

ALGER

HORATIO JR.

HERBERT CARTER'S
LEGACY; OR, THE
INVENTOR'S SON

Horatio Alger

**Herbert Carter's Legacy;
Or, the Inventor's Son**

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Содержание

BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY	5
CHAPTER I	6
CHAPTER II	9
CHAPTER III	12
CHAPTER IV	15
CHAPTER V	17
CHAPTER VI	20
CHAPTER VII	23
CHAPTER VIII	26
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	29

Jr. Horatio Alger

Herbert Carter's Legacy; Or, the Inventor's Son

BIOGRAPHY AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Horatio Alger, Jr., an author who lived among and for boys and himself remained a boy in heart and association till death, was born at Revere, Mass., January 13, 1834. He was the son of a clergyman; was graduated at Harvard College in 1852, and at its Divinity School in 1860; and was pastor of the Unitarian Church at Brewster, Mass., in 1862-66.

In the latter year he settled in New York and began drawing public attention to the condition and needs of street boys. He mingled with them, gained their confidence, showed a personal concern in their affairs, and stimulated them to honest and useful living. With his first story he won the hearts of all red-blooded boys everywhere, and of the seventy or more that followed over a million copies were sold during the author's lifetime.

In his later life he was in appearance a short, stout, bald-headed man, with cordial manners and whimsical views of things that amused all who met him. He died at Natick, Mass., July 18, 1899.

Mr. Alger's stories are as popular now as when first published, because they treat of real live boys who were always up and about—just like the boys found everywhere to-day. They are pure in tone and inspiring in influence, and many reforms in the juvenile life of New York may be traced to them. Among the best known are:

Strong and Steady; Strive and Succeed; Try and Trust; Bound to Rise; Risen from the Ranks; Herbert Carter's Legacy; Brave and Bold; Jack's Ward; Shifting for Himself; Wait and Hope; Paul the Peddler; Phil the Fiddler; Slow and Sure; Julius the Street Boy; Tom the Bootblack; Struggling Upward; Facing the World; The Cash Boy; Making His Way; Tony the Tramp; Joe's Luck; Do and Dare; Only an Irish Boy; Sink or Swim; A Cousin's Conspiracy; Andy Gordon; Bob Burton; Harry Vane; Hector's Inheritance; Mark Mason's Triumph; Sam's Chance; The Telegraph Boy; The Young Adventurer; The Young Outlaw; The Young Salesman, and Luke Walton.

CHAPTER I

MRS. CARTER RECEIVES A LETTER

“Is that the latest style?” inquired James Leech, with a sneer, pointing to a patch on the knee of Herbert Carter’s pants.

Herbert’s face flushed. He was not ashamed of the patch, for he knew that his mother’s poverty made it a necessity. But he felt that it was mean and dishonorable in James Leech, whose father was one of the rich men of Wrayburn, to taunt him with what he could not help. Some boys might have slunk away abashed, but Herbert had pluck and stood his ground.

“It is my style,” he answered, firmly, looking James boldly in the face.

“I admire your taste, then,” returned James, with a smooth sneer.

“Then, you had better imitate it,” retorted Herbert.

“Thank you,” said James, in the same insulting tone. “Would you lend me your pants for a pattern? Excuse me, though; perhaps you have no other pair.”

“For shame, James!” exclaimed one or two boys who had listened to the colloquy, stirred to indignation by this heartless insult on the part of James Leech to a boy who was deservedly a favorite with them all.

Herbert’s fist involuntarily doubled, and James, though he did not know it, ran a narrow chance of getting a good whipping. But our young hero controlled himself, not without some difficulty, and said: “I have one other pair, and these are at your service whenever you require them.”

Then turning to the other boys, he said, in a changed tone: “Who’s in for a game of ball?”

“I,” said one, promptly.

“And I,” said another.

Herbert walked away, accompanied by the other boys, leaving James Leech alone.

James looked after him with a scowl. He was sharp enough to see that Herbert, in spite of his patched pants, was a better scholar and a greater favorite than himself. He had intended to humiliate him on the present occasion, but he was forced to acknowledge that he had come off second best from the encounter. He walked moodily away, and took what comfort he could in the thought that he was far superior to a boy who owned but two pairs of pants, and one of them patched. He was foolish enough to feel that a boy or man derived importance from the extent of his wardrobe; and exulted in the personal possession of eight pairs of pants.

This scene occurred at recess. After school was over, Herbert walked home. He was a little thoughtful. There was no disgrace in a patch, as he was sensible enough to be aware. Still, he would have a little preferred not to wear one. That was only natural. In that point, I suppose, my readers will fully agree with him. But he knew very well that his mother, who had been left a widow, had hard work enough to get along as it was, and he had no idea of troubling her on the subject. Besides, he had a better suit for Sundays, neat though plain, and he felt that he ought not to be disturbed by James Leech’s insolence.

So thinking, he neared the small house which he called home. It was a small cottage, with something less than an acre of land attached, enough upon which to raise a few vegetables. It belonged to his mother, nominally, but was mortgaged for half its value to Squire Leech, the father of James. The amount of the mortgage, precisely, was seven hundred and fifty dollars. It had cost his father fifteen hundred. When he built it, obtaining half this sum on mortgage, he hoped to pay it up by degrees; but it turned out that, from sickness and other causes, this proved impossible. When, five months before, he had died suddenly, the house, which was all he left, was subject to this incumbrance. Upon this, interest was payable semi-annually at the rate of six per cent. Forty-five dollars a year is not a large sum, but it seemed very large to Mrs. Carter, when added to their necessary expenses

for food, clothing and fuel. How it was to be paid she did not exactly see. The same problem had perplexed Herbert, who, like a good son as he was, shared his mother's cares and tried to lighten them. But in a small village like Wrayburn there are not many ways of getting money, at any rate for a boy. There were no manufactories, as in some large villages, and money was a scarce commodity.

Herbert had, however, one source of income. Half a dozen families, living at some distance from the post office, employed him to bring any letters or papers that might come for them, and for this service he received a regular tariff of two cents for each letter, and one cent for each paper. He was not likely to grow rich on this income, but he felt that, though small, it was welcome.

According to custom, Herbert called at the post office on his way home. He found a letter for Deacon Crossleigh, one for Mr. Duncan, two for Dr. Waffit, and papers for each of the two former.

"Ten cents!" he thought with satisfaction. "Well, that is better than nothing, though it won't buy me a new pair of pants."

He was about to leave the office, when the postmaster called after him: "Wait a minute, Herbert; I believe there's a letter for your mother."

Herbert returned, and received a letter bearing the following superscription: "Mrs. Almira Carter, Wrayburn, New York."

"I hope it isn't bad news," said the postmaster. "I see it's edged with black."

"I can't make out where it's from," said Herbert, scanning the postmark critically.

"Nor I," said the postmaster, rubbing his glasses, and taking another look. "The postmark is very indistinct."

