

STRONG AND STEADY

By MORATHO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)
He began to replace the book in its brown paper covering.

"I don't know but I might give you twenty-five cents more. Come, now, I'll give you two dollars and a quarter."

"I can't take it," said Walter, shortly. "Three dollars and a half is the price, and I will not take a cent less."

"You won't get it out of me, then," retorted the lady, slamming the door in displeasure.

Walter had already made up his mind to this effect, and had started on his way to the gate.

"I wonder if I shall meet many people like her?" he thought, and he felt somewhat despondent.

Walter began to think that selling books would prove a harder and more disagreeable business than he had anticipated. He had been brought face to face with meanness and selfishness, and they inspired him with disgust and indignation.

Not that he expected everybody to buy his books, even if they could afford it. Still, it was not necessary to insult him by offering half price.

He walked slowly up the street, wondering if he should meet any more such customers. On the opposite side of the street he noticed a small shoemaker's shop.

"I suppose it is of no use to go in there," thought Walter. "If they won't buy at a big house, there isn't much chance here."

Still he thought he would go in. He had plenty of time on his hands, and might as well let slip no chance, however small. He pushed open the door, and found himself in a shop about twenty-five feet square, littered up with leather snavings and finished and unfinished shoes.

A boy of fourteen was pegging, and his father, a man of middle age, was finishing a shoe.

"Good-morning," said Walter.

"Good-morning," said the shoemaker, turning round. "Do you want a pair of shoes this morning?"

"No," said Walter, "I didn't come to buy, but to sell."

"Well, what have you got to sell?"

"A subscription book, finely illustrated."

"Let me look at it."

He wiped his hands on his apron, and taking the book, began to turn over the leaves.

"It seems like a good book," he said. "Does it sell well?"

"Yes, it sells largely. I have only just commenced, but other agents are doing well on it."

"That's the way to talk. How much do you expect to get for this book?"

"The price is three dollars and a half."

"It's rather high."

"But there are a good many pictures. Those are what cost money."

"Yes, I suppose they do. Well, I've a great mind to take one."

"I don't think you'll regret it. A good book will give you pleasure for a long time."

"That's so. Well, here's the money."

Walter was all the more pleased at effecting this sale, because it was unexpected. He had expected to sell a book at the great house he had just called at, but thought that the price of the book might deter the shoemaker, whose income probably was not large.

During the next hour Walter failed to sell another copy. At length he managed to sell a second. As these were all he had brought with him, and he was feeling somewhat tired, he went back to the tavern, and did not come out again till after dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Walter found a good dinner ready for him at 12 o'clock, which he enjoyed the more because he felt that he had earned it in advance. He waited till about 2 o'clock, and again set out, this time in a different direction. In some places he was received politely; in others he was treated as a humbug. But Walter was by this time getting accustomed to his position, and found that he must meet disagreeable people with as good humor as he could command. One farmer was willing to take the book if he would accept pay in apples, of which he offered him two barrels; but this offer he did not for a moment entertain, judging that he would find it difficult to carry about the apples, and probably difficult to dispose of them. However, he managed to sell two copies, though he had to call at twenty places to do it. Nevertheless, he felt well repaid by the degree of success he met with.

"Five books sold to-day!" thought Walter, complacently, as he started on his walk home. "That gives me six dollars and a quarter profit. I wish I could keep that up."

But our young merchant found that he was not likely to keep up such sales. The next day he sold but two copies, and the day succeeding three. Still, for three days and a half the aggregate sale was eleven copies, making a clear profit of thirteen dollars and seventy-five cents. At the end of the week he had sold twenty copies; but to make up this number he had been obliged to visit one or two neighboring villages.

He now prepared to move on. The next place at which he proposed to stop for a few days we will call Bolton. He had already written to Cleveland for a fresh supply of books to be forwarded to him there. He had but two books left, and his baggage being contained in a small valise, he decided to walk the distance, partly out of economy, but principally because it would enable him to see the country at his leisure. During the first five miles he succeeded in selling both books, which relieved him of the burden of carrying them, leaving him only his valise.

