ALGER HORATIO JR.

HECTOR'S INHERITANCE, OR, THE BOYS OF SMITH INSTITUTE

Horatio Alger

Hector's Inheritance, Or, the Boys of Smith Institute

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=34839502
Hector's Inheritance, Or, the Boys of Smith Institute:

Содержание

CHAPTER I. MR. ROSCOE RECEIVES TWO LETTERS	4
CHAPTER II. RESENTING AN INSULT	10
CHAPTER III. HECTOR LEARNS A SECRET	17
CHAPTER IV. A SKIRMISH	24
CHAPTER V. PREPARING TO LEAVE HOME	30
CHAPTER VI. SMITH INSTITUTE	36
CHAPTER VII. THE TYRANT OF THE PLAYGROUND	42
CHAPTER XIII. IN THE SCHOOLROOM	48
CHAPTER IX. THE CLASS IN VIRGIL	54
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	59

Horatio Alger, Jr.
Hector's Inheritance, Or, the Boys of Smith Institute

CHAPTER I. MR. ROSCOE RECEIVES TWO LETTERS

Mr. Roscoe rang the bell, and, in answer, a servant entered the library, where he sat before a large and commodious desk.

"Has the mail yet arrived?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; John has just come back from the village."

"Go at once and bring me the letters and papers, if there are any."

John bowed and withdrew.

Mr. Roscoe walked to the window, and looked thoughtfully out upon a smooth, luxuriant lawn and an avenue of magnificent trees, through which carriages were driven to what was popularly known as Castle Roscoe. Everything, even to the luxuriously appointed room in which he sat, indicated wealth and the ease which comes from affluence.

Mr. Roscoe looked around him with exultation.

"And all this may be mine," he said to himself, "if I am only

bold. What is it old Pindar says? 'Boldness is the beginning of victory.' I have forgotten nearly all I learned in school, but I remember that. There is some risk, perhaps, but not much, and I owe something to my son—"

He was interrupted by the entrance of the servant with a small leather bag, which was used to hold mail matter, going from or coming to the house.

The servant unlocked the bag, and emptied the contents on the desk. There were three or four papers and two letters. It was the last which attracted Mr. Roscoe's attention.

We will take the liberty of looking over Mr. Roscoe's shoulder as he reads the first. It ran as follows:

"DEAR SIR:-I am in receipt of your favor, asking my terms for boarding pupils. For pupils of fifteen or over, I charge five hundred dollars per year, which is not a large sum considering the exceptional advantages presented by Inglewood School. My pupils are from the best families, and enjoy a liberal table. Moreover, I employ competent teachers, and guarantee rapid progress, when the student is of good, natural capacity, and willing to work.

"I think you will agree with me that it is unwise to economize when the proper training of a youth is in question, and that a cheap school is little better than no school at all.

"I have only to add that I shall be most happy to receive your young nephew, if you decide to send him to me, and will take personal pains to promote his advancement. I remain, dear sir,

your obedient servant,

"DIONYSIUS KADIX."

Mr. Roscoe threw the letter down upon the desk with an impatient gesture.

"Five hundred dollars a year!" he exclaimed. "What can the man be thinking of? Why, when I went to school, twenty-five years since, less than half this sum was charged. The man is evidently rapacious. Let me see what this other letter says."

The second letter was contained in a yellow envelope, of cheap texture, and was much more plebeian in appearance than the first.

Again we will look over Mr. Roscoe's shoulder, and read what it contains. It was postmarked Smithville, and the envelope was disfigured by a blot. It commenced:

"DEAR SIR:-It gives me pleasure to answer your inquiries respecting my school. I have about fifty pupils, part of whom, say one-third, are boarders. Though I say it myself, it will be hard to find any school where more thorough instruction is given. I look upon my pupils as my children, and treat them as such. My system of government is, therefore, kind and parental, and my pupils are often homesick in vacation, longing for the time to come when they can return to their studies at Smith Institute. It is the dearest wish of Mrs. Smith and myself to make our young charges happy, and to advance them, by pleasant roads over flowery meads, to the inner courts of knowledge.

"Humbug!" muttered Mr. Roscoe. "I understand what all that

means." He continued:

"I hope you will not consider three hundred dollars per annum too much for such parental care. Considering the present high price of provisions, it is really as low a price as we can afford to receive.

"I shall be glad if you consider my letter favorable and decide to place your nephew under my charge. Yours respectfully,

"SOCRATES SMITH, A. M."

"That is more reasonable," said Mr. Roscoe, to himself, as he laid down the letter. "Three hundred dollars I consider a fair price. At any rate, I do not propose to pay any more for Hector. I suppose the table is plain enough, but I don't believe in pampering the appetites of boys. If he were the master of Roscoe Hall, as he thinks he is, there might be some propriety in it; but upon that head I shall soon undeceive him. I will let him understand that I am the proprietor of the estate, and that he is only a dependent on my bounty. I wonder how he will take it. I dare say he will make a fuss, but he shall soon be made to understand that it is of no use. Now to answer these letters."

Mr. Roscoe sat down in a luxurious armchair, and, drawing pen and paper toward him, wrote first to Dr. Radix. I subjoin the letter, as it throws some light upon the character of the writer:

"ROSCOE HALL, Sept. 10th. DR. DIONYSIUS RADIX.

"My DEAR SIR:-I am in receipt of your letter of the 8th instant, answering my inquiries in regard to your school. Let me say at once that I find your terms too high. Five hundred dollars

a year for forty weeks' board and schooling seems to me an exorbitant price to ask. Really, at this rate, education will soon become a luxury open only to the wealthy.

"You are probably under a misapprehension in reference to my young ward. Nephew he is not, in a strict sense of the term. He was adopted—not legally, but practically—by my brother, when he was only a year old, and his origin has been concealed from him. My brother, being childless, has allowed him to suppose that he was his own son. Undoubtedly he meant to provide for him in his will, but, as often happens, put off will-making till it was too late. The estate, therefore, goes to me, and the boy is unprovided for. This does not so much matter, since I am willing to educate him, and give him a fair start in life, if he acts in a manner to suit me. I do not, however, feel called upon to pay an exorbitant price for his tuition, and, therefore, shall be obliged to forego placing him at Inglewood School. Yours, etc.,

"ALLAN ROSCOE."

"When this letter is sent, I shall have taken the decisive step," thought Mr. Roscoe. "I must then adhere to my story, at whatever cost. Now for the other."

His reply to the letter of Socrates Smith, A. M., was briefer, but likely to be more satisfactory to the recipient. It ran thus;

"SOCRATES SMITH, A. M.

"DEAR Sir:-Your letter is at hand, and I find it, on the whole, satisfactory. The price you charge-three hundred dollars per annum—is about right. I hope you are a firm disciplinarian. I do

not want Hector too much indulged or pampered, though he may expect it, my poor brother having been indulgent to excess.

"Let me add, by the bye, that Hector is not my nephew, though I may inadvertently have mentioned him as such, and had no real claims upon my brother, though he has been brought up in that belief. He was adopted, in an informal way, by my brother, when he was but, an infant. Under the circumstances, I am willing to take care of him, and prepare him to earn his own living when his education is completed.

"You may expect to see me early next week. I will bring the boy with me, and enter him at once as a pupil in your school.

"Yours, etc., ALLAN ROSCOE."