"There's an n and a p," said Herbert, after a little examination. "I think it must be Randolph."

"Randolph? So it is, I declare. Have you got any friends or relatives living there?"

"Yes, my mother's Uncle Herbert, for whom I was named, lives there."

"Then he must be dead."

"What makes you think so?"

"The envelope is edged with black. You had better carry it home before you go round with the others."

"Perhaps I had," said Herbert. "I'll run, so as not to keep the others waiting. Deacon Crossleigh is always in a hurry for his paper."

"Yes, the deacon's always in a fidget to know what's going on, particularly when Congress is in session. He takes a wonderful interest in politics."

Herbert ran up the street with a quick step, pausing a minute at his humble home.

"You are out of breath, Herbert. Have you been running?"

"Yes, I've got a letter for you, and I wanted to bring it before I went round with the rest."

"A letter! Where from?" asked the widow, with curiosity, for she held very little intercourse with the world outside of Wrayburn.

"It's postmarked Randolph, as well as I can make out. While you are reading it, I'll run and leave my letters, and be back to hear the news."

In a hurry to do all his errands and get back, Herbert ran all the way. While his eyes were fixed on one of the envelopes, he ran full against James Leech, who was walking up the street with a pompous air.

In the encounter James's hat came off, and he was nearly thrown down.

"What made you run into me?" he demanded, wrath-fully.

"Excuse me, James," said Herbert, recovering himself.

"You did it on purpose," said his enemy, glaring at him angrily.

"That isn't very likely," said Herbert. "I got hit as hard as you did."

"Your hat didn't get knocked off. Pick it up," said James, imperiously, pointing to it as it lay in the path.

“I will, because it is by my fault that it fell,” said Herbert, stooping over and picking it up. “You needn’t have ordered me to do it.”

“The next time take care how you run against a gentleman,” said James, arrogantly.

“Take care the next time to speak like a gentleman.” said Herbert. “Good night! I must be off.”

“Insolent beggar!” muttered James. “He don’t know his place. How dare he speak to me in that way?”

CHAPTER II

WHAT THE LETTER CONTAINED

Half an hour later, Herbert reentered the cottage, breathless with running.

“Well, mother, what is it?” he asked.

“Uncle Herbert is dead,” she answered.

“When did he die?”

“Yesterday morning. They wrote at once. The funeral is to take place to-morrow afternoon, at three o'clock.”

“Uncle Herbert was rich, wasn't he, mother?”

“Yes, he must have left nearly a hundred thousand dollars.”

“What a pile of money!” said Herbert. “I wonder how a man feels when he is so rich. He ought to be happy.”

“Riches don't always bring happiness. Uncle Herbert was disappointed in early life, and that seemed to spoil his career. He gave himself up to money-making, and succeeded in it; but he lived by himself and had few sources of happiness.”

“Then he had no family?”

“No.”

“Do you think he has left us anything, mother?” asked Herbert, with something of hope in his tone.

“I am afraid not. If he had been disposed to do that he would have done something for us before. He knew that we were poor, and that a little assistance would have been very acceptable. But he never offered it. Even when your father was sick for three months, and I wrote to him for a small loan, he refused, saying that we ought to have laid up money to fall back upon at such a time.”

“I don't see how a man can be so unfeeling. If he would only leave us a thousand dollars, how much good it would do us! We could pay up the mortgage on the house, and have something left over. It wouldn't have been much for him to do.”

“Well, we won't think too much about it,” said Mrs. Carter. “It will be wisest, as probably we should be only preparing ourselves for disappointment. Uncle had a right to do what he pleased with his own.”

“Shall you go to the funeral, mother?”

“I don't see how I can,” said Mrs. Carter, slowly. “It is twenty miles off, and I am very busy just now. Still one of us ought to go, if only to show respect to so near a relation. People would talk if we didn't. I think, as you were named for your Uncle Herbert, I will let you go.”

“If you think best, mother. I will walk, and that will save expense.”

“It will be too much for you to take such a walk. You had better ride.”

“No, mother, I am young and strong. I can walk well enough.”

“But it must be twenty miles,” objected his mother.

“The funeral doesn't take place till three o'clock in the afternoon. I will get up bright and early, say at five o'clock. By nine I shall be halfway there.”

“I am afraid it will be too much for you, Herbert,” said Mrs. Carter, irresolutely.

“You don't know how strong I am,” said Herbert; “I shan't get tired so easily as you think.”

“But twenty miles is a long distance.”

“I know that, but I shall take it easy. The stage fare is seventy-five cents, and it's a good way to save it. I wish somebody would offer me seventy-five cents for every twenty miles I would walk. I'd take it up as a profession.”

“I am afraid I could earn little that way. I never was a good walker.” “You’re a woman,” said Herbert, patronizingly. “Women are not expected to be good walkers.”

“Some are. I remember my Aunt Jane would take walks of five and six miles, and think nothing of it.”

“I guess I could match her in walking,” said Herbert, confidently. “Is she alive?”

“No, she died three years since.”

“Perhaps I take after her, then.”

“You don’t take after me, I am sure of that. I think, Herbert, you had better take seventy-five cents with you, so that if you get very tired with your walk over, you can come back by stage.”

“All right, mother; I’ll take the money, but I shall be sure not to need it.”

“It is best to be prepared for emergencies, Herbert.”

“If I am going to-morrow morning, I must split up enough wood to last you while I am gone.”

“I am afraid you will tire yourself. I think I can get along with what wood there is already split.”

“Oh, don’t be afraid for me. You’ll see I’ll come back as fresh as when I set out. I expect to have a stunning appetite, though.”

“I’ll try to cook up enough for you,” said his mother, smiling.

Herbert went out into the wood shed, and went to work with great energy at the wood pile. In the course of an hour he had sawed and split several large baskets full, which he brought in and piled up behind the kitchen stove.

Mrs. Carter could not be expected to feel very deep grief for the death of her uncle. It was now more than six years since they had met. He was a selfish man, wholly wrapped up in the pursuit of wealth. Had he possessed benevolent instincts, he would have offered to do something out of his abundance for his niece, who he knew found it very hard to make both ends meet. But he was a man who was very much averse to parting with his money while he lived. He lived on a tenth of his income, and saved up the rest, though for what end he could not well have told. Since the death of Mr. Carter, whose funeral he had not taken the trouble to attend, though invited, he had not even written to his niece, and she had abstained from making any advances, lest it might be thought that she was seeking assistance. Under these circumstances she had little hope of a legacy, though she could not help admitting the thought of how much a few hundred dollars would help her, bridging over the time till Herbert should be old enough to earn fair wages in some employment. If he could study two or three years longer, she would have been very glad, for her son had already shown abilities of no common order; but that was hardly to be thought of.

“There, mother, I guess I’ve sawed wood enough to last you, unless you are very extravagant,” said Herbert, reentering the kitchen, and taking off his cap. “Now is there anything else I can do? You know I shall be gone two days, or a day and a half at any rate.”

