

ARTHUR CHENEY TRAIN

THE CONFESSIONS OF
ARTEMAS QUIBBLE

Arthur Train
The Confessions of
Artemas Quibble

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36363294

The Confessions of Artemas Quibble / Being the Ingenuous and Unvarnished History of Artemas Quibble, Esquire, One-Time Practitioner in the New York Criminal Courts, Together with an Account of the Divers Wiles, Tricks, Sophistries, Technicalities, and Sundry Artifices of Himself and Others of the Fraternity, Commonly Yclept «Shysters» or «Shyster Lawyers»:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	23
CHAPTER III	34
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	51

Arthur Cheney Train

The Confessions of Artemas Quibble / Being the Ingenuous and Unvarnished History of Artemas Quibble, Esquire, One-Time Practitioner in the New York Criminal Courts, Together with an Account of the Divers Wiles, Tricks, Sophistries, Technicalities, and Sundry Artifices of Himself and Others of the Fraternity, Commonly Yclept «Shysters» or «Shyster Lawyers»

twenty- second day of February, in the year 1855. Unlike most writers of similar memoirs, I shall cast no aspersions upon the indigent by stating that my parents were poor but honest. They were poor *and* honest, as indeed, so far as I have been able to ascertain, have been all the Quibbles since the founder of the family came over on the good ship *Susan and Ellen* in 1635, and, after marrying a lady's maid who had been his fellow passenger, settled in the township of Weston, built a mill, and divided his time equally between selling rum to the Indians and rearing a numerous progeny.

My father, the Reverend Ezra Quibble, was, to be sure, poor enough. The salary that he received as pastor of his church was meagre to the degree of necessitating my wearing his over-worn and discarded clerical vestments, which to some extent may account for my otherwise inexplicable distaste for things ecclesiastical. My mother was poor, after wedlock, owing to the eccentricity of a parent who was so inexorably opposed to religion that he cut her off with a shilling upon her marriage to my father. Before this she had had and done what she chose, as was fitting for a daughter of a substantial citizen who had made a fortune in shoe leather.

I remember that one of my first experiments upon taking up the study of law was to investigate my grandfather's will in the probate office, with a view to determining whether or not, in his fury against the church, he had violated any of the canons of the law in regard to perpetuities or restraints upon

alienation; or whether in his enthusiasm for the Society for the Propagation of Free Thinking, which he had established and intended to perpetuate, he had not been guilty of some technical slip or blunder that would enable me to seize upon its endowment for my own benefit. But the will, alas! had been drawn by that most careful of draughtsmen, old Tuckerman Toddleham, of 14 Barristers' Hall, Boston, and was as solid as the granite blocks of the court-house and as impregnable of legal attack as the Constitution.

We lived in a frame house, painted a disconsolate yellow. It abutted close upon the sidewalk and permitted the passer-by to view the family as we sat at meat or enjoyed the moderate delights of social intercourse with our neighbors, most of whom were likewise parishioners of my father.

My early instruction was received in the public schools of my native town, supplemented by tortured hours at home with "Greenleaf's Mental Arithmetic" and an exhaustive study of the major and minor prophets. The former stood me in good stead, but the latter I fear had small effect. At any rate, the impression made upon me bore little fruit, and after three years of them I found myself in about the same frame of mind as the Oxford student who, on being asked at his examination to distinguish between the major and minor prophets, wrote in answer: "God forbid that I should discriminate between such holy men!"

But for all that I was naturally of a studious and even scholarly disposition, and much preferred browsing among the

miscellaneous books piled in a corner of the attic to playing the rough-and-tumble games in which my school-mates indulged.

My father was a stern, black-bearded man of the ante-bellum type, such as you may see in any old volume of daguerreotypes, and entirely unblest with a sense of humor. I can even now recall with a sinking of the heart the manner in which, if I abjured my food, he would grasp me firmly by the back of the neck and force my nose toward the plate of Indian mush—which was the family staple at supper—with the command, "Eat, boy!" Sometimes he was kind to a degree which, by a yawning of the imagination, might be regarded as affectionate, but this was only from a sense of religious duty. At such times I was prone to distrust him even more than at others. He believed in a personal devil with horns, a tail, and, I suspect, red tights; and up to the age of ten I shared implicitly in this belief. The day began and ended with family prayers of a particularly long-drawn-out and dolorous character.

My mother, on the other hand, was a pale young woman of an undecided turn of mind with a distinct taste for the lighter pleasures that she was never allowed to gratify. I think she secretly longed for the freedom that had been hers under the broader roof of her father's stately mansion on High Street. But she had, I suspect, neither the courage nor the force of mind to raise an issue, and from sheer inertia remained faithful to the life that she had elected.

My grandfather never had anything to do with either of them

and did not, so far as I am aware, know me by sight, which may account for the fact that when he died he bequeathed a moderate sum in trust, "the proceeds to be devoted to the support and maintenance of the child of my daughter Sarah, at some suitable educational institution where he may be removed from the influences of his father."

Thus it was that at the age of nine I was sent away from home and began an independent career at the boarding-school kept by the Reverend Mr. Quirk, at Methuen, Massachusetts. Here I remained for seven years, in the course of which both my parents died, victims of typhoid. I was cast upon the world utterly alone, save for the rather uncompromising and saturnine regard in which I was held by old Mr. Toddleham, my trustee. This antique gentleman inhabited a musty little office, the only furniture in which consisted of a worn red carpet, a large engraving of the Hon. Jeremiah Mason, and a table covered with green baize. I recall also a little bronze horse which he used as a paper weight. He had a shrewd wrinkled face of the color of parchment, a thick yellow wig, and a blue cape coat. His practice consisted almost entirely in drawing wills and executing them after the decease of their respective testators, whom he invariably outlived, and I think he regarded me somewhat in the light of a legal joke. He used to send for me twice a year, for the sole purpose, I believe, of ascertaining whether or not I was sufficiently nourished at Quirk's establishment. On these occasions he would take me to lunch with him at the Parker House, where he invariably ordered

scallops and pumpkin pie for me and a pint of port for himself.

On my departure he would hand me solemnly two of the pieces of paper currency known as "shin plasters," and bid me always hold my grandfather's memory in reverence. On one of these occasions, when he had laid me under a similar adjuration, I asked him whether he had ever heard of the man who made his son take off his hat whenever he met a pig—on the ground that his father had made his money in pork. He stared at me very hard for a moment with his little twinkling eyes and then suddenly and without any preliminary symptoms exploded in a cackle of laughter.

"Goddamme," he squeaked, "I wish your gran'ther could a heard y' say that!"

Then without further explanation he turned and made his way down

School Street and I did not see him for another six months.

