THE WEEKLY SUN.

SHINES FOR ALL

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POETRY.

The Railroad Engineer's Song.

I love—Oh how I love to ride
The Iron Horse in his fiery pride;
All other joys seem dull and vain,
When I lay my hand on his misty mane.

Fear him not! with his ribs of steel,
His flaming throat and his brushing wheel;
And his smoky crest, so black and tall,
Like a pillar covered with a funeral pall.

Though his stamping shakes the solid ground,
And he scatters fire-flakes all around;
He's gentle as jennet in lady's rein
When he feels my hand on his misty mane.

Let me astride of the Iron Horse!
Full of fierce fury, speed and force;
And hark how he pants and blows, and snorts,
While my skill his eager bounding thwarts.

But when I'm mounted on his back,
And you see him coming—clear the track!
Nothing can check him on his course,
As he thunders along—my Iron Horse!

Then buzza! the Iron Horse for me!
The eagle scarce flies as fast as he;
He skims the valley and scours the plain,
And shakes like a cloud, his misty mane.

He tracks the prairie, climbs the hill,
The wild woods echo his neighing shrill;
And when the fierce tempest lashes the shores,
Louder than ever the storm he roars.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Written Expressly for the New York Sun.

THE

GIPSY NURSE,

OR

MARKED FOR LIFE.

By the Author of "The Cooper's Ward," "The Secret Drawer," "Manson the Miser," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE ADVANTAGE OF AN EDUCATION.

Felipa was sentenced to prison for a term of years. She entered with a haughty step and calm demeanor, but underneath it all, rage and vexation were contending for the mastery.

We will leave her for a while in order to release Betsy Stone from the "duranes vile" into which she had so unexpectedly fallen.

Poor Betsy! She had been quite overwhelmed by her misfortune. To think that she should be mysteriously involved in a crime from which her soul shrank with abhorrence, for Betsy, to do her justice, was strictly honest, whatever defects of education she might have.

She spent the time in crying without stint. On the morning after her arrest, she was sitting with a very disconsolate look upon her bed, when a visitor was announced.

She looked to the door with a dull feeling of curiosity, when whom should she recognize in the intruder but her quondam fellow servant—Mrs. Bent.

"What a dreadful place, to be sure," murmured that lady, surveying the contracted accommodations.

Betsy groaned and hid her face in her hands.

"However, cheer up! it isn't as if you'd got to stay here."

"Havn't I? O, Mrs. Bent, tell me, has any thing been discovered?" exclaimed the poor girl, with a ray of hope lighting up her face.

"Yes, to be sure there has."

"And have they found out it wasn't I that did it?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if they had. For, Betsy, I knew it couldn't be you all the time."

"But who is it?" asked Betsy, earnestly.

"Can't you guess?" asked the cook. "It wasn't Mr. or Mrs. Danforth, and it wasn't me that I know of."

"Then it was the nurse."

"Yes."

"But how was it found out."

"All through the sagaciousness of Mrs. Danforth. I tell you, Betsy, she's a smarter woman than I took her for. She saw through that Felipa, and—but just give me a seat beside you on the bed, and I'll begin at the beginning and tell you all about it."

This Mrs. Bent proceeded to do with a few little embellishments of her own, and closed by saying that the nurse was at that moment locked up in jail.

"And serves her right too—thinking she could make a better omelet than I. I who've been in the business, girl and woman, forty year."

"Forty years!" exclaimed Betsy with naiveté. "Why how early you must have begun. You know you told me that you were only forty-two."

Mrs. Bent was a little sensitive on the score of her age, and like some ladies occupying a higher social position, did not scruple to call herself ten years younger than she was.

She was a little taken aback by the reflection that she had so carelessly betrayed herself. She got herself out of the scrape as adroitly as possible.

"Well,' said she, "so I am forty-two. Forty-two last June. What of that?"

"Why, you said you had forty years, experience as cook."

"O lor, that was a mistake, sure enough. Of course I meant thirty. You see I began when I was twelve years old. You didn't—he, he—you didn't think I was over fifty, did you, Betsy?"

"Oh no," said Betsy.

"I thought not. I aint antediluvious as I know of."

"What does that mean?" asked her younger companion.

"I am surprised at your ignorance. Don't you know what antediluvious means?"

"No," said Betsy, a little ashamed to confess her ignorance.

"It means very old. Any body that's very old is antediluvious. If you shouldn't remember the word, you can come to me any time, and I'll tell you it," said the cook with a complacent air of superior knowledge.

"I don't like them large words," said Betsy. "They sort of stick in my throat when I go to pronounce them."

"It's all in habit," said Mrs. Bent. "If you'd been brought up to use 'em they would come natural—in fact super-natural, as they come to me."

"Lor, Mrs. Bent," said Betsy, in a tone of genuine admiration, which was not lost upon the cook, "what a education you must have.

"I should think you'd teach school."