“I think of nothing, Herbert. You had better go to bed early, and get a good night’s rest, for you will have a hard day before you.”

“So I will, but eight o’clock will be soon enough. Just suppose we should get a legacy, after all, mother. Wouldn’t it be jolly?”

“I wouldn’t think too much of it, Herbert. There isn’t much chance of it. Besides, it doesn’t seem right to be speculating about our own personal advantage when Uncle Herbert lies dead in his house.”

There was justice in this suggestion, but Herbert could hardly be expected to take a mournful view of the death of a relative whom he hardly remembered, and who had appeared scarcely to be aware of his existence. It was natural that the thought of his wealth should be uppermost in his young nephew’s mind. The reader will hardly be surprised to hear that Herbert, knowing only too well the disadvantages of poverty, should have speculated a little about his uncle’s property after he went to bed. Indeed, it did not leave him even with his waking consciousness. He dreamed that his uncle left him a big lump of gold, so big and heavy that he could not lift it. He was considering anxiously how

in the world he was going to get it home, when all at once he awoke, and heard the church clock strike five.

“Time I was on my way!” he thought, and, jumping out of bed, he dressed himself as quickly as possible, and went downstairs. But, early as it was, his mother, was down before him. There was a fire in the kitchen stove, and the cloth was laid for breakfast.

“What made you get up so early, mother?” asked Herbert.

“I wouldn’t have you go away without breakfast, Herbert, especially for such a long walk.”

“I meant to take something from the closet. That would have done well enough.”

“You will be all the better for a good, warm cup of tea. Sit right down. It is all ready.”

Early as it was, the breakfast tasted good. Herbert ate hastily, for he was anxious to be on his way. Knowing that he could not afford to buy lunch, he put the remnants of the breakfast, including some slices of bread and butter and meat, into his satchel, and started on his long walk.

CHAPTER III

HERBERT MEETS A RELATIVE

Herbert had never been to Randolph. In fact, he had never been so far away from Wrayburn. He was not afraid of losing his way, however. Here and there along the road guideposts were conveniently placed, and these removed any difficulty on that score.

When he had gone about six miles, the coach rattled by. It had started more than an hour later. Herbert turned out for the lumbering vehicle, and waited for it to pass. There was a boy on top, but such was the cloud of dust that he could not at first recognize him. It happened, however, that one of the traces broke, so that the driver was compelled to make a stop just as he overtook our hero. Then he saw that the boy on top was James Leech.

With James curiosity overcame his disinclination to speak to one so far beneath him.

“Where are you going, Carter?” he inquired.

“To Randolph,” was the answer.

“Going to walk all the way?”

“I expect to,” said Herbert, not relishing the cross-examination.

“Why don’t you ride?”

James did not ask for information. He knew well enough already, but as there are purse-proud men, so there are boys who are actuated by feelings equally unworthy, and it delighted him to remind Herbert of his poverty. Herbert divined this, but he was proud in his way, and answered: “Because I choose.”

“Well, you must like the dust, that’s all,” said James, complacently tapping his well-polished boot with a light cane which he had bought.

“Where are you going?” asked Herbert, thinking it about time for him to commence questioning.

“I’m going to Randolph, too,” answered James, with unwonted affability. “I’m going to stop a few days with a friend of mine, Tom Spencer. His father’s a rich man—got a nice place there. Didn’t you ever hear of Mr. Spencer, the lawyer?”

“I don’t think I have.”

“That’s his father. He makes a load of money by his law business. I think I shall study law some time. Perhaps I’ll go into partnership with him. What are you going to be?”

“I don’t know yet,” said Herbert.

“I suppose you’ll be a mechanic of some kind—a carpenter, or mason, or bricklayer.”

“Perhaps so,” said Herbert, quietly.

“What are you going to Randolph for?” asked James, with sudden curiosity.

“To attend my uncle’s funeral.”

“What’s your uncle’s name?”

“The same as mine.”

“I suppose he was poor.”

“No, he was rich.”

“Was he?” repeated James, in some surprise. “What do you think he was worth?”

“About a hundred thousand dollars.”

“Sho! you don’t say so. Perhaps,” continued James, with new-born respect, “he has left you something in his will.”

“I don’t think so.”

“Why not?”

“He hasn’t shown any interest in us for six years, and I don’t think he’ll remember us now.”

James looked thoughtful. He had never before heard of this relationship, or he would have treated Herbert differently. The mere fact of having a wealthy relative elevated our hero considerably in his eyes. Then, too, there was a possibility that Herbert would turn out a legatee.

“When is your uncle’s funeral?” he inquired, after a pause.

“This afternoon.”

“You won’t get there in time. You had better get up and ride.”

“No, I guess not.”

“Well, perhaps I shall meet you at Randolph.”

By this time the harness was repaired, the driver resumed his seat, and whipped up the horses to make up for lost time.

“I’m glad I don’t think as much of money as James Leech,” thought Herbert. “I suppose if my uncle would only leave us a good round sum, he would forget that I once wore patched pants, and accept me as his intimate friend.”

This was exactly what James would have done, and Herbert showed that he was not wholly without knowledge of the world in forming the conjecture.

Pausing occasionally to rest, Herbert at length accomplished his journey, arriving at Randolph a little after noon. He stopped just outside the village and ate his frugal dinner, which by this time he was prepared to relish. He then took off his jacket and beat the dust out of it, dusted his shoes, and washed his face in a little brook by the roadside. Having thus effaced the marks of travel, he entered the village and inquired the way to the residence of his late uncle. He found out where it was, but did not go there yet, knowing that there would be preparations going on for the funeral. Neither did he go to the tavern, for he knew that he would be expected to dine there, and this was an expense which he did not feel able to incur. He threw himself down in the shade of a tree, and remained there until after he heard the church clock strike two. He was still lying there when a young man, smartly dressed, sporting a showy watch chain and locket and an immense necktie, came up the street and accosted him.

“I say, boy, can you tell me where old man Carter’s house is?”

“Yes,” said Herbert. “Do you want to go there?”

“Of course I do. I’m one of the relatives. I’ve come all the way from New York to attend the funeral.”

“I’m one of the relations, too,” said Herbert. “We’ll go along together.”

“By Jove, that’s strange! How are you related to the old chap?” drawled the young man.

“He was my mother’s uncle.”

“Was he? Well, I’m a second or third cousin, I don’t know which. Never saw him to my knowledge. In fact, I wouldn’t have come on to the funeral if I hadn’t heard that he was rich. Expect to be remembered?”

“I don’t think so. He hasn’t taken any notice of mother or myself for years.”

“Indeed!” said the young man, who was rather pleased to hear this intelligence. “Are there many relations, do you know?”

“I don’t think there are.”

“That’s good. It makes our chance better, you know. I say, what’s your name?”

“Herbert Carter.”

“Same as the old man’s?”

“Yes.”

“Did he know you was named for him?”

“Of course.”

“Then he may leave you something for the name,” suggested the other, not very well pleased.

