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Terry's Trials and Triumphs

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CHAPTER I
A POOR START

"Give it to him, Terry – that's the style!" "Punch his head!" "Hit him in the face, Mike!" "Good for you, Terry – that was a daisy!" "Stick to him, me hearty; ye'll lick him yet!"

The shouts came from a ring of ragged, dirty youngsters, who were watching with intense excitement a hand-to-hand and foot-to-foot fight between two of their own kind – a rough-and-tumble affair of the most disorderly sort.

They were not well-matched combatants, the one called Terry being much inferior in size and weight to the other; but he evidently had the sympathy of the majority of the spectators, and he displayed an amount of vigour and agility that went far to make up for his deficiencies in other respects.

In point of fact, he was not fighting his own battle, but that of little Patsy Connors, whose paltry, yet to him precious, plaything had been brutally snatched away from him by Mike Hoolihan, and who had appealed to Terry to obtain its return.

The contest had waged but a few minutes, and the issue was still uncertain, when a shrill cry of, "The peelers! the peelers! they're comin' up the street!" caused a dispersion of the crowd, so speedy and so complete that the boys composing it seemed to vanish like spirits; and when the big blue-coated, silver-buttoned policemen reached the spot, there was nothing to arrest but a woebegone puppy, who regarded them with an expression that meant as plainly as possible, —

"Please, sirs, it wasn't me; and I don't know where they've gone to."

So the guardians of the peace were fain, after giving an indignant glance around, to retire in good order, but with empty hands.

*****

A life divided between Blind Alley and the Long Wharf could hardly have had a hopeful outlook. Blind Alley was the most miserable collection of tumble-down tenements in Halifax. It led off from the narrowest portion of Water Street, in between two forbidding rows of filthy, four-storied houses, nearly every window of which represented a family, and brought up suddenly against the grim and grimy walls of a brewery, whence issued from time to time the thick, oppressive vapours of steaming malt.

The open space between the rows of houses was little better than a gutter, through which you had to pick your way with careful steps if you did not wish to carry off upon your boots and clothing unsavoury reminders of the place.

Little wonder, then, that so soon as the children of Blind Alley were big enough to walk they hastened to desert their repulsive playground, in spite of the shrill summons back from their unkempt mothers, who, though they made no attempt to keep them clean, loved them too much to think with composure of their being exposed to the many dangers of busy, bustling Water Street.

It is safe to say that you could not peer into Blind Alley during any of the hours of daylight without hearing stout Mrs. M'Carthy, or red-haired Mrs. Hoolihan, or some other frowsy matron with no less powerful lungs, calling out from her window, —

"Patsy! Norah! where are ye now, ye little villains? Ye're the plague of my life wid yer always gettin' out of me sight. Come back wid ye now, or I'll beat the very life out o' ye."

And if the poor little urchins had not managed to get around the corner so as to be out of sight, they would slink dejectedly back to wait for a more favourable opportunity.

Terry Ahearn's home, if so sweet a name could rightly be given to such wretched quarters, was in the last house on the left-hand side, the two squalid rooms which served all the purposes of kitchen, parlour, and bedrooms being on the second floor, and right against the brewery wall. Here he had been born, and had grown up pretty much as the weeds grow – according to his own devices. Although the only survivor of several children, his father, who bore the unprepossessing nickname of "Black Mike," hardly ever noticed him, unless it was to swear at him or cuff him. When sober, Black Mike was sulky, and when drunk, quarrelsome, so that Terry had many excuses for not loving him. As most of Mike's earnings went over the bar at the Crown and Anchor, his wife was obliged to go out scrubbing in order to provide the bread and molasses which, with a few potatoes and an occasional bit of meat, formed the staple of Terry's diet.

With anything like a fair chance, poor Peggy Ahearn would have made a tolerably good mother. But her married life had been one long martyrdom, which had broken her spirit and soured her temper. She loved Terry with all her heart, and he loved her in return; yet an observer of their mutual relations might well have thought otherwise. He was very apt to be saucy to her if his father was not near, and she rarely addressed him in terms of affection or gentleness.

From such surroundings Terry, naturally enough, was only too glad to escape. Even the public school was more endurable, especially during the long cold winter. In the bright long days of summer there was the Long Wharf, on which his father worked, and where Terry's companions gathered every day, rain or shine, from the beginning of May to the end of October.

In Terry's general appearance there was nothing at first sight to distinguish him from any of the other "wharf rats" who were his constant companions. They all wore battered hats, ragged clothes, and dirty faces. They all had a fine capacity for shirking work, and for making a great deal of noise when they were enjoying themselves.

If you had occasion to talk with Terry, however, you would be a dull observer if you did not notice certain qualities of character indicated in his face and form which suggested the thought that there was good stuff in the lad, and that if he had a chance he might turn out to be of some use despite his unpropitious surroundings.