"There, that clinches it!" said Mr. Roscoe, in a tone of satisfaction. "Now for an interview with the boy."

CHAPTER II.
RESENTING AN INSULT

A stone's throw from the mansion was a neat and spacious carriage house. The late master of Castle Roscoe had been fond of driving, and kept three horses and two carriages. One of the latter was an old-fashioned coach; while there was, besides, a light buggy, which Hector was accustomed to consider his own. It was he, generally, who used this, for his father preferred to take a driver, and generally took an airing, either alone or with Hector, in the more stately carriage, drawn by two horses.

Hector walked across the lawn and entered the carriage house, where Edward, the coachman, was washing the carriage. As the former is to be our hero, we may pause to describe him.

He was fifteen, slenderly but strongly made, with a clear skin and dark eyes and a straightforward look. He had a winning smile, that attracted all who saw it, but his face could assume a different expression if need be. There were strong lines about his mouth that indicated calm resolution and strength of purpose. He was not a boy who would permit himself to be imposed upon, but was properly tenacious of his rights.

As he entered the carriage house, he looked about him in some surprise.

"Where is the buggy, Edward?" he asked.

"Master Guy is driving out in it."

"How is that?" said Hector. "Doesn't he know that it is mine? He might, at least, have asked whether I intended to use it."

"That is what I told him."

"And what did he say?"

"That it was just as much his as yours, and perhaps more so."

"What could he mean?"

"He said his father had promised to give it to him."

"Promised to give him my buggy!" exclaimed Hector, his eyes flashing.

"It's a shame, Master Hector, so it is," said Edward, sympathetically. He had known Hector since he was a boy of five, and liked him far better than Guy, who was a newcomer, and a boy disposed to domineer over those whom he considered his inferiors.

"I don't intend to submit to it," said Hector, trying, ineffectually, to curb his anger.

"I don't blame you, Master Hector, but I'm afraid you will have a hard time. As your uncle is your guardian, of course he has power over you, and he thinks everything of that boy of his, though, to my mind, he is an unmannerly cub."

"I don't know how much power he has over me, but he mustn't expect me to play second fiddle to his son. I am willing that Guy should enjoy as many privileges as I do, though the estate is mine; but he mustn't interfere with my rights."

"That's right, Master Hector. Why don't you speak to your

uncle about it? I would, if I were you."

"So I will, if it is necessary. I will speak to Guy first, and that may be sufficient. I don't want to enter complaint against him if I can help it."

"You didn't see Master Guy ride out, did you?"

"'No; I was reading. If I had seen him, I would have stopped him."

"I am afraid it wouldn't have done any good."

"Do you mean that he would have taken the buggy in spite of me?" asked Hector, indignantly.

"I think he would have tried. To tell the truth, Master Hector, I refused to get the buggy ready for him, till he brought out a paper from his father commanding me to do it. Then, of course, I had no choice."

Hector was staggered by this.

"Have you got the paper?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Edward, fumbling in his vest pocket.

He drew out a small scrap of notepaper, on which was written, "My son, Guy, has my permission to ride out in the buggy. You will obey me rather than Hector."

This was signed, "Allan Roscoe."

"So it seems my uncle is the trespasser," said Hector. "It is he who takes the responsibility. I will go and speak to him at once."

"Wait a minute! There comes Master Guy, returning from his ride. You can have it out with him first."

In fact, Hector had only to look down the avenue to see

the rapid approach of the buggy. Guy held the reins, and was seated in the driver's seat with all the air of a master. The sight aggravated Hector, and not without reason. He waited until Guy, flinging the reins to Edward, leaped from the buggy, then he thought it time to speak.

"Guy," he said, calmly, "it seems to me that you owe me an apology."

"Oh, I do, do I?" sneered Guy. "What for, let me ask?"

"You have driven out in my buggy, without asking my permission."

"Oh, it's your buggy, is it?" said Guy, with another sneer.

"Of course it is. You know that as well as I do."

"I don't know it at all."

"Then I inform you of it. I don't want to be selfish; I am willing that you should ride out in it occasionally; but I insist upon your asking my permission."

Guy listened to these words with a sneer upon his face. He was about the same age and size as Hector, but his features were mean and insignificant, and there was a shifty look in his eye that stamped him as unreliable. He did not look like the Roscoes, though in many respects he was in disposition and character similar to his father.

"It strikes me," he said, with an unpleasant smile, "that you're taking a little too much upon yourself, Hector Roscoe. The buggy is no more yours than mine."

"What do you say, Edward?" said Hector, appealing to the

coachman.

"I say that the buggy is yours, and the horse is yours, and so I told Master Guy, but he wouldn't take no notice of it."

"Do you hear that, Guy?"

"Yes, I do; and that's what I think of it," answered Guy, snapping his fingers. "My father gave me permission to ride out in it, and I've got just as much right to it as you, and perhaps more."

"You know better, Guy," said Hector, indignantly; "and I warn you not to interfere with my rights hereafter."

"Suppose I do?" sneered Guy.

"Then I shall be under the necessity of giving you a lesson," said Hector, calmly.

"You will, will you? You'll give me a lesson?" repeated Guy, nodding vigorously. "Who are you, I'd like to know?"

"If you don't know, I can tell you."

"Tell me, then."

"I am Hector Roscoe, the owner of Roscoe Hall. Whether your father is to be my guardian or not, I don't know; but there are limits to the power of a guardian, and I hope he won't go too far."

"Hear the boy talk!" said Guy, contemptuously.

"I wish to treat my uncle with becoming respect; but he is a newcomer here—I never saw him till three months since—and he has no right to come here, and take from me all my privileges. We can all live at peace together, and I hope we shall; but he must treat me well."

"You are quite sure Roscoe Castle belongs to you, are you, Hector?"

"That's the law. Father left no will, and so the estate comes to me."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Guy, with malicious glee.

"If you only knew what I know, you wouldn't crow quite so loud. It's a splendid joke."

There was something in this that attracted Hector's attention, though he was not disposed to attach much importance to what Guy said.

"If I only knew what you know!" he repeated.

"Yes; that's what I said."

"What is it?"

"You'll know it soon enough, and I can tell you one thing, it'll surprise you. It'll take down your pride a peg or two."

Hector stared at his cousin in unaffected surprise. What could Guy possibly mean? Had his father perhaps made a will, and left the estate to some one else—his uncle, for example? Was this the meaning of Guy's malicious mirth?

"I don't know to what you refer," he said; "but if it's anything that is of importance to me, I ought to know it. What is it?"

"Go and ask father," said Guy, with a tantalizing grin.

"I will," answered Hector, "and without delay."

He turned to enter the house, but Guy had not exhausted his malice. He was in a hurry to triumph over Hector, whom he disliked heartily.

"I don't mind telling you myself," he said.

"You are not what you suppose. You're a lowborn beggar!"

He had no sooner uttered these words, than Hector resented the insult. Seizing the whip from Guy, he grasped him by the collar, flung him to the ground and lashed him with it.

"There," said he, with eyes aflame, "take that, Guy Roscoe, and look out how you insult me in future!"

Guy rose slowly from the ground, pale with fury, and, as he brushed the dust from his clothes, ejaculated:

"You'll pay dearly for this, Hector!"

"I'll take the consequences," said Hector, as coldly as his anger would allow. "Now, I shall go to your father and ask the meaning of this."