My life at Quirk's was a great improvement over the life I had led at home in Lynn. In the first place I was in the real country, and in the second I had the companionship of good-natured, light-hearted people. The master himself was of the happy-go-lucky sort who, with a real taste for the finer things of literature and life, take no thought for the morrow or indeed even for the day. He was entirely incapable of earning a living and had been successively an actor, a lecturer, a preacher, and a pedagogue. He was a fine scholar of Latin and could quote Terence, Horace, and Plautus in a way that could stir the somnolent soul even of

a school-boy. His chief enemy, next to laziness, was drink. He would disappear for days at a time into his study, and afterward explain that he had been engaged in the preparation of his *magnum opus*, which periodically was just on the point of going to press.

During these interludes the school was run by Mrs. Quirk, a robust, capable, and rosy Englishwoman, who had almost as much learning as her husband and ten times as much practical ability. There were twelve boys in the school, for each of whom the Quirks received the modest sum of two hundred and seventy-five dollars a year. In exchange for this they gave board, lodging, and tuition. Each of us received separate instruction—or as Quirk expressed it "individual attention"—and excellent instruction it was. We arose at six, breakfasted at six-thirty, and helped around the house until eight, when our studies began. These continued until twelve, at which time we had dinner. After that we were free until two-thirty, when we resumed our labors until four.

Quirk was a tall, lank, loose-jointed man, with long black hair that lay well over his Byronic collar. He had a humorous eye and a cavernous mouth that was always twisting itself into grimaces, alternately side-splitting and terrifying. On occasions he would use the birch—and very thoroughly, too, as I have reason to remember—but he ruled us by fear of authority. For though he dressed like a clergyman, he always smelled strongly of stale cigar smoke, and his language at times was more forcible than is

generally expected of a wearer of the cloth.

I dwelt with the Quirks, winter and summer, until I was able to pass my examinations for Harvard, which I did in the summer of 1871. My allowance had been gradually increased to meet my new expenses, and I entered the freshman class with an income sufficient to permit me to dress suitably and enjoy myself in such simple ways as were in vogue among the collegians. But coming as I did, alone, from a small boarding-school, proved to be a great disadvantage, for I had all my friends to make after my arrival and I had neither the means nor the address to acquire ready-made social distinction. Thus it happened that I was very lonely during my first years in Cambridge; missed the genial companionship of my old friends, the Quirks, and seized every opportunity that offered for going back to Methuen.

I had grown into a tall, narrow-shouldered youth, with a high-arched nose between rather pale cheeks, and prominent ears. Though I could hardly flatter myself into the belief that I was handsome, I felt that my appearance had something of distinction and that I looked like a gentleman. I affected coats with long tails and a somewhat dandified style of waistcoat and neck-cloth, as well as a white beaver, much in favor among the "bloods" of those days. But this took most of my available cash, and left me little to expend in treating my fellow students at the tavern or in enjoying the more substantial culinary delights of the Boston hotels. Thus though I made no shabby friends I acquired few genteel ones, and I began to feel keenly the disadvantages of a

lean purse. I was elected into none of the clubs, nor did I receive any invitations to the numerous balls given in Boston or even to those in Cambridge. This piqued my pride, to be sure, but only intensified my resolution to become a man of fashion on my own account. If my classmates could get on without me I felt that I could get on without them, and I resolutely declined to appreciate any social distinction that might artificially exist between a man born in Salem and one born in Lynn, although I now understand that such distinction exists, at least so far as Boston society is concerned. Consequently as time went on and I could achieve prominence in no other way, I sought consolation for the social joys denied by my betters in acquiring the reputation of a sport. I held myself coldly aloof from the fashionable men of my class and devoted myself to a few cronies who found themselves in much the same position as my own. In a short time we became known as the fastest set in college, and our escapades were by no means confined to Cambridge, but were carried on with great impartiality in Boston and the neighboring towns.

We organized a club, which we called the Cock and Spur, and had a rat-pit and cock-fights in the cellar, on which occasions we invited out young actors from the Boston Museum and Howard Athenaeum stock companies. These in turn pressed us with invitations to similar festivities of their own, and we thus became acquainted with the half-world of the modern Athens, which was much worse for us, I trow, than would have been the most desperate society of our college contemporaries. There

was a club of young actors that we used to frequent, where light comedy sketches and scenes from famous plays were given by the members, and in due time several of us were admitted to membership. Of these I was one and learned to do a turn very acceptably. On one occasion I took a small part upon the Boston Museum stage to fill the place made vacant by the illness of a regular member of the cast—an illness due in part to a carousal at the Cock and Spur the night before, in which he had come out second best.

We were a clever crew, however, and never gave the faculty reason to complain of any failure on our part to keep up in our studies. When examination time came we hired an impecunious coach and, retiring from the world, acquired in five days knowledge that our fellows had taken eight months to imbibe. It is true that the college at large viewed us with some disgust, but we chose to regard this as mere envy. That we were really objectionable must, however, be admitted, for we smoked cigars in the Yard, wore sky-blue pantaloons and green waistcoats, and cultivated little side whiskers of the mutton-chop variety; while our gigs and trotters were constantly to be seen standing in Harvard Square, waiting for the owners to claim them and take the road.

On Sundays, when the decorous youths of Boston had retired to Beacon Street for their midday family feast of roast beef and baked beans, the members of the Cock and Spur might be observed in their white beaver hats driving countryward in

chaises from the local livery stables, seated beside various fair ladies from the Boston stage or the less distinguished purlieus of the Cambridge chop-houses. At noon these parties would foregather at some country tavern and spend long afternoons singing, drinking, and playing draw poker and other games of chance; and occasionally we would fight a main of cocks in some convenient pig-pen.

But this sort of life took money, and I soon found myself borrowing freely from my associates, most of whom were young fellows from other States who had already come into their inheritances and had gone to Harvard to get rid of them under the most approved conditions. For these I came to stand as a sort of sponsor, and was looked up to by them as a devil of a fellow, for I swore picturesquely and had a belligerently unpleasant manner that was regarded as something quite out of the ordinary and distinguished. These youthful spendthrifts I patronized and taught the mysteries of a sporting life, and for a time it became quite smart for a fellow to have gone on one of "Quib's" notes. These notes, however, increased rapidly in number, and before long amounted to such a prodigious sum that they gave me great uneasiness.

My habits had become extravagant and careless. Having no money at all I took no heed of what I did with that of others, for I hardly believed that I could ever repay any of it. But I continued on in my luxurious ways, well knowing that any change in my mode of life would precipitate a deluge. The safety of my

position lay in owing everybody, and in inducing each to believe that he would be the one person ultimately or immediately to be paid. Moreover, I was now completely spoiled and craved so ardently the enjoyments in which I had indulged that I would never of myself have had the will to abjure them. I had gained that which I sought—reputation. I was accounted the leader of the fast set—the "All Knights" as we were known—and I was the envy and admiration of my followers. But this bred in me an arrogance that proved my undoing. It was necessary for me to be masterful in order to carry off the pose of leadership, but I had not yet learned when to conciliate.

