

# ALGER HORATIO JR.

FACING THE WORLD

Horatio Alger

**Facing the World**

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**Alger H.**

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# **Horatio Alger**

## **Facing the World**

### **PREFACE**

Horatio Alger, Jr., in “Facing the World,” gives us as his hero a boy whose parents have both died and the man appointed as his guardian is unjust and unkind to him. In desperation he runs away and is very fortunate in finding a true friend in a man who aids him and makes him his helper in his work as magician.

They travel over the country and have many interesting experiences, some narrow escapes and thrilling adventures.

## CHAPTER I

### HARRY RECEIVES A LETTER

“Here’s a letter for you, Harry,” said George Howard. “I was passing the hotel on my way home from school when Abner Potts called out to me from the piazza, and asked me to bring it.”

The speaker was a bright, round-faced boy of ten. The boy whom he addressed was five or six years older. Only a week previous he had lost his father, and as the family consisted only of these two, he was left, so far as near relatives were concerned, alone in the world.

Immediately after the funeral he had been invited home by Mr. Benjamin Howard, a friend of his father, but in no manner connected with him by ties of relationship.

“You can stay here as long as you like, Harry,” said Mr. Howard, kindly. “It will take you some time to form your plans, perhaps, and George will be glad to have your company.”

“Thank you, Mr. Howard,” said Harry, gratefully.

“Shall you look for some employment here?”

“No; my father has a second cousin in Colebrook, named John Fox. Before he died he advised me to write to Mr. Fox, and go to his house if I should receive an invitation.”

“I hope for your sake, he will prove a good man. What is his business?”

“I don’t know, nor did my father. All I know is, that he is considered a prosperous man. This letter is from him.”

It was inclosed in a brown envelope, and ran as follows:

“HARRY VANE: I have received your letter saying that your father wants me to be your guardeen. I don’t know as I have any objections, bein’ a business man it will come easy to me, and I think your father was wise to seleck me. I am reddy to receave you any time. You will come to Bolton on the cars. That is eight miles from here, and there is a stage that meats the trane. It wouldn’t do you any harm to walk, but boys ain’t so active as they were in my young days. The stage fare is fifty cents, which I shall expect you to pay yourself, if you ride.

“There is one thing you don’t say anything about—how much proparty your pa left. I hope it is a good round sum, and I will take good care of it for you. Ennybody round here will tell you that John Fox is a good man of business, and about as sharp as most people. Mrs. Fox will be glad to see you, and my boy, Joel, will be glad to have someone to keep him company. He is about sixteen years old. You don’t say how old you are, but from your letter I surmise that you are as much as that. You will find a happy united famerly, consistin’ of me and my wife, Joel and his sister, Sally. Sally is fourteen, just two years younger than Joel. We live in a comfortable way, but we don’t gorge ourselves on rich, unhelthy food. No more at present. Yours to command,

**“JOHN FOX.”**

Harry smiled more than once as he read this letter.

“Your relative isn’t strong on spelling,” remarked Mr. Howard, as he laid the letter on the table.

“No, sir; but he appears to be strong on economy. It is a comfort to know that I shall not be injured by ‘rich, unhelthy food.’”

“When do you mean to start for Colebrook?” asked Mr. Howard.

“To-morrow morning. I have been looking at a railroad guide, and I find it will bring me to Colebrook in time for supper.”

“We should be glad to have you stay with us as long as possible, Harry.”

“Thank you, Mr. Howard, I don’t doubt that, but the struggle of life is before me, and I may as well enter upon it at once.”



At four o'clock in the afternoon the conductor of the train on which Harry was a passenger called out Bolton.

Harry snatched up his carpetbag, and made his way to the door, for this was the place where he was to take the stage for Colebrook.

Two other passengers got out at the same time. One was an elderly man, and the other a young man of twenty-five. They appeared to be father and son, and, as Harry learned afterward they were engaged in farming.

"Any passengers for Colebrook?" inquired the driver of the old-fashioned Concord stage, which was drawn up beside the platform.

"There's Obed and me," said the old farmer.

"May I ride on the seat with you?" asked Harry of the driver.

"Sartain. Where are you going?"

"To Colebrook."

"Then this is your team."