"I wouldn't demean myself to do sich a thing," said the cook, loftily. "I consider cookin' to be a much higher profession—I wouldn't advise any body to try to be a cook that hadn't a *superperior intelleck*."

Regularly launched upon her hobby, there is no knowing when she would have stopped, if she had not been recalled to herself by a question—a natural one under the circumstances—from Betsy.

"When am I coming out of prison? Can't I go now?"

"Not just yet. Mr. Danforth sent me here to say that he would make arrangments with the court, or something, so that you could come out this afternoon."

"Well, I ought to feel thankful. Only think if it hadn't been found out, and I'd had to stay here a whole year; oh, I should have died, I know I should."

"And I suppose the living is awful."

Betsy admitted that she did not fare as well as she had been accustomed to in Mrs. Danforth's establishment.

"Poor things," said Mrs. Bent, meaning the prisoners of course, "what a miserable time they must have to be sure. But I forgot to say, Betsy, that to make up for your being put into prison when you didn't deserve it, Mr. Danforth has promised you a new dress."

Betsy brightened up. A woman must be far gone, when she will not brighten up at the prospect of a new dress.

"Calico?" she said, interrogatively.

"No."

"What, delaine?"

"Better than that."

"You don't mean silk?"

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. Bent, nodding her head vigorously. "Silk. And Mrs. Danforth is going to help you pick it out when she gets a little more salubrious."

"When she gets well?"

"Oh. I forgot you don't understand long words Yes, Betsy, salubrious means well, and it's a much more genteel word."

"I've always wanted a silk dress," said Betsy, quite exhilarated, "but who'd have thought I was going to have one so quick."

"It's pretty good pay for being incastorated, (qu. incarcerated?) isn't it, Betsy?" remarked her learned companion.

"For being what?" asked Betsy, opening her eyes to their widest extent.

"Incastorated. That means, being put in jail. You must excuse me for using words above your reprehension, but it comes so supernatural to me, as I may say, that I can't suppress myself from doing it."

"What a eddication you must have!" exclaimed Betsy, for the second time, admiringly.

"Well," said Mrs. Bent, in a satisfied tone. "I don't know. I suppose I have made pretty good use of my importunities, but there's those I can't hold a candle to."

"I am sure you say that only because you are modest."

"No. I mean so. I had a cousin once. You ought to have heard him talk. He sort of despised words that warn't at least three syllables long. I caught a great many words from him."

"And where is he now?" asked Betsy, with some curiosity.

"He is defuncted," said Mrs. Bent, solemnly.

Then, seeing that Betsy looked as if she did not understand, she condescended to explain that he died of typhus fever.

"He had put on his tombstone a line from some great writer that he had altered for the occasion. It was, "After life's titful fever he sleeps well." But as he never was troubled with fits, he had it changed to "After life's typhus fever he sleeps well."

Betsy expressed her admiration of this sentiment, which put the cook into quite a good humor with her.

From this they began to discuss the manner in which the new silk dress was to be cut, and trimmed. I regret for the sake of my lady readers, that I am unable to give a satisfactory report of it.

I will only add, that in the afternoon, Betsy saw released, much to her joy, and reinstated in her old place at the Danforths, over whom, though they knew it not, a great misfortune was impending.

CHAPTER XXVI.

FELIPA'S REVENGE.

Some months passed.

During this time things went on pretty much after the same fashion in the Danforth establishment.

Little Harry became the pet of the whole family. Surely never baby received more notice than he. It was well that his parents could not look forward to the trials of his after life; a part of which we have already chronicled in the earlier chapters of this story.

It now becomes our duty to explain in what manner he was first separated from his parents.

The reader has not forgotten Felipa, whose detection at the last moment led to her incarceration for a period of several years. She never intended to stay her term out. However, she found it best to temporize for a time, and gradually won her way to the confidence of the authorities. I do not, however, intend to relate minutely her life in the prison. Enough, that some nine months after her entrance, she succeeded by a cunningly devised plan, in effecting her escape.

She made her way to the tenement which we have before described.

She had now two objects in view.

One was, to find her husband.

The other, to take vengeance upon Mrs. Danforth, for the imprisonment for which she was in a measure indebted to her.

To the last, she gave her earliest attention.

Through one of her old companions, for she did not dare to show herself in the matter, she succeeded in obtaining the information that Mrs. Danforth had gone to spend the summer at a farm-house in a country town, this having been recommended as excellent both for the mother and the child.

She at once declared her determination to proceed thither.

"What, at once, before you have seen your husband?"

"Yes," answered Felipa. "I made a vow that if ever I got out of prison, I would take vengeance upon the woman that put me there."

"You would not kill her?"

"I would pierce her heart."

"They will hang you."

"You do not understand me. She is a mother. I will pierce her heart by stealing her child."

"You will punish yourself also. I wouldn't take charge of a child for nothing."

"I can easily leave it at some door, far enough off for her not to find it."

"I see now. You are a clever woman, Felipa."