He had a bright, pleasant countenance of the genuine Irish type, thickly dotted with deep-tinted freckles; a pair of frank, brown eyes; a mop of hair with a decided tendency towards curls and redness; and a well-knit, full-sized frame, whose every muscle was developed to its utmost capacity, and within which there beat a big warm heart, although that might seem to be doubtful sometimes when its owner was in a particularly mischievous mood.

"Sure, an' I don't know what's ever to be the end of ye," said Mrs. Ahearn one day, in a more thoughtful tone than was usual with her, after scolding her son for one of his pranks which she had just found out. "Ye've got wits enough to be a gentleman, if ye only had a mind to it; but never a bit do ye seem to care, so long as there's a bite for ye to eat."

Terry's response was so surprising that it fairly took his mother's breath away; for, drawing himself up to his full height, and putting on a look of the utmost determination, he exclaimed, —

"And it's a gentleman I mean to be some day, and then it's yourself that will ride in a carriage with glass sides, as fine as Miss Drummond's."

Mrs. Ahearn's eyes and mouth opened wide with astonishment. What had come over her boy that made him talk in that style? Ride in a carriage indeed! Faith, the highest expectation she ever permitted herself to entertain was of deliverance from the drudgery of the wash-tub. If that could only be accomplished in some other way than by dying, she would be well content.

"Listen to him!" she cried. "It's crazy the boy is. Me ride in a carriage! Sure the only ride I'll ever get in a carriage with glass sides will be when I'm going to the cimitry."

Then Terry did a still more remarkable thing. Whether it was his mother's reference to the hearse, or something in his own mind that stirred him, can only be conjectured, but running up to Mrs. Ahearn he caught her round the waist and gave her a hearty hug, saying, —

"Ye'll have many a ride in a carriage, and with glass sides too, mother, before that."

Then he darted off down the stairs, whistling "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning" with all his might, while his mother fell into a chair in sheer bewilderment at her boy's utterly novel behaviour.

Certainly there had been nothing in Terry's past record to give ground for hope of his ever attaining the status of a gentleman owning a carriage. To do as little work and to have as much play as possible seemed to be his ideal of life. More than once a situation as errand-boy had been obtained for him; but he soon forfeited them by neglect of duty, and returned rejoicing to his friends on Long Wharf. Unless a decided change of disposition took place, he bid fair to turn out nothing better than one more recruit for the wretched regiment of "street loafers" that is characteristic of every maritime city.

Long Wharf, Terry's "happy hunting ground," so to speak, it must be admitted, possessed a multitude of attractions for boys of his kind. It held an unquestioned pre-eminence among the wharves of Halifax for size and superiority of position, thrusting itself out prominently from their midst into the heart of the harbour, while the rest curved away on either hand in undistinguishable monotony. From the foot of Long Wharf you could comfortably command the whole water-line as from no other vantage-ground. Hence, in addition to being one of the busiest places in the city during the day, it was in the summer evenings the favourite resort of the whole neighbourhood – men, women, and children gathering there to enjoy the cool breezes, and to watch the pleasure-boats gliding past with their merry occupants.

The wharf was the centre of bustling activity all summer long. From it sailed lines of steamers to the bleak rugged coasts of Newfoundland and to the fascinating fairy-land of the West Indies, while others voyaged across the ocean to the metropolis of the world. When they returned laden with costly cargoes, the schooners and other sailing-vessels gathered round with gaping holds that had to be filled, and what they did not carry off went into the huge warehouses which stood in opposing rows clear up to the street.

By virtue of his relationship to Black Mike, Terry had the freedom of the wharf. It was about the only benefit his father conferred upon him, and he made the most of it, scraping acquaintance with the sailors, especially the cooks of the steamers, running occasional errands for the storekeeper, who might order him off the premises at any time he saw fit, fishing for perch and tomcods, bathing in the north dock at the risk of arrest by the first policeman who should happen along, and having grand games of "I spy" among the maze of stores and sheds.

Of course, this kind of life could not go on for ever, and there were times when Terry paused in his eager quest for amusement long enough to ask himself what he would like to be and to do for a living. The answers to the question were as various as Terry's moods. He fain would be a sailor, soldier, fireman, policeman, or coachman, according as he had been most lately impressed with the advantages and attractions of that particular occupation. He even sometimes let his thoughts aspire as high as the position of clerk in the offices of Drummond and Brown, the owners of Long Wharf. But that was only in moments of exceptional exaltation, and they soon fell back again to their wonted level.

This last idea, remote as the possibility of its fulfilment might seem, had especial vigour imparted into it one morning by a few words that Miss Kate Drummond, the only daughter of the senior partner, happened to let fall. She had driven down with her own pony to take her father home to lunch, and the wharf being such a noisy place, had asked Terry, who chanced to be lounging near by, wondering if he would ever be the owner of so fine an equipage, if he would be good enough to hold the pony's head while she sat in the carriage awaiting her father's coming.