Harry climbed up with a boy's activity, and sat down on the broad seat, congratulating himself that he would have a chance to see the country, and breathe better air than those confined inside.

Soon the driver sat down on the box beside him, and started the horses.

"You're a stranger, ain't you?" he remarked, with an inquisitive glance at his young traveling companion.

"Yes; I've never been here before."

"Are you going to the tavern?"

"No; I'm going to the house of Mr. John Fox. Do you know him?"

"I reckon everybody round here knows John Fox."

"I don't know him. He is to be my guardian."

"Sho! You'll have a queer guardeen."

"Why queer?"

"The fact is, old John'll cheat you out of your eye teeth ef he gets a chance. He's about the sharpest man round."

"He can't cheat me out of much," returned Harry, not especially reassured by this remark. "What is the business of Mr. Fox?"

"Well, he's got some land, but he makes his livin' chiefly by tradin' hosses, auctioneerin', and such like."

"What sort of a woman is Mrs. Fox?"

"She's a good match for the old man. She's about as mean as he is."

"Mr. Fox wrote me that he had two children."

"Yes, there's Joel—he's about your age. He's a chip of the old block—red-headed and freckled, just like the old man. I don't believe Joel ever spent a cent in his life. He hangs on to money as tight as ef his life depended on it."

"There's a girl, too, isn't there?"

"Yes, Sally. She looks like her ma, except she's red-headed like her pa."

"I'm glad to know something of the family, but I'm afraid I shan't enjoy myself very much among the Foxes."

With such conversation Harry beguiled the way. On the whole, he enjoyed the ride. There were hills and here and there the road ran through the woods. He could hear the singing of birds, and, notwithstanding what he had heard he felt in good spirits.

At length the stage entered the village of Colebrook. It was a village of moderate size—about two hundred houses being scattered over a tract half a mile square. Occupying a central position was the tavern, a square, two-story building, with a piazza in front, on which was congregated a number of villagers. After rapidly scanning them, the driver said:

“Do you see that tall man over there leanin’ against a post?”

“Yes.”

“That’s your gardeeen! That’s John Fox himself, as large as life, and just about as homely.”



## CHAPTER II

### THE DANGER SIGNAL

The man pointed out to Harry as his guardian was tall, loosely put together, with a sharp, thin visage surrounded by a thicket of dull-red hair. He came forward as Harry jumped to the ground after descending from the elevated perch, and said: "I reckon this is Harry Vane?"

"That is my name, sir."

"Glad to see you. Just take your traps, and come along with me. Mrs. Fox will have supper ready by the time we come."

Harry was not, on the whole, attracted by the appearance of his guardian. There was a crafty look about the eyes of Mr. Fox which seemed to make his name appropriate. He surveyed his young ward critically.

"You're pretty well grown," he said.

"Yes, sir."

"And look stout and strong."

"I believe I am both."

"My boy, Joel, is as tall as you, but not so hefty. He's goin' to be tall like me. He's a sharp boy—Joel."

"By the way, you didn't write how much property your father left."

"After the funeral bills are paid, I presume there'll be only about three hundred dollars left."

Mr. Fox stopped short and whistled.

"Father hadn't much talent at making money," said Harry, soberly.

"I should say not. Why, that money won't last you no time at all."

"I am old enough to work for a living. Isn't there something I can find to do in Colebrook?"

"I guess I can give you work myself—There's always more or less to do 'round a place. I keep a man part of the time, but I reckon I can let him go and take you on instead. You see, that will count on your board, and you don't want to spend your money too fast."

"Very well, sir. There's only one thing I will stipulate; I will wait a day or two before going to work. I want to look about the place a little."

While this conversation was going on, they had traveled a considerable distance. A little distance ahead appeared a square house, painted yellow, with a barn a little back on the left, and two old wagons alongside.

"That's my house," said John Fox. "There's Joel."

Joel, a tall boy in figure, like his father, came forward and eyed Harry with sharp curiosity.

"How are ye?" said Joel, extending a red hand, covered with warts.

"Pretty well, thank you," said Harry, not much attracted to his new acquaintance.

"Here's Sally, too!" said John Fox. "Sally, this is my ward, Harry Vane."

Sally, who bore a striking family resemblance to her father and brother, giggled.