"Just give me that pair of green spectacles. Now, should you know me, do you think?"

"No, never."

"Then I shall do."

And Felipa went boldly out into the public streets, and many brushed by her, that would have been startled, had they known that she was an escaped convict.

It was a small farming town in which Mrs. Danforth had chosen to pass the summer.

She had succeeded in obtaining lodgings with a well-to-do farmer, who had an ample farm, and some of those tastes which make farming poetical. The farm-house was surrounded by a piazza, and the yard was filled with trees, whose dense foliage kept away the obtrusive sunlight.

One attraction of the village was a small river, not more than two or three hundred feet across, with sloping fields on one side, and on the other, a forest.

This was at the distance of three quarters of a mile from the farm house in which Mrs. Danforth boarded.

These details will be found not unimportant as our narrative proceeds.

Mrs. Danforth had brought with her to the farm-house a girl of fourteen, named Clara, as an attendant for Harry.

It was a bright afternoon in June, when Clara came to her mistress, and said:

"Please, madam, mayn't I carry Harry out in the basket-carriage?"

"Where do you wish to go?"

"I should like to go to the river."

"Well, I have no objection. You had better wait till the cool of the afternoon, when it will be more comfortable."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you must take all possible care of Harry."

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I will."

"And look out that nobody steals the darling," said the fond mother with a smile.

Was it a presentiment that led her to speak in this manner?

She thought so afterwards.

Delighted with the permission she had obtained, Clara prepared at the designated time to carry the baby out on an airing.

"I have a great mind to go too," said Mrs. Danforth. "How far is it?"

"About three-quarters of a mile."

"O the whole, then, I believe I will wait till another time. Good-bye, baby."

She stooped and kissed the child, not dreaming that years would elapse before she would again behold it.

Clara drew the carriage slowly along the path that led to the river.

At length she reached the bank, and paused in the shadow of a large tree, which overhung the water.

It was a large tree and hollow. Through a rift in the trunk might have been seen peering out two blazing eyes, but the attendant did not notice them.

They belonged to Felipa Morna. She had been hovering about the town for a day or two, seeking some opportunity of stealing the child. Now, for the first time, one presented itself.

There was no house within a quarter of a mile.

Clara was but a girl of fourteen, and not large or strong of her age.

It would be easy to wrest the babe from her, but she might alarm the neighborhood.

"I must bind her," thought Felipa.

Then for the means of escape. Fortune seemed this afternoon to favor the wrong-doer. Tied at the foot of the tree was a small boat, by means of which she might easily reach the other shore, and then the woods would afford her a place of retreat.

All this flashed upon the mind of Felipa in much less time that it has taken me to narrate it.

She drew a large kerchief from her neck, and seized an opportunity when Clara was looking away, to pounce upon her.

Clara shrieked in dismay.

"If you scream again I will kill you," said Felipa, menacingly.

Clara looked up into her determined face, and trembled all over, but did not dare to disobey her.

"Now," said she, "sit down."

Clara did so.

Felipa proceeded to bind both hands and one foot together, so securely that the poor girl was quite helpless.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Clara, terrified. "Don't throw me into the river."

She thought it possible that she was to be thrown in bound, in order that she might drown the more easily.

"You will suffer no harm if you keep quiet. I only want the baby."

"Oh, don't take Harry," said Clara, imploringly. "His mother loves him so much."

"Then his mother does love him?" asked Felipa, pausing for an instant.

"Oh, yes! It will break her heart if she loses him."

"That is the very reason I am going to take him," said Felipa, grimly. "His mother injured me once. I mean to have revenge."

"You will kill her."

"So much the better. And for fear she should not know who has done this thing, you may tell her that the woman whom she sent to prison has stolen her child. Will you remember it?"

"Yes," gasped Clara, gazing horror-struck at the woman, who, according to her own confession, had been the inmate of a prison.

Felipa loosened the boat. Then she snatched the child, crying now with fear, from his carriage, and paddled as well as she could, her way to the opposite shore. Then she set the boat adrift, and disappeared in the woods.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Danforth, grown anxious, sent messengers after Clara and Harry. The former was found and narrated her story. When she had concluded, Mrs. Danforth sank into a swoon, exclaiming: "I shall never see my Harry again, never, never!"

She was mistaken.

Of the future life of Harry—how he was left in charge with Mrs. Conant, and when she died, to the tender mercies of the amiable Mudge family—how he escaped, and after divers adventures, found a home with the worthy sexton, within a quarter of a mile from his mother, who knew not of his vicinity—all that has been told.

CHAPTER XXVII

YOUNG STUPID.

Harry found the sexton's dwelling very different from his last home, if the Poor-house under the charge of Mr. Mudge deserved such a name.

He supposed that he would at once be set to work, and would still have felt fortunate in possessing such a home.

But Mr. Cameron had different plans for him.

"Are you fond of studying?" he asked, as they were all three gathered in the little sitting-room, an evening or two after Harry first came to their knowledge.