It so happened that in the spring of my junior year my creditors became more than usually pressing, and at the same time a Jew by the name of Poco Abrahams began to threaten suit on a note of mine for two thousand dollars, which I had discounted with him for seven hundred and fifty. I made my usual demands upon my friends and offered to do them the favor of letting them go on some more of my paper, but without the usual result. I then discovered to my annoyance that a wealthy young fellow known as "Buck" de Vries, who had considered himself insulted by something that I had said or done, had been quietly spreading the rumor that I was a sort of hocus-pocus fellow and practically bankrupt, that my pretensions to fashion were ridiculous, and that I made a business of living off other people. Incidentally he had gone the rounds, and, owing to the rumors that he himself had spread, had succeeded in buying up

most of my notes at a tremendous discount. These he lost no time in presenting for payment, and as they amounted to several thousand dollars my hope of reaching a settlement with him was small. In point of fact I was quite sure that he wanted no settlement and desired only revenge, and I realized what a fool I had been to make an enemy out of one who might have been an ally.

In this embarrassing situation I bethought me of old Mr. Toddleham, and accordingly paid him an unexpected visit at Barristers' Hall. It was a humid spring day, and I recall that the birds were twittering loudly in the maples back of the Probate Office. As befitted my station at the time of year, I was arrayed in a new beaver and a particularly fanciful pair of rather tight trousers.

"Come in," squeaked Mr. Toddleham, and I entered easily.

The old lawyer peered quizzically at me from behind his square-boned spectacles.

"Oh," said he, "it's you, Master Quibble."

"The same, and your most obedient," I replied, letting myself fall gracefully into a chair and crossing my legs.

"You want money, I suppose?" he continued, after a few minutes, during which he inspected by get-up with some interest.

"Well," I commenced lightly, "the fact is I am rather pressed. I thought if you could make me a small advance out of my grandfather's legacy—"

"Legacy! What legacy?" he inquired.

"The legacy my grandfather left me."

"He left you no legacy," retorted the old gentleman. "Your grandfather, to whom you were once so considerate as to refer in my presence as a pig, left you no legacy. He directed that as long as you seemed to deserve it I should spend a certain sum on your maintenance and education."

"Gad!" I cried. "That puts me in a nice position!"

The old lawyer looked at me whimsically.

"My gay young man," he remarked finally, "the only position you occupy is one into which you have deliberately walked yourself. You come here in your fine clothes and your beaver hat and—excuse me—your whiskers, and you are surprised that there is no money forthcoming to pay your debts. Do not look astonished. I know and have known for a long time of your debts. I have followed your career with attention if not with edification. Even for the son of a Baptist minister you have done pretty well. However, life is life and everybody is not the same. I sha'n't judge you. I was a bit of a dog myself, although I don't look it now. But I can give you no more money for game-cocks and cigars. It is time for you to start in and earn your own living—if you can. At the end of the term I will give you fifty dollars and a ticket to New York, or one hundred dollars and no ticket to anywhere. You will have to kick out for yourself. So fine a fellow," he added, "ought not to find it hard to get along. No doubt you could find some rich girl to marry you and support you in idleness."

I flushed with anger and sprang to my feet.

"I did not come here to be insulted!" I cried furiously.

Old Mr. Toddleham chuckled apologetically.

"Tut, tut! No offence. You won't find earning your living such an easy matter. Have you thought anything about what you'll do?"

"No," I answered, still indignant.

"How much do you owe?"

"About forty-eight hundred dollars."

"Damme!" muttered Mr. Tuckerman Toddleham. "More than you could earn in the first five years at the law!"

"See here," I interrupted, "do you seriously mean that except for fifty dollars or so there is nothing coming to me out of my grandfather's estate? Why, he was worth over a million!"

"That is exactly what I mean," he returned. "He left you nothing except an allowance for your education during your good behavior. He made me the judge. I'm your trustee and I can't conscientiously let you have any more money to drink up and gamble with. It's over and done with." He rapped with an air of finality on his desk with the little bronze horse.

"Who gets all the money?" I asked ruefully.

"The Society for the Propagation of Free Thinking," he answered, eyeing me sharply.

"I should think anything like that ought to be contrary to law!"

I retorted. "It ought to be a crime to encourage atheism."

"It's a good devise under our statutes!" he answered dryly. "I suppose your own faith is beautiful enough, eh?"

I did not respond, but sat twisting my hat in my hands.

Through the open window the soft damp odors of spring came in and mingled with the dusty smell of law books. So this was law! It suddenly struck me that I was taking the loss of over a million dollars very resignedly. How did I know whether the old boy was telling me the truth or not? He had drawn the will and got a good fee for it. Certainly he was not going to admit that there was anything invalid about it. Why not study law—I might as well do that as anything—and find out for myself? It was a game worth playing. The stakes were a million dollars and the forfeit nothing. As I looked around the little office and at the weazened old barrister before me, something of the fascination of the law took hold of me.

"I rather think I should like to study law myself," I remarked.

He looked at me out of the corners of his bead-like little eyes.

"And break your gran'ther's will, mebbe?" he inquired slyly.

"If I can," I retorted defiantly.

"That would be better than fighting cocks and frittering your time away with play actors," said he.

"Mr. Toddleham," I returned, "if I will agree to turn over a new leaf and give up my present associates, will you continue my allowance and let me stay on in Cambridge and study law?"

"If you will agree to enter my office and study under my supervision—yes."

Once more I glanced around the little room. Somehow the smell of decaying leather did not have the same fascination that it had exercised a few moments before. The setting sun sinking over

the Probate Office entered the window and lingered on the stern old face of the Hon. Jeremiah Mason over the fireplace. The birds twittered gayly amid the branches by the window. Spring called me to the open air, to the world outside, to the future.

"Give me fifty dollars and my ticket to New York," said I.

It had so happened that at the time of my visit to Mr. Toddleham my credit, and consequently my ready funds, had become so reduced that I had only a dollar or two in my pocket. Therefore the check for fifty dollars that the old gentleman had carefully drawn for me with his quill pen and then had as carefully sanded over was by no means inopportune. I took the shore-car back over the Warren Avenue Bridge, depressed at the thought of leaving the scene of my first acquaintance with the world and at the same time somewhat relieved, in spite of myself, by the consoling thought that I should no longer be worried by the omnipresent anxiety of trying to escape from duns and Jews.