Walter was strong and stout, and enjoyed his walk. There was a freshness and novelty about his present mode of life, which he liked. He did not imagine he should like to be a book agent all his life, but for a time he found it quite agreeable.

He stopped under the shade of a large elm and ate the lunch which he had brought with him from the inn. The sandwiches and apples were good, and, with the addition of some water from a stream near by, made a very acceptable lunch. When he resumed his walk after resting a couple of hours, the weather had changed. In the morning it was bright sunshine. Now the clouds had gathered, and a storm seemed imminent. To make matters worse, Walter had managed to stray from the road. He found himself walking in a narrow lane, lined on either side by thick woods. Soon the rain came pattering down, at first in small drops, but quickly poured down in a drenching shower. Walter took refuge in the woods, congratulating himself that he had sold the books, which otherwise would have run the risk of being spoiled.

"I wish there were some house nearby in which I could rest," thought Walter. The prospect of being benighted in the woods in such weather was far from pleasant.

Looking around anxiously, he espied a small footpath, which he followed, hoping, but hardly expecting, that it might lead to some place of refuge. To his agreeable surprise he emerged after a few minutes into a small clearing, perhaps half an acre in extent, in the middle of which was a rough cabin. It was a strange place for a house, but, rude as it was, Walter hailed its appearance with joy.

At all events it promised protection from the weather, and the people who occupied it would doubtless be willing to give him, for pay, of course, supper and lodging. Probably the accommodations would not be first class, but our hero was prepared to take what he could get, and be thankful for it. Accordingly he advanced fearlessly and pounded on the door with his fist, as there was neither bell nor knocker.

The door not being opened immediately, he pounded again. This time a not particularly musical voice was heard from within:

"Is that you, Jack?"

"No," answered Walter, "it isn't Jack."

His voice was probably recognized as that of a boy, and any apprehension that might have been felt by the person within was dissipated. Walter heard a bolt withdrawn, and the door opening, revealed a tall, gaunt, bony woman, who eyed him in a manner which could not be considered very friendly or cordial.

"Who are you?" she demanded abruptly, keeping the door partly closed.

"I am a book agent," said Walter.

"Do you expect to sell any books here?" asked the woman, with grim humor.

"No," said Walter, "but I have been caught in the storm, and lost my way. Can I stop here over night if the storm should hold on?"

"This isn't a tavern," said the woman, ungraciously.

"No, I suppose not," said Walter; "but it will be a favor to me if you will take me in, and I will pay you whatever you think right. I suppose there is no tavern nearby."

He half hoped there might be, for he had already made up his mind that this would not be a very agreeable place to stop at.

"There's one five miles off," said the woman.

"That's too far to go in such weather. If you'll let me stay here, I will pay you whatever you ask in advance."

"Humph!" said the woman, doubtfully. "I don't know how Jack will like it."

As Walter could know nothing of the sentiments of the Jack referred to, he remained silent, and waited for the woman to make up her mind, believing that she would decide in his favor. He proved to be right.

"Well," she said, half unwillingly, "I don't know but I'll take you in, though it isn't my custom to accommodate travelers."

"I will try not to give you much trouble," said Walter, relieved to find that he was sure of food and shelter.

"Humph!" responded the woman. She led he way into the building, which appeared to contain two rooms on the first floor, and probably the same number of chambers above. There was no entry, but the door opened at once into the kitchen.

"Come up to the fire if you're wet," said the woman.

The invitation was hospitable, but the manner was not. However, Walter was glad to accept the invitation, without thinking too much of the manner in which it was expressed, for his clothes were pretty well saturated by the rain. There was no stove, but an old brick fireplace, on which two stout logs were burning. There was one convenience, at least, about living in the woods—fuel was abundant, and required nothing but the labor of cutting it.

"I think I'll take off my shoes," said Walter.

"You can if you want to," said his grim hostess.

He extended his wet feet toward the fire, and felt a sense of comfort stealing over him. He could hear the rain falling fiercely against the sides of the cabin, and felt glad that he was not compelled to stand the brunt of the storm.