"Very much," replied our hero.

"And would you like to go to school?"

"What, here in New York?"

"Yes."

"O, very much indeed."

"I am glad to hear you say so, my lad. There is nothing like a good education. If I had a son of my own, I would rather leave him that than money, for while the last may be lost, the first never can. And though you are not my son, Harry, Providence has, in a manner, conducted you to me, and I feel responsible for your future. So, by way of starting fair, you shall go to school next Monday, and I hope you will do yourself much credit there."

"Thank you very much," said Harry, "I feel very grateful, but"—

"You surely are not going to object," said the sexton.

"No, but"—

"Well, Harry, go on," seeing that the boy hesitated.

"Why," said our hero, with a sense of delicacy which did him credit, "if I go to school I shall not be able to earn my board, and shall be living upon you, upon whom I have no claim."

"Oh, is that all?" said the sexton, cheerfully. "I was afraid that it was something more serious. As to that, I am not rich, and never expect to be. But what little expense you will be will not ruin me. Besides, when you are grown up, and doing well, you can repay me if I ever need it."

"That I will," said Harry.

"Mind, if I ever need it—not otherwise. There, now, it's a bargain, on that condition. Now we will talk about something else."

The next Monday morning, in accordance with the arrangement which had just been made, Harry repaired to school. He was at once placed in a class, and lessons were assigned him.

At first his progress was not rapid. While living in the little village with his mother, he had an opportunity only to attend country schools, kept less than six months during the year, and then, as may be readily supposed, not affording advantages in any manner to be compared with a city school.

Of course, lost time could not be made up in a moment.

Therefore it was that Harry lagged behind his class.

There are always those in every school, who are disposed to take unfair advantage of their school-mates, or to ridicule those to whom they may feel superior.

There was one such in Harry's class. His name was George Dawkins.

He was rather a showy boy, and learned easily. He might have stood a class above where he now was, if he had not been lazy, and depended too much upon his natural talent. As it was, he maintained the foremost rank in his class.

"Better be the first man in a village than the second man in Rome," he used to say, and as his present position both gave him pre-eminence, which he liked, and did not cost him much exertion to maintain, he was quite well satisfied with it.

This boy stood first in the class which Harry entered at the foot.

He laughed unmercifully at the frequent mistakes of our hero, and pronounced him "Young Stupid."

"Do you know what Dawkins calls you?" asked one of the boys, addressing Harry.

"No. What does he calls me?" asked our hero, curiously.

"He calls you 'Young Stupid.'"

Harry's face flushed painfully. What boy can stand against ridicule? He certainly felt the slight deeply.

"I'd fight him if I were you," was the volunteered advice of his informant.

"No," said Harry, "that wouldn't mend the matter. Besides, I don't know but he has some reason for thinking so."

"You don't call yourself stupid, do you?"

"No, but I am not so far advanced as most boys of my age. That isn't my fault, however; I have never had a chance to go to school much. If I had been to school all my life as Dawkins has, then it would be time to find out whether I am stupid or not."

"Then you ain't going to do anything about it?"

"Yes I am."

"You said you wasn't going to fight him."

"That wouldn't do any good. But I'm going to study up, and see if I can't get ahead of him. Don't you think that will be the best way of showing him that he is mistaken."

"Yes, capital, but"—

"But you think I can't do it."

"You know he is at the head of the class, and you are at the foot."

"I know that. But wait awhile and see."

Our hero had a good deal of energy and determination. When he had once set his mind upon a thing he kept steadily at work until he had accomplished it. This is the surest secret of success. It sometimes happens that a man who has done nothing will all at once accomplish a brilliant success by one spasmodic effort, but such cases are extremly rare. "Slow and sure wins the race," is an old proverb that has a great deal of truth in it.

Harry worked industriously.

The kind sexton and his wife, who noticed his assiduity, strove to dissuade him from working so steadily.

"You are studying too hard," said they.

"Do I look pale?" said Harry, laughingly pointing to his red cheeks.

"Why no, but you will be before long."

"When I am, I will study less. But you know, uncle Hugh," so the sexton had instructed him to call him, "I want to make the most of my advantages. Besides, there's a particular boy that thinks I am stupid; I want to convince him that I am not."

"You are a little ambitious, Harry, then?"

"Yes, but it isn't that alone. I know the value of knowledge, and I want to secure as much as I can."

"That is an excellent and commendable motive, Harry."

"Then you won't make me study less?"

"Not unless I see you getting sick."

Harry took good care of this. He knew how to play as well as to study, and his laugh on the playground was as merry as any. His cheerful, obliging disposition made him a favorite with his companions. Only George Dawkins held out; he had, for some reason, imbibed a dislike to Harry.

Harry's industry was not without effect. He gradually gained position in his class.

"Take care, Dawkins," said one of his companions—the same one who had before spoken to Harry—"or Harry Conant will be disputing your place with you."