“I don’t expect anything. What is your name?”

“Cornelius Dixon. I’m related to the old man on my mother’s side.”

“Are you in business in New York?” asked Herbert, who, in spite of the queer manners of his new relative, felt considerable respect for one who hailed from so important a city.

“Yes, I’m a salesman in a New York store. Where do you live?”

“In Wrayburn.”

“Where’s that?”

“About twenty miles from here.”

“Some one-horse country town, I suppose. Are you in any business?”

“No,” said Herbert, “but I’d like to be. Do you think you could get me a place in New York?”

“Well,” said Cornelius, flattered by the belief in his influence which this inquiry implied, “perhaps I might. You can give me your name and address, so I can write to you if I hear of anything. If the old man only leaves me a few thousand dollars, I’ll go into business for myself, and then I’d have an opening for you.”

“I hope he will, then.”

“So do I. That is where we both agree. But perhaps it will be you that will get the cash.”

“I don’t think so.”

“If you do, put it into my hands, and go into partnership with me. I’ve got business experience, you know; while you’re green, countrified, you know. It would never do for you to start alone.”

“No, I shouldn’t think of it.”

“Then it’s agreed, is it?” said Cornelius. “If I get a legacy, I’ll take you into my store. If you get it, you will go into partnership with me.”

“I’m willing,” said Herbert, who really believed that his companion had as valuable business qualifications as he claimed. How was he to know that the pretentious Cornelius was only a salesman, at twelve dollars a week, in a dry-goods store on Eighth Avenue?

By this time they had reached the rather dingy-looking house of their deceased relative. The front door was open. They passed through the gate, and, entering, took their places with the mourners.

CHAPTER IV

READING THE WILL

Apparently the deceased had but few relatives. But six persons were in a small room appropriated to the mourners when our hero and his new acquaintance entered. One of these, and far the most imposing in appearance, was a stout lady, who quite filled up the only armchair in the room. In a plain chair close by was a meek little man, three inches shorter, and probably not more than half her weight. A boy and girl, the children of the ill-matched pair, the former resembling the father, the latter the mother, were ranged alongside. Permit me to introduce Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Pinkerton, of Castleton, an adjoining town. Master Albert and Miss Nancy Pinkerton.

Mrs. Pinkerton is a milliner, and her husband is her clerk and errand boy. She has considerable business capacity, and makes enough to support the family comfortably, besides adding something annually to the fund in the savings bank. The relationship to the deceased is on the side of the husband, who is a cousin. This relationship has given rise to great expectations on the part of Mrs. Pinkerton, who fully expects to inherit half the estate of Mr. Carter.

“If we get it, Josiah,” she has promised magnificently, “I’ll buy you a new suit of clothes.”

“But, Maria,” expostulated the meek husband, “it will be left to me, not to you.”

“Why so?” demanded she, frowning.

“Because he is my cousin, not yours.”

“You indeed!” retorted the wife, angrily; “and what do you know about the use of money? Who supports the family, I should like to know?”

“I help,” answered Josiah, meekly.

“And precious little you help,” returned his wife, sarcastically. “So far as you are concerned, we should all be in the poor house long before this. No, Josiah, the money must come into my hands. I’ll give you a good allowance, and hire an errand boy so that you needn’t have to carry round bundles. You ought to be contented with that.”

As no legacy had yet been received, Mr. Pinkerton thought it best not to continue the discussion. Indeed, he was rather afraid of his imperious wife, who held the reins of authority, and whom he did not dare to dispute.

The two other relations were, first, a brown-faced and brown-handed farmer, Alonzo Granger, and an old lady, of seventy or thereabouts—Miss Nancy Carter, a sister of the deceased. For years she had lived on a small pension from her brother, increased somewhat by knitting stockings for the neighbors. She, indeed, was the only real mourner. The rest were speculating about how far they were likely to be benefited by the death of the deceased, of whom they had seen but little in life. Even Herbert, though impressed by the presence of death, could hardly be expected to feel deep grief for a man who had neglected his mother in his life.

Of the funeral rites it is unnecessary to speak. We are interested in what came afterwards.

The relations were quietly notified to meet at five o’clock in the office of Mr. Spencer, the lawyer, to whom had been intrusted the will of the late Mr. Carter. Those who have even a slight knowledge of human nature will not need to be told that the attendance of all was punctual. There was an anxious, expectant look on the faces of all—not even excepting the old lady. She knew that if her brother had made no provision for her, she must go to the alms-house, and against this her honest pride revolted. She was willing to live on anything, however little, if she might live independently, as she had hitherto done. To feel herself dependent on public charity would indeed have been a hard trial for the poor old lady. Of all, probably Mrs. Pinkerton was the most confident. She had come to feel that her family was entitled to a large share of the estate, and she had gone so far as to decide

just how she would invest it, and what new arrangements she would make, for she had no idea of consulting her husband on the subject.

The lawyer was a gentlemanly-looking man, whose face inspired confidence in his integrity—a remark which, unhappily, cannot be made of all in his profession. He took his seat at a table, and produced the will, which he considerably commenced reading at once. After the usual introduction, the will proceeded thus:

“To my sister Nancy I give the use of my house, rent free, as long as she shall live. I leave her also an income of two hundred dollars a year, which, as her wants are small, will be sufficient to maintain her in comfort.”

The old lady breathed a sigh of relief. Her fears were removed. She could continue to live as she had been accustomed to do, and need not be beholden to private or public charity. Mrs. Pinkerton was not so well pleased. She felt almost as if she had been deprived of what belonged to her by right. She frowned at Miss Nancy, but the old lady was unconscious of the displeasure excited in the bosom of her imposing-looking relative.

The lawyer proceeded: “To my cousin, Alonzo Granger, I leave one hundred dollars; not because he needs it, for I understand that he is well-to-do, but as a mark of remembrance.”

The farmer scowled slightly, and opened and closed his brown hands in dissatisfaction. He was well-to-do; but when was a man ever satisfied with that? He had counted upon a few thousands, with which he proposed to buy an adjoining farm. Mrs. Pinkerton, however, was pleased. There was so much the more for her.

“To Cornelius Dixon”—here Herbert’s morning acquaintance began to feel excited—“I bequeath one hundred dollars, to buy a looking-glass and a new suit of clothes.”

The young man’s face lengthened very perceptibly as he heard the small amount of his legacy, and he glared savagely at Mrs. Pinkerton, who showed a mirthful face at his discomfiture.

Her turn came next.

“To Josiah Pinkerton, his wife and children, I leave one hundred dollars apiece; also my best black pantaloons, which he or his wife may appropriate, as may be arranged between them.”

All except the Pinkertons laughed at this sly hit, and even the lawyer smiled; but the stout lady flushed with rage and disappointment, and ejaculated: “Abominable!” The eyes of all were now directed to Herbert, who was the only one remaining. Could it be possible that the balance of the property was left to him? The fear of this made him the focus of unfriendly eyes, and he became restive and anxious.