CHAPTER III. HECTOR LEARNS A SECRET

Hector entered the library with some impetuosity. Usually he was quiet and orderly, but he had been excited by the insinuations of Guy, and he was impatient to know what he meant—if he meant anything.

Allan Roscoe looked up, and remarked, with slight sarcasm:

"This is not a bear garden, Hector. You appear to think you are on the playground, judging by your hasty motions."

"I beg your pardon, uncle," said Hector, who never took amiss a rebuke which he thought deserved. "I suppose I forgot myself, being excited. I beg your pardon."

"What is the cause of your excitement?" asked Mr. Roscoe, surveying the boy keenly.

"Guy has said something that I don't understand."

"He must have said something very profound, then," returned Allan Roscoe, with light raillery.

"Indeed, Uncle Allan, it is no laughing matter," said Hector, earnestly.

"Then let me hear what it is."

"He intimates that he knows something that would let down my pride a peg or two. He hints that I am not the heir of Castle Roscoe."

The boy used the term by which the house was usually known.

Allan Roscoe knit his brow in pretended vexation.

"Inconsiderate boy!" he murmured. "Why need he say this?"

"But," said Hector, startled, "is it true?"

"My boy," said his uncle, with simulated feeling, "my son has spoken to you of a secret which I would willingly keep from you if I could. Yet, perhaps, it is as well that you should be told now."

"Told what?" exclaimed Hector, quite at sea.

"Can you bear to hear, Hector, that it is indeed true? You are not the owner of this estate."

"Who is then?" ejaculated the astonished boy.

"I am; and Guy after me."

"What! Did my father leave the estate away from me? I thought he did not leave a will?"

"Nor did he."

"Then how can anyone else except his son inherit?"

"Your question is a natural one. If you were his son you would inherit under the law."

"If I were his son!" repeated Hector, slowly, his head swimming. "What do you mean by that? Of course I am your brother's son."

"It is very painful for me to tell, Hector. It will be distressing for you to hear. No tie of blood connects you with the late owner of Castle Roscoe."

"I don't believe you, Uncle Allan," said Hector, bluntly.

"Of course, therefore, I am not your uncle," added Allan

Roscoe, dryly.

"I beg your pardon; I should have said Mr. Allan Roscoe," said Hector, bowing proudly, for his heart was sore, and he was deeply indignant with the man who sat, smooth and sleek, in his father's chair, harrowing up his feelings without himself being ruffled.

"That is immaterial. Call me uncle, if you like, since the truth is understood. But I must explain."

"I would like to know what is your authority for so surprising a statement, Mr. Roscoe. You cannot expect me to believe that I have been deceived all my life."

"I make the statement on your father's authority—I should say, on my brother's authority."

"Can you prove it, Mr. Roscoe?"

"I can. I will presently put into your hands a letter, written me by my brother some months since, which explains the whole matter. To save you suspense, however, I will recapitulate. Where were you born?"

"In California."

"That is probably true. It was there that my brother found you."

"Found me?"

"Perhaps that is not the word. My brother and his wife were boarding in Sacramento in the winter of 1859. In the same boarding house was a widow, with a child of some months old. You were that child. Your mother died suddenly, and it was

ascertained that she left nothing. Her child was, therefore, left destitute. It was a fine, promising boy—give me credit for the compliment—and my brother, having no children of his own, proposed to his wife to adopt it. She was fond of children, and readily consented. No formalities were necessary, for there was no one to claim you. You were at once taken in charge by my brother and his wife, therefore, and very soon they came to look upon you with as much affection as if you were their own child. They wished you to consider them your real parents, and to you the secret was never made known, nor was it known to the world. When my brother returned to this State, three years after, not one of his friends doubted that the little Hector was his own boy.

"When you were six years old your mother died—that is, my brother's wife. All the more, perhaps, because he was left alone, my brother became attached to you, and, I think, he came to love you as much as if you were his own son."

"I think he did," said Hector, with emotion. "Never was there a kinder, more indulgent father."

"Yet he was not your father," said Allan Roscoe, with sharp emphasis.

"So you say, Mr. Roscoe."

"So my brother says in his letter to me."

"Do you think it probable that, with all this affection for me, he would have left me penniless?" asked the boy.

"No; it was his intention to make a will. By that will he would no doubt have provided for you in a satisfactory manner. But I

think my poor brother had a superstitious fear of will making, lest it might hasten death. At any rate, he omitted it till it was too late."

"It was a cruel omission, if your story is a true one."

"Your—my brother, did what he could to remedy matters. In his last sickness, when too weak to sign his name, he asked me, as the legal heir of his estate, to see that you were well provided for. He wished me to see your education finished, and I promised to do so. I could see that this promise relieved his mind. Of one thing you may be assured, Hector, he never lost his affection for you."

"Thank Heaven for that!" murmured the boy, who had been deeply and devotedly attached to the man whom, all his life long, he had looked upon as his father.

"I can only add, Hector," said Mr. Roscoe, "that I feel for your natural disappointment. It is, indeed, hard to be brought up to regard yourself as the heir of a great estate, and to make the discovery that you have been mistaken."

"I don't mind that so much, Mr. Roscoe," said Hector, slowly. "It is the hardest thing to think of myself as having no claim upon one whom I have loved as a father—to think myself as a boy of unknown parentage. But," he added, suddenly, "I have it only on your word. Why should I believe it?"

"I will give you conclusive proof, Hector. Read this."

Allan Roscoe took from his pocket a letter, without an envelope. One glance served to show Hector that it was in the

handwriting of his late father, or, at any rate, in a handwriting surprisingly like it.

He began to read it with feverish haste.

The letter need not find a place here. The substance of it had been accurately given by Mr. Allan Roscoe. Apparently, it corroborated his every statement.

The boy looked up from its perusal, his face pale and stricken.

"You see that I have good authority for my statement," said Mr. Roscoe.

"I can't understand it," said Hector, slowly.

"I need only add," said Mr. Roscoe, apparently relieved by the revelation, "that my brother did not repose confidence in me in vain. I accept, as a sacred charge, the duty he imposed upon me. I shall provide for you and look after your education. I wish to put you in a way to prepare yourself for a useful and honorable career. As a first step, I intend, on Monday next, to place you in an excellent boarding school, where you will have exceptional privileges."

Hector listened, but his mind was occupied by sad thoughts, and he made no comment.

"I have even selected the school with great care," said Mr. Roscoe. "It is situated at Smithville, and is under the charge of Socrates Smith, A. M., a learned and distinguished educator. You may go now. I will speak with you on this subject later."

Hector bowed. After what he had heard, his interest in other matters was but faint.

“I shall be glad to get him out of the house,” thought Allan Roscoe. “I never liked him.”

CHAPTER IV. A SKIRMISH

Hector walked out of the house in a state of mental bewilderment not easily described. Was he not Hector Roscoe, after all? Had he been all his life under a mistake? If this story were true, who was he, who were his parents, what was his name? Why had the man whom he had supposed to be his father not imparted to him this secret? He had always been kind and indulgent; he had never appeared to regard the boy as an alien in blood, but as a dearly loved son. Yet, if he had, after all, left him unprovided for, he had certainly treated Hector with great cruelty.

"I won't believe it," said Hector, to himself.

"I won't so wrong my dear father's memory at the bidding of this man, whose interest it is to trump up this story, since he and his son become the owners of a great estate in my place."

