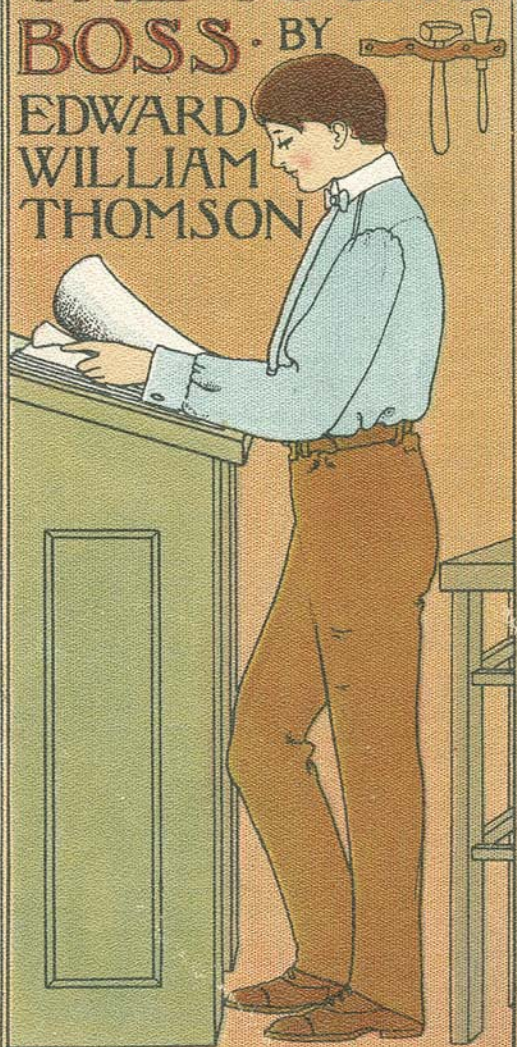
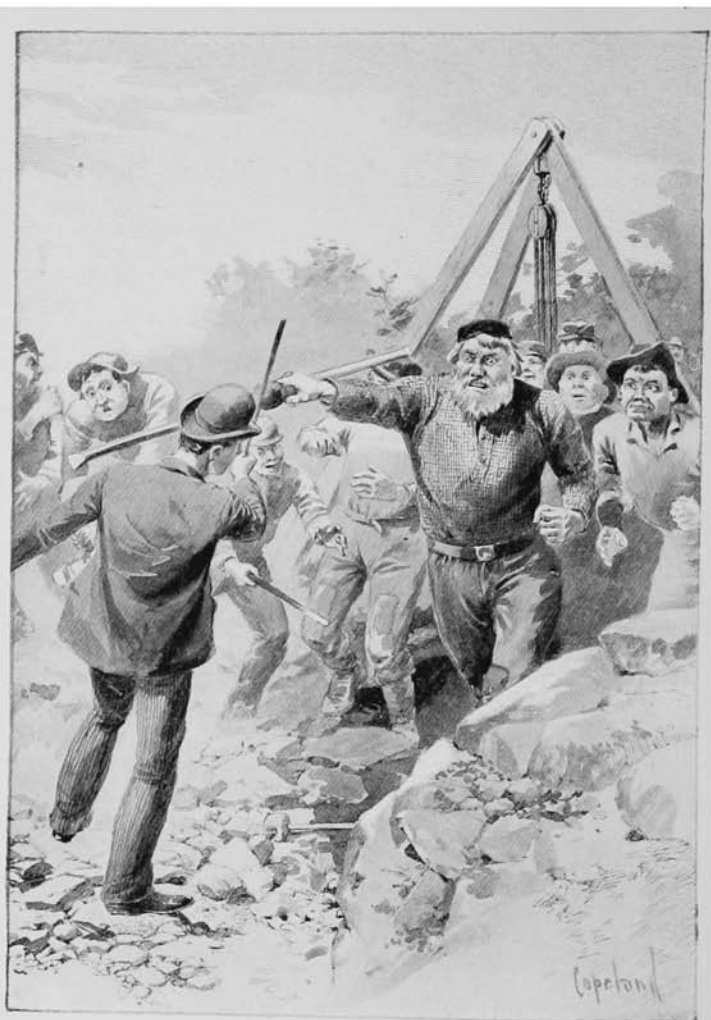




THE · YOUNG
BOSS · BY
EDWARD
WILLIAM
THOMSON



WALTER GIBBS, THE YOUNG BOSS.



"THE GIANT DROVE THE BROADENED POINT STRAIGHT AT WALTER'S HEAD." — Page 93.

THE YOUNG BOSS

A BOOK FOR BOYS

BY

EDWARD WILLIAM THOMSON

AUTHOR OF "OLD MAN SAVARIN"

SIXTH THOUSAND

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WALTER GIBBS, THE YOUNG BOSS.

CHAPTER I.

A BANKER AND A BOY.

MR. DOUGLAS GEMMILL, private banker in the small Canadian town of Garroch, stared in amazement at the sunburned youth who faced him across a low, table desk in the back office of the bank. It was after four o'clock of an afternoon in late September. Mr. Gemmill had finished his daily business with the public when Walter Gibbs had asked to be admitted on a matter of urgency.

"But, man alive," said Mr. Gemmill, who was a Scot by birth, "I never heard tell o' the like! You, a boy, come here and ask me for a credit of two thousand dollars! It's just amazing!"

"Well, sir," said Walter, "I expected it would surprise you. But I mustn't leave any-

thing untried. My mother authorized me to come. Mr. Barry, the lawyer, says she can act legally for my father while he's unconscious. You'd let my father have the money, wouldn't you, sir?"

"Aye, your father, lad. That's a horse of another color. But he's in brain fever, or the like — and there's no telling if —" The banker stopped short; he shrank from telling the boy his father might soon die.

"It's really my father you'd be lending to," said Walter, "and the contract is good. I went over the ground with my father, and I think he told me all he meant to do. It's a very simple job — draining that lake."

"Aye, is it? Perhaps you'll just explain it, Wally."

The youth took from his breast pocket a large note-book such as surveyors use, and pencilled a sketch while he talked: —

"Here's the lake — they call it Loon Lake. It's ten miles from Elbow Carry, and that's forty miles up the Ottawa from here. The lake is more than a mile long, half a mile wide, and about twelve feet deep. It is in the middle of

a flat of ten or twelve thousand acres of rich land. That's the land that Mr. Hebden wants to drain."

"What for?"

"So that he can crop it. Nothing but wild hay grows there now. It is flooded in spring and early summer. He thinks he can plough and sow it, or sell it off in farm lots if it's made dry."

"Well, how is that to be done?"

"Easy enough, sir. This creek runs out of the lake to the Ottawa River, two miles away. There's a fall of twenty-five feet in the creek. Its bed is white limestone, easy to blast out. Above the fall there is scarcely any water in summer, for the lake sinks very low and stops discharging. My father's contract is to blast out a channel four feet deep from the fall to the lake."

"I see. That will lower the lake four feet, eh?"

"Yes, sir, from its summer level. But my father has the option of going deeper, and for that he would get nearly twice as much per cubic yard."

"Aye, we'll no mind that," said the banker,

cautiously pursing his lips. "It's best just to reason on the plain contract, and no chance work. How much excavation in the four-foot channel?"

"About six thousand yards, sir."

"What's the price per yard?"

When the banker, whose business was to know something about all sorts of business, heard the price, he whistled.

"Man, there should be profit in yon, lad!"

"Yes, sir, and there may be more if we go deeper. But I was going to explain that the rock is harder under the top layer of four feet — at least it is where it crops out at the fall."

"Ah, well, I've said we'll just not reckon on the deep work. You seem to know what you're talking about, Wally."

"It would be queer if I didn't, sir — I helped my father to figure on the whole thing. He talks to me a good deal while we're working."

"You're learning the surveying, eh?"

"Yes, sir, and civil engineering. I'm apprentice to my father."

"Aye, I've seen you with yon whig-maleerie — what-you-call-it?"

"Theodolite, I guess you mean, sir."

"Aye, theodolite! Just that. I don't remember your father taking a contract before."

"Not just around here, sir. But when he sees a good small one, he goes in for it sometimes. He's been building the Buckstone River bridge and dam."

"Aye, has he? And it's there he fell off the pier, eh, and got his hurt?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does Doctor Mostyn say of his case?"

"He says father will come round all right, but his head will be affected for a good many weeks, maybe. And he should go south soon — as soon as he's strong enough to be moved, for his lungs are delicate, and he'll be weak to face the winter."

Mr. Gemmill was a ruddy-faced, stout, combative-looking man of over fifty. He could frown very terrifically at delinquent borrowers, but he now beamed quite genially at Walter. The banker lay back in his chair and gazed steadily at the youth, who looked him straight in the eye with perfect ingenuousness.

"Your father put up fifteen hundred dollars' forfeit, eh?"

"Yes, sir; it's in the hands of Mr. Bemis, the manager of the Merchants' Bank branch at Elbow Carry."

"Tell me about that."

"Well, sir, Mr. Hebden is very hot to have the job of draining finished this fall. He insisted on my father starting with at least thirty men on the first of October—that's two days after to-morrow. And he insisted on my father putting up fifteen hundred, to be forfeited in case he doesn't get started on time. Besides that, the job must be finished by the first of next January, or else my father forfeits a hundred dollars a day till it's done."

"Hebden is cranky, it's well known. But I wonder at your father."

"My father had a purpose, sir. He considered it no risk to put up the forfeit. And by doing so he could better insist that Mr. Hebden should put up forfeit money, too. You know he hates to pay out his money. They say he makes all kinds of delays. But in this case he is bound to forfeit three thousand dollars if he fails to pay any monthly estimate three days after it is certified by Surveyor Leclerc."

Mr. Gemmill laughed loudly.

"Good!" said he. "Your father was wide-awake this time. But of all the green gowks of English cockneys that ever came out to Canada, Hebden is the worst. Ah, weel, in dealings with a daft body one must fall in with whimsies. But it's a pity, Wally,— your father mortgaged his house to raise yon fifteen hundred, and now the forfeit's gone."

"It will be if I can't save it. That's what I'm trying to do, Mr. Gemmill. I do hope you will allow me a credit!"

"For two thousand dollars! Good sakes, lad, what for do you want so much money?"

"I don't want it all now, sir. But I'll have to put at least thirty men on the job on the first of October. I'll want money to pay their wages the first month before I get an estimate from Mr. Hebden, and they're sure to be asking for advances, too."

"Say seven hundred dollars, Wally," Mr. Gemmill threw in.

"Then I've got to take them up to Elbow Carry by steamer; take them ten miles back in the woods or marshes; get a big shanty built;

feed all hands for a month ; buy powder, fuse, charcoal — ”

“Charcoal? What for?”

“For the blacksmiths to sharpen drills with. There’s no other blacksmiths’ coal within fifty miles, and charcoal’s best, anyhow.”

“Go ahead, lad,” said the banker, looking pleased.

“I’ll need to buy steel and iron for jumpers, ball drills, and striking hammers ; a blacksmith’s outfit, some axes, a cooking kit — ”

“Oh!” interrupted the banker, laughing, “I see you know what plant you’ll need. But why risk the money? Why not go to Hebden and get him to let your father out of the contract, seeing he’s been unexpectedly hurt?”

“I did go to see him, sir, and I’m almost ashamed to say it. But my mother thought I ought to. I came from there this morning. I told him all about my father’s being badly hurt. I asked him to extend the contract till next year. But nothing would do. He’s an ugly-tempered little man.”

“He said he would seize the fifteen hundred forfeit, eh?”

"Yes, sir."

"Did you tell him that your father had no experienced friend or partner or employé to act for him?"

"No, sir. But I think I left him under the impression that we couldn't go on with the job. For I didn't then see how we could. It was only when I got home that I thought of coming to you. I wish you could think it right to help my mother and father in this trouble, sir."

"At what rate, Wally?"

"At any rate you like to ask, sir."

"Twenty per cent a month, Wally?"

"You wouldn't like to ask that, Mr. Gemmill," smiled the youth.

"No, eh?" Mr. Gemmill looked merry, and then grave. "Man alive, just consider! It's me that's to take the risk. Here's a lad of eighteen wants two thousand dollars. He can't give a penny of security. His father is down sick with his head caved in. Suppose he gets on his legs in two or three months, will he pay a debt like this, incurred without his authority? Besides, his house is already mortgaged. Don't you see, lad, that you're asking me to lend you

two thousand dollars, no less, on your personal word?"

Walter stood in deep thought for a full minute. There was depression in his voice when he next spoke, but he looked the banker in the eye with frank good nature.

"I see that, sir. I'm sure I'd pay you all right, but I can understand it wouldn't be business to deal so with a fellow of my age."

"Aye—you see that, eh?"

"Yes, sir, and I'll bid you good-day, and I'm obliged to you for listening so kindly to my story." Walter turned to go.

"Wait a wee, Wally. Never be precipitate, lad," said Mr. Gemmill with an oracular air. "Business is business—no doubt of that. But is it always just exactly good business to be so bound up in red tape that a man can't see the length of his nose? Tell me that, now?"

Walter sat down with joy thumping at his heart and beaming from his eyes on the banker.

"Lad, but I like you," said Mr. Gemmill, who was really an impulsive old gentleman.

"I like you, too, sir," said Walter quite simply, and the banker laughed outright at the reply.

"It's an unco' strange world we're living in," said Mr. Gemmill, "if a business man is to make no account of personal character and ability by way of security, but be all for endorsements and bonds and the like. In my opeenion it's the wise lender that looks to the quality of his customer first, eh, Wally?"

But Walter said nothing. He had too much tact to speak as if taking to himself the implied praise, but he blushed under the sense of approval.

"Who's your foreman?" Mr. Gemmill said, suddenly recovering caution.

"My father hired Pat Lynch last week, before he was hurt."

"Aye—did he? Well, I'll no say but what Pat's a very honest man. And he can get work out of men, moreover. But your father would be reckoning to oversee Pat himself."

"Yes, sir, I know that. I'll have to be on the job all the time."

"You think you can boss it?"

"Yes, sir. I've seen a good deal of rock excavation."

"What about your men?"

"My father spoke to thirty. They were expecting to start to-morrow. A cook and blacksmith, too. The blacksmith is under pay already."

"You'll be ten miles from any village?"

"Yes, sir. Elbow Carry is the nearest place."

"And if your men struck work you'd be stuck?"

"Yes, sir; for there's none too much time to do the job in. But they're to engage by the month. When I knew any of them were going I could look out for more."

"That's right. Engage them all in writing, mind you."

"Yes, sir." Walter spoke with some excitement at the significance of the banker's advice.

"Well, Wally, I don't know but you can have the money. If you don't do well with it, I'm deceived. I'd believe you've got a grand notion of business, but for one thing."

"What's that, Mr. Gemmill?"

"You're not asking what I'll charge for the accommodation."

"I know you'll do what's right, sir."

