I think the boy has ability."

"He certainly has. He ought to go to college."

Judge Webster shook his head.

"I should like it above all things," he said, "but I can't see my way clear. I am a poor man, as you know, and it would cost a great deal of money to carry Dan through college even after he were prepared."

This was true, and the young lawyer was unprepared with any suggestion as to how the difficult matter was to be arranged. But Judge Webster did not forget the conversation. He was considering what could be done towards giving his promising son an education. He was willing to sacrifice his comfort, even, if thereby he could give him a good start in life.

Finally he made up his mind to start him on the way, even if he were obliged to stop short before reaching the desired goal.

Not far away was an institution which has since become famous, Exeter Academy, which has now for a century been doing an important work in preparing boys for our best colleges, and has always maintained a high standard of scholarship. Thither Judge Webster determined to take Daniel, and provide for his expenses by domestic self-denial. It was not till he had fully made up his mind that he announced his determination to the boy.

"Dan," he said one evening, "you must be up early to-morrow."

"Why, father?"

Daniel supposed he was to be set at some farm work.

"We are going to make a journey," answered Judge Webster.

"A journey!" repeated the boy in surprise. "Where are we going?"

"I am going to take you to Exeter, to put you at school there."

The boy listened with breathless interest and delight, mingled perhaps with a little apprehension, for he did not know he would succeed in the untried scenes which awaited him.

"Won't it be expensive, father?" he asked after a pause, for he knew well his father's circumstances, and was unusually considerate for a boy.

"Yes, my son, but I look to you to improve your time, so that I may find my investment a wise one."

"How are we to go, father?"

"On horseback."

Dan was a little puzzled, not knowing whether he and his father were to ride on one horse or not, as was a frequent custom at that time. It would have been hard upon any horse, for the judge was a man of weight, and the boy though light would have considerably increased the burden.

The next morning Daniel's curiosity was gratified. In front of the farmhouse stood two horses, one belonging to his father, the other filled out with a side-saddle.

"Is that horse for me?" asked Daniel in surprise.

"Yes, my son."

"What do I want of a side-saddle? I am not a lady."

"Neighbor – is sending the horse to Exeter for the use of a lady who is to return here. I agreed to take charge of it, and it happens just right, as you can use it."

"I don't know how I can get along with it. It will look strange for me to be riding on a lady's saddle."

"If a lady can ride on it probably you can."

So Dan and his father set out on their journey from the quiet country town to Exeter, the boy mounted on a lady's horse. When in his later life he had occasion to refer to this journey, Mr. Webster recalled with great merriment the figure he must have cut as he rode meekly behind his father.

No doubt as they rode along father and son conversed together about the important step which had been taken. Judge Webster already had formed the plan of sending Daniel to college, after he should have completed a course of preparation at Exeter, but upon this part of his plan he did not think it best yet to speak to his son, very probably because he had not yet made up his mind as to whether his circumstances would allow him to incur so heavy an expense.

"My son," said the father gravely, "I hope you will improve to the utmost the advantages I am securing for you. You must remember how much depends upon yourself. A boy's future is largely in his own hands."

"Yes, father, I will do the best I can."

"Mr. Thompson thinks you can make a good scholar."

"I will try, father."

"I shall have no money to leave you, Daniel, but I hope to give you an education, which is better than a fortune."

How would the father have been gratified if he could have foreseen the brilliant future in store for the boy of fourteen who was about to take his first important step in life.

CHAPTER V.
DANIEL AT EXETER ACADEMY

The principal of Exeter Academy at that time was Benjamin Abbot, LL.D., a man of high repute in letters as well as in the educational field. He was a man of dignified presence, who exacted and received deference not only from his pupils but from all with whom he came in contact.

"Dr. Abbot," said Judge Webster, when the two were admitted to his presence, "I have brought my son Daniel to study in your institution, if you find him qualified."

The dignified principal turned towards the bashful boy, and said, "What is your age, sir?"

"Fourteen," answered Daniel.

"I will examine you first in reading. Take this Bible, my lad, and read that chapter."

It was the twenty-second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, and was very well adapted as a test of the boy's ability in reading.

Now if there was anything Dan could do well it was this. He never could remember the time when he could not read. Probably he had learned from his mother, and his first text-book was the Bible. He was endowed with reverence, and his grave, sonorous voice was especially well fitted for sacred reading.

The boy took the book and commenced the task prescribed. Usually a few verses are considered sufficient, but in this case the dignified listener became absorbed in the boy's reading, and he listened, half forgetful of the object he had in view. It is a good deal to say that he actually enjoyed it. He had seldom listened to a voice at once so rich, deep and sonorous as belonged to this young boy of fourteen. Daniel, too, forgot that he was on trial, and read with his whole soul intent upon the words before him.

When he had completed the chapter Dr. Abbot said, abruptly, "You are qualified to enter this institution."

This was all the examination which in his case was required.

It was no common school that Daniel had entered, as is shown by the list of eminent men who have gone forth from it. George Bancroft, Edward Everett, Alexander H. Everett, Lewis Cass, Levi Woodbury, John E. Palfrey and others received here the first rudiments of their classical education, and all of them looked back with affection to their Alma Mater. But without derogating from the fame of any of these eminent men, it may surely be said that in Daniel Webster not only Exeter but Dartmouth College boasts its greatest alumnus.