Struck by Terry's prepossessing albeit somewhat dirty countenance, she thought she might while away the time by asking him some questions about himself. Terry answered so promptly and politely that she became quite interested in him, and finally began to sound him as to his plans for the future.

"Do you know, Terry," said she, with a winning smile that sent a thrill of pleasure clear down to the tips of the boy's bare toes, "I believe something good might be made out of you. Your face tells me that you've got it in you to make your way in the world. Many a rich and famous man had no better start than you. Wouldn't you like to try as they did?"

Terry turned away his head to hide the blushes that glowed through the tan and freckles on his cheeks, and shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

"I don't know, mum," said he at last. "I'd like to be a gentleman, and keep a carriage some day."

Miss Drummond gave a pleasant laugh; the answer was so frankly characteristic. To be a gentleman and to ride in a carriage seemed to be the working people's highest ideal of earthly bliss.

"Well, Terry," she responded, taking care that there should be sympathy, not ridicule, in her tone; "if that is your ambition, the way is open to you to try to accomplish it. My grandfather began as a little office-boy, and he had more than one carriage of his own before he died."

The look that Terry gave Miss Drummond on hearing these words made her blush a little in her turn; it was such a curious blending of bewilderment and joy. That this radiant creature, who seemed almost as far removed from him as an angel of heaven, should have had a grandfather who was a mere office-boy, was a surprising revelation to him. At the same time, what a vista of hope it opened up! If old Mr. Drummond, whom he remembered seeing years before, had worked his way up so well, could not others do it also?

Not knowing just what to say, Terry kept silence, and the situation was presently relieved by the appearance of Mr. Drummond. As Miss Drummond gathered up the reins, she gave the boy another of her lovely smiles.

"Thank you very much, Terry," she said; "and you'll think over what I've been saying to you, won't you?"

Terry pulled off his ragged cap in token of promise to do so, and the light carriage whirled away, leaving him with thoughts such as had never stirred his brain before. Of course he knew that men had made their way up from humble beginnings to high positions, but the fact had hitherto never been so closely brought home to him; and it was while under the excitement of this idea that he so astonished his mother as related above.

CHAPTER II
THE WAY OPENS

The seed thus sown by Miss Drummond began to take root at once. Terry now gave more thought to getting a chance to make a start in life than he did to having a good time. And here, as it happened, fortune favoured him in a most unusual way. On the Saturday morning of the week after the talk which had set him thinking, he was sitting at the end of the Long Wharf watching a big steamer making her way slowly up the harbour. It being the noon hour, the wharf hands were all away at dinner, and the place was almost deserted.

Suddenly he was startled out of his reverie by the sound of hoofs beating with alarming rapidity upon the resounding planks, and turning round he saw what caused him to spring to his feet with every nerve and muscle athrill. Thundering down the wharf in blind and reckless flight came Miss Drummond's pony, while in the carriage behind sat the owner, tugging desperately upon the reins, her face white and set with terror.

Acting upon the first impulse of the moment, Terry ran forward, shouting and waving his cap. Then, seeing that to be of no avail, he sprang at the maddened creature's head, hoping to seize the reins. But by a quick swerve the pony eluded him, and the next moment plunged headlong off the end of the wharf, dragging the carriage and its helpless occupant after her. There was a piercing shriek, a splash, a whirl of seething foam, and then the clear green depths closed over all!

For the first moment, Terry, overcome by the startling suddenness of the accident, knew not how to act. Then the impulse to rescue welled up mightily in his breast, and at once he leaped into the disturbed waters, which closed over his curly head.

Rising almost instantly to the surface, he looked eagerly about him, and caught sight of a hand thrust up in the agony of a struggle for life. A few quick strokes brought him to it, and then, taking in the situation intuitively, he swerved round so as to grasp Miss Drummond at the neck. He had not spent his life about a wharf without learning something of the difficulty of dealing with drowning persons, and that, strong, expert swimmer as he was, he must not suffer those hands to fasten their frantic grip upon him, or it would mean death for both.

So, deftly avoiding the girl's wild clutch, he took good hold of her from the back, and saying beseechingly, "Keep ye still now, ma'am, and I'll save ye all right," shoved her through the water in the direction of the wharf. Happily she was a young woman of rare self-possession. As soon as she felt Terry's firm hand her terror gave way to trust. She ceased her vain strugglings, and committed herself to her rescuer. Otherwise, indeed, the poor boy could hardly have been equal to the task. As it was, his strength just lasted until he reached the first row of barnacle-covered spiles; pressing Miss Drummond up to which he hoarsely directed her – "Take good hold of that now, ma'am, and I'll yell for somebody."