"So I will, Wally, so I will," said the banker,

warmly. "And that was good business sense in you, too. It's in knowing what-like man you're dealing with that the sense comes in. I'll charge you what I'd charge your father. And now, don't you feel the responsibility weighing heavy on you, lad?"

Walter thought a while before he replied. "Well, sir, I guess I feel more glad than anything."

"Go along, lad. You're all right. If you'd said you were burdened with a great sense of responsibility I'd have thought you were a wee bit hypocritical. You'll feel it on your young shoulders, though, before you get through this job. Here's my hand to you for a straightforward, honest lad, and no humbug about you. I'll see you a man when you come back to Garroch."

When Walter had gone the old gentleman sat twiddling his pen and looking out of the window absently, and smiling at the course he had taken, for his heart said it was creditable. But the questioning habit of his business gradually came back to his head. Why was it that Hebden, the cranky Englishman, was giving so unusually high a price for that rock excavation?

Was there some risk in the job of which Walter did not know?

"Well, it's too late now," said Mr. Gemmill, going through the village streets to his tea. "My promise is given. And if there is some unseen difficulty before him, I'll just have to trust his young brains to get round it."

Meantime Walter had gone home on flying feet, though already his elation at securing the money was giving way to the sense of responsibility which he had disavowed.

So much to buy; so many men to hire and command; so urgent a need to save the forfeit by getting his men to work within three days! In the cares of the venture he almost forgot that steady, dull pain at his heart, which meant anxiety for the life of his father.

As the blue-eyed boy of business went up the front steps of his father's mortgaged home, a younger boy, keen-looking and brown-eyed, came down to meet him.

"Well, Sam, how's father now?" said Walter to his brother.

"Hsh! Walter," warned Sam. "He's in the delirium again."

"Talking about the contract?"

"Yes; it's always the contract, and the mortgage, and the forfeit. Now he's got something new. He's talking about a dam a good deal."

"That'll be the dam at the Buckstone Bridge, of course. There's no dam on the new contract. It's on the old contract the dam is."

"Well, then, he's got the two things mixed up in the delirium," said Sam. "I guess that's it. I suppose Mr. Gemmill won't let you have the money, eh?"

"But he's going to."

"Walter! Going to give you enough to go on with the job?"

"Two thousand dollars."

"Oh, bully! Hooray!"

"H—sh, Sam. Father may hear."

"Well, you are a buster, Walter! And you'll be boss! What job are you going to give me?"

"Job of going to school five days a week, Sam," smiled Walter.

"Oh, come now, Walter. You'll want a clerk and timekeeper."

"Guess not, Sam. I calculate to do all that

myself. But we'll see. Come, let us go up to mother with the news."

As they tiptoed up-stairs they could hear the voice of their father in his delirium:—

"Of course, Hebden," cried the injured engineer. "Forfeit—that's all right. But oh, the water! See it rising! See! I'm all right, though; but if the dam goes—that's the trouble. Time is the essence of the contract. Yes, yes, yes. I'll push it. Fifteen hundred dollars' forfeit—all gone, all gone! The dam, the dam, the dam!" he wailed, and stopped short, so that complete silence fell on the house. Then, after a considerable pause, his incoherent ravings began again.

Meantime Walter's mother had come forth into the upper hall to meet her boys.

"I wonder what dam it is that's troubling father's mind," said she.

"Oh, that's the dam he built above Buckstone Bridge, where he was hurt," said Walter, confidently. "It was a hard job. Father has got all his business all mixed up together, I think. Poor father! How long will he be this way, does the doctor say?"

"Perhaps three or four days, Walter. The doctor says there's some pressure on his brain, but it will be all right soon. Only father must go south and mustn't be troubled by business at all for a long time. It will be pretty hard to keep it from him, though—he will be so anxious when he knows the forfeit money is lost."

"But it isn't, mother," said Sam.

"Oh Walter! Has Mr. Gemmill helped us?"

"Yes, mother. I'm to have two thousand dollars' credit, and I must get right to work this evening hiring men."

"God bless Mr. Gemmill forever!" said Mrs. Gibbs fervently. "He trusts my dear son. Oh Walter, if you can supply your father's place! Why, we shall be saved from ruin!"

"I'll do my best, mother. I believe I can run the job. Won't you tell Mary to give me my tea at once? I must start right out and hunt up Pat Lynch and the men."

CHAPTER II.

SAVING THE FORFEIT.

AT eleven o'clock in the forenoon of the first of October, Walter Gibbs, with thirty-five men, a blacksmith, and a cook, landed from the Ottawa River steamer *Prince George* at the lumbermen's village of Elbow Carry. There bad news confronted him in the person of James Jaffray, the landlord of the "Royal Arms," a large, white, frame hotel that faced the wharf from across a wide space of rock and sand. Behind this hotel the village rambled up the side of a considerable hill.

Jaffray, better known as "Windy Jim" to the lumbermen of the Ottawa Valley, was a tall, spare, exceedingly active man of nearly sixty, who had gained a considerable fortune, mainly from teaming. When gangs of raftsmen had run cribs down the long, crooked, furious Elbow Rapids, Jaffray's spring wagons took them

quickly over the Carry, seven miles of good road, to the Head, that they might run another lot of cribs the same day.

He was the victim of some nervous disease of the eyelids which caused him to wink incessantly with both eyes while speaking. This gave him a most undignified and comical appearance, quite inconsistent with his shrewd, forcible character.

It was seldom suspected that Jaffray lived in much mortification because the ludicrous winking still made him a laughing-stock after he had become so wealthy and important that his soul longed for the title of "Squire," commonly bestowed on a rival tavern-keeper of trifling consequence, but come of a "good family." None but a few thirsty bummers about the bar called Jaffray "Squire." To nearly all other men he was known by his youthful nickname of Windy Jim.

In business a man never can tell precisely what he gains by good manners and loses by bad. Walter, during his two previous visits to Elbow Carry, had invariably spoken to his host as Mr. Jaffray. Moreover, a sentiment of pity

for the gray, shrewd man, so unfortunately compelled to look always ludicrous, had moved the youth to address him with particular politeness. Thus he had unwittingly gained a valuable friend.

But it was with no cheering visage that Jaffray confronted Walter as he stepped from the gangway to the wharf.

"Well, you're here at last!" said the tavern-keeper.

"Yes, sir. I telegraphed you it was impossible for me to get away yesterday, as I had hoped. Have you got five teams ready for me?"

"Five? Fifty, if you want 'em! But I guess you don't."

"No, five will do, Mr. Jaffray," said Walter.

"I don't believe you'll need any," retorted Jaffray, ominously.

"How's that, sir?"

"Hebden says your father has thrown up the contract. Says he'd ought to have had thirty men on the job yesterday. He's gone down there himself with a gang—started at daylight."

"He has, has he?" said Walter, reticent, though surprised.

"Says your father's forfeited fifteen hundred and the job."

"Oh, I guess not," said Walter, coolly, concealing his dismay. "How does he make that out?"

"Well, this is the first of October. You'd ought to have started yesterday."

"The contract calls for a start on or before the first."

"It's nearly noon. You can't get started at work ten miles from here to-day, can you?"

"Can't I? I leave that to you, Mr. Jaffray."

"You will, eh? Level head, my son."

The tavern-keeper loved to have things left to his management. He was instantly in action.

He had a score to settle with Mr. Hebden, for the small Englishman had struck a blow at Jaffray's interests by employing the rival tavern-keeper's teams.

Mr. Hebden had inherited a lumbering business from his uncle, who had built it up from headquarters at Elbow Carry. To this the new owner had recently come from his office as a

small solicitor in England. Such was the man's self-confidence that he imagined himself competent to manage the very large and complicated "concern," though he "could not tell a cant-hook from a broadaxe," so his foreman said.

"Bill," shouted Jaffray, to one of his hostlers, "get seven teams in right away! Have 'em round in a jiffy. John, run and tell my girls to hustle up grub for forty men — ham 'n' eggs, fried pork, cold beef, tea, anything that's handy — biff, mind! Mr. Gibbs, let your men hurry your truck ashore. Make 'em work like sixty. Then let 'em come straight to the house for grub. You haven't got a minute to spare, but eat men must."

The men, who were nearly all Irishmen, had already jumped to obey Jaffray. They were delighted with the prospect of a dinner at the hotel table, quite famous on the river, for they had expected to boil tea on a fire in the open, and feed on cold pork and bread. Moreover, they had heard enough to suspect that their job was threatened, and a fight for possession of the ground likely to occur that afternoon.

"Come with me, Mr. Gibbs," said Jaffray, taking Walter's arm and walking rapidly toward his hotel. "You understand there's no time to lose. That's why I took the liberty of ordering dinner for your whole gang—not but what it will pay me, too. And seven teams will hustle us down there faster than five. I'll show Hebden who he calls Windy Jim!" and his eyes winked with extraordinary quickness.

"Why did Mr. Hebden take a gang of men down there? That beats me to understand," said Walter.

"Why, don't you see? He's bound to claim that forfeit. He's not going to give you possession. I'm told he is barricading the road, in case you should come to-day. He won't say it's a barricade, but that's what it will amount to. He'll make out he didn't expect you, and that he's going to work there with a gang of his own, and he'll try to keep you from striking a stroke to-day. To-morrow he'll claim the forfeit. Say, where *is* that money?"

"It's in Mr. Bemis's hands, Merchants' Bank branch up the hill."

"Well, you run right along up there now, my son, and tell Bemis you've got men here — tell him you'll get to work to-day. Be sure you notify him in writing. Hurry, or he may go out to dinner, and he's got no clerk. You can't afford to wait till he comes back; we must be out of here in half an hour. I'll show Hebden who's who at Elbow Carry!"

"All right. But I say, Mr. Jaffray, please tell my foreman that we'll not bother taking the blacksmith's kit along to-day, nor any of the rest of the heavy truck. It'll be enough if we just take drills for all hands, and the big tent and a day's provisions. You can send the rest down to-morrow."

"You bet I can! And you've got a head on you, my son. Leave me to fix things. You scoot for Bemis. Now, don't forget. Notify him in writing, mind."

So Walter ran up the hill just in time to find the bank agent locking his door and about to leave for the dinner-hour.

"Mr. Bemis, I believe," said Walter.

"Yes."

"I want to open an account with you."

"Can't you come in after dinner?"

"No, sir, I am hurried for time."

"Well come in," and Mr. Bemis opened his door.

"Garroch local bank, eh?" he said, on taking and examining the check which Walter tendered. "Mr. Gemmill's check's all right, I suppose. But how is this? It's not drawn to you."

"Yes, it is, sir. My name is Walter Gibbs."

"Pooh! I know Mr. Walter Gibbs, of Garroch, well. He's old enough to be your father."

"He is my father."

"Oh, I see! You're his son, then?"

"That's it, sir. I've come up to start work at Loon Lake."

"Aren't you a day late?"

"The first of October's not gone, sir."

"Precisely what I told Mr. Hebden last night."

"Did he claim the forfeit?"

"He did. But I told him you might come along to-day."

"What did he say to that?"

"Well, I don't know but what he was right. You can't get started to-day on the job."

"But I shall."

"How, if you find a lot of trees sort of accidentally felled across the road?"

"Surely Mr. Hebden wouldn't do that!"

"I didn't say he would. But don't you go making any calculations on Mr. Hebden; he's a man by himself."

"Did he say he'd refuse me possession?"

"I've said too much already. Anyhow, it's none of my affair. Only if he claims forfeit to-morrow and you're not started, what can I do?"

"You'd hand him the money?"

"Shouldn't I have to? The bond is clear."

"All right. Will you kindly let me have pen and paper, Mr. Bemis?"

"Certainly, certainly."

Walter went over to the counter and wrote rapidly:—

1st October, 1893.

JOHN BEMIS, ESQ.,
Agent Merchants' Branch Bank,
Elbow Carry.

DEAR SIR,—I hereby give you notice that I will this day begin work with thirty-seven men on my father's account on the Loon Lake drainage contract. And I

notify you to hold the forfeit moneys deposited with you in connection with the contract between my father, Walter Gibbs, and Howard Hebden, Esquire, and to disregard any claim from Mr. Hebden that the contract has not been begun according to agreement.

Yours truly,

WALTER GIBBS, JR.

"Good enough!" said Mr. Bemis, reading the paper. "I dare say you'll be sharp enough for Hebden. Down him if you can; nobody will be sorry." It was wonderful how quickly the little Englishman had arrayed against him all the "Colonials," as he contemptuously called them, of the lumbering country.

Walter's men were already feeding hugely when he returned to the hotel. The wagons were waiting for them outside. Fifteen minutes later Jaffray, with Walter on one side of him and Pat Lynch on the other, was lashing his horses up-hill at the head of the wagon procession.

"The b'hys is well plazed this day, Misther Walther," said Pat. "Troth and a bit of a ruction would be their delight entirely."

"Oh, pshaw, Pat, there won't be any trouble."

"Throuble! Not the laste in the wurld. Misther Hebden has only ten pay-soups wid him. Throuble, is it? Us agin ten Frinch!"

"But it would never do to fight them, Pat."

"Bedad, I don't know thin. It's paycible men we are. A child might play wid us afther the feed Squire Jaffray give us. But it would play puck wid us if we was kep' out of the job, and us engaged for the fall. Who'd pay us thin, I'd like to know?"

"We'll claim possession, and get it, too, Pat. But surely you're too intelligent to want to start the job with a fight."

"Faix, an' that's thrue," said Pat, plainly flattered. "But if they do be blockin' the road wid trees?"

"How did you hear anything about that?"

"Wid my two ears, Misther Walther. Wan of the min on the wharf tould me."

"Hebden is such a blab," interposed Jaffray, "that he brags of everything he's going to do. But I'll fix him and his barricade."

"Phwat way, squire?" Pat's Irish wits had instantly marked the blandness of Jaffray when the title was given him by the men in his bar.

"We'll circumvent him."

"Begor! That's the schame!" said Pat, really puzzled. "Oh, by this and by that, if I'd a head on me like yourself, sor!"

"Here's my idea," said Jaffray, turning his face to Walter. "There are two roads around the marsh. Both lead to the place where your work lies. One is ten miles long; it crosses the south side of the hay-lands when they're dry, as now. The other is twelve miles; and it keeps high land to the north of the meadows. Hebden reckons you'll come by the short road; the other is not used at this season."

"Oh, I see. You'll take the long road," said Walter.

"Precisely. We'll get to the creek about a quarter of a mile behind him. Bill Hodgins came up from that way about ten o'clock. He said Hebden's men were felling trees across the short road, in a pinery, just a little on from where the road leaves the hay-land. They say the trees are for a new shanty. And that's where you've got to build your shanty if you want it handy to the job."

"I see. We'll circumvent him and get to

work right away," said Walter. "I'm ever so much obliged to you, Mr. Jaffray, for planning this."

"Hold on! We haven't got there yet," said Jaffray. "There's a danger. He may see us across the marsh on the bare highlands. Somebody has got to get him back into the pinery. If he sees us coming he may smell a rat and scoot across with his men and barricade the long road."

"And delay us till dark, eh?"