Daniel soon vindicated the good judgment of Dr. Abbot in admitting him as a pupil. As to the manner in which he improved the advantages which his father's self-denial had secured to him, I quote the testimony of Dr. Tefft in his interesting life of Webster:

"During the nine months of his stay at Exeter he accomplished as much for himself, according to every account, as most young gentlemen could have accomplished in two years. When he left he had as thoroughly mastered grammar, arithmetic, geography and rhetoric, as the majority of college graduates usually have done after a full collegiate course. He had also made rapid progress in the study of the Latin language. Dr. Abbot, fully appreciating the capacity of his most remarkable pupil, did not tie him down to the ordinary routine of study, nor compel him to lag behind with the other pupils, but gave him free scope and a loose rein, that he might do his utmost; and the venerable preceptor, after the lapse of more than half a century, during all which time he continued to be a teacher, declared on a public occasion that Daniel Webster's equal in the power of amassing knowledge he had never seen, and never expected to see again.

"It is not enough to say of him, according to Dr. Abbot's description of him at this time, that he had a quick perception and a memory of great tenacity and strength. He did not seem barely to

read and remember, as other people do. He appeared, rather, to grasp the thoughts and facts given by his author with a peculiar force, to incorporate them into his mental being, and thus make them a part of himself. It is said of Sir Isaac Newton, after reading for the first time the geometry of Euclid, and on being asked what he thought of it, that he knew it all before. He understood geometry, it seems, by intuition, or by a perception so rapid that it seems like intuition; but it was also true of the great astronomer that he had great difficulty in remembering even his own calculations after he had gone through with them. Daniel Webster, on the other hand, though endowed with a very extraordinary quickness of insight, worked harder for his knowledge than did Newton; but when once he had gained a point, or learned a fact, it remained with him, a part of his own essence, forever afterwards. His mind was also wonderfully fertile. A single truth, which, with most boys of his age, would have remained a single truth, in him became at once a starting-point for a remarkable series of ideas, original and striking, growing up out of the seed sown by that mighty power of reflection, in which no youth of his years, probably, was ever his superior."

At that time an assistant in the school was Joseph S. Buckminster, who later became an eminent preacher in Boston, and died while yet a young man. He was very young at the time, a mere boy, yet such were his attainments, and such was the confidence reposed in him by his old teachers, that he was selected to fill the position of tutor. He it was who first directed the studies of the new scholar, and encouraged the bashful boy to do his best. In after life Webster never displayed timidity or awkwardness; but, fresh from the farm, thrown among a hundred boys, most of whom were better dressed and more used to society than he, he felt at times awkward and distrustful. One thing he found it hard to do was to declaim. This is certainly singular, considering how he excelled in reading, and considering moreover what an orator he afterwards became.

It was not because he did not try. He committed more than one piece to memory, and recited it to himself out loud in the solitude of his own room, but when the time came to get up and declaim it before the teacher and his schoolmates he was obliged to give it up. Here is his own account of it:

"Many a piece did I commit to memory, and rehearse in my own room over and over again; but when the day came, when the school collected, when my name was called, and I saw all eyes turned upon my seat, I could not raise myself from it. Sometimes the masters frowned, sometimes they smiled. Mr. Buckminster always pressed and entreated with the most winning kindness that I would venture only *once*; but I could not command sufficient resolution, and when the occasion was over I went home and wept tears of bitter mortification."

This is certainly encouraging for bashful boys. Here was a man who became one of the greatest orators—perhaps *the* greatest—and yet as a boy he made an ignominious failure in the very department in which he afterwards excelled. It is a lesson for parents also. Don't too hastily conclude that your boys are dunces, and destined to failure, because they develop late, or are hindered from making a creditable figure by timidity or nervous self-consciousness.

In this connection I am tempted to repeat an anecdote of Sir Walter Scott. It was not till comparatively late that he discovered his poetical ability. It is related of him that when already a young man he was rowing with a friend on a Scotch lake, when they mutually challenged each other to produce a few lines of poetry. Both made the trial, and both failed. Thereupon Scott said good-humoredly to his companion, "It's clear neither of us was cut out for a poet." Yet within ten years appeared the first of those Border poems which thrilled the hearts of his countrymen, and have lent a charm to the hills and lakes of Scotland which they will never lose.

Daniel remained nine months at Exeter. Though he did not win reputation as a declaimer, he made his mark as a scholar. When he was approaching the end of his first term the usher said one day, "Webster, you may stop a few minutes after school; I wish to speak to you."

Daniel stopped, wondering whether in any way he had incurred censure.

When they were alone the usher said, "The term is nearly over. Are you coming back next term?"

Daniel hesitated. He enjoyed the advantages which the school afforded, but his feelings had been hurt at times by the looks of amusement directed at his rustic manners and ill-fitting garments.

The usher noticed his hesitation, and said, "You are doing yourself great credit. You are a better scholar than any in your class. If you come back next term I shall put you into a higher class."

These encouraging words made the boy resolve to return, and regardless of ridicule pursue with diligence the path which had been marked out for him.

It would be rather interesting to read the thoughts of Daniel's schoolmates when years afterwards they saw the boy whom they had ridiculed moving forward with rapid strides to the foremost place in the councils of state, as well as in the legal profession.