Resolved to terminate my collegiate career in a blaze of glory, I went the rounds of the college buildings and bade all my friends to a grand celebration at the Tavern, where, owing to the large amount of trade that I had been able to swing to it, my credit was still good. Even "Buck" de Vries was not forgotten, and without a suggestion of my contemplated departure I entertained my colleagues royally with a bowl of punch brewed after a celebrated Cambridge recipe, which in a decadent age spoke eloquently of the glories of the past. I was in the midst of a highly colored speech—during which I must confess de Vries had eyed me in

a somewhat saturnine manner—when the proprietor tapped me on the shoulder and said that I was wanted outside. Excusing myself I stepped to the door only to be unexpectedly confronted by the local sheriff, who apologetically informed me that he held a warrant of attachment for my worldly goods and another for the arrest of my very worldly person. With admirable presence of mind I requested his patience until I should find my coat, and returning via the buttery made my escape from the premises by means of the rear exit. *Sic gloria transit!* That night I slept under the roof of the amiable Quirk in Methuen, and the day after reached New York, the city of my future career.

CHAPTER II

My arrival in the metropolis was unaccompanied by any newspaper comment or by any particular excitement on the part of the inhabitants. I simply landed, after a seven hours' journey from Boston, with a considerable quantity of fine raiment—rather too fine, as I soon discovered, for the ordinary uses of a serious-minded, working youth—some fifty odd dollars, and a well-developed bump of self-confidence that was supported by a strong reserve resolution not to let anybody get ahead of me. I had all the assurance of a man double my years and an easy way of making acquaintances that was destined to stand me in good stead, but I do not wish to be understood as admitting that my manners were offensive or that I was in any degree supercilious. I was simply a good fellow who had always enjoyed the comradeship of other good fellows, and as a result felt reasonably sure that the rest of the world would treat him kindly. Moreover, I could dissemble without difficulty and, if occasion arose, could give the impression of being a diffident and modest young man, ready and anxious to order himself "lowly and humbly before his betters."

Yet I had seen enough of the world to know that unless a man puts a high appraisal upon his attainments and ability no one else is likely to do so, and that the public takes one, nine times out of ten, at his own valuation. Coming on the clay itself: I wore my

hair rather long, with an appreciable modicum of bear's grease well rubbed in, side whiskers and white beaver, and carried a carpet bag on which was embroidered a stag's head in yellow on a background of green worsted. And the principal fact to be observed in this connection is that, instead of creating a smile as I passed out of the Grand Central Station, I was probably regarded as a rather smart and stylishly dressed young man.

I had a card to some young actors in the city, given me by my Thespian friends in Boston, and it proved but a short trip on the horse-cars down Fourth Avenue to the locality, near the Academy of Music, then as now frequented by the fraternity. I began my professional career, then, by taking lodgings in an actors' boarding-house, and I am free to confess that at the time I was undecided whether to follow the bar or the boards. I have since frequently observed that the same qualities make for success in both, and had it not been for the fact that I found my new friends somewhat down at the heels and their rate of emolument exceedingly low, as well as for a certain little incident to be recounted shortly, I might well have joined the group of future Booths and Forrests that loitered along the near-by Rialto, looking for jobs as Roman soldiers or footmen in some coming production.

But the change from my well-appointed lodgings in Cambridge and my luxurious surroundings at the Cock and Spur to a distinctly shabby theatrical boarding-house, where the guests plainly exhibited traces of the lack of proper ablutional

facilities and the hallways smelt of cabbage and onions, was a distinct shock to my highly sensitive tastes. However, my new acquaintances proved warm-hearted and hospitable and did everything in their power to make me feel at my ease, with the result that in spite of the cabbage and the wooden slats that served as springs in my bed—which nearly filled the rear hall bed-room I had hired for one week at four dollars and twenty-five cents—I resolved to postpone entering upon an active career until I should know the city better and have made a few friends.

Those of my new comrades who were lucky enough to have employment did not rise in the morning until the neighborhood of twelve o'clock, and those who had no employment at all followed their example. I thus found myself adopting of necessity, as it were, the pleasant practice of sauntering out on Broadway after a one o'clock breakfast, and of spending most of the afternoon, evening, and following morning in or about the same locality. We usually went to some theatrical show on what was known as "paper," and I afterward joined my actor friends at a restaurant, where we sang songs and told stories until the gas-lamps were extinguished and gray dawn crept over the house-tops. Downtown—into the mysterious district of Wall Street—I did not, as yet, go, and I might still be haunting the stage entrances of the theatres had it not been for an adventure in which I was an involuntary participant.

It so happened that among my new acquaintances was a careless, rattle-brained youth known as Toby Robinson, who in

spite of some histrionic ability was constantly losing his job and always in debt. He was a smooth-faced, rather stout, good-natured-looking person, of the sort who is never supposed to have done harm to anybody. Not long before he had enjoyed a salary of fourteen dollars per week, but having overslept several times running he had been discharged for absence from rehearsals. He had reached the limit of his resources about the time of my arrival in the city and had been in a most lugubrious frame of mind when I first had the honor of his acquaintance. Suddenly, however, he appeared one day with a large roll of bills and entered upon a period of lubrication and open-handed hospitality, in which we all participated. During this season of good cheer, as Toby and I were strolling down Broadway one afternoon, an ugly looking man who had been following us stepped forward and, touching my friend on the shoulder, said gruffly:

"The captain wants to see you."

The uttering of these cryptic syllables produced a most extraordinary effect upon my companion, for he turned deadly pale and the perspiration collected in beads upon his temples, while he commenced to wring his hands and bemoan his ill fortune.

"What is the trouble?" I inquired in great solicitude.

The belligerent stranger, however, pushing between us, grasped Toby firmly by the arm and marched him across the street, while I trailed behind in the nature of a rear guard. I had

already begun to suspect that the ugly man was none other than an officer of the law, and visions of myself locked up in jail as a possible accomplice, although innocent of wrong-doing, hovered in my mind. Toby, giving every indication of guilt, slouched along beside his captor, occasionally glancing shamefacedly over his shoulder.

We were now nearing a police station, and our companion, for the first time showing any sign of personal interest, inquired if we had a lawyer. On receiving a negative reply, the officer strongly recommended our immediately retaining counsel in the person of one Gottlieb, who could be found across the street from the police station and whose precise whereabouts were made obvious by means of a large sign about six feet by three and one-half in size, reading as follows:

**ABRAHAM GOTTLIEB'S LAW OFFICE
NOTARY DEEDS RENTS COLLECTED BAIL
BONDS INSURANCE GENERAL ADVICE**

Without giving Toby time for consideration the officer led us across the street and into the stuffy little den occupied by the lawyer.

"Here's the gent I told you of," said he, nodding in the direction of a hawk-faced little man smoking a vile cigar, who was sitting with his feet upon a table. "I'll leave you alone," he added, and sauntering across the threshold, took his stand in front

of the window outside.

"Howdy," remarked Gottlieb, without arising or removing his cigar. "Mike tells me you're charged with obtaining money by false pretences."