"Precisely. Then I don't know but your goose would be cooked."

"I'd claim possession," said Walter. "He couldn't refuse it according to the agreement."

"Oh, but you want to avoid law-play. He's one of these kind of one-horse lawyers — delay and a suit would just please him. You don't know the kind of a crank he is. You want to get *into* possession and at work to-day — then you've got him tight, I guess."

"I'll follow your advice, Mr. Jaffray."

"And well you might, Mither Walter. Be jabers! The squire's got a head on his shoulders," put in Pat.

"Well, maybe you'll have a row with Hebden and his men, Mr. Gibbs," said Jaffray, looking much gratified. "But this is what I advise: When the road forks, about four miles from here, you go ahead in this wagon with two or three men by the short road. Lynch and I and the others will go around the other way. You hold Hebden in parley — get him back into the woods to talk and keep him there till you hear the drills. Lord! I'd like to see the little runt's face when he hears the drills clanking!"

"It's a fair deception," said Walter. "He'll think I've failed to bring on a gang and he'll be ready to talk."

"Talk! Blather, you mean. Let him blather away all he likes. His gab will just suit you."

About an hour and a half later Walter, with three men, trotted from the hay-land into a pine wood and saw before them an accidental-looking barricade of many felled trees. Behind the nearest stood a red-faced, insolent-looking little man clad in loud plaid, knickerbockers, a deer-stalker cap, and a single eyeglass.

"Hi, there!" he cried. "Don't you know this isn't a public road?"

"How are you, Mr. Hebden?" cried Walter, standing up in the wagon.

"Aw — it's Mr. Gibbs's boy!" said Hebden, affecting surprise. "Glad to see you," as he really was, because Walter had so few men.

"I've come down to take possession according to the contract," said Walter. "Who's been blocking the road?"

"Dear me! Why, my boy, you're too late. I've put men on the job myself. These trees are for a shanty they're going to build."

"How am I too late? This is the first of October."

"But the contract calls for you to be at work to-day with at least thirty men."

"Well, I brought them up to Elbow Carry."

"Oh, but that won't do, my boy. Pooh! They should have been at *work* to-day. You've forfeited the job."

"Do you mean to say you'd claim fifteen hundred dollars from my father in this way — knowing him to have been so badly hurt — if I was only one day late in starting?"

"Of course — dear me — certainly! A contract is a contract. Law is law. Business



"HOW ARE YOU, MR. HERDEN?" — Page 34.

is business. Let this be a lesson to you, my boy."

"Well, I think it's a pretty tough business," said Walter. "Surely you don't mean to be so hard, Mr. Hebden. I'd like to talk it over with you."

"Oh, certainly! Talk as much as you like. Come along; I've a tent back in the trees. We'll be quite comfortable there. Come along."

So Walter left his men with the horses, crawled through and under the felled pines, and joined the little Englishman. Hebden was so delighted with his certitude of gaining the fifteen hundred dollars' forfeit, and with the opportunity to show his legal wisdom before an audience, that he called his ten Frenchmen off work to astonish them with his discourse.

Half an hour went by and still the little man was explaining the sacred nature of a contract. The law of contracts was the basis of modern civilization. It was a solemn duty to insist on the most exact fulfilment of written bargains. He talked so continuously that he caught no slightest sound of the wagons that Walter vaguely heard coming down the rocky hills.

"And so you really will take my father's fifteen hundred dollars?" said Walter, toward the last.

"It's my duty, my boy. A man's first duty is to himself. I'll draw the money to-morrow."

"I don't believe it, sir," said Walter, who had caught a faint rumble of wheels on the plank bridge over the creek.

"Oh, my good fellow, you're queer. Why shouldn't I draw it?"

"Well, for one thing, I've notified Mr. Bemis to hold it," said Walter, now unable to restrain his amusement.

"On what ground, my young friend?"

"On the ground that I'd start to-day."

"Oh, but you see you can't now. If you had thirty men; if they worked ten minutes to-day, your case would be good. But as it is — why, you haven't a leg to stand on in law. Hello! What's that noise?"

"It's my men at work," said Walter, coolly; for a great clanking of steel on rock suddenly echoed and rang through the woods.

"Your men?" shouted Hebden, springing wildly to his feet.

"Yes; I sent them around with Jaffray's teams by the long road."

Instantly the choleric Englishman jumped at Walter so furiously that the boy's quickness of foot barely saved him from a heavy blow. Next moment he warded off another, and struck back. But Hebden had already reflected that he was committing assault before witnesses.

"Follow me, men!" he roared to his French-Canadians, and ran through the woods to the creek.

"Stop there! Come out of that!" he yelled, shaking his fist at Pat and his thirty, while Jaffray and his drivers grinned from the wagons back of the bridge.

"Troth, sor," said Pat, scratching his head and affecting to be puzzled, "how cud us shtop here and come out, too? Min can't be in two places at wanst."

"Shut up, you Irish hog! Come out of that! I'll prosecute every man of you for trespass."

"Hog, is it? Phwat's the name of the baste that 'ud thry for to bate a sick man out of his money?"

"Keep quiet, Pat," cried Walter.

“Oh! Whin a *gintleman* axes me!” grinned Pat. “Keep them dhrills going, bhys.”

“I’ll turn you out to-morrow! I’ll pay no estimates! I’ll bring an action for ejectment as sure as my name is Hebden!”

“It’s circumvented your name is,” laughed Pat. “Ax the squire. Oh, begorra, ’tis himself as is the sthrategist of sthrategists!”

CHAPTER III.

HEBDEN'S FIRST BLOW.

WHEN Mr. Hebden, vowing to be even with Walter, had retreated before the sarcasms of Pat Lynch, Jaffray came down from his high wagon, winking both eyes furiously, and drew the young boss beyond hearing of his men.

"What are you going to do next?" he asked.

"Make camp first," replied Walter, promptly.

"That's right; always have in mind just what you're going to do next. Look ahead. You're not likely to have plain sailing on this job. Hebden will do all he can to worry you. Now what I want you to understand is this: when you're in a fix come to me. I wasn't born yesterday. Just you come to me in trouble."

"I will, Mr. Jaffray. It's very kind of you to make the offer. I certainly will. You saved the job to-day."

"All right. Of course I'll make a profit out of you sometimes — always when I do any real work, teaming or such. But advice — that's free, mind. I ain't going to let Hebden squeeze you out for want of advice, and you'll find I'm up to snuff.

"One difference between young fellows," continued Jaffray, impressively, "is that some have sense to take the advice of experience, and some have only sense enough to learn from experience after they've bought it by big mistakes. Now you can't afford to make any big mistakes on this job, so you come to me — *I'm* Experience."

"All right, sir. And thank you kindly, Mr. Jaffray."

"Well, good-bye. I've got to get back to the Carry, and you've got to get into camp. Make your men comfortable, that's the first point. They ain't river-men; they're navvies. They can't rough it; they don't know how, and they won't learn, either. It's well you had sense to fetch the big tent right along. Up with it. Get plenty of hay in for the men to sleep on."

"I don't know about that, Mr. Jaffray. That hay is Mr. Hebden's, of course. What would he do if I took it?" and Walter pointed to many large stacks of hay elevated on platforms in the marsh lane which could be seen up the creek.

"See, now, what it is to consult Experience," said Jaffray, impressively. "That isn't Hebden's hay. That's my hay — at least, all within a mile is. I bought it of Hebden. Take all you want of it, and good luck to you. Moreover, that hay will be of big importance to you yet, or I don't know beans. But there's no time to talk of that now; I'll tell you all about it another time. Good-bye."

Before the wagons had rumbled beyond hearing Walter, who was an experienced camper, had called the men from their drills. He showed some how to put up the big tent; he sent ten men into the marsh land for bundles of hay, which they carried compressed in ropes twisted of hay; he put Meigs, the blacksmith, and Duffy, the cook, at the work of preparing the evening meal. So that night the men slept in comfort, and the merry clanking of their

drills frightened the wild ducks of Loon Lake bright and early the next morning.

Now there was a shanty to build. Instead of putting his navvies at work so unusual to them, Walter consulted Experience in the person of Jaffray, who came down that day with the wagon-loads of supplies that had been left in his care.

"The point is this, Mr. Jaffray," said the young boss, as the navvies had already dubbed Walter. "If I take any of the men off the rock-work, Hebden may claim that I haven't got thirty men on the job, as the contract requires."

"I guess he wouldn't make much out of that claim," said Jaffray, "for the job means anything connected with the job, I calculate. But it's as well to run no risks of giving any kind of an excuse to that little shyster. Besides, a dozen river-men will build more shanty in two days than thirty laborers could in a week. I'll see and send you down a gang right away. Of course I'll charge you for the trouble."

"Certainly, sir, that's business; but I'll be obliged to you all the same."

"You'll want about a forty-man shanty, I guess."

"About that, sir."

But before the gang of clever axemen had put the roof on, a great change came into Walter's plans. He determined to have an addition big enough for seventy men. His reasons for making so important an extension were frankly set forth in a letter to Mr. Gemmill, his backer and banker.

"It is this way," his letter ran. "Pat Lynch says there will be no trouble in taking out eight feet of the rock instead of four. He finds that the two upper layers are each two feet deep. My father thought that the layer under them was much harder, and as much as six feet deep. So it is at the outcrop at the fall.

"But there's a 'fault' a little way above it. And up stream from the fault the three layers are easy, and they lie as flat as a pancake, altogether, eight feet deep. So we ought to take them out, because we'll get twice as much for the lower four feet as for the upper.

"The drilling for eight feet won't be near double that for four feet, but there'll be twice

as much broken stuff to move out of the channel, and that's why I want to double my force."

Mr. Gemmill's only reply to this was a telegram, which Jaffray himself brought down from the Carry. It read:—

"I approve of the increase of your force.

"DOUGLAS GEMMILL."

Then Walter thought it would be good policy to take Jaffray fully into confidence. So he handed the despatch to the shrewd tavern-keeper and explained the circumstances. To the amazement of the young boss, Jaffray's two-eyed winking stopped, for the reason that he could not open either eye for mirth. His face expressed the extreme of almost wicked satisfaction, as he slapped his thin legs and curled up in paroxysms of glee.

"Son," he said, at last, "you've got a great head! This will be one on Hebden. To think you'll go eight feet deep! Why, he'll pay three times over, and he don't want this here channel no more'n a dog wants a tin tail."

"I don't think I quite understand, sir," said Walter, much puzzled.

"'Tisn't necessary you should — not now," said Jaffray. "But I do. See that hay yonder?"

"Yes, sir."

"Know what it's worth a ton?"

"About twelve dollars."

"Yes, son, and more sometimes. Hay is hay in a rock country. Now you just think of that. But don't you say a word to anybody, not a word. I'll tend to all this at the right time. You drive the job."

Nothing more could Walter get from Jaffray on the mysterious subject. The young boss puzzled over it for two or three days, but his acquaintance with the lumbering industry and general business was too limited to give him the clue. Soon the matter went almost wholly out of his mind, as the responsibilities of the work crowded even more heavily on his young shoulders.

During the two weeks which went by between the starting of the work and the completion of the seventy-man shanty, Walter had learned that the direction of even a small work and a small number of men requires a sort of

ability which is quite different from knowledge and experience in actually performing the labor. Pat Lynch was a skilled foreman; his gang were all practised quarrymen. They blasted and wheeled out the rock at fine speed; but the task of keeping them able and willing put the young boss incessantly to the use of his wits.

He had to keep their time. He had to give them advances and keep account of the moneys. He had to send small checks on Mr. Gemmill to their wives at Garroch. He had to keep for them a store of small articles of clothing, tobacco, jack-knives, and many other odds and ends. He had to furnish Meigs, the blacksmith, with various things needed for the forge.

Above all he had to arrange for incessant supplies to the cook. In short, the young boss found himself an administrator, a sort of temporary father or Providence to each and all of the men, who must be kept comfortable and contented, else they would forsake the contract.

His duties as commissariat officer alone were a considerable task. The village of Elbow Carry was ten miles away, and its stores were

ill supplied. There were few farmers, and no market-gardeners nor butchers in that region on the verge of the great lumbering country; but the men must have fresh meat, butter, eggs, potatoes, onions, cabbage, turnips, and at least milk enough to color their tea and coffee.

None of these things could be surely obtained at the Carry, and Walter, after buying a buck-board and horse from Jaffray, had to scour the country far and wide to obtain such supplies.

For the fact that his success depended on making his men comfortable became quickly fixed in his mind. He must be buyer and deliverer, for the few and scattered farmers could not be induced to bring their things to the camp. Indeed, they seemed to think they favored him in killing a sheep or cow for his money.

Late into the night the youth worked at his accounts, his time-book, his cash-book, his plans for next day. Sometimes he fell asleep while driving to and fro.

This mortified and alarmed him. He saw he must have an assistant. But who? Sam, of course. So he brought up his younger brother

from Garroch, and brought him just in time, for two days later the first blow of Hebden fell heavily.

It was four days after the men had moved into the new shanty. Their satisfaction in its shelter had begun to make Walter feel that things were going very well. Mists that might be malarial had covered the lowlands above the tent every morning and evening; the fog had seemed to penetrate or leak into the canvas, and much the navvies had grumbled of discomfort and "sick-like" feelings, not wholly imaginary. Now, with a cheerful open fire in the middle of the roofed shanty, they seemed merry and content.

"Boss," said Meigs, the blacksmith, to Walter, "I'm pretty nigh out of charcoal."

"All right, Meigs. I'll see and get a load down from the Carry to-day."

"Oh, to-morrow will do."

"All right, Meigs."

Charcoal was, in a sense, the life of the work. It was necessary to Meigs' sharpening of the jumpers and drills, without which all hands must soon be idle. Now the contract required

the work to go on continuously, except in bad weather, else daily forfeits would be incurred.

Walter had brought a small supply of charcoal from Garroch. He would earlier have ordered more from there had he not found that the wharfinger at Elbow Carry kept a supply on hand. For this the few blacksmiths of the forest region came many miles, and to this source Walter looked confidently. So he drove in at once to order a load in by one of Jaffray's wagons.

"Charcoal?" said the wharfinger. "I haven't got a bushel."

"Why, what's that?" said Walter, staring at the fresh supply in store.

"That's Mr. Hebden's. He bought the whole lot yesterday."

"Well, I dare say he'll sell me a load," for Walter had seen no more of the little Englishman, and could not credit anybody with persistent animosity.

"I guess he won't," said the wharfinger.

"Why, what's he need it all for?"

"I don't know — maybe he heard you were near out. It's true he needs some for his depot 'way back."

"I'll see him, anyhow," said the young boss, and walked toward the office of the Hebden estate. But on second thought he turned back for a moment.

"I want you to get in a couple of hundred bushels of charcoal for me right away," he said to the wharfinger.

"All right. It'll be here in a week." So Walter had settled promptly for at least a future supply.

On he went to Hebden's office.