I am tempted to insert here, on the authority of an Exeter correspondent of the Chicago *Advance*, an anecdote of Daniel at this period which will interest my young readers:

"When Daniel Webster's father found that his son was not robust enough to make a successful farmer, he sent him to Exeter to prepare for college, and found a home for him among a number of other students in the family of 'old Squire Clifford,' as we of a younger generation had always heard him called. Daniel had up to this time led only the secular life of a country farmer's boy, and, though the New Hampshire farmers have sent out many heroes as firm and true as the granite rocks in the pasture, there cannot be among the hard and homely work which such a life implies the little finenesses of manner which good society demands. Daniel was one of these diamonds of the first water, but was still in the rough, and needed some cutting and polishing to fit him to shine in the great world in which he was to figure so conspicuously.

"None saw this more clearly than the sensible old Squire. The boy had one habit at table of which the Squire saw it would be a kindness to cure him. When not using his knife and fork he was accustomed to hold them upright in his fists, on either side of his plate. Daniel was a bashful boy of very delicate feelings, and the Squire feared to wound him by speaking to him directly on the subject. So he called aside one of the other students with whom he had been longer acquainted, and told him his dilemma. 'Now,' said he, 'I want you this noon at the table to hold up your knife and fork as Daniel does. I will speak to you about it, and we will see if the boy does not take a hint for himself.'

"The young man consented to be the scapegoat for his fellow-student, and several times during the meal planted his fists on the table, with his knife and fork as straight as if he had received orders to present arms. The Squire drew his attention to his position, courteously begged his pardon for speaking of the matter, and added a few kind words on the importance of young men correcting such little habits before going out into the world. The student thanked him for his interest and advice, and promised reform, and Daniel's knife and fork were never from that day seen elevated at table."

CHAPTER VI.
PREPARING FOR COLLEGE

After nine months spent at Exeter Daniel was withdrawn by his father, not from any dissatisfaction with the school or with the pupil's progress, but probably for economical reasons. Judge Webster was a poor man, and though the charges at Exeter at that time were very moderate they were a heavy draft upon the good father's purse. But Dan was not taken back to farm-work. He was allowed to continue his classical studies, but under different auspices.

In the town of Boscawan, only six miles off, the minister, Rev. Samuel Wood, was noted for his success in preparing boys for college. His charges, too, were wonderfully low. For board and instruction he only charged one dollar per week, which leads us to infer either that provisions were very cheap, or that boys had less appetite than is the case now. At any rate, the low price was a great inducement to Dan's father.

"Dan," he said, soon after the boy came, "do you wish to continue your studies?"

"Yes, father, if you are willing."

"I am not only willing but desirous that you should do so. I intend to place you with Rev. Mr. Wood, of Boscawen."

Daniel knew of Mr. Wood's reputation as a teacher, and the prospect did not displease him.

Still his father had not announced the plan he had in view for him.

One cold winter day, when the snow lay deep on the ground, Judge Webster and Dan started for the house of his future teacher. As they were ascending a hill slowly through deep snows the Judge, who had for some time been silent, said, "Dan, I may as well tell you what plan I have in view for you. I shall ask Mr. Wood to prepare you for college, and I will let you enter at Dartmouth as soon as you are ready."

Daniel could not speak for emotion. He knew what a sacrifice it would involve for his father with his straitened means to carry through such a plan as that, and his heart was full. As he himself says, "A warm glow ran all over me, and I laid my head on my father's shoulder and wept."

I am afraid that some boys—possibly some of my young readers—have received a similar announcement from their fathers with quite different feelings.

We are to imagine Dan, then, an inmate of the minister's family, pursuing his studies with success, but with less of formal restraint than when he was a pupil at Exeter. Indeed I shall not attempt to conceal the fact that occasionally Dan's love of sport, and particularly of fishing, drew him away from his studies, and led him to incur the good doctor's remonstrances.

One day after a reprimand, which was tempered, however, by a compliment to his natural abilities, Daniel determined to surprise his teacher.

The task assigned him to prepare was one hundred lines of Virgil, a long lesson, as many boys would think. Daniel did not go to bed, but spent all night in poring over his book.

The next day, when the hour for recitation came, Dan recited his lesson with fluency and correctness.

"Very well," said Dr. Wood, preparing to close the book.

"But, doctor, I have a few more lines that I can recite."

"Very well," said Mr. Wood, supposing that Dan might have read twenty-five or thirty lines more. But the boy kept on till he had completed a second hundred.

"Really, Dan, I compliment you on your industry," said his teacher, again about to close the book.

"But," said Dan, "I have studied further." "Very remarkable," said the minister in surprise; "well, let us have them."

Dan rolled off another hundred lines, which he appeared to know quite as well as the previous two hundred.

"You are a smart boy!" said the doctor approvingly, and not without a feeling of relief, for it is rather tedious to listen critically to the translation of three hundred lines.

"But," said Dan, "I am not through yet."

"Pray how much have you read?" asked Dr. Wood in amazement.

"I can recite five hundred more if you like," said Dan, his eyes twinkling with enjoyment at the doctor's surprise.

"I think that will do for to-day," said Dr. Wood. "I don't think I shall have time to hear them now. You may have the rest of the day for pigeon shooting."

