

NED DARROW;
OR,
THE YOUNG CASTAWAYS.

CHAPTER V.

IN PURSUIT.

MR. JAMES could scarcely credit his senses. "Left behind?" he finally gasped. "How did the accident——"

"It was no accident. It was done purposely. Don't talk of it, Mr. James," said Ned, dashing away his tears and arising. "The thing can't be helped now."

"But," persisted the under-master, his pale face very serious and bewildered, "I don't comprehend——"

"The cause! Oh! I got into a little trouble, and the Professor punished me by leaving me," replied Ned, with affected carelessness.

"See here, Ned," he said abruptly, catching his companion by the arm and viewing his honest face with a troubled look, "you are hiding something from me. What has happened? You must tell me."

Ned saw that he could not avoid an explanation.

"Well, then, I was unjustly accused."

"Of what?" demanded Mr. James, sharply.

"Of breaking into Professor Ballentine's study."

"Oh, Ned! I see it all now," cried Mr. James, starting violently and growing pale. "Go on," he choked

out. "Some miserable action of mine has ruined your pleasure. Oh! this is too much."

It was a disconnected, faltering story that the under-master finally drew from Ned's reluctant lips.

"Heaven bless you for your nobleness of purpose in shielding me, and forgive my fault," came brokenly from Mr. James, his eyes filling with tears. "You have sacrificed all your pleasure for me—you have suffered disgrace because of my unworthy actions. Ned Darrow, this lesson I shall never forget, but this sacrifice shall not be."

He was wildly excited, and paced the campus shamefaced and self-condemning, wringing his hands agitatedly.

"To think that I should thus involve you in trouble. No, no, come to the house, Ned. You shall not remain home from that expedition."

Was Mr. James mad? He certainly was terribly in earnest, for a stern decision suddenly chased away the wretchedness of his face.

"It was me who broke into the study," he resumed. "When I awoke last night my brain seemed on fire. In my intolerable thirst I sought something to assuage it, and broke into the room. I found some alcohol there, and in my madness drank some. Then this morning, wretched in my humiliation and illness, I slunk away to the woods, not caring to face any of the school, nor intending to return until they were gone. Go to your room and get your satchel."

"But they are gone, and——"

"Then we will overtake them."

"Oh, Mr. James! that would be folly."