"I'm told you've bought all the charcoal in town, sir," said Walter, smiling pleasantly, "and as I'm wanting some, perhaps you'll kindly sell me a load or two."

"Perhaps," snapped Mr. Hebden.

"I must have charcoal, you know, sir."

"That's what I thought."

"What? Did you buy it to cut me out?"

"Put it any way you please. It's mine, and I'll keep it."

Walter checked his anger, turned on his heel, and walked over to Jaffray's hotel in real dismay. He could think of no other store of charcoal within twenty-five miles, and there was no

mineral coal nearer than Garroch. At this dire point the counsel of Personified Experience might be valuable.

But Jaffray was not in Elbow Carry. He had gone to Pembroke, seventy miles away, and would be absent for three days more. By that time, unless Meigs should be supplied with charcoal, all the men on Walter's job would be idle under pay, for they were hired by the month.

Hiring a spring box-wagon with a speedy team from Jaffray's stables, Walter appeared at the shanty with an undisturbed countenance at two o'clock that afternoon. His one chance was that the wharfinger at Black's Landing, twenty-five miles distant, might have a stock of the necessary charcoal. Thither he meant to drive at once; but he found at the shanty that "troubles never come singly."

As he drove through the small pinery and to the shanty door he heard the clink of drills and jumpers sounding merrily, together with the lighter tinkle of Meigs' hammer on anvil and on tools. Walter was resolved to keep those sounds going the next day at the price of driv-

ing during most of the coming night. But navies without cooked food will not work, and Sam, on hearing Walter's wagon, came out of the shanty with quite appalling news.

"Duffy's sick!" he said. "He was taken with some kind of queer pains after you went away. Nothing would do him but his bunk. So there he is, and I guess he's in for a bad illness."

"Great Cæsar!" said Walter. "Who cooked the dinner?"

"I did," said Sam, "in a kind of way. There's not another man on the gang that can cook at all."

"Bully for you, Sam!" said Walter, heartily. "I don't know what I'd do without you. Do you suppose you can cook a couple of meals more?"

"I s'pose I could. I can stand it if the men can."

"Did they grumble?"

"No — they said I did first-rate. But I know they will grumble. Why, I can't make bread, and what I don't know about soup and baked beans would make a book."

"Look here, Sam, you must try to feed them till I get back in the morning. I've got to go to Black's Landing for charcoal. Don't say a word about it. Is Duffy in pain?"

"Yes, he is. We've got to fetch in a doctor."

"Jiminy, Sam! But that's so. Now I'll tell you. I must go to Black's and that means I can't let you have my horse. After you get supper you scoot over to Hodgins' farm—it's only four miles—and get him to drive you up to the Carry. Fetch down bread for a couple of days. Try to fetch back a cook. If you can't, you ask Mrs. Jaffray to let you have all the cakes and pies she can. They'll keep the men contented till to-morrow with your cooking, then I'll be back and straighten things out."

"And the doctor?" said Sam.

"Fetch the doctor for Duffy, of course. That's humanity, and it will please the men, too."

"All right, boss," said Sam, "you can depend on me."

While travelling over the long, bad road to Black's Landing Walter reflected with something like fear upon the degree to which the

work was dependent on the cook. From that he pursued a train of thought which convinced him that the blacksmith was still more essential to his success in fulfilling the contract. Cooks might be found without great difficulty in the lumbering country, but blacksmiths were few and far between. What if Meigs should fall sick, or suddenly leave at the end of the month? Sam could take the cook's place for a day or two, but who could take Meigs'?

He had new alarm in thinking of what might occur if either of these necessary functionaries should fall sick and strike during his own absence. Walter must go to Garroch for a few days to hire thirty or forty more navvies, and the cares of office were heavy on him as he reflected on the possibilities which his absence might leave Sam to encounter alone.

His immediate anxieties fell from him, however, when he reached Black's Landing after dark, and found that the wharfinger had charcoal in stock. Giving his horses and himself rest till two o'clock in the morning he took the road back with a full wagon, and reached the shanty just as the men were going to work.

“Bedad, and I was thinkin’ the job ’ud shtop to-day,” said Pat Lynch, looking at the charcoal and the blackened young boss. “But it’s yourself is the manager! Faix, Meigs was consatin’ himself on a holiday. But now we’re all right again. And I’m thinkin’ ye’d bettther hurry up thim other thirty or forty min if ye want us to get the eight-foot channel done this sayson.”

“How’s Duffy?” asked Walter. “If he’s well enough to work I’ll start for Garroch this afternoon.”

“Well? Bedad, it’s worse he is. But he can thtravel to his wife. You’ll need to take him wid you—and the docther says he’ll be no use here for two weeks. Master Sam does well, though—for a bhy!”

“Then I must get a cook to-day,” and the tired young boss was on his way to Elbow Carry in an hour.

There he found no Jaffray. To and fro he hurried through the village seeking a cook, but none was to be hired. Already the lumbermen were forwarding gangs and cooks to the far-away shanties for winter’s work. Wholly beaten, Walter returned to the shanty at night,

resolving to start for Garroch early next morning, leaving Sam to cook for two days more. From Garroch he would send another cook immediately after arriving there.

But a great piece of luck seemed to have befallen him. On entering the shanty while Sam was serving supper, Walter saw a singular-looking, almost humpbacked little man assisting to pass the dishes.

"Here's a cook for you, Walt," said Sam.

"You?" cried Walter, gazing with delight on the stranger.

"Yes, sir, I'm lookin' for a jawb. I'm a pystry byker by tryde. My name is Jorrocks, Bob Jorrocks."

"You're a Londoner, I see, Jorrocks. Did you ever cook in a shanty?"

"Ho, bless you, I 'ad a jawb at cookin' ven I vas hup for 'Ebden's."

"Did he take hold at cooking supper well, Sam?" asked Walter.

"I vas too much done hout vith valkin' to get supper, sir, but I'll show you in the mornin'."

"I'm going away before daylight," said Walter, "but if you were up for Hebden's last winter —"

"I vas, sir. Mr. 'Ebden told me he'd 'eard you wanted a cook." He pronounced all his double o's like "oo" in boot.

"Well, that was pretty decent of Mr. Hebden, after all," said Walter, surprised.

"Vot vages, sir?" put in the cockney.

"Thirty dollars a month if you can cook well."

"Hall right, sir. I hengages for a month. You'll see — I'm a pystry byker by tryde."

It was soon obvious that the little man understood dishwashing at any rate, for he helped Sam with alacrity. Walter, worn out, went to bed early and slept heavily till Sam woke him at earliest dawn. The new cook was raking the fire together skilfully.

"Oh, I guess you'll do, Jorrocks," said Walter, gladly.

"Me, sir? Vy, I'm a pystry byker by tryde!"

So Walter drove away with Duffy and a light heart, breakfasted at Jaffray's, and as the steamer took him down the broad, brown stream, rejoiced exceedingly that Sam was delivered from his troubles. But alas, poor Sam!

CHAPTER IV.

A SUBSTITUTE FOR MEIGS.

AT Garroch Walter was busy for three days — hiring navvies, buying supplies, and explaining the situation of the contract to Mr. Gemmill, who was much pleased with his protégé's energy and clearheadedness.

"Man, but you're developing, Wally!" said the banker. "It's only three weeks since you started, and you're a man already. I'm thinking the responsibilities will be heavy enough on ye now."

"I feel them, sir," said Walter, soberly. "But I think I can carry them. If only I could have seen my father — and mother, too!"

"Aye, I was thinking ye'd be a bit homesick, lad. House all shut up, eh? Looks lonely like. Well, if your father was there, ye couldn't talk business with him. Doctor Mostyn wouldn't let ye. He says your father must just have his

brain resting for many a week to come. Have you heard from your mother since they went south?"

"Yes, sir, there was a letter here for Sam, and I opened it. They'd got as far as Washington. Father was improving."

"I make no doubt he'll be all right, lad. And I'm deceived if you don't make a pretty penny while he's gone."

This was the hope that sustained the young boss in his labors. But sometimes a dreadful thought assailed him. What if he were neglecting some part essential to the completion of the job? What if his father had foreseen some great difficulty of which Walter was unaware? What if that were the reason he had demanded prices so high, and especially high for the deeper excavation which Walter had undertaken, and on account of which he was doubling the force of his gang? But the youth could imagine nothing for which he had not provided, and he was always soon able to shake off these fears.

On the fourth day after leaving Sam, Walter arrived at Elbow Carry with thirty-seven men, including a new cook, for two cooks would be

needed for the doubled force. He did not bring a second blacksmith. Meigs could do all the work, for the steel points lasted well in drilling the soft limestone, and Walter meant to give Meigs an increase of pay.

He had much confidence that this essential man would not leave him without long notice. The young boss, honest himself, reckoned on finding all men "square."

Jaffray met Walter with effusion and incessant two-eyed winking.

"By golly," he cried, "you have brought a big gang!" Then he lowered his voice to a whisper. "That's right; Hebden will have to pay the shot, anyhow."

"Why shouldn't he?" asked Walter.

"What? You ain't twigged that point yet? Didn't I tell you he's got no real use for that channel you're making?"

"Yes; but why did he make the contract?"

"Because he's a pig-headed English green-horn, that consults no man of sense. Because his head is full of old-country notions about the advantage of draining fens. Don't you see it yet?"

"No, I don't. The land will be well drained, won't it?"

"You bet it will. But never mind. Don't say a word, I tell you. I'll explain it to you in time. Mum, mind you. And I guess you're needed at the job right away."

Leaving his men and supplies to be forwarded by wagons, Walter hurried rapidly with a light buggy to the shanty and Sam. On entering the door he found his young brother greasy, tired-looking, busy about the fire, while Jorrocks was washing the dinner dishes.

"Why, what on earth, Sam? You cooking?" cried Walter. Jorrocks turned his head away, and seemed to shrink deep into his boots.

"I've been cooking right along," said Sam. "Jorrocks may be a pystry byker, but in beans-byking and potato-biling and pork-cooking—Great Scott!"

"Can't he cook?"

"Cook! No more than a baby!"

"What do you mean by such a trick?" cried Walter, angrily, to Jorrocks, who turned to face him with hands extended in explanation.

"Let him be, Walt. He's a good cook's

mate, anyhow. I don't know what I'd have done without him," said Sam.

"But you told me you could cook!" shouted Walter to Jorrocks.

"No sir, please. Hi told you Hi'd 'ad a jawb of coo-kin'. I vas coo-ook's mate ven I vas hup for 'Ebden's, and I thowt Hi'd learned enough. But now Hi know Hi didn't learn nothing to speak of."

"Well, you are a queer rascal!"

"No, sir, please. Honly too 'opeful."

"And you're not a pastry-baker by trade?"

"H'im sorry Hi lied about that, sir. But Hi wanted a jawb so bad! I *vas* so hungry, sir!"

The little man looked so repentant and comically impudent at once that Walter both pitied and laughed at him. Then the face of Jorrocks cleared, and he came forward with a confidential air.

"The trewth is, sir," he said, striking a proud attitude, "Hi'm an 'oss-jawckey by tryde."

"A horse-jockey?"

"Yes, sir. Hi've rode at Hawscot and Noo-market, and the Curragh of Kildare wunct, and

I thowt hif Hi could do that, I could do hany-thing."

"Cook, eh?"

"Coo-ook? Yes, sir, good enough for a lot of Hirish."

"Well, you're the most impudent specimen I've met."

"That's wot Mr. 'Ebden told' me, sir. He woo-uldn't give me me py. 'Go down to the Loon Lake jawb,' says 'e. 'Hi'm told they want a coo-ook like you there.'"

"Oh, that was how he came to send you, eh? And he wouldn't pay you?"

"No, sir, and Hi vas dead broke. So vot could a poor man do? Lord, sir, if honly you'd let me sty on!"

"Bob Jorrocks is a good cook's mate," said Sam again. "I like Bob Jorrocks though he's such a shocking humbug."

"Thank you, sir," said Jorrocks.

"He can help the new cook; you're fetching one up, aren't you, Walt?" said Sam, laughing.

"If you'll 'ire me hover again, you'll find Hi'll do more than my dooty, sir." Bob touched his forelock to Walter.

"You can stay at twelve dollars a month, that rate of wages to begin when you started, Jorrocks," said Walter. Jorrocks had probably won this concession by his very deferential manners, for all boys like to be treated as important men.

"Hall right, sir!" cried Jorrocks, much relieved. "Hand Hi'll get heven with 'Ebden yet, too. Hi've got something to tell you, sir. It's my dooty, now Hi'm 'ired."

"What do you mean, Jorrocks?"

Jorrocks drew Walter to one side and whispered, "Wot if your blacksmith was going to leave?"

Walter stared at Jorrocks with something like horror. Meigs had been engaged and under pay nearly a week before the job began. His month would be out on the morrow. He could then legally go. If he should do so, seventy men would be thrown idle till Walter could bring on another blacksmith. Blacksmiths were scarce. And forfeits would be incurred by stopping the job for anything but bad weather.

"What makes you think he's going?" asked Walter.

"Mr. 'Ebden, sir," whispered Jorrocks. "'E vas down 'ere at noon yesterday. Hi see 'im takin' Meigs into the woods, so I follered 'em very quiet, and 'eard 'im hoffer Meigs big py to go to his depot shanty and blacksmith there," and Jorrocks went on detailing all he had overheard.

Thus Walter, by his leniency to the "'oss-jawckey," had received a valuable warning. He meditated over the information carefully. It seemed to him that he might at once triumph over and hold Meigs by good management.

Accordingly, in the shanty that evening — the shanty noisy with the loud talk between two large gangs of Garroch navvies who had not seen each other for nearly a month — he waited, with good-natured looks, for the blacksmith to spring the surprise which he thought he had in store.

Walter had spent a good many odd hours of boyhood in watching Garroch blacksmiths at work, and he had also carefully observed Meigs's manipulation of the drilling tools. He wondered if another blacksmith would be so very hard to find.

It was not till most of the men had turned

into their bunks that the blacksmith sidled around gradually till he sat by Walter. Meigs was a broad-faced, black-haired, olive-tinted man of thirty-five, who had worked in many shops, and felt himself so vastly experienced that he could easily "euchre" a mere boy. He spoke in a woolly, wheedling voice, with a most deferential air: —

"There'll be a sight of work for a man that's a blacksmith here after this, Mr. Walter. Seventy men and more now!"

"Yes; no more loafing for you, Meigs," said Walter, sharply.

"Well, sir, I don't know as I've been doin' no loafin' *as* I knows on," said Meigs, in the tone of an injured, patient man.

"I'm not complaining of you, Meigs. There'll be about twice as many points to sharpen now, that's all."

"A man might say that it'd ought to be a bit more pay for a man as is a good man at his trade, sir."

"Yes, a man might. And a man might be far wrong if he did say so."

Meigs looked suspiciously at Walter's impas-

sive face. It betokened no such bantering spirit as his slightly mocking tones had seemed to carry.

"Oh, well, Mr. Walter, I ain't heard of no more pay for me yet, sir. Not as I'm doubtin' but you'll do the right thing, Mr. Walter. And my month's pay is due to-night."