Indeed Dan was always fond of sport, and not particularly fond of farm-work. My boy reader may like to read an anecdote of this time, which I will give in the very words in which Daniel told it to some friends at a later day.

While at Dr. Wood's, "my father sent for me in haying time to help him, and put me into a field to turn hay, and left me. It was pretty lonely there, and, after working some time, I found it very dull; and, as I knew my father was gone away, I walked home, and asked my sister Sally if she did not want to go and pick some whortleberries. She said yes. So I went and got some horses, and put a side-saddle on one, and we set off. We did not get home till it was pretty late, and I soon went to bed. When my father came home he asked my mother where I was, and what I had been about. She told him. The next morning when I awoke I saw all the clothes I had brought from Dr. Wood's tied up in a small bundle again. When I saw my father he asked me how I liked haying. I told him I found it 'pretty dull and lonesome yesterday.' 'Well,' said he, 'I believe you may as well go back to Dr. Wood's.' So I took my bundle under my arm, and on my way I met Thomas W. Thompson, a lawyer in Salisbury; he laughed very heartily when he saw me. 'So,' said he, 'your farming is over, is it?'"

It will occur to my readers that, as Judge Webster was struggling so earnestly to give Dan an education, it would have been more considerate for the boy to have remained at his task, and so saved his father the trouble of finishing it. However, it is not my intention to present the boy as in all respects a model, though it is certain that he appreciated and was thoroughly grateful for his father's self-sacrificing devotion.

On one occasion Dan was set to mowing. He did not succeed very well.

"What is the matter, Dan?" asked his father.

"My scythe does not *hang* well," answered Dan, an answer which will be understood by country boys.

His father took the scythe and tried to remedy the difficulty, but when it was handed back to Dan, it worked no better.

"I think you had better hang it to suit yourself, Dan," said his father.

With a laughing face Dan hung it on the branch of a tree, and turning to his father said, "There, that is just right."

On another occasion Judge Webster, on returning home, questioned the boys as to what they had been doing in his absence.

"What have you been doing, Ezekiel?" asked his father.

"Nothing, sir," was the frank reply.

"And you, Daniel, what have you been doing?"

"*Helping Zeke, sir.*"

There is no doubt that Judge Webster was more indulgent than was usual in that day to his children, and more particularly to Daniel, of whose talents he was proud, and of whose future distinction he may have had in his mind some faint foreshadowing. This indulgence was increased by Dan's early delicacy of constitution. At any rate, Daniel had in his father his best friend, not only

kind but judicious, and perhaps the eminence he afterwards attained was due in part to the judicious management of the father, who earnestly sought to give him a good start in life.

While at Boscawan Dan found another circulating library, and was able to enlarge his reading and culture. Among the books which it contained was an English translation of Don Quixote, and this seems to have had a powerful fascination for the boy. “I began to read it,” he says in his autobiography, “and it is literally true that I never closed my eyes until I had finished it, nor did I lay it down, so great was the power of this extraordinary book on my imagination.”

Meanwhile Daniel was making rapid progress in his classical studies. He studied fitfully perhaps, but nevertheless rapidly. In the summer of 1797, at the age of fifteen, he was pronounced ready to enter college. His acquisitions were by no means extensive, for in those days colleges were content with a scantier supply of preparatory knowledge than now. In the ancient languages he had read the first six books of Virgil’s Æneid, Cicero’s four Orations against Catiline, a little Greek grammar, and the four Evangelists of the Greek Testament. In mathematics he had some knowledge of arithmetic, but knew nothing of algebra or geometry. He had read a considerable number of books, however, enough to give him a literary taste, but he was by no means a prodigy of learning. Yet, slender as were his acquirements, his school life was at an end, and the doors of Dartmouth College opened to receive its most distinguished son.

CHAPTER VII.
DANIEL'S COLLEGE LIFE

It is all important point in a boy's life when he enters college. He leaves home, in most cases, and, to a greater extent than ever before, he is trusted to order his own life and rely upon his own judgment. It is a trying ordeal, and many fail to pass through it creditably. A student who has plenty of money is in greater danger of wasting his time from the enlarged opportunities of enjoyment which money can buy. From this danger, at least, Daniel was free. His father found it hard enough to pay his ordinary expenses, and it is hardly likely that the boy ever had much spare money to spend on pleasure.

Besides, though only fifteen, Daniel already possessed a gravity and earnestness not often to be found in much older students. These, however, were blended with a humor and love of fun which contributed to make him an agreeable companion for his fellow-students.

Daniel's development was not rapid. The oak tree grows steadily, but in rapidity of growth it is eclipsed by many trees of less importance. The great powers which our hero exhibited in after life did not at once make themselves manifest. He did not at once take his place proudly at the head of his class. This is shown by the fact that at the Sophomore exhibition neither of the two principal appointments was assigned to him. Notwithstanding this, it may safely be asserted that his time was well spent. In this connection I am sure my young readers will be interested in reading the testimony of Professor Shortliff.

"Mr. Webster, while in college," writes the professor, "was remarkable for his steady habits, his intense application to study, and his punctual attendance upon all the prescribed exercises. I know not that he was absent from a recitation, or from morning and evening prayers in the chapel, or from public worship on the Sabbath; and I doubt if ever a smile was seen upon his face during any religious exercise. He was always in his place, and with a decorum suited to it. He had no collision with any one, nor appeared to enter into the concerns of others, but emphatically minded his own business. But, as steady as the sun, he pursued with intense application the great object for which he came to college."