“To my namesake, Herbert Carter, I leave a black trunk which I keep in my room, with all that it contains. To his mother I direct that the sum of one hundred dollars be paid.”

This was not much, but it was more than Herbert had expected. He knew how welcome even one hundred dollars would be to his mother, and he looked satisfied—the only one of the party, except the old lady, who showed any pleasure at the contents of the will.

The relatives looked bewildered. All had been mentioned in turn, and yet but a small part—a very small part—of the estate had been disposed of. Mrs. Pinkerton bluntly expressed the general curiosity.

“Who’s to have the rest, Mr. Spencer?” she demanded.

“I’m coming to that,” answered the lawyer, quietly.

“All the rest and residue of my property, of whatever kind, I leave to the town of Randolph, to establish a high school, directing that not more than twenty thousand dollars be expended upon the building, which shall be of brick. I desire that the school shall be known as the Carter School, to the end that my name may be remembered in connection with what I hope will prove a public blessing.” “That is all,” said the lawyer, and he laid down the will upon the table.

CHAPTER V

WHAT CAME AFTERWARD

There was silence for a minute after the will was read. Mrs. Pinkerton fanned herself furiously, and looked angry and excited.

At length she said: "I wish to say that that is a very unjust will, Mr. Spencer."

"I am not responsible for it, Mrs. Pinkerton," answered the lawyer, quietly.

"I don't know what the rest of you think," said the angry lady, with a general glance around the office, "but I think the will ought to be broken."

"On what grounds?" asked Mr. Spencer.

"He had no right to put off his own flesh and blood with a beggarly pittance, and leave all his money to the town."

"Pardon me; whatever you may think of Mr. Carter's will, there is no doubt that he had a perfect legal right to dispose of it as he did."

"Then the laws ought to be altered," said Mrs. Pinkerton, angrily. "I don't believe he was sane when he made the will."

"If you can prove that," said the lawyer, "you can set aside the will; but not otherwise."

"My brother was in his right mind," here interposed Miss Nancy. "He always meant to give the town money for a school."

"No doubt you think he was sane," sneered Mrs. Pinkerton, turning upon the old lady. "You have fared better than any of us."

"Miss Nancy was most nearly related to the deceased," said the lawyer, "and she needed help most."

"It's all very well to talk," said the lady, tossing her head, "but me and mine have been badly used. I have hard work enough to support the family, and little help I get from him," she added, pointing to her unhappy husband.

"I'm workin' all the time," remonstrated Josiah. "You are unkind, Maria."

"I could hire a boy to do all your work for three dollars a week," she retorted. "That's all you help me. I've worried along for years, expectin' Mr. Carter would do something handsome for us; and now he's put us off with four hundred dollars."

"I get only one hundred," said the farmer.

"And I, too. It's a beastly shame," remarked Cornelius.

"Really," said the lawyer, "it appears to me unseemly to speak so bitterly so soon after the funeral."

"I dare say you like it well enough," said Mrs. Pinkerton, sharply. "You've got all our money to build a schoolhouse."

"It will not benefit me any more than the townspeople generally," said the lawyer. "For my part, I should have been glad if my late friend had left a larger sum to those connected with him by blood."

"Don't you think we could break the will?" asked Mrs. Pinkerton, persuasively. "Couldn't you help us?"

"You can attempt it, but I assure you in advance you haven't the ghost of a chance. You would only lose your money, for the town would strenuously oppose you."

The stout lady's face fell. She felt that the last hope was gone.

"All I can say is, that it's a scandalous thing," she concluded, bitterly.

"I should like to know what's in that trunk he left you," said Cornelius Dixon, turning to Herbert. "Maybe it's money or bonds. If it is, don't forget our agreement."

This drew attention to Herbert.

“To be sure,” said Mrs. Pinkerton, whose curiosity was aroused, “Mr. Dixon may be right. Suppose we all go over to the house and open it.”

Herbert looked irresolutely toward the lawyer.

“There is no objection, I suppose,” said Mr. Spencer.

“I know what’s in the trunk,” said Miss Nancy.

Straightway all eyes were turned upon her.

“What is it?”

“It’s clothes. My brother used to keep his clothes in that trunk.”

Cornelius Dixon burst into a rude laugh.

“I say, Herbert, I congratulate you,” he said, with a chuckle. “The old fellow’s left you his wardrobe. You’ll look like a peacock when you put ‘em on. If you ever come to New York to see me, leave ‘em at home. I wouldn’t like to walk up Broadway with such a gawk as you’d look.”

“Young man,” said Miss Nancy, her voice tremulous, “it don’t look well in you to ridicule my poor departed brother. He didn’t forget you.”

“He might as well,” muttered Cornelius.

“I hope you won’t laugh at my brother’s gift,” said the old lady, turning to Herbert.

“No, ma’am,” said Herbert, respectfully. “I am glad to get it. I can’t afford to buy new clothes often, and they can be made over for me.”

“You wouldn’t catch me wearing such old-fashioned duds,” said Cornelius, scornfully.

“No one asked you to, young man,” said the old lady, disturbed at the manner in which her brother was spoken of. “The boy’s worth a dozen of you.”

“Thank you,” said Cornelius, bowing with mock respect. “I should like to ask,” he continued, turning to the lawyer, “when I can get my legacy. It isn’t much, but I might as well take it.”

“As the amount is small, I will send you a check next week,” said Mr. Spencer, “if you will leave me your address.”

“And can I have my money, too?” demanded Mrs. Pinkerton. “It’s a miserable pittance, but I owe it to my poor children to take it.”

“I will send your husband a check also, next week, madam.”

“You needn’t send it to him. You may send it to me,” said the lady.

“Part of it is mine,” expostulated the husband, in meek deprecation.

“I can give you your part,” said his wife. “Mr. Spencer, you may make the check payable to me.”

“But, Maria—”

“Be silent, Josiah! Don’t make a fool of yourself,” said his wife, in an imperious tone.

The poor man was fain to be silent, but the lawyer was indignant, and said: “Mr. Pinkerton, I will certainly not pay your legacy, nor your children’s, to anyone but yourself. I will send Mrs. Pinkerton a check for her own share—one hundred dollars—since she desires it.”

“I insist upon your sending me the children’s money also,” said the lady angrily. “He ain’t fit to take charge of it.”

“You may insist as much as you like, Mrs. Pinkerton,” said the lawyer, coolly, “but it will be useless. As the head of the family, I shall send the money designed for the children to your husband.”

“Do you call him the head of the family?” demanded the angry Maria. “I would have you to know, sir, that I am the head of the family.”

“The law does not recognize you as such. As to the pantaloons, which form a part of the legacy, I will forward them to you, if you wish.”

“Do you mean to insult me, sir?” gasped Mrs. Pinkerton, growing very red in the face.

“Not at all; but they were left either to you or your husband, as you might jointly agree.”