"So it is. And here's your money, Meigs. Just sign the pay-sheet." Walter had been sitting by his rude desk, and drew forth the bills and the document.

Though Meigs was surprised by the cool alacrity of the young boss, he smiled with satisfaction at getting his pay, for he had feared that it might be held back. After pocketing the cash, he remarked, as if in much doubt, "I don't suppose but what you'd just as lief's not I stayed on, Mr. Walter."

"Were you thinking of leaving, Meigs?"

"Well, I ain't sayin', so fur, as I was meanin' any such thing. On'y this here job kind o' seems to me it wants a tip-top blacksmith, and wants a man that'll keep sober and steady right along."

"Certainly, Meigs. I don't want seventy

men idle on my hands on account of one man drunk. You're a sober man anyhow."

"I allus was, Mr. Walter. And I'm told the job's got to go on right along or the contract's busted."

"Oh, well, that's none of your business, Meigs," for Walter felt that his aggressiveness would tend to disconcert the enemy.

"Well, I'd ought to have pay accordin' to the size of the gang." Meigs spoke with some vexation.

"Double pay?"

"Yes, about that."

"Can't do it, Meigs. I'll give you ten dollars a month more, on certain conditions."

"Ten dollars! 'tain't a consideration."

"All right."

"What's the conditions?" said Meigs, so surprised as to incautiously betray his inward thought that he might stay.

"That you sign to stay on till the job's done."

"Not much — not for no ten dollars extra."

"Very well — you're going to-morrow, eh?"

Meigs made no immediate reply. He won-

dered whether Walter had engaged another blacksmith during his absence at Garroch. But he was not so stupefied by Walter's manner as to doubt, on reflection, that he himself really had the young boss on the hip. Meigs concluded that Walter was simply "bluffing."

"Well, you're jokin', Mr. Walter," he said, affecting a laugh. "Nat'rilly and in course you're jokin'. Ten dollars ain't a circumstance to what I see."

"What do you see, Meigs?"

"Why, with seventy men idle you'll lose more in two days than all the pay I'd ask would amount to."

"Yes, eh? How much are you going to ask?"

"Seventy-five dollars a month, 'stead of forty."

"I wish you may get it, Meigs."

"So I kin, from Mr. Hebden."

"Well, I wish you luck, Meigs. Good-night, — I'm going to bed."

Meigs sat for some time completely taken aback. But the more he pondered the more certain he became that Walter was simply

"bluffing." Now he knew that one who does that rashly likes to be provided with some way of "climbing down" easily.

So he went to Walter's bunk and whispered wheedlingly and winked hard.

"I understand—you done it well, and I don't deny but what you done it smart, Mr. Walter. I'll give in I was bluffin' a bit, too. Say seventy dollars, and I'll stop right along."

"Meigs," said Walter, rising up on his elbow, "you're trying to blackmail me. Now you can't. Go to Mr. Hebden and be hanged to you. Good-night."

For Jorrocks had told Walter that Mr. Hebden's offer to the blacksmith was one of sixty dollars a month, which Meigs could not obtain except by going two hundred miles back into the forest.

"You can't get another blacksmith in a week," said Meigs, wrathfully.

"Maybe yes, and maybe no. Anyhow there's more ways of killing a dog than choking him with butter."

This enigmatical phrase went to bunk with Meigs, echoed in his dreams, was clearly in his

ears when he rose in the morning. What could the young boss be up to?

"Anyhow," said Meigs to himself, "I can get sixty from Hebden, and I'll start after breakfast."

Walter ate that meal with much more anxiety than he showed. He could not be quite sure of success in what he meant to try. If he failed, the job would stop for days—in case Meigs departed. If he failed, his men would laugh at him more or less secretly, and his authority would be hopelessly impaired.

But he knew he must take the risk. He could not afford to be bullied by Meigs, for the blacksmith's success might set all the other men to bullying for an advance of wages. As it was, he felt that the quick-witted Irishmen were narrowly watching him, in some expectation that he would "squeeze" Meigs, but with more hope that Meigs would squeeze him, and so give them a line of policy for the end of the coming week, when many of them would have completed their first month's engagement.

Pat Lynch put a coal on his pipe, crammed it down with a stick, and threw his blouse over

his shoulders. It was the signal for going to work. Seventy men followed him. Walter went, too.

Meigs, packing his clothes-bag, felt at once very mean and angry. He knew that there were not tools sharpened for half a day's work. He seemed to feel the eyes of Sam, Jorrocks, and the new cook sticking into his back.

They only were left in the shanty with the blacksmith. No words were exchanged. Sam, relieved from cooking, was shrewdly watching Meigs.

"*Clank-clank-clonk—trippety-trip-trip—clank, trip, clank,*" came the sound of drills and striking hammers. Soon the chorus of steel on rock was at its merriest. Meigs listened with derision. Every stroke would dull steel points. No blacksmith to make them good! Meigs sat down—the clanking deeply impressed him with a sense that Walter must come back and offer him his own terms.

But what was that small beating, quicker than any other, that suddenly came into the metallic din? Meigs started up in amazement.

He knew well the note of his own anvil and hammer. No, his ears must have deceived him! There was now no anvil sound. Then *clankety-clink* came again the clear ringing of hammer on steel. Yes, there was a blacksmith at work!

Sam grinned to see Meigs wonder. Meigs picked up his bundle, and took the straight road for Hebden with the boy's crackling laugh stinging his ears.

There was silence at the anvil now. "He's filing the red point," thought Meigs. The silence continued. "He'll be tempering the steel now," thought the blacksmith. Then, after a little, the merry anvil notes came again through the pinery to the walking man.

They seemed to taunt him with having acted like a fool. They clinked, "You're going to bury yourself far in the woods. You've been mean, mean, mean. You don't want to go. You were bluffing. And a boy called you down. Ho-ho-ho, Jim Meigs — mean, mean, mean!"

Where could Walter have concealed the new blacksmith? Who was he? Was he one of the new men who had passed as a navvy? Meigs'

curiosity overcame him. He laid his bundle down by the roadside, and cautiously stole through the pinery to reconnoitre the forge.

Could he trust his eyes? From the edge of the wood he could clearly see the new blacksmith, who was plying the hammer rather awkwardly but still effectively. How on earth could he have picked up so much knack?

Then it flashed on Meigs that the sharpening of drill and jumper points was so simple an operation that it could be safely left—all but the tempering—to young apprentices. Meigs remembered how quickly he himself had, at eighteen, learned the trick of heating, hammering, and filing the points. “The young boss was always mighty handy,” reflected the blacksmith; for it was Walter himself who stood at the anvil!

“So this is what the young boss has picked up while watching meself and other blacksmiths at work!” thought Meigs. He had himself often unconsciously been giving Walter lessons at odd times in that very forge. But was it possible the lad could have caught the secret of tempering the points? Meigs

could no longer restrain his curiosity. He left the cover of the pines, and walked straight for the forge.

The back of Walter's flannel shirt was toward the coming blacksmith. Just as Meigs came upon the cinders round the anvil Walter thrust a point into the half-barrel of water. He gave it a flourish in the very manner of Meigs, drew it forth and gazed intently at it, yet seeing Meigs out of the corner of his eye.

A straw color, blent with tints of blue and orange, was quivering on the hot point. From the thickest part the blue stole slowly to the filed edge. Just as it was chasing away the last vestiges of straw color Walter plunged the drill deep into the water and held it there, while he smiled amiably at Meigs. Then he drew forth the tool and flung it with a look of inquiry at the blacksmith's feet.

The journeyman picked up the drill, and stared at it with new surprise. It was a rough job, but the temper was perfect. Meigs knew that the jumper would do.

He was fairly beaten at all points, and he

was one of the men who are not bad fellows when completely overcome.

"Mr. Walter, you're a mighty smart young chap," said Meigs. "I don't want to go anyhow. I'll own up I was partly bluffin'."

"You used me meanly, Meigs."

"I did, and I'm sorry for it."

"Say no more," said Walter. "I'm glad you'll stay. I guess I could do the trick for three or four days, Meigs, but I don't want to. Will you take right hold? I'll give you fifty dollars a month and you'll sign for the job."

"Done," said Meigs, heartily. And so that trouble passed by the young boss.

But it had not passed for Meigs yet. That night the Irishmen chaffed him unmercifully. They requested him to "put his head to soak." They admonished him to "kape it safe in a bag." They assured him "the young boss does be thinkin' wid his head whilst ye're shnorin', and that's the way he's too shmart for schamers."

But Meigs bore all philosophically. He even requested Walter to abstain from trying to check the chaffing men.

“It pleases you and it don’t hurt me, you villains,” he laughed, for he did not lack spirit. “Blather away and be hanged to you. You’re only a lot of wild bog-trotters anyhow. And some day you’ll get a taste of the young boss yourselves, or I dunno. There’s one thing I know, though—I never saw so many Irish together without them going in for some kind of divilment against the contractor.”

CHAPTER V.

NO END OF TROUBLES.

WITH his blacksmith and cook engaged up to the end of the job, with plenty of charcoal arranged for, with seventy men clanging away and regarding him as a young miracle of management, Walter felt the ground to be solid under his feet. He completed his sense of security by inducing Jaffray to buy and send down the fresh supplies the shanty needed daily, and then, freed from minor cares, he turned his attention seriously to an important question.

The end of October had come. An estimate of the amount of rock excavated was to be made. According to the contract, this calculation should be prepared by Mr. Leclerc, a surveyor whose headquarters were at Elbow Carry. He was to act for Mr. Hebden in the matter.

But Hebden had not sent Leclerc to make

the measurements. From this Walter feared that the cranky little Englishman meant to delay payment of the estimate, which would be due on the fifth of November.

Walter would soon need money. The credit given him by Mr. Gemmill was nearly exhausted, for the demands on it had been greater than were foreseen. And the young boss felt much puzzled to know how he might best compel Mr. Hebden, whose disposition was intensely litigious, to pay over the cash needed for the coming month. At this crisis he bethought him of the winking wisdom of Jaffray, and went to the Carry to obtain the hotel-keeper's advice.

"You've done well to come to me," said Jaffray, closing both eyes for a full minute and pondering the problem. "See now, — can you make the estimate yourself? Of course you can."

"Yes, I've made it already. No trouble in that. It was an easy job of cross-sectioning."

"I reckoned it would be," said Jaffray, ignoring that he himself did not know what cross-sectioning meant. "Well, then, why not go straight ahead? Why not present your estimate to Hebden?"

"But it's got to be certified by Mr. Leclerc."

"Certified by him, eh? Is Leclerc at home?"

"Yes. But he won't go down without Hebden's orders. Hebden was to pay him for making the estimate. That's not much of a job."

"How long would it take him to do it, my son?"

"Five hours, maybe — surely less than a day."

"Did you offer to pay him for doing it?"

"No, I never thought of that. You see he was to act for Hebden. Perhaps he'll act for me."

"You'll find he'll act for a ten-dollar bill. If he don't, he'll hear from me. He's owing me fifty-seven dollars for teaming these two year back. Say, you're just as free to hire Leclerc as you are to hire anybody else. Go and hire him, then."

Walter found this very easy. The ten-dollar bill and the mention of Jaffray's name were enough for the impecunious surveyor.

"Certainly," said he, slowly. "I s'pose I'm free to take pay to work for you or anybody else. But you don't expect Hebden will honor the estimate I make as your agent?"

"We'll see about that," said Walter, guided by Jaffray's instructions.

So Leclerc went down to the shanty, checked Walter's cross-sectioning, prepared three copies of the estimate for October, made affidavit to its correctness, and departed with his ten-dollar bill. Then Walter, by Jaffray's counsel, sent one copy to Mr. Bemis, the bank agent at the Carry, with a notification that he would claim three thousand dollars' forfeit, as well as the amount of the estimate, in case it was not paid by the fifth of November. He sent a similar notification, with another copy of Leclerc's estimate, to Mr. Hebden, and anxiously awaited results.

"You'll see he'll come down all right," said Jaffray. "He'll see you've got ready for a lawsuit, and he'll know you've got him tight."

"But if he don't come down?"

"Then you'll shove the work right along, and he'll have to pay the cost, besides the forfeit."

"Yes, if I had money, but I'm nearly out. And if I don't get the job done by the first of January, then we forfeit all due, and fifteen hundred dollars besides."

"Geewhittaker, son! It looks like's if I'd have to wake Hebden up about that hay sooner'n I calculated."

"I don't understand what you mean, Mr. Jaffray."

"That's kind of queer, too, son. But you will when the time comes. Ain't I ever told you that the old Hebden that's dead contracted to give me the cutting of five hundred acres of wild hay off that marsh for three years to come?"

"I didn't know that. But what's that got to do with it, sir?"

"Beats all how little young folks *do* see!" said Jaffray. "Get your thinker to work on it. I ain't going to tell you. All I say is, keep mum. I don't want Hebden to get out too easy. What scares me is that your cash is running out. But just wait till the fifth — then we'll know."

During the three days which elapsed before the money for the estimate was due Walter did put his "thinker" to work, as Jaffray had advised. But as he knew nothing of agriculture or the habits of wild hay on the particular land involved, or its value in a lumbering country,

he still failed to understand the bearing of the hotel-keeper's remarks.

On the afternoon of the fifth Walter drove up to the branch bank at Elbow Carry. He was deeply anxious. Some of his men had demanded advances which he could not pay unless Hebden should have paid the estimate. He owed Jaf-fray over two hundred dollars for supplies and teaming. He feared that his men would quit work if they found him in financial difficulties.

Again he was absorbed in the opinion that he must finish the job to get a profit from it. He longed, too, for the satisfaction of completing it. What man of action but dislikes to abandon work partly done, even if paid for the part? To compel Mr. Hebden, by slow process, to pay the whole outlay, and damages besides, would be, Walter felt, poor consolation for stopping the job. Besides, where could his father find money for a lawsuit? So it was with a complication of fears at his heart that the young boss entered the branch bank.

"Mr. Bemis, has Mr. Hebden paid that estimate?" asked Walter.

"Yes, this morning."

Walter's heart jumped so big with joy that it seemed to float him off the office floor.

"I'm glad of that," he said as calmly as possible. "I was needing money. I'll just draw out five hundred dollars."

"I'm afraid you can't, young man."

"No — why not?" Walter almost shouted.

"It's not paid to your order. It's paid to Walter Gibbs, senior, your father."

"I'm acting for him — it's all right."

"Have you power of attorney?"

"No — but —"

"You can't draw a cent of the estimate without it."

"But my father is two thousand miles away, and he can't do any business."

"I'm afraid that was Hebden's calculation," said Mr. Bemis. "I'm sorry, but so it stands. I've no authority in the world to pay out any of that money to your father's son."