Mrs. Fox, to whom Harry was introduced at the supper table, was as peculiar in her appearance and as destitute of beauty as the rest of the family.

The next day, Harry, feeling it must be confessed, rather homesick, declined Joel's company, and took an extended stroll about the town. He found that though the railway by which he had come was eight miles distant, there was another, passing within a mile of the village. He struck upon it, and before proceeding far made a startling discovery. There had been some heavy rains, which had washed out the road for a considerable distance, causing the track to give way.

"Good heavens!" thought Harry, "if a train comes over the road before this is mended, there'll be a wreck and loss of life. What can I do?"

Just across the field stood a small house. In the yard the week's washing was hung out. Among the articles was a red tablecloth.

"May I borrow that tablecloth?" asked Harry, in excitement, of a woman in the doorway.

"Land sakes! what for?" she asked.

"To signal the train. The road's washed away."

"Yes, yes; I'm expectin' my darter on that train," answered the woman, now as excited as our hero. "Hurry up! the train's due in fifteen minutes."

Seizing the tablecloth, Harry gathered it quickly into a bundle and ran back to the railroad. He hurried down the track west of a curve which was a few hundred feet beyond the washout, and saw the train coming at full speed. He jumped on a fence skirting the tracks, and waved the tablecloth wildly.

"Will they see it?" he asked himself, anxiously.

It was an anxious moment for Harry as he stood waving the danger signal, uncertain whether it would attract the attention of the engineer. It did! The engineer, though not understanding the meaning of the signal, not knowing indeed, but it might be a boy's freak, prudently heeded it, and reversing the engine, stopped the train a short distance of the place of danger.

"Thank God!" exclaimed Harry, breathing a deep sigh of relief.

The engineer alighted from the train, and when he looked ahead, needed no explanation.

"My boy!" he said, with a shudder, "you have saved the train."

"I am glad of it, sir. My heart was in my mouth, lest you should not see my signal."

By this time the passengers, whose curiosity had been roused by the sudden halt, began to pour out of the cars.

When they saw the washout, strong men turned pale, and ladies grew faint, while many a fervent ejaculation of gratitude was heard at the wonderful escape.

"We owe our lives to this boy!" said the engineer. "It was he who stood on the fence and signaled me. We owe our deliverance to this—tablecloth."

A small man, somewhat portly, pushed his way up to Harry.

"What is your name, my lad?" he asked, brusquely.

"Harry Vane."

"I am the president and leading stockholder of the road, and my property has come very near being the death of me. Gentlemen"—here the president turned to the group of gentlemen around him—"don't you think this boy deserves a testimonial?"

"Yes, yes!" returned the gentlemen, in chorus.

"So do I, and I lead off with a subscription of twenty dollars."

One after another followed the president's lead, the president himself making the rounds bareheaded, and gathering the contributions in his hat.

"Oh, sir!" said Harry, as soon as he understood what was going forward, "don't reward me for what was only my duty. I should be ashamed to accept anything for the little I have done."

"You may count it little to save the lives of a train full of people," said the president, dryly, "but we set a slight value upon our lives and limbs. Are you rich?"

"No, sir."

"So I thought. Well, you needn't be ashamed to accept a little testimonial of our gratitude. You must not refuse."

When all so disposed had contributed, the president gathered the bills from the hat and handed the pile to Harry.

"Take them, my boy," he said, "and make good use of them. I shall owe you a considerable balance, for I value my life at more than twenty dollars. Here is my card. If you ever need a friend, or a service, call on me."

Then the president gave directions to the engineer to run back to the preceding station, where there was a telegraph office, from which messages could be sent in both directions to warn trains of the washout.

Harry was left with his hands full of money, hardly knowing whether he was awake or dreaming.

One thing seemed to him only fair—to give the owner of the tablecloth some small share of the money, as an acknowledgment for the use of her property.

“Here, Madam,” said Harry, when he had retraced his steps to the house, “is your tablecloth, for which I am much obliged. It saved the train.”

“Well, I’m thankful! Little did I ever think a tablecloth would do so much good. Why, it only cost me a dollar and a quarter.”

“Allow me to ask your acceptance of this bill to pay you for the use of it.”

“Land sakes! why, you’ve given me ten dollars!”

“It’s all right. It came from the passengers. They gave me something too.”