The lady was about to decline accepting them at all, but it occurred to her that they might be made over to suit her husband, and so save the expense of a new pair, and, she directed that they should be sent to him.

Then, gathering her family about her, she strode majestically from the office, shaking off, metaphorically, the dust of her feet against it.

Next Mr. Granger, after a few words with the lawyer, departed. Mr. Cornelius Dixon also announced that he must depart.

“Come and see me some time in the city,” he said to Herbert, “and if you ever get a windfall just put it into my hands, and I’ll go into business with you.”

“I’ll remember,” said Herbert, “but I’m afraid it’ll be a good while before that.”

“I don’t know about that. You can open a second-hand clothing store. The old man’s left you a good stock in trade. Good joke, isn’t it? Good-by.”

Next Miss Nancy rose to go.

“Tell your mother to call and see me, my boy,” she said, kindly, to Herbert. “I wish my brother’d left her more, for I know she needs it.”

“Thank you, Miss Nancy,” said Herbert, respectfully; “but we don’t complain. We are thankful for what we have received.”

“You’re the best of ‘em,” said the old lady, earnestly. “You’re a good boy, and God will prosper you.”

She went out, and of the eight heirs Herbert alone remained.

CHAPTER VI

THE LAWYER'S HOME

The lawyer regarded Herbert with a smile.

“Your uncle’s will doesn’t seem to have given general satisfaction,” he said.

“No,” responded Herbert; “but for my part I have come out as well as I expected.”

“I suppose you know Mr. Carter was rich?”

“So my mother told me.”

“How much do you think he was worth?”

Herbert was rather surprised at this question. Why should the lawyer ask it, when of course he knew much more about the matter?

“About a hundred thousand dollars, I suppose,” he answered.

“You are not far wrong. Now doesn’t your share, and your mother’s, seem very small compared with this large amount?”

“It is very small compared with that, but we had no claim to anything. The clothes and the money will be very useful to us.”

“You are a model heir,” said Mr. Spencer, smiling “You alone do not find fault, except, of course, Miss Nancy, who has fared the best.”

“I would rather make a fortune for myself than inherit one from another,” said Herbert, sturdily.

“I respect your independence, my boy,” said the lawyer, who felt favorably disposed toward our hero. “Still, a legacy isn’t to be despised. Now tell me when you want to take your trunk.”

“I want to ask your advice about that,” said Herbert. “I walked over from Wrayburn. How shall I carry the trunk back?”

“You will have to return by the stage to-morrow morning, that is, if you are ready to go back so soon.”

“Do they charge much to stop overnight at the hotel?” asked Herbert, anxiously, for he had but seventy-five cents with him. It occurred to him how foolish he had been not to consider that it would be necessary for him to spend the night in Randolph.

“I don’t know exactly how much. I think they charge fifty cents for a bed, and the same for each meal.”

Herbert’s face lengthened, and he became alarmed. How was he going to manage, on his limited resources?

The lawyer penetrated his perplexity, and, being a kind-hearted man, quickly came to his relief.

“I think you would find it lonely at the hotel, my boy,” he said, “and I shall therefore invite you to pass the night at my house instead.”

“You are very kind, sir,” said Herbert, gratefully, finding his difficulty happily removed. “I accept your invitation with pleasure.”

“The boy has been well brought up, if he is poor,” thought Mr. Spencer. “Well,” he said, “that is settled. I think our supper must be ready, so we will go over to the house at once. By the way, there is a boy from your town visiting my son. You must know him?”

“Is it James Leech?” asked Herbert, remembering what James had told him.

“Yes. Do you know him?”

“We are schoolmates.”

“Then it will be pleasant for you to meet.”

Herbert was not quite sure about this, but forbore to say so.

He accompanied Mr. Spencer to his house, which was just across the street from the office, and followed the lawyer into an apartment handsomely furnished. James Leech and Tom Spencer were sitting at a small table, playing checkers.

"Hello, Carter!" exclaimed James, in surprise, "how came you here?"

"Mr. Spencer invited me," said Herbert, not surprised at the mode of address.

"Did your uncle leave you anything?" asked James, with interest.

"Yes."

"How much?"

"He left my mother a hundred dollars."

"That isn't much," said James, contemptuously. "Was that all?"

"No, he left me a trunk, and what is in it."

"What is in it?"

"Clothes, I believe."

"A lot of old clothes!" commented James, turning up his nose. "That's a fine legacy, I must say."

"I shall find them useful," said Herbert, quietly.

"Oh, no doubt. You can roll up the pants and coat-sleeves. It will be fun to see you parading round in your uncle's tailcoats."

"I don't think you'll have that pleasure," said Herbert, flushing. "If I wear them I shall have them made over for me."

"I congratulate you on your new and extensive wardrobe," said James, mockingly. "Won't you cut a dash, though, on the streets of Wrayburn!"

Herbert did not deign a reply to this rude speech. Tom Spencer, who was much more of a gentleman than James, was disgusted with his impertinence. He rose, and took Herbert by the hand.

"You must let me introduce myself," he said. "My name is Thomas Spencer, and I am glad to see you here."

"Thank you," said Herbert, his heart opening at the frank and cordial manner of the other. "My name is Herbert Carter, and I am very glad to make your acquaintance."

"Are you going to finish this game, Tom?" drawled James, not relishing the idea of Herbert's receiving any attention from his friend.

"If you don't mind, we'll have it another time," said Tom. "There goes the supper bell, and I for one am hungry."

At the supper table James noticed, to his secret disgust, that Herbert was treated with as much consideration as himself. Mr. and Mrs. Spencer appeared to consider them social equals, which made James very uncomfortable.

"You boys are about of an age, I suppose," said Mr. Spencer.

"I really don't know," said James, haughtily.

"You attend the same school?"

"Yes," said James, "but I expect to go to some select academy very soon. At a public school you have to associate with all classes, you know."

Mr. Spencer arched his brows, and steadily regarded the young aristocrat.

"I don't see any great distinction of classes in a country village," said he, dryly. "Besides, we are living in a republic."

"You wouldn't like to associate on equal terms with a day laborer," said James, pertly.

"I am a laborer myself," said the lawyer, smiling. "I wish I could say I were a day laborer exclusively, but sometimes I have to work into the night."

"You are a professional man, and a gentleman," said James. "You don't work with your hands."

"I hope you boys will all grow up gentlemen," said Mr. Spencer.

"I shall, of course," said James.

"And you, Tom?"

“I hope so.”

“And you, Herbert?”

“I hope so, too,” said Herbert; “but if it is necessary to be rich to be a gentleman, I am not sure about it.”

“What is your idea of a gentleman, James?” asked the lawyer.

“He must be of a good family, and wear good clothes, and live nicely.”

“Is that all?”

“He ought to be well educated.”

“I see you name that last which I should name first. So these constitute a gentleman, in your opinion?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Not always. I have known men combining all the qualifications you have mentioned, who were very far from being gentlemen, in my opinion.”