"What!" gasped Toby, grasping the table for support. "False pretences!"

"Flying a bit of bad paper, eh? Come now, didn't you cash a check on the Cotton Exchange Bank for about six hundred dollars when there was only fifteen on deposit? Don't try to bluff me. I know your sort. Lucky if you don't get ten years."

"Save me!" wailed Toby. "Yes, I did cash a check, come to think of it, for that amount, but I had no idea my account had run so low."

Mr. Gottlieb spat into a sawdust box under the table and winked with great deliberation.

"How much have you got left?" he inquired indifferently.

Tony delved into his breeches and with trembling hands produced a roll of bills still of some dignity. Gottlieb stretched forth a claw, took them, placed them in his own pocket, and then swung his feet to the floor with alacrity.

"Come on, my lads," he exclaimed, "and I'll show you how we get the sinners off! All right, Mike." And he led the way across the street and into the station-house, where poor Toby was searched and his pedigree taken down by the clerk. It being at this time only about eleven in the morning we were then conducted to the nearest police court, where we found in attendance the

unfortunate hotel keeper who had so unwisely honored Toby's check.

"You rascal!" he shouted, struggling to reach my unfortunate friend. "I'll show you how to take other people's money! I'll put you where you belong!" But the officers haled him back and he was forced to restrain himself until he could tell his story to the judge. This, it so happened, was not to be for several hours, and during this interval Gottlieb mysteriously vanished and as mysteriously reappeared. It was half after three before the judge announced that he would take up Toby's case. Now, the judge looked even more of a rascal than did Gottlieb, which was paying his Honor a high compliment, and I suspect that it was for this reason that the complainant had in the meantime sent round for his own lawyer to represent him. We were now pushed forward and huddled into a small space in front of the rail, while the lawyers took their places upon the platform before us.

"Your Honor," began the lawyer for the hotel man, "this fellow here has swindled my client out of six hundred dollars by inducing him to cash a worthless check."

"What have you to say, Mr. Gottlieb?" asked the judge.

"Confession and avoidance, your Honor," replied the attorney, with what appeared to me to be the slightest possible drawing down of his right eyelid. "Confession and avoidance. We admit the fact, but we deny the imputation of guilt. My client, Mr. Robinson, whose abilities as an actor have no doubt hitherto given your Honor much pleasure, was so careless as to forget

the precise amount of his bank account and happened to draw a check for too large an amount. No one was more surprised and horrified at the discovery than he. And his intention is at once to reimburse in full the complainant, whose action in having him arrested seems most extraordinary and reprehensible."

"Your Honor," interrupted the other lawyer, "were there the slightest possibility of any such outcome I should be glad to withdraw the charge; but, as a matter of fact, this person is a worthless, lazy fellow who has not a cent to his name, and who induced my client to cash his check by leading him to believe that he was a man of substance and position. No doubt he has spent the money, and if not we might as well try to squeeze it out of a stone. This fellow is guilty of a crime and he ought to be punished. I ask your Honor to hold him for the grand jury."

"Well, Mr. Gottlieb," remarked the judge, "tell me, if you can, why I should not lock your client up. Did he not falsely pretend, by requesting the complainant to cash the check, that he had money in the bank to meet it?"

"By no means, your Honor," answered Gottlieb. "The proffering of a check with a request for money thereon is merely asking that the money be advanced on the faith that the bank will honor the demand made upon it. One who cashes a check does so at his own risk. He has a full remedy at civil law, and if the bank refuses to pay no crime has been committed. This is not a case for the penal law."

"That seems reasonable," said the judge, turning to the other.

"How do you make this out a crime? What false pretence is there in merely inviting another to cash a check?"

"Why," answered the attorney, "if I ask you to cash a check for me, do I not represent that I have a right to draw upon the bank for the amount set forth? If not, no one would ever cash a check. The innocent person who advances the money has the right to assume that the borrower is not offering him a bad check. There is a tacit representation that the check is good or that the maker has funds in the bank to meet it."

"True—true!" nodded his Honor. "There is something in what you say. What answer can you make to that, Brother Gottlieb?"

"I have a hundred good arguments," replied the lawyer in a low tone. Then he added briskly: "But the intent, your Honor! There can be no crime without a wrongful intent; and how can there have been any such when my client honestly believed that he had the money in the bank to meet the check?"

"But," cried the other, "he knew very well he had not!"

"What evidence have you to that effect?" queried Gottlieb. "You say so, to be sure, but I, on the contrary, assert that he was perfectly honest in the matter. Now, there is absolutely nothing in this case to prove that he had any guilty knowledge to the effect that his account was too low to meet the draft in question. You have proven no scienter whatever."

"Ah!" exclaimed the judge. "That is it! You have shown no scienter!"

"Exactly!" cried Gottlieb—"no scienter at all."

"But how in the world could I have proved a scienter?" wrathfully demanded the lawyer. "I can't pry open the prisoner's skull and exhibit his evil intent."

"No, but you could have shown that he knew he had only a few dollars in the bank by the fact that he had previously tried to cash a similar check and that it had been returned. In any event, my own mind is clear on the subject. You have shown no scienter. The prisoner is discharged."

Poor Toby was so overcome by his unexpected release that he began to stammer out incoherent expressions of gratitude to the judge, such as "Oh, thank you, your Honor! God bless your Honor! Thank you, your Honor! I am an innocent man, your Honor!" until Gottlieb, grasping him by the arm, dragged him away from the rail and pushed him into the street. The complainant and his attorney indignantly followed us, the former loudly deploring the way modern justice was administered. Once outside Gottlieb shook hands with Toby and told him if he were ever in trouble again to look him up without fail. Toby promised gratefully to do so, and the lawyer was about to leave us and enter his office when it occurred to me that he still had my friend's roll of bills.

"But, Mr. Gottlieb," said I, "you are going to return Mr. Robinson's money to him, are you not?"

"What!" he exclaimed, growing frightfully angry. "Give him back his money! I have no money of his. It is he owes me money for keeping him out of jail."

"But how about the roll of bills?" I protested. "You certainly do not intend to keep all of that?"

"Certainly—that is my fee," he retorted calmly; "and small enough it is too!"

"How much was there in that roll, Toby?" I asked.

"About five hundred dollars," answered my friend. "But let him keep it, by all means!"

"Why," I exclaimed, "he has done nothing to earn such a fee. He merely got up and said that you had no scienter—whatever that is. It is not worth more than ten dollars."

"Ten dollars!" shouted Gottlieb. "Ten dollars! Why scienter is one of the most complicated and technical defences known to the law. Ten dollars! Scienter is worth a thousand! Your rascally friend got his money for nothing, didn't he? He's lucky to be outside the bars—for if I ever saw a guilty man he's one. Get along, both of you, or I'll call an officer!"