“You didn’t tell me your name.”

“My name is Harry Vane.”

“Do you live round here? I never heerd the name afore.”

“I’ve just come to the village. I’m going to live with John Fox.”

“You don’t say! Be you any kin to Fox?”

“Not very near. He’s my guardian.”

“If he hears you’ve had any money give you, he’ll want to take care of it for you.”

This consideration had not occurred to Harry. Indeed, he had for so short a time been the possessor of the money, of which he did not know the amount, that this was not surprising.

“Well, good-morning!” he said.

“Good-morning! It’s been a lucky mornin’ for both of us.”

“I must go somewhere where I can count this money unobserved,” he said to himself.

Not far away he saw a ruined shed.

Harry entered the shed, and sitting down on a log, took out the bills, which he had hurriedly stuffed in his pocket, and began to count them.

“Almost three hundred dollars!” murmured Harry, joyously. “It has been, indeed, a lucky morning for me. It has nearly doubled my property.”

The question arose in his mind: “Should he give this money to Mr. Fox to keep for him?”

“No,” he decided, “I won’t give him this money. I won’t even let him know I have it.” Where, then, could he conceal it? Looking about him, he noticed a little, leather-covered, black trunk, not more than a foot long, and six inches deep. It was locked, but a small key was in the lock.

Opening the trunk he found it empty. The lock seemed in good condition. He made a pile of the bills, and depositing them in this receptacle, locked the trunk and put the key in his pocket.

Now for a place of concealment.

Harry came out of the shed, and looked scrutinizingly around him. Not far away was a sharp elevation surmounted by trees. The hill was a gravelly formation, and therefore dry. At one point near a withered tree, our hero detected a cavity, made either by accident or design. Its location near the tree made it easy to discover.

With a little labor he enlarged and deepened the hole, till he could easily store away the box in its recess, then covered it up carefully, and strewed grass and leaves over all to hide the traces of excavation.

“There that will do,” he said, in a tone of satisfaction.

He had reserved for possible need fifteen dollars in small bills, which he put into his pocketbook.

John Fox had heard the news in the post office, and started off at once for the scene of danger.

“How’d they hear of the washout?” he asked, puzzled.

“I heerd that a boy discovered it, and signaled the train,” said his neighbor.

“How did he do it?”

“Waved a shawl or somethin’.”

“That don’t seem likely; where would a boy find a shawl?”

His informant looked puzzled.

“Like as not he borrowed it of Mrs. Brock,” he suggested.

Mrs. Brock was the woman living in the small house near by, so that the speaker’s surmise was correct. It struck John Fox as possible, and he said so.

“I guess I’ll go and ask the Widder Brock,” he said. “She must have seen the train, livin’ so near as she does.”

“I’ll go along with you.”

The two men soon found themselves on Mrs. Brock’s premises.

“Good-mornin,’ Mrs. Brock,” said John Fox.

“You’ve come nigh havin’ a causality here.”

“You’re right there, Mr. Fox,” answered Mrs. Brock. “I was awful skeered about it, for I thought my Nancy might be on the train. When the boy run into my yard—”

“The boy! What boy?” asked Fox, eagerly.

“It was that boy you are guardeen of.”

“What, Harry Vane?” ejaculated Fox, in genuine surprise.

“Tell me all about it, Mrs. Brock.”

“Well, you see, he ran into my yard all out of breath, and grabbin’ a red tablecloth from the line, asked me if I would lend it to him. ‘Land sakes!’ says I, ‘what do you want of a tablecloth?’”

“‘The track’s washed away,’ he said, ‘and I want to signal the train. There’s danger of an accident.’ Of course, I let him have it, and he did signal the train, standin’ on the fence, and wavin’ the tablecloth. So the train was saved!”

“And did he bring back the tablecloth?”

“Of course, he did, and that wasn’t all. He brought me a ten-dollar bill to pay for the use of it.”

“Gave you a ten-dollar bill!” exclaimed John Fox, in amazement. “That was very wrong.”

“You hadn’t no claim on the money if you are his guardeen. A collection was took up by the passengers, and given to the boy, and he thought I ought to have pay for use of the tablecloth, so he gave me a ten-dollar bill—and a little gentleman he is, too.”