Just then Guy advanced toward Hector with a malicious smile upon his face. He knew very well what a blow poor Hector had received, for he was in his father's confidence, and he was mean enough, and malicious enough, to rejoice at it.

"What's the matter with you, Hector?" he asked, with a grin. "You look as if you had lost your last friend."

Hector stopped short and regarded Guy fixedly.

"Do you know what your father has been saying to me?" he asked.

"Well, I can guess," answered Guy. "Ho! ho! It's a great joke that you have all the time fancied yourself the heir of Castle Roscoe, when you have no claim to it at all. I am the heir!" he added, drawing himself up proudly; "and you are a poor dependent, and a nobody. It's funny!"

"Perhaps you won't think it so funny after this!" said Hector, coolly, exasperated beyond endurance. As he spoke he drew off, and in an instant Guy measured his length upon the greensward.

Guy rose, his face livid with passion, in a frame of mind far from funny. He clinched his fists and looked at Hector as if he wished to annihilate him. "You'll pay for this," he screamed. "You'll repent it, bitterly, you poor, nameless dependent, low-born, very likely—"

"Hold, there!" said Hector, advancing resolutely, and sternly facing the angry boy. "Be careful what you say. If this story of your father's is true, which I don't believe, you might have the decency to let me alone, even if you don't sympathize with me. If you dare to say or hint anything against my birth, I'll treat you worse than I have yet."

"You'll suffer for this!" almost shrieked Guy.

"I am ready to suffer now, if you are able to make me," said Hector. "Come on, and we'll settle it now."

But Guy had no desire for the contest to which he was invited. He had a wholesome fear of Hector's strong, muscular arms, aided, as they were, by some knowledge of boxing. Hector had never taken regular lessons, but a private tutor, whom his father

had employed, a graduate of Yale, had instructed him in the rudiments of the "manly art of self-defense," and Hector was very well able to take care of himself against any boy of his own size and strength. In size, Guy was his equal, but in strength he was quite inferior. This Guy knew full well, and, angry as he was, he by no means lost sight of prudence.

"I don't choose to dirty my hands with you," he said. "I shall tell my father, and it would serve you right if he sent you adrift."

In Hector's present mood, he would not, perhaps, have cared much if this threat had been carried into execution, but he was not altogether reckless, and he felt that it was best to remain under Mr. Roscoe's protection until he had had time to investigate the remarkable story which he suspected his reputed uncle had trumped up to serve his own interests.

"Tell your father, if you like," said Hector, quietly. "I don't know whether he will sustain you or not in your insults, but if he does, then I shall have two opponents instead of one."

"Does that mean that you will attack my father?" demanded Guy, hoping for an affirmative answer, as it would help him to prejudice his father against our hero.

"No," answered Hector, smiling, "I don't apprehend there will be any necessity, for he won't insult me as you have done."

Guy lost no time in seeking his father, and laying the matter before him, inveighing against Hector with great bitterness.

"So he knocked you down, did he, Guy?" asked Allan Roscoe, thoughtfully.

"Yes; he took me unawares, or he couldn't have done it," answered Guy, a little ashamed at the avowal.

"What did you do?"

"I—I told him he should suffer for it."

"Why did he attack you?"

"It was on account of something I said."

"What was it?"

Guy reluctantly answered this question, and with correctness.

"It was your fault for speaking to him when he was feeling sore at making a painful discovery."

"Do you justify him in pitching into me like a big brute?" asked Guy, hastily.

"No; but still, I think it, was natural, under the circumstances. You should have kept out of his way, and let him alone."

"Won't you punish him for attacking me?" demanded Guy, indignantly.

"I will speak to him on the subject," said Allan Roscoe; "and will tell him my opinion of his act."

"Then shan't I be revenged upon him?" asked Guy, disappointed.

"Listen, Guy," said his father. "Is it no punishment that the boy is stripped of all his possessions, while you step into his place? Henceforth he will be dependent upon me, and later, upon you. He has been hurled down from his proud place as owner of Castle Roscoe, and I have taken his place, as you will hereafter do."

"Yes," said Guy, gleefully; "it will be a proud day when I

become master of the estate."

Allan Roscoe was not a specially sensitive man, but this remark of his son jarred upon him.

"You seem to forget, Guy, that you do not succeed till I am dead!"

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Guy, slowly.

"It almost seems as if you were in a hurry for me to die."

"I didn't mean that, but it's natural to suppose that I shall live longer than you do, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," returned Allan Roscoe, shortly.

"Of course that's what I mean."

"Then, since you are so much better off than Hector, you had better be more considerate, and leave him to get over his disappointment as well as he can."

"Shall I send in Hector to see you?" asked Guy, as he at length turned to leave the room.

"Yes."

"You're to go in to my father," said Guy, reappearing on the lawn; "he's going to give it to you."

Hector anticipated some such summons, and he had remained in the same spot, too proud to have it supposed that he shrank from the interview.

With a firm, resolute step, he entered the presence of Allan Roscoe.

"I hear you wish to see me, Mr. Roscoe," he said, manfully.

"Yes, Hector; Guy has come to me with complaints of you."

"If he says I knocked him down for insulting me, he has told you the truth," said Hector, sturdily.

"That was the substance of what he said, though he did not admit the insult."

"But for that I should not have attacked him."

"I do not care to interfere in boys' quarrels, except in extreme cases," said Mr. Roscoe. "I am afraid Guy was aggravating, and you were unnecessarily violent."

"It doesn't seem to me so," said Hector.

"So I regard it. I have warned him not to add by taunts to the poignancy of your disappointment. I request you to remember that Guy is my son, and that I am disposed to follow my brother's directions, and provide for and educate you."

Hector bowed and retired. He went out with a more favorable opinion of Allan Roscoe, who had treated the difficulty in a reasonable manner.

Allan Roscoe looked after him as he went out.

"I hate that boy," he said, to himself; "I temporize from motives of policy, but I mean to tame his haughty spirit yet."

CHAPTER V. PREPARING TO LEAVE HOME

Allan Roscoe's remonstrance with the two boys had the effect of keeping the peace between them for the remainder of the week. Guy did not think it prudent to taunt Hector, unless backed up by his father, and he felt that the change in their relative positions was satisfaction enough at present. Besides, his father, in a subsequent conversation, had told Guy that it was his purpose to place Hector in a boarding school, where the discipline would be strict, and where he would be thrashed if he proved rebellious.

"I shall tell Mr. Smith," he added, "that the boy needs a strong hand, and that I am not only perfectly willing that he should be punished whenever occasion may call for it, but really desire it."

"Good, good!" commended Guy, gleefully. "I hope old Smith'll lay it on good."

"I presume he will," said Allan Roscoe, smiling in sympathy with his son's exuberance. "I am told by a man who knows him that he is a tall man, strong enough to keep order, and determined to do it."

"I should like to be there to see Hector's first flogging," remarked the amiable Guy. "I'd rather see it than go to the theater any time."

"I don't see how you can, unless you also enter the school."

"No, thank you," answered Guy. "No boarding school for me. That isn't my idea of enjoyment. I'd rather stay at home with you. Hector won't be here to interfere with my using his horse and buggy."

"They are his no longer. I give them to you."

"Thank you, father," said Guy, very much gratified.

"But I would rather you would not use them till after Hector is gone. It might disturb him."

"That's just why I want to do it."

"But it might make trouble. He might refuse to go to school."