And with that Gottlieb slipped inside his office and banged the door.

"Come along, Quib!" urged Tony; "there's a great deal of truth in what he says. I don't begrudge it to him. It was well worth it to me."

"Lord!" I groaned. "Five hundred dollars just for scienter. If that is the law, then I'll turn lawyer."

And with that idea growing more firmly each moment in my mind I returned to the boarding-house with my friend.

CHAPTER III

I am free to confess that the ease with which Counsellor Gottlieb had deprived my friend Toby of the ill-gotten proceeds of his check—or, for his sake putting it more politely, had earned his fee—was the chief and inducing cause that led me to adopt the law as a career. I shall not pretend that I had any lofty aims or ambitions, felt any regard for its dignity or fascination for the mysteries of its science when I selected it for my profession. My objects were practical—my ambition to get the largest financial return consonant with the least amount of work. My one concrete experience of the law had opened my eyes to its possibilities in a way that I had never dreamed of, and I resolved to lose no time in placing myself in a position to rescue others from harm on the same pecuniary basis as did Mr. Gottlieb.

Of course I realized that I must serve an apprenticeship, and indeed the law required that were I not a graduate of a law school that I must have worked as a clerk for two years before I could be admitted to the bar. Accordingly I began to make inquiries as to what were the best law firms in the city, and before long had acquired pretty definite information as to who were and who were not in high standing. Now, I had no letters of introduction and nothing to recommend me except a certain degree of maturity and a cultivated manner of speaking, and I might and probably should have been trying to this day to break

into some sedate and high-toned old-fogy office had it not been for one of those accidents with which my career has been replete.

I had visited all the firms on my list without finding any who wanted to take in a student. Indeed all the offices seemed filled if not crowded with studious-looking young men whose noses were buried in law books. In one or two, to be sure, I might have secured admittance and been given desk room in exchange for the services of my legs as a runner of errands and a server of papers, but none had any idea of paying anything. The profession at the bottom was more overcrowded than the gallery of the Academy of Music when they ran Rosedale. Each night as I returned to my lodgings I felt more and more discouraged. Its smell of cabbage came to have for me an inexpressible sensation of relief, of protection, even of luxury. Here, at any rate, even in an actors' boarding-house, I was independent, as good as anybody, and not regarded as if I were a beggar on the one hand or a questionable character on the other.

How long this might have continued I have no means of knowing, but one afternoon as I was trudging uptown, still holding in my hand a copy of a legal journal, the advertisements in which I had been engaged in sedulously running down, my attention was attracted by a crowd gathered in the street around a young man who had been so unfortunate as to be run over by a stage. There was nothing external to indicate the extent of his injuries, and as I drew nearer two persons assisted him to his feet and began to lead him toward the nearest store. Having nothing

better to do I walked along with them, and after they had gone inside remained looking curiously through the window. While I was thus engaged a stout, bustling man of about forty years of age came hurrying down the sidewalk and turned to enter the store. As he did he observed me apparently waiting there and his eye with a quick glance took in the title of the paper in my hand. Instantly he stepped up beside me and tapping me on the arm said in a low tone:

"Whom do you represent?"

I was somewhat taken aback by this inquiry, not seeing at the moment its immediate relation to the business at hand, but for want of a better answer I replied in the same spirit:

"Artemas Quibble."

"Oh! Quibble, eh! I've heard of him. But look here, my young friend, there is no reason why honest men should cut one another's throats. Tell my friend Quibble I was here before ye and keep this for yourself."

And with that he peeled a twenty-dollar bill from the top of a heavy roll that he produced from his pocket and placed it within my palm.

"Very good," said I. "It may cost me dear if Quibble hears of it, but a man must live, and I work at starvation wages."

I placed the bill in my breast pocket and made way for him to enter the store, which he did without more ado. Why this busy gentleman should gratuitously present me with twenty dollars did not at the moment occur to me. I continued on my way

northward, pondering upon the question, and passed the street upon which the police court was located and Counsellor Gottlieb had his office. The thought came into my mind that here was the very person to shed light upon the subject and I turned the corner and opened the door. Gottlieb was in his customary position with his feet elevated upon the table before him.

"Well," he said, "I didn't expect you back so soon."

"I've come for free advice this time," I answered.

"Oh," he grunted. "Well, in that case perhaps you won't get it."

Somehow I had taken a shine to the fellow, for all his robbery of poor Toby, and I admired his quickness of perception and readiness of speech. Perhaps he too felt not unkindly toward me. At any rate I told him my story.

"Now," says I, "what d'ye make of it?"

Gottlieb laughed.

"Was he a fat little turkey with gray eyes?" he inquired.

"The same," I replied.

"Then it was Tom Kelly," he answered. "On his daily still hunt for the maimed, the halt and the blind. You say the chap had been run over by the stage? Well, Tom'll take his case on a contingent fee—fifty per cent. to Tom and fifty per cent. to the client of all that comes of it—bring an action against the stage line and recover heavy damages. Oh, it's terrible to think what that poor injured young man will suffer. To-day he may feel quite well, but to-morrow he will have all kinds of pains in his head and eyes, his spine will ache, he will experience symptoms of a nervous

breakdown. He will retire to bed and not emerge for six months, and when he does he'll be a hopeless and helpless cripple for life. Tom is an artist, he is, in his own line. They tell me he made sixty thousand last year out of his accident practice alone. Why, the case he gave you twenty to keep out of may net him five thousand dollars."

"If I'd known that it would have cost him fifty!" I said, feeling that an unjust advantage had been taken of me.

"Twenty is the regular rate," answered Gottlieb. "There are too many chances to make it worth much more merely to get the other fellow out of the way. Sometimes, though, I've paid as high as fifteen hundred for a case."

"Fifteen hundred!" exclaimed I.

"Yes, and got a verdict of nineteen thousand, of which I pocketed ninety-five hundred and four hundred dollars costs besides."

"Whew!" I whistled.

"Oh, there's pretty good pickin's on occasion even for a police-court lawyer," he continued; "but it's nothin' to the return from what I might call legitimate practice. Now, there's old Haight, of Haight & Foster, for instance. He gets half a dozen twenty-thousand-dollar fees every year, and all he has is strictly old-fashioned probate and real-estate practice and a little of this new-fangled railroad business. My great regret is that I didn't stick to regular trade instead of going after easy money. Who's Gottlieb now? Just a police-court lawyer, when he might be arguing before

the Supreme Court of the United States! My brain's just as good as Haight's. I've licked him many a time in my young days. And then I get tired of all this hogwash! I tell you it's dirty business, most of it!"

"Well," I answered, remembering "scien-ter," "I've no doubt that you could beat them all. But I fancy you have nothing to complain of in the way of returns, yourself. What worries me is how to get any start at all. I've tried half the law offices in town."