But he did not need to yell twice. Already helpers had gathered above them, and were shouting down words of encouragement; and a moment later a boat darted round the corner of the wharf, propelled by eager oarsmen.

On being lifted carefully in, Miss Drummond, yielding to the reaction, fainted for the moment; whereat Terry, who had never seen a woman faint before, set up a wail of grief, thinking she must be dead.

"Oh, the dear lady's dead!" he cried. "Ye must be getting a doctor quick."

But the others reassured him, and to his vast delight the blue eyes opened again to give him a look of inexpressible gratitude ere the boat touched the landing-steps.

Here Mr. Drummond, pale and trembling, the first thrill of numbing horror having just given place to ecstatic joy, awaited them. The instant the boat was within reach he sprang into it, and,

regardless of her dripping garments, clasped his daughter to his breast, kissing her again and again, while his quivering lips murmured, "My darling, my darling! God be thanked for your rescue!"

Releasing herself gently from his arms, Miss Drummond reached out her hand for Terry, who was just scrambling awkwardly ashore.

"Don't forget to thank him too, father," she said, with a meaning smile.

Thus reminded, Mr. Drummond, blushing at the excess of feeling which had caused him to forget everything save that his only daughter, the joy and pride of his life, had been saved from death, laid hold of Terry, and drew him back into the boat, where, taking both the boy's hands in his, he said in tones of deep emotion, —

"My boy, you have done my daughter and me a service we can never adequately repay. But all that grateful hearts can do we will not fail to do. Tell me your name and where you live."

Poor Terry was so abashed at being thus addressed by the great Mr. Drummond that his tongue refused its office. But one of the bystanders came to his relief.

"Sure and he's Black Mike's son, sur, and he lives up Blind Alley," was the information volunteered.

Accepting it as though it came from Terry himself, Mr. Drummond, giving the boy's hands another grateful shake, said, —

"Thank you. You will hear from me before the day ends."

Then taking his daughter by the arm, he continued, —

"Come now, darling; we must make all haste up to my office, and see what can be done for you."

Not until she stepped upon the wharf did Miss Drummond remember her pony. Then the question as to what had become of it flashed into her mind, and she turned to look down the wharf, exclaiming, —

"Oh, but my pony! Poor, dear Dolly! What's become of her?"

"Never mind the pony, dear," said Mr. Drummond; "the men will look after her. Come, come; you'll catch your death of cold staying out here in your dripping clothes."

Somewhat reluctantly Miss Drummond obeyed. Reassuringly though her father had spoken, she had misgivings as to her pony's fate – misgivings which were in fact only too well founded; for, dragged to the bottom by the weight of the carriage, the poor creature had been drowned in spite of its desperate struggles.

When the Drummonds disappeared, Terry found himself the centre of a circle of admirers, each of whom sought in his own way to give expression to his admiration and envy.

"Sure and your fortune's made this day, Terry, me boy," said the storeman, who wished in his heart that he had been lucky enough to rescue his employer's daughter. "Mr. Drummond's not the man to forgit his word; and didn't he say he'd do anything in the world for ye?"

But Terry's triumph was complete when the appearance of his father lounging sullenly back to work, with a short clay pipe between his teeth, was hailed with shouts from the crowd of, —

"Mike! Mike! come here wid ye, till we tell ye what yer boy's been doin'. Oh, but you're the lucky man to have a boy like Terry!"

Without a change in his dark countenance, or a quickening of his step, Black Mike drew near, and silently awaited explanations. When the matter was made clear to him, his face did brighten a little; but whether it was with pride at his son's achievement, or selfish pleasure at the prospect of the benefits that might accrue from it, the keenest observer would have been puzzled to say.

He managed, however, to get out something that more closely approached praise than anything Terry had ever heard from his lips before, and this delighted the boy so that he had to execute a few steps of his favourite clog dance to relieve his feelings. Then, bethinking himself that he had stayed long enough inside his uncomfortably wet clothing, he raced up the wharf, and made for his home in Blind Alley.

Here his mother received him with a shower of questions, in the answering of which he found rare delight.

"Me blessed boy!" the excited woman exclaimed, her feelings strangely divided betwixt horror at the thought of the risk her son had run and joy at its successful issue. "It's proud I am of you this day. No doubt but ye'll be your mother's comfort."

"And make ye ride in a carriage with glass sides, eh, mother?" said Terry with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Ah! now don't be talking such foolishness, Terry," returned Mrs. Ahearn, in a tone that implied to do so was tempting Providence perchance. "If your old mother has only a bit and sup sure to the end of her days, and a decent gown to put on, she'll be content enough without the carriage."