He looked around him guardedly, not wishing to let his hostess see that he was doing so, for she looked like one who might easily be offended. The room seemed remarkably bare of furniture. There was an unpainted table, and there were also three chairs, one of which had lost its back. These were plain wooden chairs, and though they appeared once to have been painted, few vestiges of the original paint now remained. On a shelf were a few articles of tin, but no articles of crockery were visible, except two cracked cups. Walter had before this visited the dwellings of the poor, but he had never seen a home so poorly provided with what are generally regarded as the necessities of life.

"I wonder what Lem would say if he should see me now," thought Walter, his thoughts going back to the Essex Classical Institute, and the friend whose studies

he shared. They seemed far away, those days of careless happiness, when as yet the burdens of life were unfeared and scarcely even dreamed of. Did Walter sigh for their return? His father was then alive, and he would have given years of his own life to recall that loved parent from the grave. But I do not think he would have cared, for the present at least, to give up his business career, humble though it was, and go back to his studies. He enjoyed the novelty of his position. He enjoyed even his present adventure, in spite of the discomforts that attended it, and there was something exciting in looking about him, and realizing that he was a guest in a rough cabin in the midst of the woods, a thousand miles away from home.

Guarded as he had been in looking around him, it did not escape without observation.

"Well, young man, this is a poor place, isn't it?" asked the woman, suddenly.

"I don't know," said Walter, wishing to be polite.

"That's what you're thinking, I'll warrant," said the woman. "Well, you're not obliged to stay, if you don't want to."

"But I do want to, and I am very much obliged to you for consenting to take me," said Walter, hastily.

"You said you would pay in advance," said the woman.

"So I will," said Walter, taking out his pocketbook, "if you will tell me how much I am to pay."

"You may give me a dollar," said the woman.

Walter drew out a roll of bills, and, finding a one-dollar note, handed it to the woman.

She took it, glancing covetously at the remaining money which he replaced in his pocketbook. Walter noticed the glance, and, though he was not inclined to be suspicious, it gave him a vague feeling of anxiety.

(To be continued.)

KING HARNESSSED A HORSE.

Meanwhile, Its Owner Sat By, Watching the Monarch's Work.

Much-traveled people will testify that the most stupid people in the whole world are found in Mecklenburg, Germany, says the Kansas City Star. Natives of that district are said to be even more dense than the inhabitants of the county of Wiltshire, England, and that is saying a good deal. The inhabitants of both of these places will admit the impeachment, but they do not call it stupidity; they have another name for it. They have exalted it into a virtue and call it "imperturbability." In the United States, if a country yokel didn't know the way to a town fifteen miles away, he would be accounted a fool. But in Mecklenburg the peasant one meets on the highways doesn't know, has never been there and never wants to go. That is imperturbability.

It is a mistake, however, to think that the country dullard never "scores," as the king of Wurtemberg has discovered. Recently that royal individual went to shoot with the Grand Duke Adolphus of Mecklenburg. Accompanied by the grand duke's eldest son they drove in a luxurious motor car to the famous deer park at Neustrelitz. On the way they came upon a country tilt-cart drawn at a snail's pace along the narrow road by a white horse. Perched on the seat were a peasant and his good wife. The chauffeur blew his horn and much to the royal party's surprise the horse began to prance briskly.

As the peasant made no attempt to pull the horse and cart out of the road the chauffeur repeated the "honk, honk." The horse reared and jumped about, but strange to say, the peasant and his wife sat stolidly on the seat without any signs of excitement. Finally the horse flopped over on its side and lay quite still.

Immediately out jumped the king, the grand duke and the son of the grand duke and came running up to the fallen horse. The grand duke made a dive at the horse's head, his son narrowly escaped serious injury in unfastening the traces while the horses' hind legs were working like flails. All this while the peasant and his good wife sat calmly on their seat and watched the royal trio perspire at their self-imposed task. Finally after a great deal of pulling and coaxing the white horse scrambled to its feet and patiently submitted to being reharnessed by the three pairs of hands which probably never before had done such humble work. When everything was in order again, the grand duke handed the peasant a piece of money.

"There, there, my good man," he said, "it's all right this time, anyhow. Now you can tell your cronies that the grand duke and his son picked up your horse, and the king of Wurtemberg helped them."