“A collection taken up for my ward?” repeated Fox, pricking up his ears. “Well, well! that is news.”

John Fox was already on his way back to the road. He was anxious to find his ward.

## CHAPTER III

### HARRY DISAGREES WITH HIS GUARDIAN

Harry and his guardian met at the dinner table. Mrs. Fox had provided a boiled dinner, to which Harry was ready to do justice.

Mr. Fox seemed unusually pleasant.

"I find, Harry," he said, clearing his throat, "that you have already been distinguishing yourself."

"Then you heard of the narrow escape of the train?" said Harry.

"Yes, I heard that but for your presence of mind, and Mrs. Brock's tablecloth, there would have been a smash-up."

"What on earth are you talkin' about, John Fox?" demanded his wife, curiously.

"Well, you see, Maria, the rain of last night washed away part of the railroad track, and the train would have been plunged into a gully if our young boarder here hadn't seen the danger, and, borrowin' a tablecloth from Mrs. Brock, signaled the train."

"You don't say?"

"That isn't all," resumed John Fox. "The passengers took up a contribution, and I expect gave quite a handsome sum to our young friend."

"How much did the folks give you?" asked Joel eagerly.

"I've got fifteen dollars left," he replied. "I gave some money to Mrs. Brock for the use of the tablecloth."

John Fox looked disappointed and disgusted.

"You don't mean to say," he ejaculated, sharply, "that you gave away almost half of your money for the use of an old tablecloth that would be dear at a dollar?"

"If I hadn't had the tablecloth, I couldn't have attracted the engineer's attention," said Harry, mildly.

There was a little more conversation on the subject, but Harry remained tranquil, and did not appear disturbed by the criticisms elicited by his conduct. He heartily hoped that his guardian's family would not find out how large a sum he had received.

When dinner was over, Harry was about to leave the house, when John Fox said, insinuatingly: "Don't you think you'd better give me that money to keep for you? It will be safer in my hands."

"Thank you, Mr. Fox," said Harry, "but I think I can take care of it myself."

"Fifteen dollars is a good deal of money for a boy like you to carry round with you," said his guardian.

"I don't think I shall lose it, sir," replied the boy.

"Perhaps not, but you will be tempted to spend it wastefully."

John Fox didn't look amiable. He was in doubt whether he might not properly take from his ward the money by force, but it occurred to him that it would be better not to assert his authority quite so soon.

"We will speak of this again," he said.

"It is well I didn't bring all the money home. I wonder how soon Mr. Fox will make another attempt to secure the sum I have with me," thought Harry.

The attempt was made that same night.

Harry was afraid he would be expected to occupy the same room with Joel, in which case he could hope for no privacy, and would be unable to conceal his money, which he had little doubt his guardian intended to secure, either by fair means or foul. It chanced, however, that Joel slept in a small bedroom opening out of his parents' chamber. So Harry was assigned an attic room, in the end

of the house, the sides sloping down to the eaves. It was inferior to the chambers on the second floor, but our hero was not disposed to complain. He valued solitude more than superior finish.

Harry's suspicion was roused by the circumstance that his guardian did not again refer to his money, nor did he manifest any disappointment at his ward's declining to intrust him with it.

During the evening, Joel brought out a backgammon board, and proposed to Harry to play. If there would have been anything to read Harry would have preferred entertaining himself in that way, but Mr. Fox didn't appear to be literary. There were a few books in the house, but they were not of an attractive character.

Partly in backgammon, partly in conversation with the son and heir of the Foxes, the time passed till half-past eight o'clock.

"Joel, you can go to bed," said his mother. "It is half-past eight."

Joel yawned, and interposed no objection.

"You may as well go, too, Harry," said Mrs. Fox.

"I am ready to go to bed," said Harry.

In fact, he felt rather sleepy, and anticipated little pleasure in sitting up in the far from exciting company of Mr. and Mrs. Fox.

"Joel!" said his mother, "take this candle and show Harry upstairs in the attic chamber."

"Yes, mam."

So, preceded by Joel, Harry went up two flights of stairs to the attic room reserved for him. It was the only room that had been finished off, and the garret outside looked dark and forbidding.

"I would be scared to sleep up here," said his companion.

"I shall not be at all frightened, Joel," said Harry.