That afternoon Mr. Drummond picked his way carefully through the perils of Blind Alley to the grimy tenement where the Ahearns abode, and inquired for Terry. The latter, having exchanged his wet garments for the only others his scanty wardrobe contained, had gone down again to Long Wharf; so, after exchanging a few kind words with his mother, Mr. Drummond followed him thither, saying to himself, as he cautiously stepped from stone to stone, for the alley was little better than a mere muddy gutter, "The boy must be detached from these surroundings if anything is to be made of him. And he has a bright face. He ought to have good stuff in him. Certainly he shall have a fair trial at my hands, for I owe him more than money can repay."

On reaching his office, Mr. Drummond sent one of the clerks out to hunt Terry up, and presently he returned with the lad in tow, looking very bashful and ill at ease. He was attired in his "Sunday best," and boasted a face and hands of unwonted cleanliness. The merchant gave him a warm greeting, and made him sit down in a chair in front of him, while he scanned his countenance closely.

"My dear boy," said he after a pause, and seeming well satisfied with the result of his inspection, "as I have already told you, I feel that I am indebted to you for a service the worth of which cannot be put down in money; and it is not by offering you money that I would prove my gratitude. The money would be soon spent, leaving you no better, and possibly worse, than before it was given you. No; you have saved my daughter's life, and in return I want to save yours, though in a somewhat different way. Look me straight in the eyes, please."

For the first time since he had entered Mr. Drummond's presence Terry lifted his big brown eyes, and looked full into his face, his freckles being submerged in the warm flush that swept over his face as he did so.

"Ah!" said Mr. Drummond, "I was not mistaken. Your face gives warrant of many good qualities that you've had small chance to develop thus far. It will be my privilege and pleasure to give you the opportunity circumstances have hitherto denied you. How would you like to go to a nice school?"

Terry had been listening with eager attention and brightening countenance; but at the mention of the word "school" his face suddenly fell, and from the restless twitching of his body it was very evident that the idea had no attraction for him at all.

Mr. Drummond's keen eye did not fail to note the effect of his question, and without stopping to argue the point he promptly put another.

"Well, then, how would you like to be taken into my office and taught to be a clerk?"

Instantly the boy's face burst into bloom, so to speak, and giving the merchant a look which said as plain as words, "I hope you really mean it," he exclaimed, —

"Sure, sir, an' it's now ye're talkin'."

Mr. Drummond could not suppress a smile at Terry's quaint phrase that went so straight to the mark.

"You shall have your own way then," he responded in his pleasantest tone, "and you may begin as soon as you like. Let me just say this to you, my boy," he continued, drawing Terry towards him with one hand, and placing the other on his shoulder. "I want to be your friend for life. You can always

rely upon that. But I cannot do for you what you alone can do for yourself. You will meet with many trials and temptations that you will have to fight all by yourself. I will at all times be glad to give you the best counsel I can. But in the end you must make your own way. No one else can make it for you. By being faithful to my interests, Terry, you will most surely advance your own. Never forget that. And now, good-bye for the present. Mr. Hobart in the outer office has some business to do with you right away, and I will look for you bright and early on Monday morning."

Rather relieved at the interview being over, and feeling as though he would have to go prancing and shouting down the whole length of Long Wharf to give vent to his delight at what Mr. Drummond had said, Terry slipped out of the merchant's sanctum, and found a pleasant-looking young man evidently awaiting him in the office.

"Come in here, Terry," said he, "and tell us your good-luck."

In the fulness of his heart Terry was only too glad to find a confidant, and without reserve he related all that had been said, as well as he could remember it.

"Phew!" whistled the clerk. "You've got on the right side of the old man, and no mistake. No putting you off with a sovereign and a paragraph in the papers. Whatever he says goes, I can tell you. Come along now; I'm to have the pleasure of making a swell out of you."

In some bewilderment as to Mr. Hobart's meaning, Terry obediently accompanied him up to Granville Street, where they entered a gentleman's outfitting establishment, before whose broad plate-glass windows the boy had often stood in covetous appreciation of the fine things so dexterously displayed therein. With an air of easy self-possession that Terry profoundly admired, Mr. Hobart called upon a brilliantly-arrayed clerk to show them their ready-made clothing. They went into the rear part of the shop, and then the purpose of their coming was made clear.

"You're to have a complete outfit of good clothes, Terry," said Mr. Hobart. "And Mr. Drummond, knowing my good taste in such matters, has put the business in my hands, so you'll please be good enough to entirely approve of my selections."

His manner was so kind and pleasant that Terry felt as though there was hardly anything on earth that he would not have been willing to do for him, let alone approving of the benefactions he was the instrument of bestowing.

"Indeed that I will, sir," he responded, with a warmth that made the clerk smile in such a patronizing way that Mr. Hobart cut him short by saying curtly, —

"Well, then, let me see something in the way of pepper-and-salt tweeds."