The story courteous.

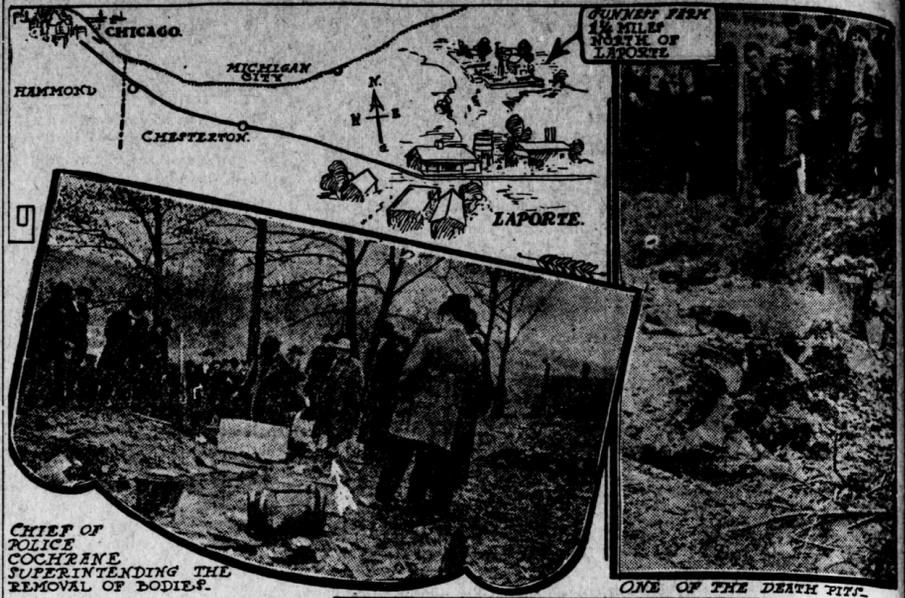
An official of the Department of the Interior tells of an incident at one of the government schools for the Indians.

A patronizing young woman of Cincinnati was being shown through the institution, when she came upon a fine looking Indian girl of perhaps 16 years of age. The Indian girl was hemming napkins, which the girl from Cincinnati watched for some moments in silence. Then she said to the Indian, "Are you civilized?"

The Sioux raised her head slowly from her work and glanced coldly at her interrogator. "No," she replied, as her eyes again sank to her napkins; "are you?"

The man who tells tiresome stories usually has a big strong voice, lots of determination, and gets to the end in spite of interruptions.

SCENES AT THE GUNNESS "DEATH FARM" NEAR LA PORTE, IND.

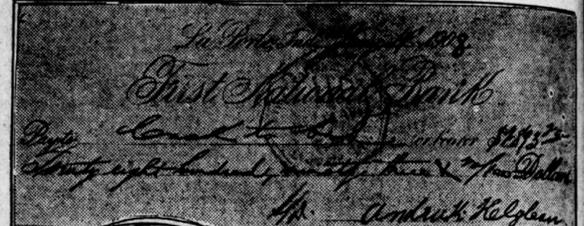


THE LA PORTE MURDER FARM.

Grotesque Revelations There Read Like a Story of the Mid-Centuries.

Like a chapter from the bloody records of the mid-centuries is the terrible story unfolded by the authorities of La Porte, Ind., where wholesale murder was done for years without anyone knowing or suspecting it. Criminal records contain no parallel of the grotesque story revealed in the finding of the clearing house for murders kept by Mrs. Belle Gunness near the Indiana town. Just how many persons met their fate in connection with the bloody business carried on there will perhaps never be known. The skeletons discovered on her premises and the fact that expressmen had many times delivered to her boxes and trunks now believed to contain human bodies form the chief materials for the construction of the strange story of her career. She is supposed to have lured rich men to her den by matrimonial advertisements and then made away with them for their money, and also to have run a murder "fence" for the benefit of her partners in the awful trade of human slaughter, the latter operating in Chicago and sending the bodies of their victims to her for burial. It is the theory of the prosecution that Mrs. Gunness deliberately lured men to her farm by means of an advertisement in a Chicago newspaper, in which she represented herself as an attractive and amiable widow looking for a mate. She alleged that she was the owner of a valuable farm and sought a well-to-do farmer as a husband. After a visit from such a candidate she generally induced him, it appears, to sell his farm and come to her with the proceeds of the sale, at which time she would deliberately murder him and bury his body on the premises.