"You'd make him go, wouldn't you, father?"

"Yes; but I wish to avoid forcible measures, if possible. Come, Guy, it's only till Monday; then Hector will be out of the way, and you can do as you please without fear of interference."

"All right, father. I'll postpone my fun till he is out of the way. You'll go with him, won't you?"

"Yes, Guy."

"Just tell old Smith how to treat him. Tell him to show him no mercy, if he doesn't behave himself."

"You seem to dislike Hector very much. You shouldn't feel so. It isn't Christian."

Guy looked at his father queerly out of the corner of his eye. He understood him better than Allan Roscoe supposed.

"I hope you won't insist on my loving him, father," he said. "I leave that to you."

"I only wish you to avoid coming into collision with him. As

for love, that is something not within our power."

"Will you be ready to go with me to boarding school on Monday morning, Hector?" asked Allan Roscoe, on Saturday afternoon.

"Yes, sir."

Indeed, Hector felt that it would be a relief to get away from the house which he had been taught to look upon as his—first by right of inheritance, and later as actual owner. As long as he remained he was unpleasantly reminded of the great loss he had experienced. Again, his relations with Guy were unfriendly, and he knew that if they were permanently together it wouldn't be long before there would be another collision. Though in such a case he was sure to come off victorious, he did not care to contend, especially as no advantage could come of it in the end.

Of the boarding school kept by Mr. Socrates Smith he had never heard, but felt that he would, at any rate, prefer to find himself amid new scenes. If the school were a good one, he meant to derive benefit from it, for he was fond of books and study, and thought school duties no task.

"I have carefully selected a school for you," continued Allan Roscoe, "because I wish to follow out my poor brother's wishes to the letter. A good education will fit you to maintain yourself, and attain a creditable station in life, which is very important, since you will have to carve your own future."

There was no objection to make to all this. Still, it did grate upon Hector's feelings, to be so often reminded of his penniless

position, when till recently he had regarded himself, and had been regarded by others, as a boy of large property.

Smithville was accessible by railroad, being on the same line as the town of Plympton in which Roscoe Castle was situated. There was a train starting at seven o'clock, which reached Smithville at half-past, eight. This was felt to be the proper train to take, as it would enable Hector to reach school before the morning session began. Allan Roscoe, who was not an early riser, made an effort to rise in time, and succeeded. In truth, he was anxious to get Hector out of the house. It might be that the boy's presence was a tacit reproach, it might be that he had contracted a dislike for him. At any rate, when Hector descended to the breakfast room, he found Mr. Roscoe already there.

"You are in time, Hector," said Mr. Roscoe. "I don't know how early they will get up at school, but I hope it won't be earlier than this."

"I have no objection to early rising," said Hector.

"I have," said Allan Roscoe, gaping.

"I am sorry to have inconvenienced you," said Hector, politely. "I could have gone to school alone."

"No doubt; but I wished an interview with Mr. Socrates Smith myself. I look upon myself in the light of your guardian, though you are not my nephew, as was originally supposed."

"I'd give a good deal to know whether this is true," thought Hector, fixing his eyes attentively upon his uncle's face.

I have written "uncle" inadvertently, that being the character

in which Mr. Roscoe appeared to the world.

"By the way, Hector," said Allan Roscoe, "there is one matter which we have not yet settled."

"What is that, sir?"

"About your name."

"My name is Hector Roscoe."

"I beg your pardon. Assuming by brother's communication to be true, and I think you will not question his word, you have no claim to the name."

"To what name have I a claim, then?" asked Hector, pointedly.

"To the name of your father—the last name, I mean. I have no objection to your retaining the name of Hector."

"What was the name of my father?" asked the boy.

"Ahem! My brother did not mention that in his letter. Quite an omission, I must observe."

"Then it is clear that he meant to have me retain his own name," said Hector, decisively.

"That does not follow."

"As I know no other name to which I have a claim, I shall certainly keep the name of the kindest friend I ever had, whether he was my father or not," said Hector, firmly.

Allan Roscoe looked annoyed.

"Really," he said, "I think this ill-judged, very ill-judged. It will lead to misapprehension. It will deceive people into the belief that you are a real Roscoe."

"I don't know but I am," answered Hector, with a calm look

of defiance, which aggravated Allan Roscoe.

"Have I not told you you are not?" he said, frowning.

"You have; but you have not proved it," said Hector.

"I am surprised that you should cling to a foolish delusion. You are only preparing trouble for yourself. If my word is not sufficient—"

"You are an interested party. This story, if true, gives you my property."

"At any rate, you may take your father's—I mean my brother's—word for it."

"If he had told me so, I would believe it," said Hector.

"You have it in black and white, in the paper I showed you. What more do you want?"

"I want to be sure that that document is genuine. However, I won't argue the question now. I have only been giving you my reasons for keeping the name I have always regarded as mine."

Allan Roscoe thought it best to drop the subject; but the boy's persistency disturbed him.

CHAPTER VI. SMITH INSTITUTE

Socrates Smith, A. M., was not always known by the philosophic name by which he challenged the world's respect as a man of learning and distinguished attainments. When a boy in his teens, and an academy student, he was known simply as Shadrach Smith. His boy companions used to address him familiarly as Shad. It was clear that no pedagogue could retain the respect of his pupils who might readily be metamorphosed into Old Shad. By the advice of a brother preacher, he dropped the plebeian name, and bloomed forth as Socrates Smith, A. M.

I may say, in confidence, that no one knew from what college Mr. Smith obtained the degree of Master of Arts. He always evaded the question himself, saying that it was given him by a Western university causa honoris.

It might be, or it might not. At any rate, he was allowed to wear the title, since no one thought it worth while to make the necessary examination into its genuineness. Nor, again, had anyone been able to discover at what college the distinguished Socrates had studied. In truth, he had never even entered college, but he had offered himself as a candidate for admission to a college in Ohio, and been rejected. This did not, however, prevent his getting up a school, and advertising to instruct others in the branches of learning of which his own knowledge was so incomplete.

He was able to hide his own deficiencies, having generally in his employ some college graduate, whose poverty compelled him to accept the scanty wages which Socrates doled out to him. These young men were generally poor scholars in more than one sense of the word, as Mr. Smith did not care to pay the high salary demanded by a first-class scholar. Mr. Smith was shrewd enough not to attempt to instruct the classes in advanced classics or mathematics, as he did not care to have his deficiencies understood by his pupils.

It pleased him best to sit in state and rule the school, administering reproofs and castigations where he thought fit, and, best of all, to manage the finances. Though his price was less than that of many other schools, his profits were liberal, as he kept down expenses. His table was exceedingly frugal, as his boarding pupils could have testified, and the salaries he paid to under teachers were pitifully small.

So it was that, year by year, Socrates Smith, A. M., found himself growing richer, while his teachers grew more shabby, and his pupils rarely became fat.

Allan Roscoe took a carriage from the depot to the school.

Arrived at the gate, he descended, and Hector followed him.

The school building was a long, rambling, irregular structure, of no known order of architecture, bearing some resemblance to a factory. The ornament of architecture Mr. Smith did not regard. He was strictly of a utilitarian cast of mind. So long as the institute, as he often called it, afforded room for the school

and scholars he did not understand what more was wanted.

"Is Mr. Smith at leisure?" Mr. Roscoe asked of a bare-arm servant girl who answered the bell.