So the work of fitting Terry out began. Mr. Hobart seemed no less particular than if he were choosing the various articles for his own wardrobe. He had *carte-blanche* from Mr. Drummond, and the matter of cheapness was not to be taken into account. It all seemed like a beautiful dream to Terry. A fine suit of clothes, that fitted him as though they had been cut to order; a pair of scarlet braces with bright brass clasps such as his heart had often vainly hungered for; three good flannel shirts for week-day wear, and three lovely linen ones for Sabbaths; a sheaf of collars and a roll of cuffs; and, finally, to top it all, a hard felt hat, the like of which had never before been on his head; – one after another were these fine feathers procured, and the money for them paid down from a bundle of notes which Terry, in his ignorance of money in that form, thought must contain at least a thousand pounds.

It took over an hour to complete the business, Mr. Hobart evidently enjoying it in no small degree himself. At last, however, he seemed satisfied with his work, and giving Terry a friendly clap on the back, he said, —

"There, now; you're qualified to be a credit to Drummond and Brown's office, so far as appearance goes at all events. You can trot along home now. They'll send the things there for you."

Eager to tell his mother of the wonders of the day, Terry darted off, and in a few minutes was at home in Blind Alley. With many exclamations of gratitude to the "blessed saints," and many interjected questions, did Mrs. Ahearn listen to his wonderful story; and when the parcels arrived, she spread out their contents upon the bed and fell upon her knees before them. For many years her

life had known but scant rays of sunshine, and this sudden outburst almost overwhelmed her. With trembling fingers she gently touched the different articles, as though to assure herself that her eyes were not playing her false. Then rising to her feet again, her eyes streaming and lips quivering, she threw her arms around Terry and hugged him to her heart.

With a mother's fond prescience she grasped the fact that in him, and in him alone, had she hope of redress for the sorrows which had so deeply shadowed her life. Terry's chance had come, and his future and hers depended upon the way in which he availed himself of it.

CHAPTER III
UNEVEN GOING

It was with a queer jumble of feelings palpitating in his young bosom that Terry, attired as never before in his life, set out for Long Wharf on Monday morning. Blind Alley seemed to swarm with women and children, who first gazed in wild-eyed astonishment at his appearance, and then proceeded to give vent to their admiration or envy in remarks that would have sorely tried the composure of a stump orator hardened by many campaigns.

"The blessed saints presarve us! Did ye ever see the loike?" gasped Mrs. O'Rafferty, with a side glance at the gutter, where her own Phelim was hunting for a lost marble, and looking more like a mud-turtle than a bit of humanity.

"Get on to the hat, will you?" shouted Tim Doolin, his fingers itching to throw a handful of mud at it, but his head telling him that to do so would insure a tremendous thrashing, for Terry's prowess with his fists was not to be gainsaid.

"Sure he's got a place in front of Clayton's, and has to stand there all day on exhibition," sneered sly Tony Butler, pretending that he thought Terry was to play the part of a living advertisement for a well-known ready-made clothing firm.

Through this ordeal Terry hastened with a deprecating smile, as though to say, "Really, you're making an absurd fuss about a most trifling matter;" and wisely refraining from any retort, he drew a deep breath of relief when he reached Water Street, and became merged in the crowd of well-dressed clerks hurrying to their offices.

On arriving at Long Wharf, he could not resist the impulse to take one look over his beloved playground before reporting himself at Drummond and Brown's. He clearly realized that if he would take full advantage of the opportunity now open to him, the dock would know him no more as in the past; and besides that, he did want to let his playmates, who would have his company no longer, see his fine feathers in their pristine freshness.

The chorus of praise they elicited would have contented a much more exacting heart than Terry's, and in answering the questions showered upon him he ran the risk of not being "bright and early," as Mr. Drummond had enjoined upon him. Happily, however, the boom of the market clock reminded him in time, and darting back up the wharf he entered the big warehouse, the front part of whose ground floor was given up to a suite of offices, in which many of the clerks had already assembled for the day's work.

Terry's impulse carried him as far as inside the door, and then it deserted him, leaving him completely stranded. Now that he was in the office, he had not the slightest idea what to do with himself. The clerks were busy getting their books out, and chaffing one another as to the doings of the night before. No one seemed to notice him, and feeling acutely uncomfortable he shrank into a corner, a longing to run off again coming over him with great force. He could see nothing of Mr. Hobart, and in his utter strangeness his heart sank in chill despair. How remote seemed the possibility of his ever taking his place among that group of dashing young fellows, who had so much to tell each other of enjoyments and exploits in spheres of society far beyond his ken!

A movement that he made in his agitation at length attracted the attention of a young lad about his own age, who, looking sharply at him, asked in a rude tone, —

"Well, sonny, what is it you want?"