For years this strange woman is said to have conducted her murder mill,



CHECK SHOWING THAT HELGREN WITHDREW ALL OF HIS SAVINGS.



DR. J. H. WILLIAM MEYER.

uncertainty. A fire which destroyed the Gunness home also disclosed the fact that her three children had either been murdered before the fire or that they had perished in the flames.

In some respects the methods of Mrs. Belle Gunness seem similar to those of the infamous Bender family in Kansas. Yet it is doubtful if the blood-thirsty Kate Bender in her palmyest days was ever equal to the awful crimes that are laid at the door of the Gunness woman. The story of the La Porte murder farm recalls the noto-

sible for the murder of quite a long list of persons. He was hanged in Philadelphia. The Benders, husband and wife and son and daughter, were supposed to have murdered nine or ten persons and buried the bodies in the vicinity of their home, robbery being their motive. The Benders mysteriously disappeared and their fate is unknown, although rumors were abroad at the time that indignant citizens put an end to their infamous careers.

COFFEE AS WEDDING GIFT.

Peculiar Custom Which Is General in Coffee-Raising Countries.

"We have a custom in the coffee-raising countries," said Senor Joaquim Nabuco, the Brazilian ambassador to the United States, "which is unknown in other parts of the world. When a child is born in the coffee country, a sack of the best grain is set aside as part of the inheritance, to be received on attaining its majority. Usually the sack is the gift from some close friend or relative, and it is regarded as sacredly as if it were a gift of gold or bonds. No stress would induce a Brazilian parent to use coffee which was made the birth gift of a child. As a rule it is sealed with the private seal of the owner and bears a card giving all particulars about the variety of grain, its age on being sowed and the birth of the child to whom it is given, and other details which are very interesting when the gift is due.

"Generally the coffee is opened for the first time when the child marries. The coffee for the reception or marriage feast is made from the legacy, and, according to precedent, this must be the first time the sack is opened. After the coffee is made for the wedding feast the sack is carefully closed and sent to the new home of the young couple, and should keep them in this staple for a year at least. When both bride and bridegroom have the birth gift of coffee they have started life under very hopeful conditions, so far as one necessary is concerned. Few people know that the older the parched grain of coffee is the better the flavor. Like wine it grows with age, and that which is over twenty years mellowing under proper conditions will bring from \$1.50 to \$3 a pound from connoisseurs. The giving of pounds of green coffee is a common practice in the coffee belt. Friends exchange these gifts and compare results. When one cannot afford to give a sack of coffee it frequently is the case that ten pounds of the best green is packed in a fancy case and bestowed on a newly born child, with directions that it must not be opened until the wedding day."—New York Press.

Practice Makes Perfect.

At the appointed time Edwin Jones had called at his best girl's home, but somehow Miss Wrinkle was not there to greet him.

He seated himself in the drawing room and anxiously awaited her arrival.

Presently the door opened; but, alas! it was only her eight-year-old brother.

"Hello!" exclaimed Edwin. "Is your sister busy?"

"She seems so," replied the youngster, "but I don't know just what she thinks she's doing. She's standing in front of the mirror, blushing just awful and whispering to it, 'Oh, Mr. Jones, this is so sudden!'"

The Situation.

"Are you able to keep a girl?"

"Financially, yes. Diplomatically, no."—Pittsburg Post.

When a woman buys something she cannot really afford, she condones the fault by doing without something else that did not intend to buy, anyway.



MRS. BELLE GUNNESS

while her neighbors remarked upon her good humor and her children mingled with others of their age in the neighborhood. And the end of this record of crime and mystery is shrouded in

rious doings of the Bender family in Montgomery County, Kan., about forty years ago, and the famous case of Henry H. Holmes, who swindled insurance companies and was held respon-