Gottlieb listened with some interest as I outlined my experiences.

"But," he exclaimed, "you didn't go to the right person. You should have tackled the head of the firm himself. Find some sort of introduction. Flatter him. Offer to work for nothing—and, trust me, he'll have you. Now, my advice is to go straight to old Haight and make up your mind to get into his office willy-nilly. It'll be worth three thousand a year to you to graduate from there. It'll give you the tone you need in the profession. There are two qualities that make for the highest success in the law—honesty and dishonesty. To get ahead you must have one or the other. You must either be so irreproachable in your conduct and elevated in your ideals that your reputation for virtue becomes your chief asset, or, on the other hand, so crooked that your very dishonesty makes you invaluable to your clients. Both kinds of lawyers are equally in demand. Some cases require respectability and some dirty work. But the crooked lawyer has got to be so crooked that everybody is afraid of him, even the judge. Now, the trouble with

me is that I'm too honest. Sometimes I wish I were a crook like the rest of them!"

He sighed deeply and slowly drew down his left eyelid.

"Thank you, Mr. Gottlieb," said I, suppressing an inclination to smile. "I'll take your advice. Perhaps you'll let me talk to you again later on."

"Come as often as you like," he replied. "And look you, young-feller-me-lad, I'll give you half of all the profits I make out of any business you bring me. You don't have to be a lawyer to get clients. Hustle around among your friends and drum up some trade and you'll do almost as well as if you could try cases yourself. For every dollar I earn you get another. Is it a go?"

"Surely!" I cried. "And if I'm not very much mistaken I'll not be long about it, for I have an idea or two in my head already."

The next day I again presented myself at the office of Haight & Foster, where I had already applied for a position to the chief clerk. This time I asked for the head of the firm himself, and I was amused to see that whereas before I had been almost kicked out of the office, I was now treated with the respect due to a possible client. After a wait of some twenty minutes I was ushered into a large sunny office lined with books and overlooking the lower East River. Mr. Haight was a wrinkled old man with a bald scalp covered with numerous brown patches about the size of ten-cent pieces. A fringe of white hair hung about his ears, over one of which was stuck a goose-quill pen. He looked up from his desk as I entered and eyed me sharply.

"Well, Mr. Quibble," he began gruffly, as if he were about to add, "out with what you have to say, young man, and be gone as soon as possible!"

"Mr. Haight," said I with great defence, "I have called on you at the suggestion of my guardian and trustee, Mr. Tuckerman Toddleham, of Barristers' Hall, Boston, to inquire whether I may not be allowed the great privilege of a desk in your office. I am a Harvard man, born in Salem, and of an old Massachusetts family. Ever since I made up my mind as a boy to enter the law it has been my ambition to study in your office; and, I may add, it is also the earnest hope of my guardian, Mr. Toddleham."

"Do you refer to the Mr. Toddleham of 'Toddleham on Perpetuities'?" he asked with some interest.

"The same," I answered, for although I had never heard of the work in question, it seemed just the sort for old Toddleham's production.

"I am glad to know you, Mr. Quibble," he exclaimed, extending his hand. "I have often wished that I could meet your guardian and ask the great Mr. Toddleham face to face what he really thinks of the Rule in Shelley's Case—what do you think of it? What *was* the Rule in Shelley's Case, may I ask?"

Now, I had never heard of the rule in question, so for want of a better answer I replied:

"The law is no respecter of person. I suppose the rule was *the same in his case as in any other*."

Mr. Haight looked at me strangely for a moment and suddenly

began to chuckle. Then he eyed me again and chuckled still more. Finally he laid aside all modestly and hugged himself with delight.

"I see that you are a man of *esprit!*" he remarked between spasms. "I shall be glad to take you into my office. You may go and introduce yourself to Mr. Spruggins, the chief clerk."

Thus it was that I secured my first slender foothold at the bar of New York, and it was not for several years that I discovered that the Toddleham who had written the book on Perpetuities was an entirely different person, belonging to another branch of the family.

Of course I received no compensation for my services at Haight & Foster's, but that was the customary rule with all students. As a result we were not strictly tied down in our attendance at the office. I really believe it would have been cheaper for the firm to have paid a small salary to their clerks, for it would then have been in a position to demand much more of them in return. As it was I found myself able to come and go about as I chose, and being obliged to support myself in some way my attendance at the office was quite irregular. But I was started at last and belonged somewhere. No longer was it necessary for me to wander about the streets looking for a place to hang my hat, and I already had schemes in mind whereby I was soon to become rich.

My associates in the office were all scholarly, respectable young men, most of them law-school graduates and scions of

well-known families, and I was not insensible to the advantage to me that my connection with them might be later on. It was essential that I should impress them and the firm with my seriousness of purpose, and so I made it a point, unpleasant as I found it, to be on hand at the office every morning promptly at eight-thirty o'clock, ready to arrange papers or serve them, and to be of any assistance, no matter how menial, to Mr. Spruggins, whose sense of dignity I took pains to flatter in every way possible. In the afternoon, however, I slipped away on the pretext of having to go uptown to study, but in point of fact in order to earn enough money to pay for my board and lodging.

I had been cogitating several ideas since I had visited Gottlieb, and the one that appealed to me the most was that of procuring of business for other lawyers upon a percentage basis. I reasoned that there must be several hundred thousand people in the city who had no acquaintance with lawyers and would be as ready to consult one as another. Reputable lawyers did not advertise, to be sure, but I was not yet a lawyer, and hence many courses were open to me at this stage in my career that would be closed later on. I had considerable confidence in my own persuasive ability and felt that it was only a question of time before I could drum up a substantial amount of business. Accordingly I had a few cards neatly printed on glossed board reading:

MR. ARTEMAS QUIBBLE
BROADWAY
OF

HAIGHT & FOSTER Contracts
ATTORNEYS-AT-LAW Mortgages
10 WALL STREET Tax Matters
NEW YORK CITY General Advice

The Haight & Foster end of the card was done in very heavy type, while my own name was comparatively inconspicuous. Further to assist my plans I rented a tiny office not far from Madison Square for the sum of two dollars per week and furnished it with a table, two chairs, and an inkpot. The door bore the inscription:

**OFFICE OF ARTEMAS
QUIBBLE, ESQ. COUNSELLOR**

The reader will observe that not being authorized as yet to practice as an attorney I was scrupulous not to hold myself out as one. "Counsellor" might mean anything. Certainly I had the right to give counsel to such as desired it. Here I might be found at and after half-past one of every day, having already done five hours' work at the office of Haight & Foster. I still had enough funds to carry me for some three weeks and so felt no immediate anxiety as to the future, but I realized that I must lose no time in getting out my tentacles if I were to drag in any business. Accordingly I made myself acquainted with the managers and clerks of the neighboring hotels, giving them the impression, so far as I could, that Haight & Foster had opened an uptown

office and that I was in charge of it. I made friends also with the proprietors and barkeepers of the adjacent saloons, of which there were not a few, and left plenty of my cards with them for distribution to such of their customers as might need legal assistance, in each case promising that any business which they secured would be liberally rewarded. In short, I made myself generally known in the locality and planted the seed of cupidity in the hearts of several hundreds of impecunious persons. It was very necessary for me to net ten dollars per week to live, and under the circumstances it seemed reasonable to believe that I could do so.