“How is that, sir?” asked James, puzzled.

“They were arrogant, puffed up with an idea of their own importance, deficient in politeness.”

“How well he has described James!” thought Herbert, but he was too much of a gentleman to say so.

James looked disconcerted, and dropped the subject. He thought the lawyer had some queer ideas. Why need a gentleman be polite to his inferiors? he thought, but he didn't say so.

After supper the boys went out behind the house, and feasted on peaches, which were just ripe. Herbert found Tom very social, but James took very little notice of him. Our hero did not make himself unhappy on this account. In fact, he was in unusual good spirits, and enjoyed in anticipation the pleasure of going back to Wrayburn with the welcome news of the two legacies.

About half past seven Mr. Spencer came out into the orchard.

“As the stage starts early in the morning, Herbert,” he said, “we had better go over and get the trunk ready, so that you can take it home.”

James Leech hoped to receive an invitation to accompany the two; but no invitation was given, and he was forced to content himself with staying behind.

CHAPTER VII

A WELCOME DISCOVERY

Mr. Spencer entered the house so lately vacated by the old man who had occupied it for forty years.

“The trunk is in your uncle’s room,” said the lawyer, “or ought to be. I suppose it has not been moved.”

The two entered the chamber. It was a small, poorly furnished apartment, covered with a carpet which, cheap in the first place, was so worn with use that the bare floor showed in spots.

“Your uncle was not very luxurious in his taste,” said Mr. Spencer. “There are plenty of day laborers in town who have as good rooms as this.”

“I suppose he liked laying up money better than spending it,” said Herbert.

“You are right there. This must be the trunk.”

It was a small, black hair trunk, studded with brass nails. Mr. Spencer took a bunch of keys from his pocket and unlocked it. Lifting the cover he exposed to view a collection of woolen clothes-coats, vests, and pants.

“This is your legacy, Herbert,” said the lawyer. “I am afraid you won’t find it very valuable. What is this?”

He drew out, and held up to view, a blue cloak of ample proportions.

“Will you try it on?” he said, smiling.

Herbert threw it over his shoulders, and looked at himself in a small seven-by-nine looking-glass which was suspended over the washstand. It came down nearly to his feet.

“I should hardly dare to wear this without alteration,” he said; “but there is a good deal of good cloth in it. Mother can cut a coat and vest out of it for me.”

“Here is a blue coat with brass buttons. I remember your uncle used to wear it to church twenty years ago. Of late years he has not attended, and has had no occasion to wear it. Here is a pair of pantaloons; but they are pretty well worn.”

So they went through the list, finding little of value. The last article was a vest.

“It seems heavy,” said Herbert.

The lawyer took it from him and examined it.

“There seems to be an inside pocket,” he said. “There must be something in it.”

The pocket was confined by a button; Mr. Spencer thrust his fingers inside, and drew out something loosely enveloped in brown paper.

“What have we here?” he said, in a tone of curiosity.

The secret was speedily solved. When the paper was opened, it was found to contain five gold eagles, and two dollars in silver coins.

Herbert’s eyes glistened with delight as he viewed the treasure.

“Fifty-two dollars!” he exclaimed. “And it is mine.”

“Undoubtedly. The will expressly says you are to have the trunk, and all it contains.”

“I wonder whether Uncle Herbert remembered this money?”

“We can’t tell as to that, but it doesn’t affect your title to the money. I congratulate you, Herbert.”

“It will do us a great deal of good. Then there are the hundred dollars for mother. Why, we shall be rich.”

“Then you are content with your legacy?” asked Mr. Spencer.

“Oh, yes; it was more than I expected, or mother, either.”

“Yet it is but a mere drop of your uncle’s wealth,” said the lawyer, thoughtfully.

“That may be; but he needn’t have left us anything.”

“I see you look upon it in the best way. You are quite a model heir—very different from most of your relatives—Mrs. Pinkerton, for instance.”

“I supposed she expected more than I did.”

“She appeared to expect the bulk of the property. I am afraid her husband will have a hard time of it for a week to come,” said the lawyer, laughing. “He will have to bear the brunt of her disappointment. Well, there seems no more for us to do here. We have found out the value of your legacy, and may lock the trunk again. If you will lend a hand, we will take it across to my house, so that there may be no delay when the stage calls in the morning.”

“All right, sir.”

James Leech was looking out of the front window, awaiting the return of Mr. Spencer and Herbert with not a little curiosity. At length he spied them.

“Tom!” he exclaimed, “your father and that Carter boy are coming back.”

“Why do you call him that Carter boy? Why don’t you call him Herbert?”

“I am not on intimate terms with him,” said James.

“That is strange, as you both live in the same village.”

“You must remember that there is some difference in our social positions,” said James, haughtily.

“That is something I never think of,” said Tom, candidly. “I am a genuine republican.”

“I am not,” said James. “I should like to live in England, where they have noblemen.”

“Not unless you could be a nobleman yourself, I suppose?”

“No; of course not.”

By this time Mr. Spencer and Herbert were bringing the trunk into the front entry.

“I shouldn’t think a professional gentleman like your father would like to be seen carrying a trunk across the street,” said James.

“Oh, he don’t care for that; nor should I,” said Tom.

Herbert entered the room.

“Well, Herbert, what luck?” asked Tom.

“Better than I expected,” said Herbert, gayly. “What do you say to that?” and he displayed the gold and silver.

“How much is it?” asked James, his vanity melting under the influence of curiosity.

“Fifty-two dollars.”

“Capital!” said Tom.

“It isn’t much,” said James, in a tone of depreciation.

“I’ll bet Herbert is richer than you, James,” said Tom, in a lively manner. “Can you show as much money as that?”

“I shall be a rich man some day,” said James, with an air of importance.

“Your father may fail.”

“The moon may be made of green cheese,” retorted James, loftily. “How about the clothes? Are you going to show them?”

“I think not,” said Herbert.

“A parcel of rags, I suppose,” said James, with a sneer.

“Not quite so bad as that,” responded Herbert, good-naturedly. “Still, I think I shall hardly venture to wear any of them without alteration.”

“I wouldn’t wear second-hand clothes,” remarked James Leech, in his usual amiable tone.

“Perhaps you would if you were poor,” said Herbert, quietly.

“But I am not poor.”

“Fortunately for you.”

“Then you won’t show the clothes? I suppose they look as if they were made in the year one.”

“For our forefather Adam?” suggested Tom, laughing. “I am inclined to think the old gentleman in question hadn’t clothes enough to fill a trunk as large as that.”

“Probably not,” said Herbert; “he had no uncle, you know, to leave any to him.”

“What are you going to do with your money, Carter?” asked James, whose curiosity got the better of his dignity occasionally.

“I haven’t made up my mind yet. I think I shall find plenty of uses for it.”

“What would you do with it if you had it, James?” asked Tom.

“I can have more if I want to. I have only to ask father.”

“Then you’re better off than I. Say, father, will you give me fifty-two dollars?”

