

he will tell you ; but if you don't want to ask"—and I put considerable meaning into this—"hold the road to the north-east and inquire the direction to Libertyville. When you get there you will easily find the old man, and he is as good as cheese !"

He then said, in the same cautious voice as before :

"Young man, I like your style, and I want to know you better. Join me over the river in some ravine. I want to talk to you."

"All right," I rejoined, "but you better let me go ahead. I'll have to go up to the shop first and put on my boots and hat. I'll be as quick as I can, and will start on first. Then you follow on, but not too closely. I'll be up in some of the gorges, so we can talk entirely by ourselves. But I'll tell you the truth, stranger," said I, rather indifferently, "upon my word, I don't care very much about going, because I've already lost too much time at the shop to-day."

He had by this time finished saddling his horse, but he continued adjusting and readjusting things so as to gain time to say what he wished ; and to my intimation that I cared very little about leaving my work, he responded :

"Don't fail to join me. *I'll make it worth something to you !*" He then added flatteringly : "You're as good a man as I've met lately."

I then moved forward to fasten the reins, and he edged along toward me, asking carelessly : "Do you know John Smith, of Elgin ?"

"I know all the Elgin John Smiths," I replied. "Do you mean the gunsmith ?"

"Yes," he answered tersely.

"Well, I know John," I continued ; "that is, he has repaired my rifle and shotgun several times ; but he might not remember me. I never had much talk with him."

"He's a square man," replied the stranger. "I'm his uncle. I came up from Elgin this morning. Smith didn't know just where Crane lived. He told me that he traded here, and that the boys were over here a good deal, so that I would be likely to find somebody here who could readily direct me to his place."

"Well," I said rather curtly, "we've talked too much already. It won't do. I'll join you over the river soon."