This is certainly high praise, and I am afraid such words could hardly be said with truth of the majority of the college students of to-day. Conscientious devotion to duty is often set down by college students as indicating a lack of proper spirit, and the punctilious scholar is often stigmatized as a toady, who is trying to curry favor with the Faculty. Daniel, however, understood very well how important to his future success was his improvement of the advantages which his father's self-sacrifice had purchased for him. Judge Webster was obliged to mortgage his house and farm to meet the expenses incurred by Daniel's education, and he would indeed have been most reprehensible if he had not constantly borne this in mind.

To go into details, Daniel's favorite studies were the Latin and Greek classics. He was but slenderly versed in these languages when he entered college, and the college course was not as advanced as it is at Dartmouth to-day. The first year, and part of the second, was devoted to authors and studies which now receive attention before entrance. For instance, the Freshman class went on with the Seventh Book of the Æneid and with the remainder of the Greek Testament, arithmetic was continued, and algebra was begun. While he was not below the average in mathematics, Daniel certainly did not excel in that department. It is related of Charles Sumner that he made strenuous efforts to become a good mathematical scholar in spite of, perhaps because of, his conscious distaste for that important branch, but without marked success. General reading and composition always attracted him, and he was probably one of the best read students at the time in college. He devoted his leisure hours to extensive readings in poetry, history and criticism. His powerful and retentive memory made this voluntary course of especial value, and years later there were times when he was able to make happy and striking quotations from authors he had not read since his college life.

It is quite certain that Daniel at this time had no path marked out for his future life, yet he probably could not have made a more profitable preparation for that which actually lay before him than that which he was unconsciously making. The history of England and of his own country especially interested him, not alone the history of outward events, but the constitutional history. From the age of eight he had been familiar with the Constitution of the United States, read for the first time as printed on the cheap cotton handkerchief, of which mention has already been made. He never ceased to study it, and he well deserved the title sometimes given him of Expounder and Defender of the Constitution.

At that time, as at present, it was the custom for the students to form societies, in which debates and other literary exercises were the principal features of the periodical meetings. Towards the middle of his college course Daniel joined "The United Fraternity," then the leading society in college. He had long since overcome the diffidence which at Exeter prevented him from participating in the exercise of declamation. In the society he became distinguished both as a writer and debater, and ere long ranked in the general estimation as the best writer and speaker in college. So far as he exhibited precocity in anything he showed it in these two branches. His method of preparation, for he always prepared himself when he proposed to speak, is described by a classmate as follows: "He was accustomed to arrange his thoughts in his mind in his room or his private walks, and to put them upon paper just before the exercise would be called for. When he was required to speak at two o'clock, he would frequently begin to write after dinner, and when the bell rang he would fold his paper, put it in his pocket and go in, and speak with great ease. In his movements he was rather slow and deliberate, except when his feelings were aroused; then his whole soul would kindle into a flame."

As this was the formative period when young Webster's intellectual character was taking shape; as, moreover, he was still a boy in years, no older than many who will read this book, I add another tribute to his industry in college and the ability which he displayed. It is from a letter written by Hon. Henry Hubbard to Prof. Sanborn.

"I entered the Freshman class in 1799," writes Mr. Hubbard, "at the early age of fourteen. I was two years in college with Mr. Webster. When I first went to Hanover I found his reputation already established as the most remarkable young man in the college. He was, I believe, so decidedly beyond any one else that no other student of his class was ever spoken of as *second* to him. I was led, very soon, to appreciate most highly his scholarship and attainments. As a student his acquisitions seemed to me to be very extensive. Every subject appeared to contribute something to his intellectual stores. He acquired knowledge with remarkable facility. He seemed to grasp the meaning and substance of a book almost by intuition. Others toiled long and patiently for that which he acquired at a glance.

"As a scholar, I should say that he was then distinguished for the uncommon extent of his knowledge, and for the ease with which he acquired it. But I should say that I was more impressed by his eloquence and power as a speaker, before the society of which we were both members, than by his other qualifications, however superior to others. There was a completeness and fullness in his views, and a force and expressiveness in his manner of presenting them, which no other student possessed. We used to listen to him with the deepest interest and respect, and no one thought of equaling the vigor and glow of his eloquence. The oration which he delivered before the United Fraternity on the day of his graduation is, I think, now among the records of that society. Whoever will read it at this late day, and bring to mind the appearance of the author, his manner and power, during its delivery, cannot fail to admit that I have said no more of his eloquence than I was warranted in saying. The students, and those who knew him best and judged him most impartially, felt that no one connected with the college deserved to be compared with him at the time he received his first degree. His habits and moral character were entirely unimpeachable. I never heard them questioned during our college acquaintance."

After this testimony I am certainly justified in holding up Daniel Webster, during his college life, as a fit model for all young men who at this day are placed in similar circumstances and pursuing a similar course.

CHAPTER VIII.
DANIEL RECEIVES SOME VALUABLE ADVICE

Peter Harvey, in his interesting volume of "Reminiscences of Daniel Webster," relates many incidents for which he was indebted to the free and friendly communications of Mr. Webster himself. One of these I will transfer to my pages, as it will be likely to amuse my young readers. I can do no better than quote it without alteration from Mr. Harvey's book.