"Good-night. Just hold the candle while I go downstairs."

When he was fairly all alone, Harry began to look about him, to ascertain in what kind of quarters he was to pass the night. To begin with he examined the door, he ascertained that it was a common latch door, and there was no lock. There was nothing to prevent anyone entering the room during the night. There was a small cot bed in one corner, a chair, and an old wooden chest. There was no bureau nor washstand. The absence of the latter annoyed Harry.

He learned afterward that he was expected to go downstairs and wash in a large basin in the kitchen sink—wiping his face on a brown, roll towel which was used by the entire family. This was quite unsatisfactory to Harry, who was scrupulously neat in his tastes.

"This isn't a palace exactly," Harry said to himself.

Then came the thought, "What was he to do with his money?"

Now, it so happened that Harry was the possessor of two pocketbooks—one—shabby, and well worn, which he had failed to throw away on buying another just before he left home. In connection with this, a scheme for outwitting Mr. Fox came into his mind. He folded up a fragment of newspaper, and put it into the old pocketbook, bulging it out till it looked well filled, and this he left in the pocket of his pantaloons.

"Now to hide the other," said he to himself.

He looked about the room seeking for some place of concealment. Finally he noticed in one portion of the floor a square board, which looked as if it might be lifted. He stooped over and succeeded in raising it. The space beneath was about a foot in depth—the lower level being the lathing and plastering of the room below.

"That will do," said Harry, in a tone of satisfaction. "I don't think Mr. Fox will find my money here," and dropping the pocketbook into the cavity he replaced the square board. Then he went to bed and awaited results.

When Harry had gone up to his bed, Mr. and Mrs. Fox naturally began to compare notes respecting him.

"That new boy rides a high horse," said Mrs. Fox, grimly. "Are you going to allow it?"

“Certainly not.”

“He wouldn’t give up his money to you, though you are his guardeen.”

“Very true, but I mean to have it all the same. I shall go up to his bedroom after he is asleep, and then it will be the easiest thing in the world to take the pocketbook without his knowin’ anything about it.”

“He’ll know it in the mornin’.”

“Let him! Possession is nine p’int of the law, Mrs. Fox.”

“He might say you stole it.”

“He can’t do that, for I’m his guardeen, don’t you see?”

A little after ten Mr. Fox, considering that Harry must be sound asleep, decided to make him a visit. He removed his shoes, and in his stocking feet, candle in hand, began to ascend the narrow and steep staircase which led to the attic.

“Shall I go with you, John?” queried his helpmeet.

“No, I guess I can manage alone.”

His wife wanted to share in the excitement of the night visit. There was something alluring in the thought of creeping upstairs, and removing by stealth, the pocketbook of the new inmate of their home.

Left to himself, Mr. Fox pursued his way up the attic stairs. They creaked a little under his weight, and, much to his annoyance, when he reached the landing at the top he coughed.

“I hope the boy won’t hear me,” he said to himself.

He paused an instant, then softly opened the door of Harry’s chamber.

All seemed satisfactory. Our hero was lying quietly in bed, apparently in a peaceful sleep. Ordinarily he would have been fast asleep by this time, but the expectation of a visit from his guardian had kept him awake beyond his usual time. He had heard Mr. Fox cough, and so, even before the door opened, he had warning of the visit.

Harry was not a nervous boy, and had such command of himself, that, even when Mr. Fox bent over, and, by the light of the candle, examined his face, he never stirred nor winked, though he very much wanted to laugh.

“All is safe! The boy is sound asleep,” whispered Mr. Fox to himself.

He set the candle on the floor, and then taking up Harry’s pantaloons, thrust his hand into the pocket.

The very first pocket contained the pocketbook which our hero had put there. Mr. Fox would have opened and examined the contents on the spot, but he heard a cough from the bed, and, quickly put the pocketbook into his own pocket, apprehending that his ward might wake up, and taking up the candle, noiselessly withdrew from the chamber.

After he had fairly gone, Harry had a quiet laugh to himself.

Mr. Fox returned in triumph to his own chamber, where his wife was anxiously waiting for him.

“Have you got it, Mr. F.,” she asked, eagerly.

“Got it? Why shouldn’t I get it?”

“Well, open it, and let us see what it contains.”