"I guess he's in his office," was the reply.

"Take him this card," said Mr. Roscoe. The girl inspected the card with some curiosity, and carried it to the eminent principal. When Socrates Smith read upon the card the name

ALLAN ROSCOE,

and, penciled in the corner, "with a pupil," he said, briskly:

"Bring the gentleman in at once, Bridget."

As Mr. Roscoe entered, Mr. Smith beamed upon him genially. It was thus he always received those who brought to him new scholars. As he always asked half a term's tuition and board in advance, every such visitor represented to him so much ready cash, and for ready cash Socrates had a weakness.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Roscoe," said the learned principal, advancing to meet his visitor. "And this is the young lad. Dear me! he is very well grown, and looks like he was fond of his books."

This was not exactly the way in which a learned scholar might be expected to talk; but Mr. Smith's speech was not always elegant, or even grammatically correct.

"I believe he is reasonably fond of study," said Mr. Roscoe. "Hector, this is your future instructor, Prof. Socrates Smith."

At the name of professor, which he much affected, Socrates Smith looked positively benignant.

"My young friend," he said, "we will try to make you happy. Smith Institute is a regular beehive, full of busy workers, who are preparing themselves for the duties and responsibilities of life. I aim to be a father to my pupils, and Mrs. Smith is a mother to them. I am truly glad to receive you into my happy family."

Hector scanned attentively the face of his new teacher. He was not altogether prepossessed in his favor. That the reader may judge whether he had reason to be, let me describe Mr. Smith.

He was a trifle over six feet in height, with yellowish, sandy hair, high cheek bones, a rough and mottled skin, a high but narrow forehead, a pair of eyes somewhat like those of a ferret, long, ungainly limbs, and a shambling walk. A coat of rusty black, with very long tails, magnified his apparent height, and nothing that he wore seemed made for him.

Perhaps, as the first Socrates was said to have been the homeliest of all the Athenians, it was fitting that the man who assumed his name should also have the slightest possible claim to beauty.

"He may be a learned man," thought Hector, "but he is certainly plain enough. It is well that he has something to compensate for his looks."

"I hope you are glad to come here, my boy," said Socrates, affably. "I sincerely trust that you will be contented at the institute."

"I hope so, too," said Hector, but he evidently spoke doubtfully.

"I should like a little conversation with you, Professor Smith," said Allan Roscoe. "I don't know that it is necessary to keep Hector here during our interview."

Socrates took the hint.

He rang a hand bell, and a lank boy, of fifteen, appeared.

"Wilkius," said Mr. Smith, "this is a new scholar, Hector Roscoe. Take him to the playground, and introduce him to Mr. Crabb."

"All right, sir. Come along."

This last was addressed to Hector, who went out with the new boy.

"I thought it best to speak with you briefly about Hector, Professor Smith," commenced Allan Roscoe.

"Very appropriate and gratifying, Mr. Roscoe. I can assure you he will be happy here."

"I dare say," returned Mr. Roscoe, carelessly. "I wish to guard you against misinterpreting my wishes. I don't want the boy pampered, or too much indulged."

"We never pamper our boarding pupils," said Socrates, and it is quite certain that he spoke the truth.

"It spoils boys to be too well treated."

"So it does," said Socrates, eagerly. "Plain, wholesome diet, without luxury, and a kind, but strict discipline—such are the features of Smith Institute."

"Quite right and judicious, professor. I may remark that the boy, though reared in luxury by my brother, is really penniless."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, he is solely dependent upon my generosity. I propose, however, to give him a good education at my own expense, and prepare him to earn his living in some useful way."

"Kind philanthropist!" exclaimed Socrates. "He ought, indeed, to be grateful."

"I doubt if he will," said Mr. Roscoe, shrugging his shoulders. "He has a proud spirit, and a high idea of his own position, though he is of unknown parentage, and has nothing of his own."

"Indeed!"

"I merely wish to say that you do not need to treat him as if he were my nephew. It is best to be strict with him, and make him conform to the rules."

"I will, indeed, Mr. Roscoe. Would that all guardians of youth were as judicious! Your wishes shall be regarded."

After a little more conversation, Allan Roscoe took his leave.

So, under auspices not the most pleasant, Hector's school life began.

CHAPTER VII. THE TYRANT OF THE PLAYGROUND

Under the guidance of the lank boy, named Wilkins, Hector left Mr. Smith's office, and walked to a barren-looking plot of ground behind the house, which served as a playground for the pupils of Smith Institute.

Wilkins scanned the new arrival closely.

"I say, Roscoe," he commenced, "what made you come here?"

"Why do boys generally come to school?" returned Hector.

"Because they have to, I suppose," answered Wilkins.

"I thought they came to study."

"Oh, you're one of that sort, are you?" asked Wilkins, curiously.

"I hope to learn something here."

"You'll get over that soon," answered Wilkins, in the tone of one who could boast of a large experience.

"I hope not. I shall want to leave school if I find I can't learn here."

"Who is it that brought you here—your father?"

"No, indeed!" answered Hector, quickly, for he had no desire to be considered the son of Allan Roscoe.

"Uncle, then?"

"He is my guardian," answered Hector, briefly.

They were by this time in the playground. Some dozen boys were playing baseball. They were of different ages and sizes, ranging from ten to nineteen. The oldest and largest bore such a strong personal resemblance to Socrates Smith, that Hector asked if he were his son.

"No," answered Wilkins; "he is old Sock's nephew."

"Who is old Sock?"

"Smith, of course. His name is Socrates, you know. Don't let him catch you calling him that, though."

"What sort of a fellow is this nephew?" asked Hector.

"He's a bully. He bosses the boys. It's best to keep on the right side of Jim."

"Oh, is it?" inquired Hector, smiling slightly.

"Well, I should say so."

"Suppose you don't?"

"He'll give you a thrashing."

"Does his uncle allow that?"

"Yes; I think he rather likes it."

"Don't the boys resist?"

"It won't do any good. You see, Jim's bigger than any of us."

Hector took a good look at this redoubtable Jim Smith.

He was rather loosely made, painfully homely, and about five feet nine inches in height. Nothing more need be said, as, in appearance, he closely resembled his uncle.

Jim Smith soon gave Hector an opportunity of verifying the description given of him by Wilkins.

The boy at the bat had struck a ball to the extreme boundary of the field. The fielder at that point didn't go so fast as Jim, who was pitcher, thought satisfactory, and he called out in a rough, brutal tone:

"If you don't go quicker, Archer, I'll kick you all round the field."

Hector looked at Wilkins inquiringly.

"Does he mean that?" he asked.

"Yes, he does."

"Does he ever make such a brute of himself?"

"Often."

"And the boys allow it?"

"They can't help it."

"So, it seems, you have a tyrant of the school?"

"That's just it."

"Isn't there any boy among you to teach the fellow better manners? You must be cowards to submit."

"Oh, you'll find out soon that you must submit, too," said Wilkins.

Hector smiled.

"You don't know me yet," he said.

"What could you do against Jim? He's three or four inches taller than you. How old are you?"

"I shall be sixteen next month."

"And he is nineteen."

"That may be; but he'd better not try to order me round."

"You'll sing a different tune in a day or two," said Wilkins.

By this time Jim Smith had observed the new arrival.

"What's that you've got with you, Wilkins?" he demanded, pausing in his play.

"The new boy."