“When you are twenty-one I may do it.”

“You see,” said Tom. “But you haven’t answered my question. What would you do with the money if you had it?”

“I think I would buy a new rowboat; there’s a pond near our house.”

“When you get it send for me, and I’ll help you row.”

“Very well,” said James; but he did not answer very positively. In fact, he was by no means sure that his father would comply with his request for money, although it suited him to make this representation to his companions.

Herbert retired early. It had been a fatiguing day for him, and it would be necessary to rise in good season the next day, as the coach left Randolph for Wrayburn at an early hour.

CHAPTER VIII

HERBERT'S RETURN

Mrs. Carter awaited Herbert's return with interest. She felt lonely without him, for he had never before been away from home to stay overnight. But there was a feeling of anticipation besides. Her hopes of a legacy were not very strong, but of course there was a possibility of her uncle's having remembered them in his will.

"Even if it is only five dollars, it will be welcome," she thought. "Where people are so poor as we are, every little helps."

She sat at her sewing when the stage stopped before the door.

"I'm glad he rode home," thought the widow; "the walk both ways would have been too fatiguing."

"But why does not Herbert come in at once?"

He had gone behind the coach, and the driver was helping him take down a trunk.

"Where did he get it?" thought his mother, in surprise.

"I guess you can get it into the house yourself," she heard the driver say.

"Yes, I'll manage it; you needn't wait," said Herbert.

The driver cracked his whip, and the lumbering old coach drove on.

"Oh, there you are, mother," said Herbert, looking toward the house for the first time. "I'll be with you in a minute."

And he began to draw the trunk in through the front gate.

"Where did you get that trunk, Herbert?" asked Mrs. Carter.

"Oh, it's my legacy," said Herbert, laughing. "Here it is," and he lifted it up, and laid it down in the front entry.

"What is inside?" asked his mother, with natural curiosity.

"It isn't full of gold and silver, mother, so don't raise your expectations too high. It contains some clothes of Uncle Herbert, out of which you can get some for me."

"I am glad of that, for you need some new clothes. Well, we were not forgotten, after all."

"You don't seem disappointed, mother."

"I might have wished for a little money besides, Herbert; but beggars cannot be choosers."

"But sometimes they get what they wish for. Uncle Herbert left you a legacy of a hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars!" said Mrs. Carter, brightly. "Why, that will be quite a help for us. Was it left to me?"

"Yes, to you."

"It was kind in your uncle. My legacy is more than yours, Herbert."

"I don't know about that, mother; look here!"

And Herbert displayed his gold and silver.

"Here are fifty-two dollars that I found in the pocket of a vest. It belongs to me, for the will says expressly that I am to have the trunk and all it contains."

"I am really glad," said his mother, joyfully. "We are more fortunate than I expected. Sit down and tell me all about it. Who got the bulk of the property?"

"None of the relations. It is bequeathed to the town of Randolph, to found a high school, to be called the Carter School."

"Well, it will do good, at any rate. Didn't the other relations receive legacies?"

"Small ones; but they didn't seem very well satisfied. Do you know Mr. and Mrs. Josiah Pinkerton?"

“Slightly,” said Mrs. Carter, smiling. “Were they there?”

“She was, and he was in attendance upon her. She didn’t give him a chance to say much.”

“I have always heard she kept him in good subjection. How did they fare?”

“They and their two children received a hundred dollars apiece. She was mad and wanted to break the will. Then there was a Mr. Granger, a farmer, who got the same; and Cornelius Dixon, also.”

“I hope Aunt Nancy fared better. She is the best of them all.”

“She is allowed to occupy the house, rent free, and is to have an income of two hundred dollars a year as long as she lives.”

“I am really glad to hear it,” said Mrs. Carter, with emphasis. “She deserves all her good fortune. One of the best things her brother did in life was to allow her such an income as to keep her independent of public charity; I feared he would forget to provide for her.”

“She seems a good old lady. She asked me to invite you to call and see her.”

“I should like to do so, and if I ever have occasion to go to Randolph I will certainly do so.”

“Now, mother,” said Herbert, when he had answered his mother’s questions, “I want you to take this money, and use it as you need.”

“But, Herbert, it was left to you.”

“And if you use it I shall receive my share of it. By the way, your money will be sent you next week; so Mr. Spencer assured me.”

“Who is Mr. Spencer?”

“The lawyer who read the will. He was very kind to me. It was at his house I spent the night. I got acquainted with his son, Tom, a fine fellow. I met also James Leech, whom I cannot compliment so highly. He was visiting Tom.”

“I never thought him an agreeable boy.”

“Nor anyone else, I expect. He appears to think he can put on airs, and expects everybody to bow down to him because his father is a rich man.”

“I hope you didn’t quarrel with him,” said Mrs. Carter, apprehensively.

“Oh, no, he sneered at me, as usual, and drew a ridiculous picture of my appearance with my uncle’s clothes on.”

“Do you mind what he says?” asked his mother, anxiously.

“A little,” said Herbert, “but I can stand it if he doesn’t go too far.”

“He has an unhappy nature. I think his father must have been somewhat like him when he was young.”

“So do I. He feels just as important as James. I like to see him strut round, as if he owned the whole village.”

“He does own more of it than anyone else. Among the rest, he owns our house, in part.”

“You mean he has a mortgage on it, mother?”

“Yes.”

“Seven hundred and fifty dollars, isn’t it?”

“Yes, Herbert.”

“How much do you consider the whole worth?” asked our hero, thoughtfully.

“It cost your father fifteen hundred dollars. That is, the land—nearly an acre—cost three hundred dollars, and the house, to build, twelve hundred.”

“Would it sell for that?”

“Not if a sale were forced; but, if anybody wanted it, fifteen hundred dollars would not be too much to pay.”

“I wish the mortgage were paid.”

“So do I, my son; but we are not very likely to be able to pay it.”

“How fine it would have been if Uncle Herbert had left us, say eight hundred dollars, so that we might have paid it up, and still have had a little left for immediate use!”

“Yes, Herbert, it would have made us feel quite independent, but it isn’t best speculating on what might have been. It is better to do the best we can with what we really have.”

“I suppose you are right, mother; but it is pleasant to dream of good fortune, even if we know it is out of reach.”

“The trouble is, our dreaming often interferes with our working.”

“It shan’t interfere with mine. I’ve got something to work for.”

“Do you refer to anything in particular, Herbert?”

“Yes. I want to pay off this mortgage,” answered Herbert, manfully.

“Some day, when you are a man, you may be able; but the time is too far off to spend much time upon it at present.”

Herbert had moved to the window as the conversation went on. Suddenly he called to his mother: “Look, mother, there is Squire Leech riding up. He is pointing out our house to the man that is riding with him. Do you know who it is?”

“Yes, it is Mr. Banks, his new superintendent. He has just come into the village.”

“I wonder why he pointed at our house?”

“Probably he was telling him that he had a mortgage on it.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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