This Mr. Fox proceeded to do. But no sooner did his glance rest on its contents than his lower jaw fell, and his eyes opened wide in perplexity.

“Well, what are you staring at like a fool?” demanded his wife, who was not so situated that she could see the contents of the pocketbook.

“Look at this, Mrs. F.,” said her husband, in a hollow voice. “There’s no money here—only this piece of newspaper.”

“Well, well, of all the fools I ever saw you are about the most stupid!” ejaculated Mrs. Fox. “What you undertake you generally carry through, do you? After all the fuss you’ve brought down a pocketbook stuffed with waste paper.”



“I don’t understand it,” said Fox, his face assuming a look of perplexity. “Surely the boy told the truth when he said he had fifteen dollars.”

“Of course! Joel saw the money—a roll of bills, and saw him take them out of his pocketbook. He must have taken them out. Did you search all his pockets?”

“No; when I found the pocketbook I thought I was all right.”

“Just like a man!” retorted Mrs. Fox. “I’ll go up myself, and see if I can’t manage better than you.”

“Then you’d better take this wallet, and put it back in his pocket.”

“Give it to me, then.”

With a firm step Mrs. Fox took the candle, and took her turn in going up the attic stairs.

## CHAPTER IV

### MRS. FOX COMES TO GRIEF

Harry confidently anticipated a second visit to his chamber.

He was rather surprised when the door was again opened, and Mrs. Fox entered. Opening his eyes a little way, he saw her, after a brief glance at the bed, go to the chair containing his pantaloons, and put back the deceptive wallet. She was about to prosecute a further search, when Harry decided that matters had gone far enough. He did not fancy their night visits, and meant to stop them if he could.

Chance favored his design. A puff of air from the door, which Mrs. Fox had left wide open, extinguished the candle, and left the room, as there was no moon, in profound darkness.

"Drat the candle!" he heard Mrs. Fox say.

Then a mischievous idea came to Harry. In his native village lived a man who had passed a considerable time in the wild region beyond the Missouri River, and had mingled familiarly with the Indians. From him Harry had learned how to imitate the Indian warwhoop.

"I'll scare the old lady," thought Harry, smiling to himself.

Immediately there rang out from the bed, in the darkness and silence, a terrific warwhoop, given in Harry's most effective style.

Mrs. Fox was not a nervous woman ordinarily, but she was undeniably frightened at the unexpected sound.

"Heavens and earth, what's that?" she ejaculated, and dropping our hero's clothes, retreated in disorder, almost stumbling downstairs in her precipitate flight. Dashing into the chamber where Mr. Fox was waiting for her, she sank into a chair, gasping for breath.

"Good gracious, Maria, what's the matter?" exclaimed her husband, gazing at her in astonishment.

"I—don't—know," she gasped.

"You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"I haven't seen anything," said his wife, recovering her breath, "but I've heard something terrible. It's my belief the attic is haunted. I went upstairs and put back the wallet, and was looking to see if I could find another, when all at once the candle went out, and a terrible noise shook the chamber."

"What was it like, Mrs. F.?"

"I can't tell you. I never heard anything like it before. All I know is, I wouldn't go up there again tonight for anything."

"Did the boy sleep through it all?"

"How can I tell? The candle was out."

"Perhaps he blew it out."

"Perhaps you're a fool Mr. Fox. It wasn't near the bed, and he was fast asleep, for I looked at him. It made me think of—of Peter," and Mrs. Fox shuddered.

Peter had been taken from the poorhouse three years ago by Mr. Fox, and apprenticed to him by the town authorities. According to popular report he had been cruelly treated and insufficiently fed, until he was taken sick and had died in the very bedroom where Mrs. Fox had been so frightened. This may explain how it was that a woman so strong-minded had had her nerves so easily upset.

"We won't talk of Peter," said Mr. Fox, shortly, for to him, also, the subject was an unpleasant one. "I suppose you didn't find another wallet?"

"No, I didn't. You can order the boy to give it up to-morrow. The best thing to do now is to go to bed and rest."

The breakfast hour at the house of Mr. Fox was half past six. Harry was called at six, and was punctual at the table. Mr. Fox cast a suspicious glance at his ward, but the boy looked so perfectly unconcerned, that he acquitted him of any knowledge of the night visit.