"Much good it'll do him," said the latter, contemptuously.

"For all that, you'll have to be careful; I tell you that."

"I'm not in the least afraid. I'm a little too firm in my position to be ousted out by Young Stupid."

"Just wait and see."

Dawkins really entertained no apprehension. He was one who had unbounded confidence in himself, and felt a sense of power in the rapidity with which he could master a lesson. He, therefore, did not study much, and though he could not but see that Harry was rapidly advancing, he rejected with scorn the idea that Young Stupid would ever be able to displace him.

This, however, was the object which Harry was arriving at. He had not forgotten the nickname which had been given him, and this was the revenge which he sought—a strictly honorable one, as will be admitted.

At length the day of his triumph came. He was advanced to the head of the class, which he had entered at the foot, and George Dawkins, much to his disgust, found himself playing second fiddle to "Young Stupid."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TEMPTATION OF RIVALRY.

Dawkins was exceedingly mortified at losing the pre-eminence which he had long enjoyed, and the mortification was increased by the reflection that it had been won by one whom he considered intellectually his inferior.

He made one or two attempts to recover his position, which, not succeeding, he let it be understood that he could oust the fellow if he chose, but didn't think it worth the trouble.

There was to be another rivalry between them, however, in which he felt more interested.

One morning the principal rose, and, after calling the attention of the scholars, made the following announcement:

"Boys, I am authorized to offer a prize to each class in school for the best written essay, on subjects which I shall announce. I do this, not so much to excite you to rivalry, as to afford you an opportunity for obtaining more practice in composition than you would otherwise get. The essays will of course be longer and more elaborate than your ordinary compositions. I shall expect you to do your best. The competition will be an honorable one, and I hope you will all engage in it in the right spirit. The prizes will consist of ten dollar pieces, which, at your option, can be replaced by gold medals of equal value."

He next proceeded to assign the subjects which had been selected, to the several classes.

To the class to which Harry belonged was assigned as a subject, "The Character of Washington."

Of course, there was quite an interest manifested among the boys, and little knots gathered together in recess to speculate as to those who would be fortunate enough to succeed.

Our interest is confined to the class in which our hero held a place.

The general impression seemed to be tha George Dawkins would obtain the prize.

He was, as has already been said, a showy boy, and very quick. Whatever he did cost him little pains, and his compositions, if not generally the best, had stood among the first, while it was known that they cost him not more than half the labor bestowed by his less brilliant classmates.

"Yes, Dawkins will get it," said one. "I'll bet on him."

"I ain't so sure of that, said another. "He's so careless. Dashes off a thing in half a minute."

"O, well, no wonder. Anybody would get off as easily as possible for a common composition, but this is for a prize."

"Now, I think Harry Conant will get it."

"To be sure he is at the head of the class, but you know Dawkins might be if he chose. He says he won't take the trouble."

"I know he says so; that's his way. But that doesn't make it so."

"You know Harry studies harder than Dawkins."

"Yes, and he'll take more pains in writing."

At dinner, that day, George Dawkins mentioned that a prize had been offered for the best essay on "The Character of Washington."

"Of course you'll write, George," said his father.

Mr. Dawkins had been very much such a boy as his son, but with more energy. He had a great deal of pride, and was disposed to think that his son was one of the smartest boys of his age in America—a belief which is very apt to be entertained by fathers in regard to their sons. It is wonderful what a very considerable number of the representatives of Young America are rarely gifted.

"Yes," said George, "I intend to write."

"Well, my son, there isn't any one that is likely to prove a dangerous rival, is there?"

"No, sir. To be sure, there's one boy that some of them think will get it over me, but they'll find themselves mistaken."

"Who is the boy?"

"Harry Conant."

"Conant—Conant! I don't know the name. Is he of good family?"

This was the all-important question with Mr. Dawkins.

"Hasn't got any at all, that I know off," drawled George.

"Who does he live with then?" questioned the parent.

"O, he's a sort of adopted son of old Cameron, the sexton?"

"O," said Mr. Dawkins, contemptuously. "Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, George, I hope you have the honor of the family too much at heart to allow yourself to be beaten by such a fellow as that."

"Yes, sir; I should be ashamed of myself. However, I don't feel very much alarmed."

"By way of a little stimulus, I will give you, if you succeed, in addition to the prize which is of no great importance in itself, a gold watch.

"Will you?" said George, with delight.

The truth was, he had longed for nothing so much as a gold watch, and now that there seemed to be a fair opportunity of obtaining one, he resolved to do that he could toward it.

Here, however, his vanity stood in the way. Instead of beginning at once as he ought to have done, he let time slip away until three out of the four weeks which were allowed for the task had glided away.

Meanwhile, Harry had not communicated the prize offer to the sexton and his wife.

This was his motive. He wished, in case he should be successful, to be able to surprise them with his success. Moreover, he intended with the ten dollars, in the event of his obtaining it, to purchase a present for the sexton's wife as a mark of his gratitude, and this too he wished to be a surprise.