The young boss walked out into the crisp November weather feeling as if his brain were paralyzed. He could see that he had no resource against Hebden. Hebden had complied with the contract. Walter had but seventy-two dol-

lars to his credit. More than that was needed that very afternoon. If he failed to make the small advances that his men had asked, they would suspect him of being bankrupt. And if they should strike work, his father would be ruined. Hebden could claim forfeit, and probably large damages also, for delay.

Experienced people may think it strange that Walter's mind did not instantly turn to Mr. Gemmill; but he had grown into a habit of thinking that he would repay part of Mr. Gemmill's advance out of this very estimate. The idea of appealing to the kind banker for more aid had been wholly outside of his calculations. Now he was so disturbed, and felt so much need for a period of reflection, that he desired to conceal himself even from Jaffray, who had suddenly become to his eyes a creditor whom he could not pay.

Jaffray, however, was not so easily avoided. He came out to the shed when Walter went there for his horse, and insisted on learning the particulars.

"Ho, son!" cried the tavern-keeper, "Hebden's acted right enough. What are you troubled

about? Why, you're all right; no bones broken that I can see. Telegraph to Mr. Gemmill."

"But I can't ask him for more money."

"Oh, go 'way! He deals in money. It's no favor. He'll make you pay for the accommodation."

"But I can't give him a cent of security."

"Well, son, you're pretty green at business. Don't you see that the money Hebden has paid to your father's credit is Mr. Gemmill's good-enough security for advances to you? It lies to your father's order. Gemmill will get a check from your father by mail on Bemis. Pooh! I'm surprised at you feeling beat. Why, I'll let you have five hundred dollars myself as quick as wink," and then Jaffray colored fiery red at his own apparent allusion to his own infirmity.

"Thank you, Mr. Jaffray; you're awfully kind to me," said Walter. "I don't know what I'd have done without you."

"Oh, I guess you'd wriggle through," said Jaffray. "You're polite and you're modest, and you know enough to take advice from Experience. That's why I like you. Then you

ain't always leaning on somebody else, either. You can do for yourself lots of ways — uncommon well, too. I'll bet you'll make a first-class man. And besides, I've got a sharp stick for Hebden, and you're the chap that's going to drive it in," for the tavern-keeper's vindictiveness to an enemy was as constant as his helpfulness to a friend. He never forgot that Hebden had called him Windy Jim to his face, besides interfering with his teaming business.

So the young boss returned to the shanty with money in his pocket and hope high in his heart. It seemed to him, though, that the men were surprised at his readiness to make the usual advances. Had Mr. Hebden already spread a rumor that he was in financial distress? If so, he quieted the fears of the navvies for the moment.

But it was with anxiety that Walter noted the signs that trouble was ready for him if Mr. Gemmill should fail to supply his need. A strike? A strike would be ruinous, for there was little enough time remaining to complete the work, enlarged as it had been by his undertaking the deep cut. Walter had even thought of putting up another shanty and employing fifty more men.

On the morning of the sixth of November he started again for Garroch, feeling it would be better to see his banker face to face. And the last thing he said to Pat Lynch, his foreman, was this:—

“Pat, take on any good men that come to hire. I’ll spread it at the Carry that you want quarrymen. We could bunk ten more. I want the job rushed from this out,” for now the thought that the rainy season was nigh at hand worried the young boss, though he had no adequate notion of the immense trouble it would give him.

Mr. Gemmill made no difficulties about renewing Walter’s credit.

“I’m pleased with you, lad, for coming to face me. You’ll find it always good policy to see the man you’re dealing with in this world. Yon man Jaffray is a sensible creature—if he is a tavern-keeper—but it’s a trade I despise.

“I’ll just drop a line to your mother, and to you, too, on this business,” he went on. “It’s likely your father will be able enough to send me a check, and if he’s not, your mother can act for him. Tell her all you’ve been doing on the

job, in case your father may be able to take an interest. And mind I'm trusting you to tell me every time as promptly as this time, of any difficulty that occurs."

Walter wrote the suggested letter to his mother without an idea of the degree in which it would affect his future operations, and hurried back to Elbow Carry and his shanty at all speed.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon of November the eighth when he again heard the clanking of his drills and the tinkling of Meigs' hammer on anvil and steel. But somehow the din sounded slow and dull. "Is it," thought Walter, "that the haze of the warm November day, the blaze of autumn on the hills, the brown grasses of the marsh, the seeming sleepiness of the air, affect my senses? Or are the men really dawdling at their work?"

Jorrocks and the cook were certainly not dawdling in the shanty, but were actively cleaning up after dinner and preparing a baking of bread. Sam was not there. Walter but looked into the shanty when he asked, "Where's my brother?"

"E's down at the jawb, sir," said Jorrocks, and came to the door as Walter went out. "Mr.

Walter," whispered the little man, "there's trouble a-brewin'."

"What do you mean, Jorrocks?"

"It's got about that you're 'ard up for cash."

"Pooh — that's not so. Are you afraid of your pay, Jorrocks?"

"Not me, — no, sir, Hi'd stand by you if I vas, — you treated me so decent. But that there Hirish foreman has took on noo men. One of 'em's a reg'lar mutinous duffer. It's him is spreadin' the stories. 'E used to work for 'Ebden and 'e lives in vun of 'Ebden's 'ouses and Hi'm thinkin' it's 'Ebden that's sent him 'ere to make all the jolly trouble 'e can. Mr. Sam is watching 'im — 'is name's Schlitzer — 'e's a big Prooshun."

"And the men have got it into their heads that I can't pay?"

"That's it, sir. They been a-talkin' strike."

"I'll soon settle that," cried Walter, angrily, and walked straight through the pinery to the work.

He was somewhat fatigued by his journey and two nights of bad sleep. At the thought of the men discrediting him his heart was hot. He

knew he had done more than his duty by them; taken much trouble to give them more than usual comfort; made unusual advances to them, and altogether deserved kindness at their hands. So his temper was hot when he came to the edge of the excavation, and saw the gang strung along the creek bed, making a mere pretence of work. Sam hurried across the excavation to meet Walter.

"I don't know what's got into the men," said Sam. "Pat's half afraid to drive them. See that big fellow across there? That's a Prussian named Schlitzer. Pat says he's been telling the men that Hebden says you're dead broke, and they won't get their pay."

Walter left Sam and walked straight across the channel to the big Prussian, a tall, very powerful, fair-haired, sullen-looking man, who was distinctly loafing instead of plying the ball drill against which he leaned.

"Get a move on you there, my man," said the young boss, sharply. Then he called to the foreman, "Lynch, what's this man doing here? Is he paid for standing idle?"

Instantly at his word of sharp command, the

drills and jumpers rang with activity. All but that of the Prussian. He sneered insolently in Walter's very face and said, loudly : —

“Pay — vot pay? You don't got no money for pay, dot so — ya, dot-so.”

“I've got money for you right now,” said Walter. “Sam, what's this fellow's time? Lynch, I wonder you didn't sack him long ago.”

Now Walter had made a great mistake in speaking thus, in interfering with his foreman in the presence of the men. Pat hung back sulkily, the sound of the drills fell away to a little clinking, a strike seemed imminent, and Schlitzer, feeling enraged, threw himself into a defiant attitude.

The next moment he had called Walter a foul name, and the moment afterwards Walter's indignant fist smashed full into the Prussian's face. The young boss had lost his head entirely with rage at the vile insult, and in an instant the navvies were crowding round the fight.

Walter was a very powerful and active youth, but Schlitzer was a giant. He was not, how-

ever, a boxer. Long trained in Prussian military service, he looked to weapons.

As Walter drew back, suddenly quite cool and ashamed in clearly seeing himself wrong, and yet by his coolness all the more efficient for fighting, the Prussian stooped for a tamping iron about three feet long. One blow of it would have dashed out any man's brains. He was lifting it madly, when Walter, closing in at a bound, seized it in his left hand.

For an instant they stood, faces close together. Schlitzer tugged twice at the iron. It seemed as if his wrath had driven him out of his senses. His eye fell on the ball drill standing in its hole close by. Accustomed to bayonet exercise, his hands left the tamping iron to Walter and snatched up the drill.

It was about seven feet long, a heavy, sharp-pointed, terrible weapon. The giant threw his arm back to lunge, and drove the broadened point straight at Walter's head.

There was a clash of steel — with the tamping iron Walter weakly warded the murderous thrust. But the ward was enough — that and Walter's quick dodging of his head aside. The

point of the drill barely grazed and cut his left ear. Had it struck his face it would have passed through, and a foot beyond his head.

As Walter threw out his left hand and grasped the drill he heard clear above the shouts of the men the voices of Sam, of Meigs, of Pat Lynch and of Jorrocks, all trying to reach the scene of combat.

"Knock the murderous vilyan down, wan of ye!" yelled Pat.

"Let me through," shouted Sam, trying to scramble over the very shoulders of the crowd to Walter's aid.

"Give it to him, boss," roared Meigs.

"Hi'll show the bloomin' Prooshian!" screamed Jorrocks, and strangely, it was from his path only that the crowding men fell back, some with howls of agony.

Schlitzer had wrenched the drill from Walter's weaker grasp, and thrown himself almost into position for another lunge. In that instant Walter felt that his life was to pay for his moment of wild anger. A terrible meaning was in the Prussian's fierce blue eyes.

It went from them suddenly, and he screamed

with pain. His mighty arm, which had been fully drawn back, fell down. The drill clanked from his hands to the rock, and with another howl of woe he ran from the red-hot jumper. Jorrocks had earnestly laid it against his leg and now threatened him with a second branding.

The "oss-jockey," following Walter to the work, had seized the jumper from the coals of the forge as he ran to the rescue. With its red-hot point he had forced a passage easily. Now he stood waving it defiantly, dancing like a misshapen goblin, lunging toward Schlitzer, and shouting "come on." But the Prussian was running for the cooling water of Loon Lake as fast as his legs could carry him, while an immense roar of laughter from the navvies pursued him to the edge.

"Bedad, it's a fighter yez are, Jorrocks," said Pat. "And are you hurted, Mr. Walter?"

"No — not a bit."

"He was for murdherin' you, the vilyan of the world! I could bate the life out of him. Shall we go at him?"

"Leave him alone, Pat. I was wrong to strike him. I lost my temper."

"You wasn't wrong, then. Sure I admire the shpunk av ye. And him as big as a house! Begor, the lies he's been tellin' the bhys. Ye're not out of money, thin, at all?"

"No, I'm not," said Walter. "But we've had enough of this now. The work's waiting."

"Come, min," shouted Pat, with a new sense of authority. "This job's to be dhruv. What are ye standin' round for? There's plenty of money—it's the big bounce any wan of ye'll get that does be dhriftin' round this day. Rattle down thim holes. Whoop, there!"

Walter had triumphed, but he felt somewhat dismayed at having lost his head for a few moments. That was "not good business." Yet he blamed himself little for the blow he had struck. He saw nothing wrong in replying forcibly to a brutal insult; what shocked him was that he had been as one bereft of his senses. And he was sick at heart with recollection that he had clearly heard in the din cries of "Give him wan, Schlitzer," and "Bate the loife out of him, Schlitzer," from men that he had believed to be heartily his friends.

CHAPTER VI.

RISING WATER.

ROUGH navvies, wholly uneducated, much given to horse-play and brawling, yield quickly to courage and audacity a loyalty that kindness can with difficulty win from them. Though Walter had been ashamed of losing his self-control in dealing with Schlitzer, he soon felt that his combative nature had inspired him wisely, for his readiness to strike a man far bigger than himself had fixed him more firmly than ever in the admiration and confidence of his men. They were, for one thing, quite sure that no boss in need of money would have ventured to carry things with so high a hand.

If Walter had been older and more philosophical, he might have been in no wise pained by the evidence that he had won by the wild wrath of a moment what his indulgence of the men had not wholly secured. But their

ingratitude rankled in his young heart. He began to doubt whether any of the gang but Jorrocks and Meigs were sincerely attached to him. And this gave him a new air, stern, peremptory, hard.

Under the coldness that had come into his blue eyes the men, like so many children, winced. But they obeyed. His mere demeanor drove the work up to the 15th of November as it had never been driven before. Moreover, the men, feeling the approach of winter, when work for them would be scarce, keenly feared discharge, now that they knew their pay was secure if they worked on.

Rain began to fall on the fifteenth of the month. Up to this time the weather had been unusually dry and fine. Loon Lake, low as it had been in October, had continued to dwindle. Imagine a vast and very shallow saucer, with an uncommonly deep depression in its middle. This depression may stand for Loon Lake, and the shallow sides of the saucer for the two-miles-wide low hay land that lay on three sides of the water.

Into this great meadow of wild hay the rain

poured, not from the sky only, but in little streams from the wet surrounding forest and more or less distant hills. Walter, sitting in the shanty, with all his men idle and under wages, moodily listened to the downpour on the roof of scoops.

A hundred dollars would not pay for the direct loss by each day's rain, to say nothing of the loss of profits unearned, and the danger that the job might not be finished as contracted for. Yet the fears that soaked into the young boss with three days of steady downpour were trifling to the dismay with which he read a letter that came on the morning when fine weather had returned.

His mother wrote from St. Augustine, Florida. His father, she said, had so far recovered that she had read to him that letter in which Walter asked for a check and authority to use the moneys Mr. Hebden had paid, or should thereafter pay, on the contract — the letter in which Walter had given some account of his work on the job.

"Your father was greatly pleased on the whole," Mrs. Gibbs wrote, "and I send you the

check for the money in Mr. Bemis's hands and the papers your father signed. But he seemed a good deal puzzled because you did not say anything about the dam. He said of course you must have built the dam when you concluded to take out the deep rock, and he wondered you had not said anything about it. He worried over this all night, and next day the doctor positively forbade him to do any kind of business, or even let his mind run on business.

"Indeed," the letter went on, "the whole matter fatigued your father so much that he had a sort of relapse, and has again sunk into that curious, listless, sleepy, indifferent state he was in before. You had better write and tell us all about the dam, so as to ease his mind when he recovers interest again.

"We expect to be home before Christmas, for, physically, your father has picked up wonderfully. It is only that his brain is still suffering from some sort of pressure due to the blow on his head. But the doctor says he will certainly be quite well before Christmas."

As the young boss read the letter, his brain fairly reeled with sudden perception of what he

had neglected. He had *not* pondered enough on the engineering of the contract. He had been too much absorbed in the actual excavation, the difficulties of supply and the troubles with Hebden and about money. He had never reckoned that Loon Lake would probably rise in November, but had thought of the hay-land as flooded in spring only. He now experienced that dreadful daze of the mind which comes when one suddenly understands that he has overlooked a fatal danger that was "right under his eyes," as it were.

A rise of nine feet in Loon Lake would, he knew, send a thin stream of water down the bed of the creek in which his men were excavating. A rise of one foot would bring the surface of the water as high as the bottom of his excavation, though it would be then held far back by the very rock he meant to take out.

It was now clear that he would need a dam across the creek up near the lake, in case it rose more than one foot. He would need this dam to keep water off the shoaling upper end of the deep rock he meant to excavate. The men could not drill and blast in water. And if they

should not get out all the rock upon the first of January, his father and mother would be utterly ruined, and deeply in debt.