For a moment Terry was nonplussed for a reply. How could he explain his position to this saucy-looking inquirer? Then by a happy inspiration, it occurred to him to ask for his friend of Saturday afternoon, and in a low, hesitating voice he said, —

"I want to see Mr. Hobart, please."

"Say, there, Walter!" shouted the clerk, in the direction of an inner office, "there's a young kid asking for you here. Did you forget to pay your washer-woman on Saturday night?"

Mr. Hobart appeared quickly, and the moment his eyes fell upon Terry (who even in the midst of his discomposure had his wits sufficiently about him to take in the meaning of the clerk's impertinence, and his eyes were brimming in consequence) he sprang towards the speaker, and seizing him by the collar, gave him a vigorous shaking, saying meanwhile in indignant tones, —

"See here, Morley: if you don't keep your sauce to yourself, you'll get something worse than a shaking. Do you know who that is? It's the boy who saved Miss Drummond's life, and he's got the makings of a better man in him than you have, or I'm much mistaken." Then turning to Terry he continued, as he released his hold on Morley, "Come right inside here, Terry, and I'll introduce you to the boys."

The appearance of his friend, and the warmth with which he took up his cause, worked a complete revolution in Terry's feelings. The tears vanished from his eyes, and with a broad smile lighting up his countenance he obeyed Mr. Hobart's bidding; while Morley, looking very much crestfallen, and displaying a malignant scowl that boded no good to the new-comer, went sullenly back to his desk.

Mr. Hobart introduced Terry to each of the clerks, and they all shook hands with him cordially. His gallant rescue of their employer's daughter prepared them to like him, and his honest, good-humoured face disarmed, for the time at least, any feelings of opposition to his entry into their ranks. There were nearly a dozen of them altogether, from the senior book-keeper, gray-bearded and spectacled, down to Tom Morley, whose work it was to look after collecting the wharfage. Mr. Hobart held the responsible post of finance-clerk. He attended to all the banking; paid the labourers on Friday evenings and made out the salary cheques at the end of the month; and by virtue of the importance of his duties, and the evident favour in which he was held by the firm, stood next to the book-keeper in the estimation of his associates. Terry was very fortunate in having his support at the start, particularly as he had taken a decided liking to the boy, and was quite willing to act as his patron, and to pilot him through the difficulties of his new surroundings.

The Civil War in the United States was then at its height, and Halifax, as a neutral port, open to the vessels of both contestants for supremacy, occupied a peculiarly advantageous position. Never before in the history of the city had business been brisker or money more plentiful. Hardly a day passed without its quota of steamships or sailing-vessels pressing into the splendid harbour, and willing to pay almost any price in good gold for immediate attention.

Nor were these profitable customers of the harmless merchant class only. From time to time there appeared grim men-of-war, looking terribly business-like with their rows of black-muzzled guns; and now and then the whole city was thrown into excitement by the sudden advent of one of the far-famed Confederate cruisers, which did such fearful damage to Federal commerce – as, for instance, the renowned *Tallahassee*, whose trim black form came dashing through the white caps one fine summer morning, while far out in the offing a keen eye could discern the dark shapes of her disappointed pursuers.

But most interesting of all such visitors were the blockade-runners, the *Colonel Lamb*, the *Robert E. Lee*, and the like. Marvels of beauty and speed they were, their low, graceful hulls painted a soft gray tint, so as to make them invisible at sea when only a few miles distant; and in the eyes of the Halifax boys every man on board was a hero, and the object of profound admiration.

This feeling, moreover, was by no means confined to the boys. If at any time during the war a poll of the Haligonians had been taken, the majority in favour of the South would certainly have been very large. Self-interest, no doubt, had much to do with this state of affairs; and, besides that, there was current the belief that the South was fighting for freedom rather than for the maintenance of slavery.

The firm of Drummond and Brown having had extensive business connections with the Southern States for many years before the war, it was but natural that Long Wharf should be the favoured resort of the Confederate vessels. The blockade-runners, without exception, docked there; and, as a matter of course, from the heads of the firm down to the humblest toiler on the wharf, everybody belonging to the establishment was Confederate to the core.

As for Terry Ahearn, so fervent was his sympathy with the South, that up to the time of his being taken into the office, had he ever received any encouragement, he would have unhesitatingly joined himself to the crew of a blockade-runner in any capacity they would have for him. Happily for him they had no use for boys on board these vessels, and his desires remained unrealized, until the opening up of a new life to him through his being taken into Mr. Drummond's employment diverted his thoughts into an altogether different channel.

Certainly he had much to think about during the first period of his clerkship. It was a big change for a boy to make in a day – from careless, idle play in ragged clothes about a dock, varied by an occasional trip coastward, when he could persuade the captain of one of the many packet schooners to take him along as an extra hand, to steady-going service in an office, with the accompanying requirements of always being neat, well-dressed, and respectful in demeanour to those about him.

