

between the eyes the first time he cuts up mean!" The new hand was considerably disturbed in mind, and his perturbation did not decrease as he realized how completely he was covered by the Parson's wing. The Parson seated Slim beside him at the table, and even helped him to food. It rather astonished Mr. Baker to see the Parson, after skilfully appropriating the best cuts of meat, as was his usual custom, pass his plate to Master Slim, and content himself with the next best cuts he could find. The Parson even sweetened Slim's coffee for him, which operation caused Forkey to stealthily whisper to the young man:

"If you should feel bad any time just after eatin', go right to the clerk and ask for an enetic; don't do no loatin' about it, either—pizen sometimes gets into coffee."

Forkey climbed that night to his bunk with the praiseworthy resolution to lay awake all night, and, with eyes apparently closed, to watch every motion of the original occupant of the opposite bunk. This resolve formed a magnificent stone in the pavement of a certain dangerous but highly popular pathway, famed in proverb as paved with such material, for while in the midst of a subtle mental device for overcoming the Parson, Forkey fell into a peaceful slumber. Waking suddenly in the middle of the night—from a dream in which the Parson was with one hand seductively offering Slim a cup of poison while with the other he was rifling Slim's pockets—Forkey sprang suddenly up and looked toward the opposite bunk. To his great surprise he saw, by the dim light of the single lantern which hung in the ward, the Parson, who was always grumbling about the cold drafts which swept through the boiler-deck at night, folding his blanket double and piling it over his bunk-mate, after which operation the Parson stretched himself in his bunk with no covering whatever. Forkey lay awake for the remainder of the evening, determined to be ready to give the Parson the lie the moment that gentleman awoke and accused Slim of appropriating his bed-clothing. The couple arose without quarreling, however, and the Parson was as kind to the green hand as he had himself slept under downy coverlets throughout the night.

Forkey pondered over the matter without reaching a satisfactory conclusion as to the Parson's motive. He consulted Mr. Baker, but that gentleman, even after stimulating his intellect in the manner peculiar to roustabouts, was unable to offer any theory in elucidation. In fact when, to have undisturbed opportunity for reflection, Mr. Baker climbed to the top of a pile of cotton on the after-deck, he himself received a revelation

compared with which Forkey's was insignificant. He was lying on his stomach, as is the custom of the meditative roustabout, and his eyes naturally fell upon the narrow runway which had been left between the cotton and the side of the boat. Suddenly the unhandsome form of the Parson appeared, and, after dropping a roll of bills, quickly vanished. The startled observer sprang to his feet, ran softly along the cotton-heap, and reached the end of it just in time to hear the Parson say to Slim:

"Wouldn't ye like to have yer name tattooed on to yer arm, so if ye got lost overboard, or got hurt ashore, folks 'd know where ye b'longed?"

"Yes," replied the youth.

"Go 'round behind the cotton, then," said the Parson, "and I'll get my things an' come an' do the bizness."

Mr. Baker, swearing eloquently to himself, returned to his original resting-place in time to see Slim start at the sight of the roll, and quickly pick it up. At one and the same instant, the observer rose to his feet and the Parson appeared, saw the money and exclaimed:

"Hello! found somethin'?"

"Yes," drawled Slim, his eyes opening widely; "I wonder who lost it?"

"Don't trouble your head about that," roughly exclaimed the Parson. "If it's anybody aboard he'll growl about it soon enough. Jest keep yer mouth tight shet about it—that's all you've got to do. Then, if nobody claims it, you can send it home from Cairo or Shawnee town. 'Twould come in handy to your folks;—let's see—there's ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty dollars; bully! You can get eastern bills fur it fur about a dollar extra, an' jest think how yer mother's eyes 'll stick out—eh?"

The tattooing operation began, and Mr. Baker, doubting the accuracy of his own senses, speedily drank them into a condition of utter quiescence.

CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH THE HERO FINDS AND LOSES ONE OF HIS EARLIEST ACQUAINTANCES.

Day by day the little "Helen Douglas" gallantly struggled up the great river, and day by day the mystery of the after-deck grew more absorbing. The roustabouts discussed in earnest undertones a subject which was always dropped when the Parson came within earshot. So absorbed was Mr. Forkey in contemplation, that on one occasion, while wooding up, and struck forcibly by a new