The outlet creek, in which he was excavating, ran like a deep gash through the clay of the hay-land for half a mile. Its head connected with the lake by a sort of bay two hundred yards long. The upper end of the eight-feet-deep excavation would stop about half-way up this bay, which was a hundred and forty yards wide at that point. Therefore he must build a dam one hundred and forty yards long, and high enough to hold back any probable rise of the lake in November and December.

Now Walter saw very clearly that the enormous price his father was getting for the deeper excavation had been intended to cover the cost of the dam and the risk that it might be carried away.

With bitter regret he reflected that he might have erected the dam on dry land or rock if he had foreseen the need. Could he do so now, after three days' rain? Taking Sam with him, he went up the creek, and found that the water had already risen three feet in the deep depres-

sion of the lake and outlet bay. The hay-land was still unflooded, but he must build his dam in two feet of water. How high it must be he could not tell, for he had never questioned any one as to the rise of the lake in autumn.

Walter, though feeling almost at his wits' end, explained the situation to Sam.

"It will take a good many men to run up the dam," said Walter. "I can't take a man off the job. These navvies don't know how to build a dam, anyhow. It's mighty little I know myself. I guess the best plan will be to rig up a lot of stout three-legged trestles, give 'em a slope to the front as lumbermen do and plank them."

"But plank won't hold back water," said Sam. "It would leak through the cracks."

"Yes, plank alone wouldn't do. But we can fill clay in front. Or, say, we can fill in the front with hay, and throw mud in front of that. Hay? Why, I guess that's what Jaffray was thinking of!"

But straightway he reflected to himself, "Surely Jaffray would have warned me if he'd seen I needed a dam."

The truth was that Jaffray had never really

given his mind to the engineering effect of the deepening of the excavation. There were some things, he admitted later, which even his experience had not taught him. The use to which he designed to put the fact that the marsh grew vast quantities of wild hay was quite unconnected with dams.

"Well, Walt, I guess it will be all right," said Sam, soothingly. "You can build the dam. I can see myself that your plan will work. All I've got to say is, go at it. There's no time to be lost."

"I'm afraid time enough has been lost already to knock the profits off the job," said Walter. "But I'll go straight to the Carry, and try to get men together. The worst of it is that the river-men are mostly gone to the woods already, or on their way. Oh Sam, I've been working under a terrible blunder."

"Well, who could have thought it? It's queer father never mentioned the dam to you."

"Only when he was delirious. Don't you remember, Sam? I thought it was the Buckstone Bridge dam he was crying out about when he was so ill. I guess he never really expected

he would go deeper than four feet, and so he didn't talk about the dam to me. My, I've been an awful fool!"

"Never mind, Walt. Pile in; it will come all right. We've got to finish the job somehow. Let's get a big gang together right away."

But Walter did not reply. A long silence fell on him. He sat down on the still dry bed of the creek and looked more than ever desperate. When he spoke it was to say: —

"Sam — more men — fifty, perhaps! Perhaps for a week or more. And more rain may come any day. The expenses may be heavy. The dam may be very hard to build if the water rises fast, and all the money spent on it may be wasted. And at whose risk? Who's advancing our money?"

"Mr. Gemmill, of course," said Sam. "What then? Don't be bothering him!"

"Why, I must tell him about this. He may not approve. I dare not put him in deeper without explaining."

To confess that, after all, he had misrepresented affairs to the banker! To confess that he had been ignorant, unforeseeing, rash, neg-

lectful! To confess that this great trouble arose from his blind undertaking of the deep excavation! Surely it would destroy Mr. Gemmill's confidence in him. Could it be believed that the banker would risk more money in his hands? And if he did not — if he required an immediate abandonment of the work — what then? The sick father and the dear, hopeful mother would be utterly ruined and heavily in debt!

"But why should you be in a hurry to tell Mr. Gemmill?" asked Sam, unconsciously expressing the very temptation that was tearing at Walter's sense of honor. "The lake mayn't rise more. Get a big gang together and pile in."

Walter reflected again in silence. Why give up, why confess before trying what he could do? Was it wise to alarm the banker? Mr. Gemmill might take a more gloomy view than the risks warranted. He might stop the work, whereas boldness might pull it through.

Yet the still small voice kept up the struggle. It whispered very clearly, "Mr. Gemmill trusted you. You are in duty bound to tell him of this at once. He should have the choice of withdrawing or going on."

"That's all nonsense," said Sam, angrily, when Walter again spoke his mind. "What's the use of scaring Mr. Gemmill out? You haven't tried anything yet. Who knows but you can get men right away? Don't funk this way, Walter."

"I don't think I'm funking, Sam. I'm trying to see what's right, and sensible too. It's a new case. I'm in a great difficulty. I've got Mr. Gemmill in with me; he thinks it's all plain sailing; what would he have a right to think if I should bring the contract to a greater loss than can be incurred by stopping now, and had never told him I was in this fix?"

"But you don't know you are really in a bad fix. It may be easy to put up all the dam that's needed. Inquire. And above all, don't waste time. Why, you might put Mr. Gemmill beyond all risks by piling in on the dam to-morrow."

This was the consideration that battled most strongly against Walter's prompting to inform his backer. By energy he might still save the contract and make a profit. He might thus be acting in Mr. Gemmill's best interest. But by

telling him the danger he might frighten the banker into choosing to bear the losses that immediate stoppage would involve, rather than boldly taking a new risk that might bring him out with a profit.

The humiliation of telling the case to his backer seemed harder the more he thought of it. Could he not avoid that?

He took out his note-book and tried to estimate the losses to come of stopping now. He estimated, too, the far greater losses to come of going on, building the dam, and after all failing to complete the job in the contract time. And the greater the danger of loss, the greater his obligation to inform the banker!

It was a hard quandary for a youth whose disposition, like Sam's, was all for action, all for grappling with the difficulty and the risks. At last Walter thought of a middle course. He might go to the Carry at once and see if men were to be had. He would consult any of them who understood the building of dams, as nearly all river-men do. Then he would be able to decide whether the magnitude of the enterprise required the disclosure to Mr. Gemmill.

As Walter almost resolved on this course he felt pricked in conscience. It did not seem perfectly frank to Mr. Gemmill. But he told Sam what he intended.

"That's right," said Sam. "What's the use of bothering Mr. Gemmill? Keep dark and do the best you can."

Keep dark! At the words Walter's soul rose in revolt. Keep dark! Conceal the truth from his benefactor! Play the sneak to him! Sam had hit the bull's-eye of Walter's honor. But he did not rebuke Sam. He wanted no more talk, no more temptation.

"Sam, I won't keep it dark. I will at once write the precise truth to Mr. Gemmill. If he can't trust me any longer so much the worse for me. Anyhow, I'll do all I can to deserve to be trusted."

"And you won't be. And the job will be stopped. And father will be ruined. You're a fool, Walt," said Sam.

"Don't let us quarrel, Sam," said Walter, holding out his hand. "I've got enough to worry through without that. You wouldn't have me go against my conscience."

"Only I wish you hadn't that kind of girly-girly conscience — that's all," said Sam, looking still vexed, though he was secretly glad of the strong grasp of Walter's hand.

Walter drove at once to Elbow Carry, that he might catch the afternoon mail. He felt disinclined to tell Jaffray at once about the need for a dam. It was a matter so much for Mr. Gemmill's decision that the young boss resolved to disclose nothing of his difficulty to the tavern-keeper until he should have received the banker's reply. It was not till he had written and posted his plain statement that he went to the landlord of the "Royal Arms."

"I've been thinking of increasing my force again," said Walter. "Do you suppose I can get a gang of river-men together quickly if I want them for a few days?"

"No, sir, you can't," said Jaffray, holding his eyes firmly together. "Peter Black has hired every man in sight. He's coming up tomorrow himself, and he's had two agents here these three days. They've got a hundred men together, and he's expecting to bring another hundred from Garroch and thereabout. You'll

have to pay big money to get men for any short job. Peter Black's hiring 'em for all winter."

The Carry seemed overrun with shantymen, but on going among them Walter found Jaf-ray's report true. They were mostly "going up" for Peter Black, a very enterprising young lumberman.

Walter felt dismay creeping more and more deeply into his heart. Even if Mr. Gemmill should consent to the building of the dam it was doubtful if men enough could be assembled to do it speedily. Nothing but very high pay would hold them even one week from going to the backwoods for the winter.

Walter felt that Mr. Gemmill ought to know this, too. So, about the middle of the afternoon, he telegraphed these words to the banker:

"In reference to my letter posted this forenoon, I find river-men will be hard to get and must be paid about double wages for a short job."

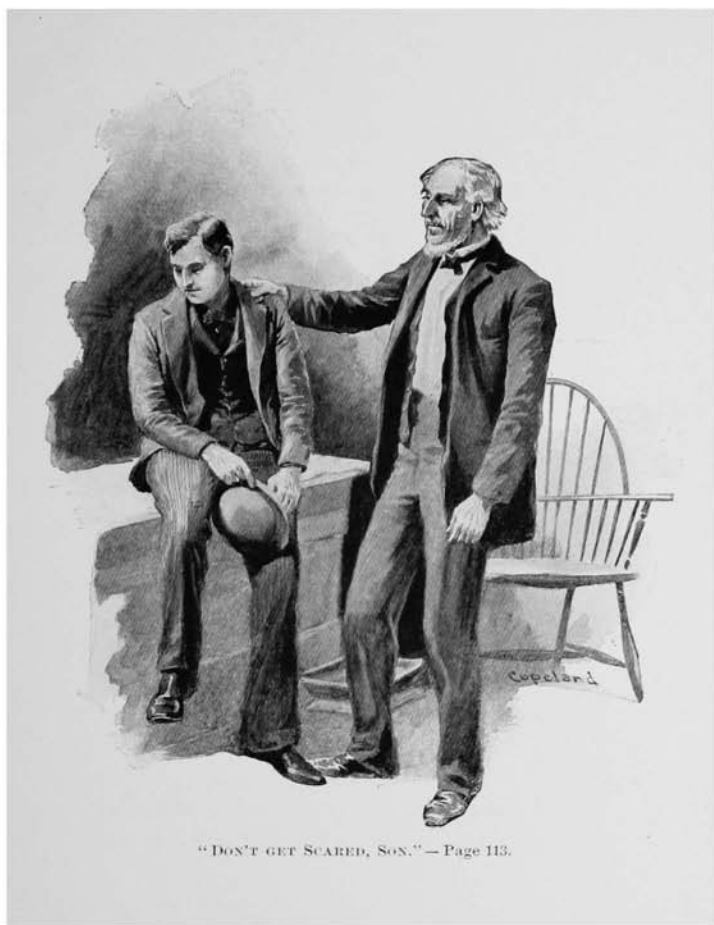
The young boss now felt that he had done all he could to inform his backer fully. On that point his conscience became easy. The effect was to set him thinking calmly about

what he should do in case the banker should tell him to go on with the dam.

He soon saw that he should need no manufactured material for the work if it were built on the plan he had sketched in talk with Sam, except about three thousand superficial feet of three-inch plank, and some kegs of heavy spikes for the three-legged trestles. Hay, mud, and light timber for the trestles he could obtain close by the dam site. Walter quickly found that he could buy the plank at a saw-mill, and the spikes at one of the stores.

The next question was as to getting these materials quickly to the dam site in case of Mr. Gemmill's consent. Had Jaffray plenty of wagons and teams likely to be disengaged for the morrow? With this question he went to the tavern-keeper.

"No," said Jaffray. "You know I haven't got a great bunch of horses on hand at this season. When the time for teaming men that drive the river has passed I sell off some horses and send more to the woods. And every team I've got is engaged for to-morrow and three days after, to take Peter Black's men and sup-



"DON'T GET SCARED, SON." — Page 113.

plies over the Carry to the steamboat landing on the upper reach."

"That's bad," said Walter, gloomily, for insurmountable difficulties seemed to arise on every hand.

"What were you wanting teams for anyhow, young man?"

"It's possible I may have to build a dam, sir," said Walter, thinking it best to explain to some extent.

Now a hint was as good as a long story to the shrewd tavern-keeper. Before his mind's eye the map of Loon Lake, its hay-lands and its outlet creek suddenly spread.

"Thunder and lightning!" he cried, as if aghast. "I tee-totally forgot you'd need a dam. But of course you will—on account of going so deep with the excavation! Jerusha, here's a pickle! There'll be six feet of water to fight. Why didn't you get at this before?"

"I never thought of it at all, Mr. Jaffray," said Walter, wofully. "Seems as if I had been stone-blind."

"Don't get scared, son. A man can't think when he's scared," said Jaffray, kindly, laying

his hand on Walter's shoulder. "Come into my back room and tell me just how things stand."

While the young boss explained the situation and all his proceedings, Jaffray sat winking furiously. He closed his eyes at the conclusion of the story for fully five minutes, and was deeply buried in thought. Finally he remarked decisively:—

"I'm going to try if I can pull your chestnuts out of the fire, or water rather. Certainly they're in it pretty deep. No men to be had—water rising—why, if there's more rain soon there may be a stream over your work before you can say Jack Robinson. I guess you'll have to drop this job right away."

"That's ruin," said Walter.

"Oh, I guess not," smiled Jaffray, with much winking. "But I ought to have had more time to work on Hebden's mind. I was reckoning to stop you about the middle of December."

"What do you mean, Mr. Jaffray? You've hinted at this before, but I never could understand your meaning."

"I mean that Hebden went into that contract

like a blind man. He's a kind of crank, and green as grass anyhow. He hadn't been here a month, he hadn't examined the contracts that his dead uncle made, he didn't know what obligations he inherited with his estate. He got it into his head that he'd do wonders by draining that hay-land, and before I'd heard anything about it he made the contract with your father. Now I'm going to remind Mr. Hebden of the existence of Windy Jim."

CHAPTER VII.

PETER BLACK'S PLAN.

DURING the recent weeks of Walter's work at Loon Lake Mr. Hebden had been concealing with difficulty his delight in a prospect he foresaw. He knew, for Walter's father had fully explained to him, the necessity for a dam in case the deep work were undertaken. As Walter let week after week pass without setting about the dam the litigious, ill-tempered little pettifogger reckoned with glee that the young boss must come to disaster. His malicious disposition was particularly pleased by the three days' rain.

"The next estimate will be due on the fifth of December," his secret thoughts ran. "By that time the need for a dam will be plain. I will not pay the estimate. I will object that the dam has not been built, and that the work

cannot be finished in contract time. He will, of course, stop the job. I shall claim forfeit and bring suit for damages. Even if old man Gibbs is bankrupt, I shall have all his son's work during November to the good, and I can finish the job cheap next year with that start to the good."

Of late Hebden had been keeping himself closely informed of Walter's movements. When he learned that the young boss had been inquiring for lumber and spikes he pondered the situation carefully. Plainly Walter was about to try to build the dam.