"Who's he?"

"His name is Roscoe."

"Ho! Hasn't he got any other name?" asked Jim, meaningly.

Wilkins had forgotten the new arrival's first name, and said so.

"What's your name, Roscoe?" asked Jim, in the tone of a superior.

Hector resented this tone, and, though he had no objection, under ordinary circumstances, to answering the question, he did not choose to gratify his present questioner.

"I don't happen to have a card with me," he answered, coldly.

"Oh, that's your answer, is it?" retorted Jim, scenting insubordination with undisguised pleasure, for he always liked the task of subduing a new boy.

"Yes."

"I guess you don't know who I am," said Jim, blustering.

"Oh, yes, I do."

"Well, who am I, then?"

"The bully of the school, I should suppose, from your style of behavior."

"Do you hear that, boys?" demanded Jim, in a theatrical tone, turning to the other boys.

There was a little murmur in response, but whether of approval or reprobation, it was not easy to judge.

"That boy calls me a bully! He actually has the audacity to insult me! What do you say to that?"

The boys looked uneasy. Possibly, in their secret hearts, they admired the audacity that Jim complained of; but, seeing the difference between the two boys in size and apparent strength, it did not seem to them prudent to espouse the side of Hector.

"Don't you think I ought to teach him a lesson?"

"Yes!" cried several of the smaller boys, who stood in awe of the bully.

Hector smiled slightly, but did not seem in the least intimidated.

"Jim," said Wilkins, "the boy's guardian is inside with your uncle."

This was meant as a warning, and received as such. A boy's guardian is presumed to be his friend, and it would not be exactly prudent, while the guardian was closeted with the principal, to make an assault upon the pupil.

"Very well," said Jim; "we'll postpone Roscoe's case. This afternoon will do as well. Come, boys, let us go on with the game."

"What made you speak to Jim in that way?" expostulated Wilkins. "I'm afraid you've got into hot water."

"Didn't I tell the truth about him?"

"Yes," answered Wilkins, cautiously; "but you've made an

enemy of him."

"I was sure to do that, sooner or later," said Hector, unconcernedly. "It might as well be now as any time."

"Do you know what he'll do this afternoon?"

"What will he do?"

"He'll give you a thrashing."

"Without asking my permission?" asked Hector, smiling.

"You're a queer boy! Of course, he won't trouble himself about that. You don't seem to mind it," he continued, eying Hector curiously.

"Oh, no."

"Perhaps you think Jim can't hurt. I know better than that."

"Did he ever thrash you, then?"

"Half a dozen times."

"Why didn't you tell his uncle?"

"It would be no use. Jim would tell his story, and old Sock would believe him. But here's Mr. Crabb, the usher, the man I was to introduce you to."

Hector looked up, and saw advancing a young man, dressed in rusty black, with a meek and long-suffering expression, as one who was used to being browbeaten. He was very shortsighted, and wore eyeglasses.

CHAPTER XIII. IN THE SCHOOLROOM

"Mr. Crabb," said Wilkins, "this is the new scholar, Roscoe. Mr. Smith asked me to bring him to you."

"Ah, indeed!" said Crabb, adjusting his glasses, which seemed to sit uneasily on his nose. "I hope you are well, Roscoe?"

"Thank you, sir; my health is good."

"The schoolbell will ring directly. Perhaps you had better come into the schoolroom and select a desk."

"Very well, sir."

"Are you a classical scholar, Roscoe?"

"Yes, sir."

"And how far may you have gone now?" queried Crabb.

"I was reading the fifth book of Virgil when I left off study."

"Really, you are quite a scholar. I suppose you don't know any Greek?"

"I was in the second book of the Anabasis."

"You will go into the first class, then. I hope you will become one of the ornaments of the institute."

"Thank you. Is the first class under Mr. Smith?"

"No; I teach the first class," said Crabb, with a modest cough.

"I thought the principal usually took the first class himself?"

"Mr. Smith comes into the room occasionally and supervises,

but he has too much business on hand to teach regularly himself."

"Is Mr. Smith a good scholar?" asked Hector.

"Ahem!" answered Mr. Crabb, evidently embarrassed; "I presume so. You should not ask Ahem! irrelevant questions."

In fact, Mr. Crabb had serious doubts as to the fact assumed. He knew that whenever a pupil went to the principal to ask a question in Latin or Greek, he was always referred to Crabb himself, or some other teacher. This, to be sure, proved nothing, but in an unguarded moment, Mr. Smith had ventured to answer a question himself, and his answer was ludicrously incorrect.

The schoolroom was a moderate-sized, dreary-looking room, with another smaller room opening out of it, which was used as a separate recitation room.

"Here is a vacant desk," said Mr. Crabb, pointing out one centrally situated.

"I think that will do. Who sits at the next desk?"

"Mr. Smith's nephew."

"Oh, that big bully I saw on the playground?"

"Hush!" said Crabb, apprehensively. "Mr. Smith would not like to have you speak so of his nephew."

"So, Mr. Crabb is afraid of the cad," soliloquized Hector. "I suppose I may think what I please about him," he added, smiling pleasantly.

"Ye-es, of course; but, Master Roscoe, let me advise you to be prudent."

"Is he in your class?"

"Yes."

"Is he much of a scholar?"

"I don't think he cares much for Latin and Greek," answered Mr. Crabb. "But I must ring the bell. I see that it wants but five minutes of nine."

"About my desk?"

"Here is another vacant desk, but it is not as well located."

"Never mind. I will take it. I shall probably have a better neighbor."

The bell was rung. Another teacher appeared, an elderly man, who looked as if all his vitality had been expended on his thirty years of teaching. He, too, was shabbily dressed—his coat being shiny and napless, and his vest lacking two out of the five original buttons.

"I guess Smith doesn't pay very high salaries," thought Hector. "Poor fellows. His teachers look decidedly seedy."

The boys began to pour in, not only those on the playground, but as many more who lived in the village, and were merely day scholars. Jim Smith stalked in with an independent manner and dropped into his seat carelessly. He looked around him patronizingly. He felt that he was master of the situation. Both ushers and all the pupils stood in fear of him, as he well knew. Only to his uncle did he look up as his superior, and he took care to be on good terms with him, as it was essential to the maintenance of his personal authority.

Last of all, Mr. Smith, the learned principal, walked into the

schoolroom with the air of a commanding general, followed by Allan Roscoe, who he had invited to see the school in operation.

Socrates Smith stood upright behind his desk, and waved his hand majestically.

"My young friends," he said; "this is a marked day. We have with us a new boy, who is henceforth to be one of us, to be a member of our happy family, to share in the estimable advantages which you all enjoy. Need I say that I refer to Master Roscoe, the ward of our distinguished friend, Mr. Allan Roscoe, who sits beside me, and with interest, I am sure, surveys our institute?"

As he spoke he turned towards Mr. Roscoe, who nodded an acknowledgment.

"I may say to Mr. Roscoe that I am proud of my pupils, and the progress they have made under my charge. (The principal quietly ignored the two ushers who did all the teaching.) When these boys have reached a high position in the world, it will be my proudest boast that they were prepared for the duties of life at Smith Institute. Compared with this proud satisfaction, the few paltry dollars I exact as my honorarium are nothing—absolutely nothing."

Socrates looked virtuous and disinterested as he gave utterance to this sentiment.