Harry very wisely commenced his task at once. He knew that in a brief time, Dawkins, whom, he knew would prove his chief rival, could write a better essay than himself; but he also knew his own strength, and he felt that with proper care, he might stand an excellent chance.

He felt the more confidence when he learned, as indeed Dawkins took good care to have it understood, that when three-quarters of the time had elapsed, he had not commenced his essay.

"He must feel very confident," thought Harry, who, by this time, had completed the first draught of his own.

Three—four days had passed away.

Dawkins had now got fairly to work, and wrote at high pressure.

His essay was a very creditable one under the circumstances, and would probably distance any, with the exception of Harry's.

The latter was finished, and had already been seen by one or two of the boys who were loud in its praise.

On the morning on which they were to be handed in, Dawkins heard some of these favorable comments. Beginning, for the first time, to feel a little troubled about the success of his own effort, he managed by ingenious questioning, to find that Harry's was kept in his desk.

Seeing the coast clear, he contrived to get hold of it, and after reading a page or two, found to his great disgust that it was much better than his own.

What should he do?

He had been so certain of obtaining the prize—he had even assured his father with the utmost confidence that there really could be no doubt on he point; that the disomfiture which he could forsee, and the anticipated triumph of the sexton's adopted son, would be absolutely intolerable.

Besides—and this had quite as much weight as anything else—he had been promised a gold watch—an object he had long coveted—in the event of his success.

"I do believe he took so much pains on purpose to cheat me out of the watch," said he, with a slight touch of unreasonableness.

Yet what he could he do, since this result appeared to be inevitable?

He might destroy the essay of his rival, but that would be altogether too daring and high-handed an outrage.

There was another thing he might do. He remembered that a blot was to be considered fatal to the claims of an essay, however deserving in other respects. With a sudden impulse he opened the fair manuscript and deaded it by a large blot. He then hastily returned it to its place, satisfied that he had not been seen.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE SECRET WITNESS.

At the close of the last chapter we disclosed the base plan by which George Dawkins removed all chance of his rival's success.

It was a daring piece of outrage, and perhaps Dawkins would have been incapable of it at any other time. But the reader understands the force of the motives which were brought to bear upon him—involving the loss of the ten dollars as only a secondary thing.

Nevertheless his conscience did smite him. But he said to himself, by way of palliation, "After all, it wasn't at all sure that Conant would gain the prize. I dare say my essay would have been considered equally good. Besides, as it isn't so much the money I wanted, I can give Conant that, in case I am successful."

But before leaving the room, Dawkins was quite dismayed by discovering that he had been mistaken in thinking that he had been alone.

In a corner of the school room, stretched upon a bench, was Arthur Sweet, one of the smallest boys in school.

Dawkins turned pale and then red. He was not a little terrified, for he knew that if the boy should reveal what he had seen, things would wear an ugly look. The danger must be faced in some way.

First he must ascertain whether his conduct had really been observed—a point on which he was not altogether certain.

Accordingly he turned back, and walked up to the young boy.

"Holloa, Sweet!" said he in rather a rough tone, nudging the boy, "what are you about?"

"What are *you* about?" retorted Arthur.

Dawkins thought there was something significant in the tone in which this was uttered.

"You're reading, are you?" he asked, observing Robinson Crusoe, lying near Arthur.

"Yes."

"Have you been reading for the last ten minutes?"

"Yes, of course. But what do you want to know for?"

"Perhaps he did not see me after all," thought Dawkins. "I must not let him see what I am aiming at."

"Whereabouts are you in the book?" he asked, taking it up unceremoniously.

"At the place where Robinson finds Friday."

"Humph! Do you like it?"

"Yes, very much."

"I remember," said Dawkins, "when I read it for the first time, I was so interested that I didn't know anything of what was passing around me."

Perhaps he wished to elicit a similar confession from Arthur, but the latter did not seem disposed to make it, or else did not know what was wanted of him.

"You must have been very much interested, then," said he.

"I suppose you are not so much so, but are smart enough to do two things at once."

"Of course," said Arthur.

This was still unsatisfactory. It might mean either one thing or another.

Dawkins changed his tactics.

"Did you see me when I came in the room, a minute ago?"

"A minute ago? A pretty long minute it was."

"I only said a minute," said Dawkins uneasily, "to see if you would know better."

"It was ten minutes ago."

"You are a better observer than I thought. Perhaps you can tell what I have been doing all the time?"

"*Perhaps* I can," repeated Arthur.

"Well, but can you?"

"Do you suppose your motions are important enough for me to watch them all the time?"

"How do I know? Folks sometimes meddle with matters that are of no particular importance because they have nothing better to do."

"Well, I have got something better to do than to watch you," said Arthur, resuming his Robinson Crusoe. "This is a great deal more interesting, and if you've got through asking your rigmarole of questions, I'll just go on reading. I want to finish this chapter before school begins."