"Mr. Webster was once telling me about a plain-spoken neighbor of his father, whose sons were schoolmates of his own. The neighbor had moved into the neighborhood of Hanover, where he had opened a little clearing, and had settled upon a piece of comparatively barren land. After Daniel had been in college several months his father said to him,

"'John Hanson is away up there somewhere. I should like to know how he is getting along. I think you had better find him out, and go and see him.'

"So Daniel inquired about, and soon found out pretty nearly where Hanson lived.

"'One Saturday afternoon,' related Mr. Webster, 'I thought I would trudge up there through the woods, and spend Sunday with my old friends. After a long, tedious walk I began to think I should never find the place; but I finally did, and when I got there I was pretty well tired out with climbing, jumping over logs, and so on. The family were not less delighted than surprised to see me, but they were as poor as Job's cat. They were reduced to the last extreme of poverty, and their house contained but one apartment, with a rude partition to make two rooms.

"'I saw how matters were; but it was too late to go back, and they seemed really glad to see me. They confessed to me that they had not even a cow, or any potatoes. The only thing they had to eat was a bundle of green grass and a little hog's lard, and they actually subsisted on this grass fried in the hog's fat. But it was not so bad after all. They fried up a great platter of it, and I made my supper and breakfast off it. About a year and a half afterwards, just before graduating, I thought that, before leaving Hanover, I would go and pay another visit to the Hansons. I found that they had improved somewhat, for they now had a cow and plenty of plain, homely fare. I spent the night there, and was about to leave the next morning, when Hanson said to me,

"'"Well, Daniel, you are about to graduate. You've got through college, and have got college larnin', and now, what are you going to do with it?"

"'I told him I had not decided on a profession.

"'"Well," said he, "you are a good boy; your father was a kind man to me, and was always kind to the poor. I should like to do a kind turn to him and his. You've got through college, and people that go through college either become ministers, or doctors, or lawyers. As for bein' a minister I would never think of doin' that; they never get paid anything. Doctorin' is a miserable profession; they live upon other people's ailin's, are up nights, and have no peace. And as for bein' a lawyer, I would never propose that to anybody. Now," said he, "Daniel, I'll tell you what! You are a boy of parts; you understand this book-larnin', and you are bright. I knew a man who had college larnin' down in Rye, where I lived when I was a boy. That man was a conjurer; he could tell by consultin' his books and study if a man had lost his cow where she was. That was a great thing, and if people lost anything, they would think nothin' of payin' three or four dollars to a man like that, so as to find their property. There is not a conjurer within a hundred miles of this place; and you are a bright boy, and have got this college larnin'. The best thing you can do, Daniel, is to study that, and *be a conjurer*!"'"

We can imagine the serious, earnest tone in which this advice was given, and we may easily suppose that Daniel found it hard not to laugh when the climax was reached. We can hardly imagine the advice to have been taken. If, in place of Daniel Webster, the great lawyer, and the defender of the Constitution, we had Daniel Webster, the famous conjurer, it would be a ludicrous transformation.

There are few persons who do not consider themselves qualified to give advice, but when my young readers are advised about the serious business of life, let them consider whether the advice comes from one who is qualified by wisdom and good judgment to give it.

CHAPTER IX.
BROTHERLY LOVE

Daniel's path seemed to lie plain before him. He was a college student, receiving and using such advantages as Dartmouth could give him. At nineteen he would be a graduate, and well qualified to commence a professional course. So far as he was concerned Daniel felt that he had reason to congratulate himself. But there was another for whom he began to feel solicitude.

Ezekiel Webster was nearly two years older than Daniel, and like him possessed uncommon natural gifts. A strong affection had united the two brothers from their earliest years. There was no reason, apart from Judge Webster's poverty, why Ezekiel, as well as his younger brother, should not be allowed a college education. But the father hesitated long before he ventured to offer Daniel the education which he longed to give him, and to raise the necessary money was obliged to mortgage his humble house. His plan for Ezekiel was that he should remain at home and carry on the farm. As he grew older, and hard work had made him in his own words "old before his time," he felt that it would be a relief to have a son like Ezekiel to take the burden from his shoulders, and keep up the farm. But Ezekiel scarcely more than Daniel had a vocation for farming. He too had a thirst for learning, and felt that a farmer's life would be uncongenial. It is natural that he should have felt dissatisfied with his prospects, and that the claims of Duty which he recognized should nevertheless have seemed to him difficult to obey.

Such was the state of feeling when Daniel came home on a vacation. To him Ezekiel revealed his thoughts and inward struggles.

"I ought to stay, Daniel," he said; "now that you are away father needs me more than ever, but I can't bear the idea of growing up in ignorance, with no work more elevating than working on the farm."

Daniel was touched. He could see how unequal their lots were likely to be. While he might be a successful lawyer, his favorite brother, whose talents he considered to equal his own, would have to toil on the barren acres of their paternal farm.

"I can't bear the idea, either, Zeke," he answered. "You are sacrificing yourself to me. Father has mortgaged the farm to pay my expenses, and you are working to pay it."

"If but one of us can have an education, Dan, I am glad that you are that one."

"But, Zeke, you are as smart as I, nay, smarter, and ought to have the same advantages."