"And now, boys, you will commence your daily exercises, under the direction of my learned associates, Mr. Crabb and Mr. Jones."

Mr. Crabb looked feebly complacent at this compliment,

though he knew it was only because a visitor was present. In private, Socrates was rather apt to speak slightingly of his attainments.

"While I am absent with my distinguished friend, Mr. Roscoe, I expect you to pursue your studies diligently, and preserve the most perfect order."

With these words, the stately figure of Socrates passed through the door, followed by Mr. Roscoe.

"A pleasant sight, Mr. Roscoe," said the principal; "this company of ambitious, aspiring students, all pressing forward eagerly in pursuit of learning?"

"Quite true, sir," answered Allan Roscoe.

"I wish you could stay with us for a whole day, to inspect at your leisure the workings of our educational system."

"Thank you, Mr. Smith," answered Mr. Roscoe, with an inward shudder; "but I have important engagements that call me away immediately."

"Then we must reluctantly take leave of you. I hope you will feel easy about your nephew—"

"My ward," corrected Allan Roscoe.

"I beg your pardon—I should have remembered—your ward."

"I leave him, with confidence, in your hands, my dear sir."

So Allan Roscoe took his leave.

Let us look in upon the aspiring and ambitious scholars, after Mr. Smith left them in charge of the ushers.

Jim Smith signalized his devotion to study by producing an

apple core, and throwing it with such skillful aim that it struck Mr. Crabb in the back of the head.

The usher turned quickly, his face flushed with wild indignation.

"Who threw that missile?" he asked, in a vexed tone.

Of course no one answered.

"I hope no personal disrespect was intended," continued the usher.

Again no answer.

"Does anyone know who threw it?" asked Mr. Crabb.

"I think it was the new scholar," said Jim Smith, with a malicious look at Hector.

"Master Roscoe," said Mr. Crabb, with a pained look, "I hope you have not started so discreditably in your school life."

"No, sir," answered Hector; "I hope I am not so ungentlemanly. I don't like to be an informer, but I saw Smith himself throw it at you. As he has chosen to lay it to me, I have no hesitation in exposing him."

Jim Smith's face flushed with anger.

"I'll get even with you, you young muff!" he said.

"Whenever you please!" said Hector, disdainfully.

"Really, young gentlemen, these proceedings are very irregular!" said Mr. Crabb, feebly.

With Jim Smith he did not remonstrate at all, though he had no doubt that Hector's charge was rightly made.

CHAPTER IX. THE CLASS IN VIRGIL

Presently the class in Virgil was called up. To this class Hector had been assigned, though it had only advanced about half through the third book of the AEneid, while Hector was in the fifth.

"As there is no other class in Virgil, Roscoe, you had better join the one we have. It will do you no harm to review."

"Very well, sir," said Hector.

The class consisted of five boys, including Hector. Besides Jim Smith, Wilkins, Bates and Johnson belonged to it. As twenty-five lines had been assigned for a lesson, Hector had no difficulty in preparing himself, and that in a brief time. The other boys were understood to have studied the lesson out of school.

Bates read first, and did very fairly. Next came Jim Smith, who did not seem quite so much at home in Latin poetry as on the playground. He pronounced the Latin words in flagrant violation of all the rules of quantity, and when he came to give the English meaning, his translation was a ludicrous farrago of nonsense. Yet, poor Mr. Crabb did not dare, apparently, to characterize it as it deserved.

"I don't think you have quite caught the author's meaning, Mr. Smith," he said. By the way, Jim was the only pupil to whose

name he prefixed the title "Mr."

"I couldn't make anything else out of it," muttered Jim.

"Perhaps some other member of the class may have been more successful! Johnson, how do you read it?"

"I don't understand it very well, sir."

"Wilkins, were you more successful?"

"No, sir."

"Roscoe, can you translate the passage?"

"I think so, sir."

"Proceed, then."

Hector at once gave a clear and luminous rendering of the passage, and his version was not only correct, but was expressed in decent English. This is a point in which young classical scholars are apt to fail.

Mr. Crabb was not in the habit of hearing such good translations, and he was surprised and gratified.

"Very well! Very well, indeed, Roscoe," he said, approvingly. "Mr. Smith, you may go on."

"He'd better go ahead and finish it," said Smith, sulkily. "He probably got it out of a pony."

My young readers who are in college or classical schools, will understand that a "pony" is an English translation of a classical author.

"He is mistaken!" said Hector, quietly. "I have never seen a translation of Virgil."

Mr. Smith shrugged his shoulders, and drew down the corners

of his mouth, intending thereby to express his incredulity.

"I hope no boy will use a translation," said the usher; "it will make his work easier for the time being, but in the end it will embarrass him. Roscoe, as you have commenced, you may continue. Translate the remainder of the passage."

Hector did so, exhibiting equal readiness.

The other boys took their turns, and then words were given out to parse. Here Jim Smith showed himself quite at sea; though the usher, as it was evident, selected the easiest words for him, he made a mistake in every one. Apparently he was by no means certain which of the words were nouns, and which verbs, and as to the relations which they sustained to other words in the sentence he appeared to have very little conception.

At length the recitation was over. It had demonstrated one thing, that in Latin scholarship Hector was far more accurate and proficient than any of his classmates, while Jim Smith stood far below all the rest.

"What in the world can the teacher be thinking of, to keep such an ignoramus in the class?" thought Hector. "He doesn't know enough to join a class in the Latin Reader."

The fact was, that Jim Smith was unwilling to give up his place as a member of the highest class in Latin, because he knew it would detract from his rank in the school. Mr. Crabb, to whom every recitation was a torture, had one day ventured to suggest that it would be better to drop into the Caesar class; but he never ventured to make the suggestion again, so unfavorably

was it received by his backward pupil. He might, in the case of a different pupil, have referred the matter to the principal, but Socrates Smith was sure to decide according to the wishes of his nephew, and did not himself possess knowledge enough of the Latin tongue to detect his gross mistakes.

After a time came recess. Hector wished to arrange the books in his desk, and did not go out.

Mr. Crabb came up to his desk and said: "Roscoe, I must compliment you on your scholarship. You enter at the head. You are in advance of all the other members of the class."

"Thank you, sir," said Hector, gratified.

"There is one member of the class who is not competent to remain in it."

"Yes, sir; I observed that."

"But he is unwilling to join a lower class. It is a trial to me to hear his daily failures, but, perhaps, he would do no better anywhere else. He would be as incompetent to interpret Caesar as Virgil, I am afraid."

"So I should suppose, sir."

"By the way, Roscoe," said the usher, hurriedly; "let me caution you against irritating Smith. He is the principal's nephew, and so we give him more scope."

"He seems to me a bully," said Hector.

"So he is."

"I can't understand why the boys should give in to him as they do."

"He is taller and stronger than the other boys. Besides, he is backed up by the principal. I hope you won't get into difficulty with him."

"Thank you, Mr. Crabb. Your caution is kindly meant, but I am not afraid of this Jim—Smith. I am quite able to defend myself if attacked."

"I hope so," said the usher; but he scanned Hector's physical proportions doubtfully, and it was very clear that he did not think him a match for the young tyrant of the school.

Meanwhile, Jim Smith and his schoolfellows were amusing themselves in the playground.

"Where's that new fellow?" asked Jim, looking back to see whether he had come out.

"He didn't come out," said Bates.

Jim nodded his head vigorously:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.