Arthur buried himself in the volume alluded to, and Dawkins left the room, not altogether certain, but on the whole feeling safe.

"I guess he didn't notice anything," said he to himself. He was so busy reading that he just looked up when I entered the room, and then went at his reading. I ought not to have asked him so many questions. It was just the thing to excite his suspicions, or increase them if he had any. However, I guess I'm safe. Even if he had looked up, and happened to see me with the essay in my hand, he would have thought it was my own, and wouldn't have suspected anything. I'd let the matter slip from my mind. I only hope that Conant will hand in his essay without taking the trouble to look at it first. That might be rather awkward, especially if the ink shouldn't have dried, and he should question that little rascal."

"Come here, Dawkins, I want you for a game at marbles," sounded from the play-ground.

The boy dismissed the recollection of the disreputable scene in which he had just played a part, and at once accepted the proposition, and was soon absorbed in the game.

Meanwhile Arthur Sweet, who had resumed his book, threw it aside, and said to himself:

"I wonder what's the matter with Dawkins this morning. He acts rather queer—seems to me he's rather inquisitive. He's been up to something, I'll bet a hat."

Arthur thought a moment, and then continued:

"Let me see, what was he doing? I saw him go to Conant's desk, and then I saw him with a paper in his hand. I wonder if it wasn't Conant's essay. It must have been. I remember now, they are to be handed in this morning. He was afraid I caught him looking at it, that was it. But why should he care?"

The result of Arthur's cogitations was, to excite his curiosity to such an extent, that he, too, went to Conant's desk, and, fumbling round, got hold of the essay.

He opened it, scarcely knowing why he did so, when the first thing that was revealed to him was the blot, which, in all its deformity, stared him in the face.

"A blot!" he exclaimed, "that's too bad That spoils Conant's chance. How could he have been so careless?"

He inspected the blot a little more closely.

"Why, it looks quite fresh," he said to himself.

"Can it be," thought he, after a moment's pause, "that Dawkins blotted it? O, I see now. The prize was sure to go to either one or the other of them, and Dawkins has made sure of it in that way. That's the reason he was prowling round here this morning, and the reason he asked me so many questions was, because he was afraid I saw him. He's brought himself right out, for I never should have thought of it, if it hadn't been for his questions. What an awful mean trick it was, though! I declare, I've a great mind to go right off and tell Harry Conant. I like him ten times as well as I do that George Dawkins, especially since this has happened. Shall I tell or not? I don't like being a tell-tale, but then it would be mean not to tell in such a case as this. I guess though I'll wait, and watch how Dawkins appears. Anyhow, if the prize should be given to him, I'll up and tell all I know."

Arthur put away his book, the interest of which was eclipsed by the bit of real life which was just revealed to him, and walked out into the play-ground.

Dawkins and two other boys were playing marbles.

The latter, who had his for observing reasons Arthur's movements, said carelessly, "So you've got tired of reading Robinson Crusoe, have you?"

"Yes, I've read all I want to just now."

"Won't you come and play with us?"

"I guess not. There isn't time before the bell rings."

"He never paid me so much attention before," thought Arthur, confirmed in his suspicions.

That morning the essays were handed in. Harry did not again look at his, and, therefore, did not know that it carried its own condemnation darkly imprinted upon it.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOW IT TURNED OUT.

The essays were all in, and all that the competitors could now do, was, to wait in patience till the examination should be made and the decision announced.

At length the morning came.

We have no particular interest in any of the classes, but the one to which our hero belonged, and shall therefore confine our account to that.

When the principal came to this class, he said:

"Before awarding the prize for an essay on the Character of Washington, I may remark that I am obliged to deny the prize to the one whose intrinsic excellence merits it, on account of want of neatness in the manuscript. It was understood that this was a point indispensable, and that a blot would be fatal, however excellent the essay might be in other respects.

Meanwhile Harry listened, not in the least suspecting that the blotted manuscript was his own. He supposed that it must be the essay of Dawkins, which he was prepared to believe carelessly written.

Dawkins himself looked slightly flushed, as Harry noticed, probably, he thought, on account of his disappointment, in relation to his failure.

"Ruling the blotted manuscript out, therefore," said the principal, "I find the prize is awarded to George Dawkins."

"George Dawkins!"

There was a buzz of surprise. The other boys as well as Harry, had supposed that the disfigured manuscript must be his.

Dawkins himself was in a trying situation. Aware of how he had gained the prize, his feelings in spite of his triumph, were by no means enviable.

As for Harry, he with the others, wondered who the writer of the other essay could be. But his wonder was succeeded by a still greater wonder, when the principal went on to say:

"I am induced also to mention in the name of the author of the essay which should have been successful, since its merits entitle it, notwithstanding the blemish to which I have alluded, to honorable mention. It is by Harry Conant."

Harry was quite overwhelmed with surprise.

What could it all mean? His essay blotted.

He raised his hand, soliciting permission to speak.