“How did you sleep, Harry?” asked Mrs. Fox.

“Soundly, thank you,” answered Harry, politely.

“You didn’t hear any—strange noises, then?”

“No.”

“Now, Harry,” said Mr. Fox, after breakfast, “we may as well speak of our future arrangements. I have considerable to do on my twenty acres of land, and I can give you work here.”

“What compensation do you offer, sir?”

“As a boarder I should have to charge you five dollars a week for your board, and fifty cents extra for your washing—that would go to Mrs. Fox; as well as pay twenty-five cents a week for your mending. That also would go to my wife. Now, if you work for me, I will take off three dollars, making the charge to you only two dollars and seventy-five cents per week.”

“Don’t you think, Mr. Fox, that is rather low pay for my services?”

“I might say two dollars and a quarter,” said Mr. Fox, deliberating.

Harry smiled to himself. He had not the slightest idea of working for any such trifle, but he did not care to announce his determination yet.

“I will pay full price for a week, Mr. Fox,” he said, “and during that time I will consider your offer.”

“I may not offer you as favorable terms a week from now,” said Fox, who wanted to get his ward to work at once.

“I will take my chance of it, sir. I prefer to have a few days of freedom.”

“By the way, Harry, don’t you think you had better give me your money to keep? You might lose it.”

“You are very kind, Mr. Fox; but I am not afraid of losing it.”

After breakfast Harry went to walk. His steps naturally tended to the place where he had left the greater part of his treasure. It was possible that he had been seen hiding it, and he thought on the whole it would be better to find another place of concealment.

“Joel,” said his mother, “follow Harry, and see where he goes. He may be goin’ to hide his money. But don’t let him see you.”

“All right, mam; I’ll do it. I wish I had followed him yesterday.”

A position as detective would have suited Joel. Whatever was secret or stealthy had a charm for him.

In the present instance he managed to shadow Harry very successfully. The task was made easier, because our hero had no idea that anyone was following him.

“So he’s goin’ to the railroad,” said Joel, to himself

Arrived at the railroad track, Harry’s course diverged to the hillock, at the top of which he had concealed his treasure.

Joel posted himself at a point where he had a good view of the elevation, and could see what Harry was doing. He saw our hero digging at a particular spot, and concluded that he was going to hide the fifteen dollars there. What was his surprise and delight when he saw him dig up and expose to view a large roll of bills.

“Oh, cracky!” ejaculated Joel, “there must be a hundred dollars in that roll of bills. Wouldn’t dad open his eyes if he saw it?”

Unconscious of observation, Harry held the money in his hand and deliberated. Then he put it in his pocket, resolved to think over at his leisure its ultimate place of deposit.

Now, unfortunately for Joel, just at this moment he slipped from his perch on the branch of a small tree, and for about half a minute what Harry did was concealed from him. He clambered into the tree again, but only to see Harry filling up the hole again.

He didn't want Harry to catch sight of him when he descended from the hill, and accordingly scuttled away sufficiently far to escape suspicion, yet not too far to entirely lose sight of Harry's movements.

Five minutes later Harry descended from the hill, and bent his steps toward that part of the railway where the accident had occurred. Joel, who had hastened away in a different direction, went back to the hill as soon as he thought it would be safe, and eagerly ascended it. He found without difficulty the spot where Harry had been digging. With the help of a fragment of wood which he had picked up below, he in turn began to dig—his eyes glistening with expectation and cupidity.

He kept digging, but gradually became anxious, as the expected treasure did not show itself.

"I'm sure I have dug deep enough," he said to himself.

"He must have took the money when I fell from the tree," thought Joel, crestfallen. "He's served me a mean trick. Won't I tell dad, though, and get him into trouble? Oh, no!"

Meanwhile Harry, not knowing how narrowly he had escaped being robbed, pursued his way to the railway.

"If I were only in my old home," he thought, "I would ask Mr. Howard to take care of it for me. Then I should know it was all right."

He thought of the president of the railroad, to whom he was principally indebted for the money.

"If I could only see him," he thought, "I would ask him to take care of it for me."

What was his surprise, when, on reaching the depot, the first person on whom his eyes fell was the very gentleman of whom he was thinking.

"How do you do, sir?" said Harry, politely.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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