Almost at the outset I had a piece of luck, for a guest at a Fifth Avenue hotel was suddenly stricken with a severe illness and desired to make a will. It was but a few days after I had called upon the manager, and, having me fresh in his mind, he sent for me. The sick man proved to be a wealthy Californian who was too far gone to care who drew his will so long as it was drawn at all, and I jotted down his bequests and desires by his bedside. I had originally intended to go at once to Mr. Haight and turn the matter over to him, but my client seemed so ill that it appeared hardly necessary. I persuaded myself with the argument that the affair required a more immediate attention than the office could give, and accordingly decided to draw the will myself and incidentally to earn the whole fee. The proceeding seemed honest enough, since, although I had been introduced as representing Haight & Foster, the sick man had never heard of them before

and obviously did not care one way or the other.

I had never drawn a will or any other legal paper, but I lost no time in slipping around to Gottlieb's office and borrowing a work on surrogates' practice, including forms, with which under my arm I hurried back to my office. Here after a good many unsuccessful attempts I produced a document sufficiently technical to satisfy almost any layman and probably calculated to defeat every wish of the testator. Of this, however, I was quite ignorant, and do myself the justice to say that, had not that been the case, I would not have attempted what I now know to have been an impossible task for one of my lack of legal education. I carefully engrossed the will in long hand on fresh foolscap, ornamented it with seals and ribbons and, returning to the hotel, superintended its execution. My client asked my how much was my fee and I modestly replied—as I never expected to see him again this side of the grave—that my charge would be one hundred and fifty dollars. He nodded, and indicating his pocketbook, told me to help myself, which I did, regretting not having asked for more. That night he died, and my impromptu will was forwarded to California and became the subject of a litigation lasting over eleven years and costing several hundred thousand dollars.

It thus happened that my eagerness to begin to build up my material fortunes, coupled with the necessity of having a technical connection with a regular firm of lawyers, resulted in my leading a sort of double legal existence. In the morning I was

a mere drudge or office devil, in the afternoon I was Counsellor Quibble, head of his own office and my own master. Having now a capital of one hundred and fifty dollars I was in a position to put one of my schemes into practice, and accordingly I drew up with great care the following instrument, copies of which I had struck off by a theatrical job printer near by:

=====

THIS AGREEMENT made this day of, 1878, between, of the City and County of New York, party of the first part, and Artemas Quibble, Esquire, of the same, party of the second part, WITNESSETH:

That the said party of the first part in consideration of one dollar to him in hand paid upon the first day of each month by the party of the second part, hereby covenants and agrees to employ at a reduced rate the said party of the second part to look after all the legal matters that may arise in his business and to recommend said party of the second part to his friends and acquaintances as a suitable person to perform the like services for them; in the latter event the said party of the first part to receive as a further consideration a commission of one-third of the fees of the party of the second part procured therefrom.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we have hereunto set our hands and seals the day and year above named.

.....(*)

.....(*)

=====

Armed with these insinuating documents I procured a fresh roll of one hundred one-dollar bills and set forth to interview all whose acquaintance I had made in the course of my brief residence in the city. My argument ran thus: Almost anybody would be willing to receive a dollar every month in return for a service that would cost him nothing. With an outlay of one hundred dollars I could have a hundred persons virtually in my employ trying to get me business. After the first month I could discontinue with those who seemed likely to prove unremunerative. Almost any case would return in fees as much as my original disbursement. On the whole it seemed a pretty safe investment and the formal-looking contract would tend to increase the sense of obligation upon the contracting party of the first part. Nor did my forecast of the probabilities prove at all wide of the mark. Practically every one to whom I put the proposition readily accepted my dollar and signed the agreement, and at the end of a week my one hundred dollars had been distributed among all the cab drivers, conductors, waiters, elevator men, clerks, bartenders, actors, hall boys, and storekeepers that I knew or with whom I could scrape an acquaintance. None of them expected to have any business of their own and all welcomed with delight the idea of profiting by the misfortunes of their friends.

I had often lost or won at a single sitting at cards a much larger sum than the one I was now risking in what seemed an excellent business proposition, so that the money involved caused

me no uneasiness. Besides, I had fifty dollars left in my pocket. Meantime I spent my evening in my office reading Blackstone and such text-books as I cared to borrow from the well-equipped library of my employers.

Business came, however, with unexpected promptitude. At the end of the first week I had received calls from two actors who desired to sue their managers for damages for breach of contract, five waiters who wished to bring actions for wages due, and actress who wanted a separation from her husband, a bartender who was charged with assault for knocking the teeth of an unruly customer down his throat, and a boy whose leg had been caught under an elevator and crushed. Each of these I made sign an agreement that I should receive half of any sum recovered in consideration of seeing that they received proper legal advice and service, and each of them I sent over to Counsellor Gottlieb, with whom I executed a mutual contract to divide evenly the fees received.

The reader will notice that I did not technically hold myself out as a lawyer in these contracts, and merely agreed to furnish counsel. Thus I flattered myself I was keeping on the lee side of the law. Gottlieb settled the case of the boy for twelve hundred dollars, and we divided six hundred between us, and the other cases that came in the first month netted us three hundred dollars apiece more. The future began to look bright enough, as I had to distribute as commissions only two hundred dollars, which left me a gross profit of four hundred dollars. With this I secured fifty

new contracts, and after paying the second installments upon all the first I pocketed as a net result two hundred and fifty dollars cash. I now had a growing business at my back, finding it necessary to employ an office assistant, and accordingly selected for that purpose an old actor who was no longer able to walk the boards, but who still retained the ability to speak his part. For a weekly wage of ten dollars this elderly gentleman agreed to sit in my office and hold forth upon my ability, shrewdness, and learning to all such as called in my absence. In the afternoons I assumed charge myself and sent him forth armed with contracts to secure new allies.

My business soon increased to such an extent that it bid fair to take up all my time, and the bookkeeping end of it, with its complicated division of receipts, proved not a little difficult. The amazement of my friend Gottlieb knew no bounds, but as it was a profitable arrangement for him he asked no questions and remained in ignorance as to the source of my stream of clients, until one of his friends, to whom my assistant had made application, showed him one of the contracts. That night he sent for me to come to his office, and after offering me a very large and exceedingly good Havana cigar delivered himself as follows:

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.