

THE ROBIN AND THE CHICKEN.

A green robin flew down from a tree. To him a worm that he happened to see; A trisky young chicken came straggling by.

THE CASH BOY.

Frank Fowler's Inheritance.

BY HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUT OF WORK.

Two days Frank spent in fruitless efforts to obtain a place.

When he was asked, 'Why did you leave them?'

He might have answered because trade was dull, but this he felt would be only evading the truth.

'Because an enemy made a false charge against me.'

'Of what kind?' asked the merchant, suspiciously.

'She accused me of stealing,' answered Frank, flushing painfully.

'And they believe the charge?'

'They did not feel sure, but as they were intending to discharge four of their cash boys they included me in the number.'

'Then they would not give you a recommendation?'

'I am afraid not,' said Frank, uncomfortably.

'We can't take you without a recommendation,' said the merchant, decidedly.

'I don't know that I am bound to answer your questions,' answered Frank, quietly.

'But I am not dishonest,' said Frank, indignantly.

'I do not judge or accuse you, but under the circumstances I can't take you.'

This was the general answer which Mr. Wade's applications received.

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It was only a matter of time before all this time his money steadily diminished.

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'You might be in better business than accusing a poor boy falsely.'

'You impudent young scamp! How dare you speak to me in this manner!'

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'Yes, but he may get something to do. He is just obstinate enough to stay in the city, because he knows he is not wanted here.'

'Then what do you propose to do, Mr. John?'

'I don't know yet; I must think it over. I must prevent the boy communicating with my uncle if it is a possible thing. Strike while the iron is hot, I say.'

'That is very judicious, Mr. John. I have no doubt you will know how to manage business.'

'With this bit of flattery, which she knew would be acceptable, Mrs. Bradley left the room.'

'Yes,' said John Wade to himself, 'I must think it over. I am playing for a high stake and I must leave nothing undone that will promote my fortunes. This boy is more dangerous than Mrs. Bradley has any idea of. I am convinced that his wily cousin, and the rightful heir to my uncle's property. But he must never know it. Strange that circumstances should have brought him into his own grandfather's house. If I were inclined to be superstitious now I might fancy that there was a Providence. It is only chance, and I must overrule it, and crush my possible rival.'

John Wade dressed himself for a walk, and drawing out a cigar, descended the steps of his uncle's house into the street.

'I can think of some plan as I walk,' he said.

He reached Fifth avenue, and walked slowly down town. He was about opposite Twenty-eighth street, when he came face to face with the subject of his thoughts.

Frank had been lucky enough to get a bundle to carry, and that accounted for his presence on Fifth avenue at that early hour.

'The devil is always near when you are thinking about him,' thought John Wade, as he looked at the young rascal.

'Where are you going?' he demanded, sternly.

Our hero looked up, for the first time aware of his enemy's approach.

'Mr. Wade!' he exclaimed, in surprise.

'Did you hear my question? Where are you going?'

'I don't know that I am bound to answer your questions,' answered Frank, quietly.

'But I am not dishonest,' said Frank, indignantly.

'I do not judge or accuse you, but under the circumstances I can't take you.'

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was aware of John Wade's hostility, he supposed that he had nothing more to fear from him.

After telling his errand he walked down town again, but did not succeed in obtaining any further employment.

Wherever he went he was followed by Graves. Unconsciously he exhausted the patience of that gentleman, who got heartily tired of his tramp about the streets. But the longer day wore on to an end, and at last he had the satisfaction of tracking Frank to his humble lodging. Then, and not till then, he felt justified in leaving him.

After taking a frugal supper at a cheap restaurant for his purse was at a loss—Nathan Graves sought the residence of John Wade. He rang the bell as the clock struck eight.

'Well, what success?' asked Wade, when they met.

'I have tracked the boy. That is what you wanted?'

'Yes.'

'What more can I do for you?' asked Graves, with a long feeling of curiosity.

'I am hardly prepared to say. In fact I believe I will consult you. As you will guess, I have no friendly purpose. He stands in my way.'

'Well, do you want him put out of the way?' asked the other, significantly.

John Wade started. Bad as he was, he shrank from the evident meaning of his companion's question.

'Hush! I said he is not prepared to go as far as that.'

'What, then, do you want?'

'I want to get him away from the city. The fact is—I may as well tell you—my uncle has taken a great fancy to the boy, and might be induced to adopt him, and cut me off from my rightful inheritance. The boy is an awful young rascal, and has been doing all he could to get into the good graces of my uncle, who is my old and weak friend. You see my object, don't you?'

'I don't see how a boy in his position managed to approach a gentleman like your uncle.'

'Then I will tell you how it happened, in order that you may be the better comprehend the situation.'

The story, colored in the telling, need not be repeated here, nor need I detail the subsequent conversation, since the plan finally agreed upon will be understood as the story proceeds.

It was nine o'clock when Nathan Graves left the house, John Wade himself accompanying him to the door.

'How soon do you think you can carry out my instructions?' asked Wade.

'To-morrow, if possible.'

'The sooner the better.'

'I understand. I will spare no efforts, was the answer.'

'It is lucky I fell in with him,' said Nathan Graves to himself with satisfaction, as he slowly walked down Fifth Avenue. It's a queer business, but that's none of my business. The main thing for me to consider is, that it brings money to my purse, and of that I have need enough.'

Parsonish in general, John Wade was willing to pay in such a case as the present; and Graves left the house richer by a hundred dollars than he entered it.

'I must see Dan,' soliloquized Graves. 'He's got a crib over in Jersey that will do for a cage for the young'un. He won't mind letting me have the loan of it cheap. That'll answer to begin with. We can decide about the rest later.'

He dropped into a cigar store, and bought a choice Havana, which he smoked with great apparent enjoyment.

'I haven't been able to afford such luxuries lately,' he said to himself. 'Lock's turned, I hope.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

A PHILOSOPHICAL BACKSLIDE.

It was eleven o'clock in the forenoon of the next day when Frank walked up Canal street toward Broadway. He had been down to the wharves since early the morning seeking for employment. He had offered his services to many, but as yet had been unable to secure a job. Things were beginning to look serious to our hero. He was not earning enough to pay his daily expenses, not to mention the obligation which he had assumed to pay his sister's board. He was not wholly discouraged, but he was forced to think seriously of the future. Things could not remain long as they were.

'Shine your boots, mister,' said a boot black, judging from our hero's dress that he was in comfortable circumstances.

'Yes, if you'll shine 'em for nothing,' said Frank, good-humoredly.

'That ain't my way of doing business. Yer don't see any green in my eye, do you?'

'I thought you might be blacking boots for pleasure.'

'Not much, was the reply. 'If it's a pleasure to you, just shine up my shoes.'

As he spoke he extended a foot only partially covered by a dilapidated apology for a shoe, through the holes of which he wore no stockings, some dirty shins were visible.

'Where did you buy those shoes?' asked Frank, innocently.

'Buy 'em! I didn't buy 'em. They were left me by my grandfather, who wore them seventeen years himself afore he kicked the bucket. He left them shoes to me in his will. They was all he did leave me, and I wear 'em out of regard for him.'

'Do you make it pay blacking boots?' asked Frank.

'What do you want to know for? Do you want to go into it?' asked the boy shrewdly.