"It cannot be, Daniel. I know that well enough. If I could be spared to leave home I should like to go out West. In a new part of the country I should have a better chance of getting on than here. Here on our barren little farm there is no chance to do better than get a bare living."

"I wish you could go to college too. Isn't there some way of managing it?"

"I have thought of it many times, but I see no way," answered Ezekiel despondently.

"May I mention the subject to father, Zeke?"

"It would only trouble him, and after all it would do no good."

All night long the two brothers talked the matter over, and finally Zeke gave his consent to Dan's broaching the subject to their father. The result I will give in Daniel's words.

"I ventured on the negotiation, and it was carried, as other things often are, by the earnest and sanguine manner of youth. I told him [Judge Webster] that I was unhappy at my brother's prospects. For myself I saw my way to knowledge, respectability and self-protection; but as to him, all looked the other way; that I would keep school, and get along as well as I could, be more than four years in getting through college, if necessary, provided he also could be sent to study. He said at once he lived but for his children; that he had but little, and on that little he put no value, except so far as it might be useful to them; that to carry us both through college would take all he was worth; that, for himself,

he was willing to run the risk, but that this was a serious matter to our mother and two unmarried sisters; that we must settle the matter with them, and if their consent was obtained, he would trust to Providence, and get along as well as he could."

So the matter was referred to Mrs. Webster, and she showed a devotion equal to that exhibited by her husband. Though she knew that the education of both of her boys would take the balance of their little property, she never hesitated. "I will trust the boys," she answered promptly.

Her confidence was not misplaced. She lived long enough to rejoice in the success of both sons, and to find a happy and comfortable home with Ezekiel. Nothing in the life of Daniel Webster is more beautiful than the devotion of the parents to their children, and the mutual affection which existed between them.

CHAPTER X.
THE TWO BROTHERS

Ezekiel was worthy of the sacrifices his parents made for him. If he was not the equal of Daniel in ability, he was still remarkable, and in time reached high rank as a lawyer in his native State. He was a man grown, and nearly a man in years, when his new plan of life was formed. He was close upon twenty years of age, a young man of striking appearance, "an improved edition of his father in form and features," but thus far he had had only such educational advantages as were afforded by the common schools of his native town. But a small academy had been established in Salisbury, and of this he enrolled himself as a pupil. He remained here for two years, beginning the Latin grammar, for it was necessary, notwithstanding his age, to begin at the lowest round of the ladder.

From the academy he went to reside with Dr. Wood, and under him completed his preparatory studies. The good minister was justly proud of having trained two such pupils as Daniel and Ezekiel Webster.

Between the two brothers the natural relations of older and younger seemed to be reversed. Ezekiel looked up to Daniel, though the latter was two years his junior, and asked his advice, but Daniel never assumed the superiority which his elder brother was so ready to concede. Here is an extract from one of his letters: "You tell me that you have difficulties to encounter which I know nothing of. What do you mean, Ezekiel? Do you mean to flatter? That don't become you; or, do you think you are inferior to me in natural advantages? If so, be assured you greatly mistake. Therefore, for the future say in your letters to me, 'I am superior to you in natural endowments; I will know more in one year than you do now, and more in six than you ever will.' I should not resent this language. I should be very well pleased in hearing it; but be assured, as mighty as you are your great puissance shall never insure you a victory without a contest."

It will be seen how warm and free from jealousy were the relations between these two brothers. The spectacle is particularly pleasing because in so many families we find the case so different. Alienation, jealousy and strife are too often found. When brothers band together, cherishing a community of plans and interests, as in the case of the well-known publishers, the Harper brothers, their chance of a large and enduring success is much greater than it would be if all pulled in different directions.

Ezekiel entered college just as Daniel, his younger brother, was leaving it. As he was destined to be associated with Daniel afterwards, my young readers may like to know how he succeeded in college. I quote, from the private correspondence of Daniel Webster, a letter written by Rev. George T. Chapman touching this point:

"All my recollections of Ezekiel Webster are of a gratifying character. In the Senior year we occupied rooms opposite to each other, in a building directly north of the college. I am therefore able to state, from intimate personal acquaintance, that he was altogether exemplary in his habits and faithful in his studies. He had no enemies, and all were happy to be numbered in the list of his friends.

"Owing to his absence in teaching school, no part was assigned him at Commencement. But I have no doubt he stood high in the estimation of the college Faculty; and although I should hesitate to pronounce him the first scholar in his class, it would be doing injustice to his memory to say that he was excelled by either of those who received the highest college honors on the day of our graduation. It has been recently stated that he was particularly distinguished for his knowledge of Greek; but I cannot now recall the circumstance to mind, nor, in fact, make any discrimination as to relative proficiency in the several branches of study. He was deficient in none. He was good in all. Such at least is my recollection of the reputation he enjoyed. After leaving college, from all that I have heard, he obtained a greater degree of eminence in the eye of the public than any of his classmates; and

when I revert to college days, after the lapse of almost half a century, all my recollections of what he then was cause me to feel no surprise at the subsequent elevation which he attained."

I think I am justified in saying that Ezekiel was worthy of his relationship to Daniel, though he was overshadowed by the more brilliant talents and success of his younger brother. It is to be considered, however, that he was cut off in the midst of his career, before he had attained the age of fifty, and we cannot tell what might have been had he lived twenty years longer.