And greatly as Terry rejoiced in the sudden advance, he would have been more than mortal if he had not found his new environment bristling with difficulties which neither the favour of Mr. Drummond nor the friendly offices of Mr. Hobart could materially help him to overcome. He did not fail to feel keenly the marked contrast between his own speech and manners and those of Tom Morley, for instance; nor was he blind to the fact that his educational equipment was deplorably deficient. How bitterly he regretted that he had not taken more advantage of his opportunities at school, and how fervently he vowed to do his best to make up lost ground so far as might be possible!

It was no slight addition to his embarrassments that all unwittingly he had at the very start incurred the enmity of Tom Morley, who thenceforward did everything that he dared to annoy him. Tom was a clever boy himself, and had enjoyed many advantages in his bringing up. He took to business as naturally as a duck to water, and but for certain characteristics, would have been held in high esteem in the office.

Unhappily, however, he had a sly, jealous, selfish nature, that soon revealed itself, because, forsooth, he made little attempt to conceal it, and this effectually barred his way to popularity.

Even without the *contretemps*, for which he alone was responsible, on the morning Terry first came to the office, Morley would have taken a dislike to Terry simply because of his good fortune. Now that there was double cause for such a feeling, he let it have full play, and if poor Terry had done him some mortal injury he could not have shown a more vicious spirit towards him. He mimicked his brogue for the amusement of his fellow-clerks; he made sneering remarks about his clothes; he played practical jokes upon him to raise a laugh at his expense; in fact, he behaved so abominably towards him, that there were times when only the restraining influence of his surroundings kept Terry back from rushing upon him with clenched fists. Being thus beset, Terry found his lot far harder than he had conceived, and needed all the help that came to him from his mother's sympathy, Mr. Drummond's kindly interest, and Mr. Hobart's good-humoured helpfulness, in order to keep up his courage. It was, therefore, a welcome inspiration to him when, on the Saturday following the rescue, Miss Drummond appeared at the office, quite recovered from her startling experience, and as soon as she arrived asked for her rescuer.

In some trepidation Terry went into Mr. Drummond's sanctum, where he was warmly welcomed by the young lady.

"Why, Terry, how well you look!" she exclaimed, beaming radiantly upon him. "I'm so glad you're in my father's office. I know you're going to make a capital clerk."

Terry could find nothing to say; so Miss Drummond went on, —

"I believe, Terry, that an important thing in a clerk is to be always in time, and as I want you to have no difficulty on that score, I got this little timekeeper for you, and am going to ask you to wear it in memory of to-day week, so that you won't forget the service that you rendered me then."

While thus speaking she took from her reticule a small watch in a silver case, with a neat silver charm attached, and opening the case showed Terry where his name in full was engraved inside, and underneath it the words, "In recognition of rescue," with the proper date appended.

Drawing Terry towards her, she secured the watch in his vest, while he did his best to stammer out his gratitude.

"Never mind about thanks, Terry," said Miss Drummond. "You may consider it your medal for life-saving, you know. And never forget, Terry, that in business a good watch is the next best thing to a good conscience."

Terry went back to his place in a tumult of joy and pride. Naturally enough, the first thing he did was to show his new treasure to Mr. Hobart and the others. They all admired it, and congratulated him; except Morley, who, professing to be very much engrossed in his work, bent a scowling face over his desk. Terry's good fortune had affected him in the same way that Joseph's rather indiscreet relation of his dreams affected his elder brethren, so that without any other cause of offence he came to "hate him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

As may be easily understood, Terry gave him many chances to vent his baseless spite. Everything about the office was utterly new to him. The days were full of blunders, and whenever these were explained there was Morley enjoying the poor boy's discomfiture, and, if Mr. Hobart did not happen to be at hand, letting fall cutting remarks that made Terry wince as though they were strokes of a whip.

Although none of the other clerks showed the same spirit as Morley, still they did not attempt to interfere, partly because they thought that Terry needed to be "licked into shape," and partly because they did not approve of his advent quite as cordially as Mr. Hobart. He was of a different class from them, and they could not sympathize with him in the same degree as if he were one of themselves.

Thus the new way that had been opened up to Terry proved to be set thick with difficulties, which would severely test his qualities of self-control and determination in order to their overcoming; and when the boy's previous life and surroundings were taken into account, the chances could hardly be said to be in his favour.

Mr. Hobart, it is true, showed every disposition to befriend him; but he was a very busy man, the hardest worker on the whole staff, and there were days when a kind, encouraging smile as he bustled about his work was all the communication Terry had with him.

It soon became clear to Terry that he must fight his own battles – that, as Mr. Drummond had said, he must make his own way – and it was with many misgivings as to the result that he set himself to the undertaking.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.