"Well, Conant," said the teacher, encouragingly, for he was prepossessed in favor of the boy, and was disappointed in being compelled to bring him no prize.

"Will you be kind enough to let me see the manuscript of my essay? I had no idea that it was blotted when it was handed in."

The essay was handed him.

He opened it, and the blot stared him in the face.

His face flushed with mortification.

"I don't understand it," he said. "When I brought it over in the morning, and showed it to some of the boys, it was entirely free from blots. I am afraid some one must have had it afterwards, and got the blot on."

"What boys saw it?" asked the teacher.

"Henry Vernon, and Edward Graves, sir."

"Vernon," said the teacher, turning to him, "can you remember the state of Conant's manuscript when you saw it? Was there any blot on it?"

"No, sir," said the boy promptly.

"Graves, do you say the same?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are both quite sure that you are not mistaken?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what time did you see it?"

"Half an hour before school."

"Do you mean that you first saw it then, or that you had seen it at that time."

"We had seen it at that time."

"And the essay was handed in at nine. Then some one must have had it in the meantime. Probably, for I will not suspect that anyone disfigured it purposely, it was quite accidental. Yet, it is no more than justice to Conant, as well as manly for the offender to come forward and confess it."

There was a silence. Everybody looked expectant.

There were two who looked restless and excited. These were the two boys who, undoubtedly knew more of it than any one else.

Of course the reader will understand that I mean Arthur Sweet and George Dawkins.

At length the teacher said.

"Is there any one present who saw the manuscript of Conant's essay, within half an hour of school-time?"

Arthur Sweet hesitated a moment, and then with his face flushing painfully, raised his hand.

All were surprised, and there was one that looked dismayed.

"Then you saw it?" queried the teacher.

"Yes, sir."

"What induced you to look at it?"

"Curiosity, sir," said Arthur, with some hesitation.

"And you accidentally got a blot on, did you?"

"No, sir."

"No? Do you mean to say that it was already there?"

"Yes, sir."

"This complicates the matter," said the teacher, a little mystified. "Of course you will understand that there will be no punishment for an accident, Arthur. Again, did you blot the essay?"

"No, sir," said Arthur, promptly, in a tone which carried the conviction of its being truthful, with it.

"Did the blot look recent?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you any suspicion as to how it got on there?"

Arthur stole a stealthy glance at Dawkins, but the latter was looking down, and he could not catch his glance.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you know who was the means of doing it?"

"Yes, sir; or at least I feel very confident."

"Will you tell us what you know about it?"

"There was another boy in the room at the time that I was there. I saw him go to Conant's desk, and saw him afterwards with a manuscript in his hand. I was reading Robinson Crusoe at the time. After he went out, I was led by curiosity to go to Conant's desk myself, and on opening his essay, saw the blot."

"Did it look as if it had been made within a few minutes?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now," said the teacher, slowly, "but one thing remains to be told—the name of the boy who did this."

Arthur caught a stealthy, imploring glance from Dawkins, and, much as he disliked him, he could not help pitying him also. He determined that he would say no more.

"That, sir, I would rather not tell."

The teacher started, and looked at first disposed to be angry. But it was only for a moment. His countenance cleared and he said in his usual tone: "Since you are unwilling I will not press the matter. I understand your reluctance, and I respect it."

Arthur looked gratified, and the teacher gained much in the estimation of the scholars by his wise and manly forbearance. A mere martinet would have harshly insisted upon the whole being told.

"Still," pursued the teacher, "it is not right that Conant should lose the prize he has merited, through no fault of his own."

Here Dawkins looked alarmed, fearing that he should lose what had already been assigned him.

"Therefore," said the teacher, "I will give, out of my own purse, a prize equal to the other, to which I declare Conant entitled. Conant and Dawkins, you may advance and receive your prizes."

As they went forward, there burst forth from the boys an irrepressible cheer, intended, however, wholly for Conant.

When school was over, Arthur Sweet went up to Dawkins:

"Dawkins," said he, "I kept silent this morning, not because I think well of you, for I don't; but because I don't like being a tell-tale. However, I give you warning that I shall tell Harry Conant. I know now why you blotted his essay. You wanted to spoil his chance of a prize. But you didn't succeed."

"Don't tell him," urged Dawkins, alarmed. "If you won't, I'll give you half the prize."

"Thank you for nothing. I don't take bribes."

"If you tell," blustered Dawkins, resorting to menace, "I will lick you."

"And suppose I am asked why you licked me?" asked Arthur, significantly. "What shall I say?"

Dawkins walked off in discomfiture. But from that moment he hated Harry, and determined to injure him if he could.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A MEETING AFTER MANY YEARS.

Dawkins did not remain in school much longer. Whether the boys really suspected that he was the one who had blotted his rival's essay, or whether he only suspected this to be so, is uncertain. At all events, he knew that our hero, Harry Conant, had been told of it, and although the latter had never said anything about it, yet he did not like to meet the gaze