But could he obtain a big gang of river-men speedily enough to deal successfully with the rising water? Putting this question to himself, Hebden ordered his foreman to compete with Peter Black, and employ at once all the shanty-men seeking work for the winter.

On the following morning the little man was in a state of high satisfaction. The weather looked cloudy. More rain was in prospect. The dam must be built immediately or not at all, and his foreman told him that no men were to be had at Elbow Carry for any wages.

"Now we'll see," said Hebden, turning to

his morning mail. That son of Gibbs' shall learn a lesson that will last him the rest of his life."

At that moment Mr. Hebden opened a letter directed in the large round hand of Jaffray, the hotel-keeper.

Never did a face grow more red and wrathful than his became as he perused the notification. At a second reading he slapped it down on his desk, struck it with his clenched fist, and sat staring at it as if he expected it might vanish into nothingness under his dreadful gaze. As it did nothing of the kind, he collected his wits, rose, unlocked the door of his dead uncle's bricked-in safe, and after much rummaging brought forth a form of agreement, which he proceeded to read with positive fury. It was the document to which Mr. Jaffray referred in this letter:—

HOWARD HEBDEN, Esq.,

"DEAR SIR,—You are, I understand, about to lower Loon Lake and drain the hay-lands there. I hereby notify you that your uncle, the late John Hebden, for value received, bound himself, his heirs, and assigns to give me the cutting of five hundred acres of wild hay per year on those lands. The contract has still two years to

run, and I mean to hold you to its fulfillment. You perhaps don't know that the land if drained will cease to produce wild hay.

"I may also take the liberty of telling you that it will produce no other crop for a good many years, as the land will be too sour.

"Yours truly,

"JAMES JAFFRAY, 'Royal Arms' Hotel.

"Sometimes called 'Windy Jim.'"

"I couldn't help getting that in," said Jaffray to Walter at a later day. "Of course it was bad business — but the old Nick got into me. I wanted to give him the reminder of how he'd insulted me."

Mr. Hebden sat clenching his hands with fury. He was not chastened, but only maddened the more as his own reflections taunted him.

This little man was the proverbial beggar put suddenly on horseback. His inheritance of the Hebden estate had been quite unexpected by him. Coming from his pettifogging practice into a large fortune in Canada, his head, as the lumberman said, had "swelled."

He had felt and acted for four months like an autocrat. He had discharged some of his uncle's

confidential men; others had rebelled against his bullying manner and left him; those who had remained had soon abstained from counseling an employer who took every bit of advice as an imputation against his wisdom.

He now saw that many men about him must have understood that his plan of drainage would destroy a valuable tract of hay-land, for he did not doubt Jaffray's word. The wild hay was always worth at least ten dollars a ton. His own lumber shanties needed vast quantities. And he had been imagining that the land would continue to yield the crop till he could put it in timothy or sell it for farms!

He reflected, angrily, that Jaffray must have been laughing at him for weeks, and meditating this notification. He reflected with still more anger that the old confidential manager who had quickly left him with disgust must have known of this agreement, and would have warned him of its provisions had his services been retained.

Still Hebden did not abandon his hope to punish Walter Gibbs. Reverting to that matter he saw more clearly than ever that the young

boss could not drain the land according to contract unless he could at once assemble a large force of men capable of building a dam.

"If that boy fails," thought Hebden, "the meadows will stay as they are, and this contract with Jaffray will not be infringed in the least."

He therefore sent no reply to the tavern-keeper. Time enough to reckon with him in case there should be a prospect of the completion of the drainage job that fall. Meantime Walter, who had stayed all night at the "Royal Arms" in order to receive as early as possible in the forenoon the despatch which he expected from Mr. Gemmill, was quite unaware of Jaffray's interference in the business.

The young boss had slept wretchedly; nightmares carrying his father and mother to destruction galloped through his short dreams. He rose miserable, breakfasted without appetite, and walked out in the dull weather among the crowds of men all waiting for the arrival of Peter Black. It seemed cruel to the young boss that all these hands, able at dam-building, should be going far out of his reach just when he might most need their aid.

Nine o'clock came. "Now," thought Walter, "Mr. Gemmill will be reading my letter. By ten I shall get a despatch from him. But what if he does say, 'Go ahead with the dam'? Where shall I get men?"

At quarter to ten he went to the little telegraph office. No despatch! At eleven the tale was the same. So at half-past eleven. Walter was in a woe of anxiety. Was Mr. Gemmill so staggered that he could not make up his mind in any sense? Eighty men clanking away on the Loon Lake work! If they were to be stopped it would be as well to stop them quickly, for every day on the work would in that case mean heavier loss to his father.

As Walter came out of the telegraph office at half-past eleven he heard the whistle of the steamboat coming up the river. It was barely possible that Mr. Gemmill might have sent up a letter by the boat.

"He might," thought Walter, "have wondered at my telegram of yesterday afternoon, and gone to the post-office late in the evening to get my letter, which would not otherwise reach him till this morning."

Walter walked rapidly toward the wharf. In came the steamboat fairly black with men. They were roaring the French-Canadian chorus of "*O roulant ma boule.*" The crowd waiting for them caught up and sang the inspiring refrain.

"All river-men, nearly," thought Walter. "Good gracious, if I could have them for a few days! Wouldn't two hundred of them just rattle up that dam!"

On the hurricane-deck beside the captain stood a tall young man, who had become a very familiar figure on the river. When the men ashore saw his keen, shaven face clearly they stopped singing, and soon the chorus ceased from the steamboat also.

One of the men on the wharf shouted, "Who yer goin' up for?"

"Peter Black!" roared a hundred voices together. It was the favorite "gag" of the river when Peter Black first became the pre-eminent adventurer in the hazardous lumber trade.

Peter Black, standing beside the captain, laughed heartily. When something like silence

fell just as the boat touched the wharf, he came to the side and held up his hand for attention.

"Is Walter Gibbs of Garroch there?" he then cried.

"Yes, sir, I'm here," cried the young boss.

"Come aboard, will you? I've got a word for you. Make way there, men — let Mr. Gibbs aboard."

Walter ran up the gangway, climbed to the hurricane-deck, and clasped hands with the great lumberman.

"What is it, sir?" he said, "have you a letter for me from Mr. Gemmill?"

"No. But I've seen him. I had business with him last night, and was stopping at his house. He says go ahead with your dam."

Walter stood dumb. He scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry. For the thought of the lack of men struck him with new force, now that he must look for hands.

"Mr. Gemmill told me your fix," said Black. "He was greatly pleased with your straightforward letter. So was I—he read it to me. Now I've been in such scrapes myself, and I know it's tough to own up to one's backer.

Well, the long and short of it is, you can have all the men you want. Here's two hundred of mine at your disposal. It was lucky I chanced to hear of your fix."

"What! You'll lend me a gang?"

"Yes, and I'll go down and run up that dam for you myself. I've built a dozen big dams in my time."

"Well — Mr. Black — I don't know how to thank you!"

"Don't thank me — thank your honest letter, Mr. Gibbs. I'll lose nothing. You'll pay the men for their time. I don't really want 'em up river yet for a week. Jaffray!" he shouted, seeing the tavern-keeper coming across the wharf, "I want you to move a hundred men down to Mr. Gibbs' contract after they've got their dinner — can you do it?"

"Of course I can," cried Jaffray, "but —" he stopped and stood winking as if puzzled. He was thinking that he had been too hasty in notifying Hebden, for now he saw that Walter might finish the contract after all.

It was half-past two o'clock the same afternoon before all preparations had been completed

for taking one hundred river-men to Loon Lake. Tents, pork, biscuit, tea, axes, every foreseen requisite for their dam-building had been brought from Peter Black's storehouse near the wharf.

Nine wagons, each containing eleven men and one of Jaffray's drivers, stood ranged before the "Royal Arms" Hotel. Four other wagons were piled high with supplies. Everything had been made ready for Peter Black's order to start, but neither Peter, nor Jaffray, nor Walter was to be seen.

The cause of this delay was Peter Black himself. Scarcely had he landed from the steamboat before he had learned from Jaffray the true situation of the Loon Lake job.

Up to that time the young lumberman had been unaware that Hebden's scheme of drainage applied to a great tract of wild hay.

"And you tell me, Jaffray, that you want Hebden to go on paying for worse than worthless work," said Peter, sternly. "'Pon my word, it's too bad. Somebody should have told Mr. Hebden plainly that his plan will destroy those valuable meadows."

"Oh, he's one of the kind that knows it all," said Jaffray. "He's got the 'big head,' don't you see. I want him to learn a lesson. He contracted for this drainage job on his own cranky notions; he gets mad when anybody gives him a word of advice, and he's acted as mean as dirt to young Gibbs. I'd be glad to see it cost him any amount."

"You're too vindictive, friend Jaffray," said Peter. "It's true Hebden is a greenhorn and an arrogant, offensive greenhorn at that. But it's a shame to let him throw away his money for want of a word of warning. If he won't take warning — why, then, there's no helping him. For me, I hate to see men's work wasted no matter who's to pay for it. I'm going over to see Hebden about this."

"Why, what do you expect you can do with him?" asked Jaffray, sulkily.

"What he should do is clear," said Peter. "He should pay for the work already done, and pay Gibbs for abandoning the profits he could probably make by completing the job. Surely he will have sense enough to see that after getting your letter."

But Peter Black found Mr. Hebden in no humor for compromise. The little man, quite unaware that Peter would put up the dam for Walter, jumped to the idea that the young lumberman had come to him on Walter's behalf.

"You tell me, Mr. Black," said Hebden, "that the hay-land will be ruined by drainage. I am obliged to you for the information. It may be correct. If so, all I have to do is to dam up this outlet and flood the land again. Then I shall have to pay no damages to Jaffray on his hay contract with my uncle."

"All right, if you will have it so," said Black, patiently. "You will then pay the useless removal of about twelve or thirteen thousand cubic yards of rock. If you could induce Gibbs to stop now you'd have to pay for only four or five thousand yards, and the allowance for profits on the rest."

"Induce Gibbs to stop!" snorted Hebden. "I fancy the rising lake will do that. Pooh-pooh, sir, I shall deal as I please with Gibbs!"

"That's your calculation, eh?" said Black. "Then I may tell you that the water won't stop the young fellow at all."

"Pooh—he can't find men to build his dam," cried Hebden.

"Pooh yourself, sir, he's found them already! I'm going to lend him a hundred, or two hundred if they can be used. I'm going to build the dam for him myself. My men are in wagons now, waiting to go down there."

"The way you infernal colonials hang together!" cried Hebden, angrily.

"Well, now, Mr. Hebden, I don't think your tone is quite justified," said the wise young lumberman, soothingly. "It's in your own interest that I took the liberty of suggesting a course. It doesn't seem to me judicious to throw good money after bad. It is very easy for me to understand that a gentleman recently from England should not see the value of wild hay, for 'at home' it would be useless, I presume. There you'd naturally want to drain such a marsh and get a crop from it. But wild hay represents good money in a rough, lumbering country. No newcomer could know that."

"I wish some one had had the decency to tell me of this in time," said Hebden, somewhat mollified.

"Well, sir, I thought it was my duty to come as soon as I understood the situation. I hope I've given you no offence."

The considerate and respectful tone of the well-known and wealthy young lumberman was like balm to the wounded and angry little man.

"Won't you sit down again, Mr. Black?" he said. "I'm really very much obliged to you. What do you propose? If young Gibbs has your men at his command I presume there's no doubt he can put up the dam and finish the contract."

"Very little," said Black. "Of course the dam might give him some trouble. But he's a bright, active young fellow, and could probably keep it in repair. I presume you don't really wish him to come to grief—it would be a sad thing for his father to lose his all on this contract. Really, I think it would be a Christian thing for you to relieve him from the risk, and save a good many thousands of your own money in the bargain."

"Well, well—putting it on that ground," said Hebden, feeling somewhat puffed up at

the assumption that he was in a position to make generous concessions. "What does he propose?"

"I haven't consulted him in the matter yet," said Black. "But I dare say he will hear reason. Suppose we send for him."

So Walter, to his amazement, was confronted with a proposal that he should stop work at once. At first he rebelled decidedly.

"I don't see why I should," said he, for he had been very ambitious to finish the job cleanly, and greatly lifted up by the prospect which Black's men gave him.

"I think you should," said Black. "Mr. Hebden agrees, I understand, to pay the whole outlay and allow for a reasonable profit. Let us figure on the thing," and once he got Walter involved in calculations the bargain was in a fair way toward conclusion.

Jaffray, being called in to give his opinion as to the cost of supplying Walter's men for six weeks longer, soon became engaged in the general discussion, and cleverly addressed himself to increasing the allowance that Walter should receive for prospective profits.

Still the young boss was discontented with the idea of giving up the work.

"I might make half as much again as you advise me to take," he said, drawing Mr. Black aside.

"You might and you mightn't. The dam might break away, and more than once. Deep snow may come early. Rain may rob you of half the working days from this out. Take a good profit when you can get it. And another point is this—consider how greatly relieved from anxiety your mother and father will be if you close out the job now with a good profit on hand."

"That's so, you're giving me good advice," said Walter, gratefully. "But I'll have to get Mr. Gemmill's opinion on the matter."

At four o'clock that afternoon Peter Black's men were told that they could proceed with their supplies, not to Loon Lake, but to the head of the Carry. At half-past four Walter had begun to exchange telegrams with Mr. Gemmill. At six o'clock the banker had sent his final word. "Take Peter Black's advice. Let him see that the settlement is secure.

Four thousand dollars' profit over all is a good transaction, and I congratulate you and myself on being out of the job."

Thus it happened that Walter Gibbs, Senior, when his interest in business revived, was cheered by the news that four thousand dollars stood to his credit in Mr. Gemmill's bank. It lifted up his heart so greatly that he recovered speedily, and was back in Garroch before Christmas. The looks and words of gratitude and love that the young boss then received from his parents he can never forget.

"My dear boy, you did wonders," said his father, "wonders. In less than two months, four thousand dollars! Why, it was a grand business."

"Aye, Wally'll make a good business man yet, I'm thinkin'," said Mr. Gemmill, patting his protégé affectionately on the arm. "He just did fine, and I give ye notice I'll back him again if he's needing it."

"Well, sir," said Walter, blushing, "it seems to me that I don't deserve one bit of credit. You started me. Mr. Jaffray saved the forfeit for me. Sam kept the gang together by cook-

ing at a pinch, and Mr. Black got me out of the final scrape with a profit. It seems to me I didn't come in anywhere — I didn't even finish the job."

"Well, I'm no saying but you had some good turns done ye," said Mr. Gemmill. "But mind you this—it's the man with a head on him, and sense and manners, that gets good turns done him in this world — aye, is it! And you'll not forget that you downed Meigs all by your lone, and skelpit yon Prussian, besides all the work of administrating the job. Oh, I'll back ye again to ony reasonable extent. I'm aye for backin' business lads that has streaks of luck coming quick after others. That means ability — luck's but a foolish name for the good turns that's aye happenin' to them that help theirsels."