But we must not forget that it is the life and the gradual development of Daniel's powers that we are studying. My young readers will probably be surprised to learn that in college he was known as a poet, and appears to have written verse on many occasions with considerable facility. That he would ever have achieved eminence in this class of composition no one will claim, but as the productions of such a youth his verses merit notice. That my readers may judge for themselves, I will quote entire a letter in rhyme written by Daniel a little before he attained the age of seventeen. It was addressed to his friend, George Herbert:

"Dartmouth College, Dec. 20, 1798

"Dear George, I go. I leave the friend I love.
Long since 'twas written in the books above.
But what, good God! I leave thee, do I say?
The thought distracts my soul, and fills me with dismay.
But Heaven decreed it, let me not repine;
I go; but, George, my heart is knit with thine.
In vain old Time shall all his forces prove
To tear my heart from the dear friend I love;
Should you be distant far as Afric's sand,
By Fancy pictured, you'd be near at hand.
This shall console my thoughts till time shall end:
Though George be absent, George is still my friend.
But other friends I leave; it wounds my heart
To leave a Gilman, Conkey and a Clark;
But hope through the sad thought my soul shall bear:
Bereft of hope I'd sink in dark despair.
When Phœbus a few courses shall have run,
And e'er old Aries shall receive the sun,
I shall return, nor more shall fear the day
That from my friends shall take poor me away.
Oh then roll on, ye lagging wheels of time,
Roll on the hours; till then, dear George, I'm thine.

"D. W."

Verse-writing was but an episode, an occasional diversion, with Daniel, and when he entered upon his professional life he found little time to devote to it. I will therefore cite but one other specimen of his college productions in this line. It was written shortly after his eighteenth birthday, and was appended to a letter written to his intimate friend, Mr. Bingham.

It runs thus:

"SYLVARUMQUE POTENS DIANA. A FABLE

"Bright Phœbus long all rival suns outshone,
And rode triumphant on his splendid throne.
When first he waked the blushes of the dawn,
And spread his beauties o'er the flowery lawn,
The yielding stars quick hastened from the sky,
Nor moon dare longer with his glories vie;
He reigned supreme, and decked in roseate light
Beamed his full splendors on the astonished sight.
At length on earth behold a damsel rise,
Whose growing beauties charmed the wondering skies!
As forth she walked to breathe the balmy air,
And view the beauties of the gay parterre,
Her radiant glories drowned the blaze of day,
And through all nature shot a brighter ray.
Old Phœbus saw—and blushed—now forced to own
That with superior worth the damsel shone.
Graced with his name he bade her ever shine,
And in his rival owned a form divine!"

One trait of the young college student I must refer to, because young men at that stage in their mental training are too apt to be marked by a self-sufficient and not altogether agreeable opinion of their own powers. Notwithstanding his great abilities Daniel was always modest, and disposed to under rather than overestimate himself. Shortly after his graduation he took occasion to express himself thus, in speaking to some friends:

"The opinion of my scholarship was a mistaken one. It was overestimated. I will explain what I mean. Many other students read more than I did, and knew more than I did. But so much as I read I made my own. When a half hour, or an hour at most, had elapsed, I closed my book and thought over what I had read. If there was anything peculiarly interesting or striking in the passage I endeavored to recall it and lay it up in my memory, and commonly could effect my object. Then if, in debate or conversation afterwards, any subject came up on which I had read something, I could talk very easily so far as I had read, and then I was very careful to stop. Thus greater credit was given me for extensive and accurate knowledge than I really possessed."

It may be remarked generally that men of great abilities are more likely to be modest than third-rate men, who are very much afraid that they will not be rated as high as they should be. There are indeed exceptions, and those of a conspicuous character. The poet Wordsworth had a comfortable consciousness of his superiority to his contemporaries, and on one occasion, when he was asked if he had read the poems of such a one (a prominent poet), he answered, "I never read any poetry except my own."

It is a safe rule to let the world pronounce you great before you call attention to your own greatness.

CHAPTER XI.
DANIEL AS AN ORATOR

The four years spent in college generally bear an important relation to the future success or non-success of the student. It is the formative period with most young men, that is, it is the time when the habits are formed which are to continue through life. Let us inquire, then, what did Daniel Webster's college course do for him?

We cannot claim that his attainments at graduation were equal to those of the most proficient graduates of our colleges to-day. The curriculum at Dartmouth, and indeed at all colleges, was more limited and elementary than at present. Daniel was a good Greek and Latin scholar for his advantages, but those were not great. He did, however, pay special attention to philosophical studies, and to the law of nations. He took an interest in current politics, as may be gathered from letters written in his college days, and was unconsciously preparing himself for the office of a statesman.

He paid special attention also to oratory. No longer shrinking from speaking before his classmates, he voluntarily composed the pieces he declaimed, and took an active part besides in the debating society. I am sure my young reader will like to know how Daniel wrote at this time, and will like to compare the oratory of the college student with that of the future statesman. I shall, therefore, quote from a Fourth of July oration, which he delivered by invitation to the citizens and students at the age of eighteen. As in a boy's features we trace a general likeness to his mature manhood, so I think we may trace a likeness in passages of this early effort to the speeches he made in the fullness of his fame.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.