

Lem arrived, panting and purple, Mr. Binkle welcomed him with a look of tender solicitude, and led him to a thicket a hundred yards from the road, where lay Mr. Lodge caressing a bandaged ankle, and simulating pain with heart-rending groans.

CHAPTER XVII.

A MISDIRECTED MISSIONARY EFFORT.

For several days Lem's new friends kept him quite busy. They assured him of steady employment, explaining that officers of the law, who, like themselves, could not be too careful to keep their own persons out of sight, needed some assistant who was well known and trusted. The work made necessary by the pursuit of the horse thief for whom they were ostensibly in search, was various. Among other things, a gun was necessary—they had forgotten to bring their fire-arms, so great had been their hurry—and Lem was sent to the principal settlement in the adjoining county to buy one, the cost not to exceed ten dollars, though a fifty-dollar bill was given him with which to make the purchase. Then Lem was instructed to hire a horse, on pretence of going to see a cousin in still another county, and there he was to purchase, out and out, three as good horses as he could find. These investments were made only after Lem had been sent into Mount Zion on every conceivable errand by which good money could be obtained in exchange for counterfeits. Mr. Binkle had fulfilled his intention of giving Lem fifty dollars for his mother, the giving having been preceded by a drawing from Lem of his story, and by a copious shower of tears from the sympathetic Mr. Binkle.

As for Lem, he was happy; life seemed every way delicious to him. He was helping his mother; he was satisfying his employers; he had at last found some one who appreciated him and remunerated him handsomely. There was something delightful about the secrecy of his new business, and even more delightful in the camping out and the irregular life which it necessitated. Money came to him freely; he was promised a regular salary of twenty-five dollars per month, but before he had been among the counterfeiters a week he had received, in good money, and as special gratuities for successful transactions, the equivalent of his monthly salary. The conservative Mr. Lodge murmured considerably about his partner's generosity, and finally remarked:

"You might pay it in bad money, anyhow—he wouldn't know any better."

"Them storekeepers down East, where his mother'll spend whatever we give him, would spot it in a minute," replied Mr. Binkle, "and then we *might* lose him. You mustn't forget the first principles of business, Lodge, just for the sake of being careful."

"S'pose we lose him anyhow?" growled the despondent partner.

"Then we'll have got rid of a good deal more than we ever did in such a little while before. You don't even seem to think that we're doin' good with money we give him, either."

Mr. Lodge uttered a frightful bark, which was intended for sarcastic laughter; his partner so understood it, for he took issue with him at once.

"Now look here, Lodge, 'tisn't decent in you to always talk and act as if we were the hardest cases in the world. You may think what you please about yourself, but when you're thinkin' up abuse, just count me out, if you please. I know shovin' counterfeit money isn't accordin' to law, but I ain't got the same notions on finance that congressmen and legislators have, and when I get a chance to do good, and it don't cost more than I think I can stand, I'm going to do it, and I ain't ashamed to say that I believe it'll be passed to my credit. Over and over again I've heard preachers get off sermons on the text, 'True religion and undefiled is this: to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep themselves unspotted from the world.' I'm doin' the *first* half of that by givin' Lem plenty of money to send to his mother. The *last* half of the text—well, there's lots of church members in business that's worse than me. I don't drink, I don't swear, I don't steal, I never tell dirty stories, no woman alive can say anything against me—"

"How about the mother of that boy that the Regulators hung in Missonri, for shovin' bad money that you gave him to spend?" interrupted Mr. Lodge.

"I didn't mean *that* sort of thing about women," replied Mr. Binkle, quickly, "and you ain't fair in throwin' it up to me—you know I'd have got him the best lawyer in in the county, and got him clear, when the case came for trial, or I'd have hired somebody to break jail for him; I thought a great deal of that boy. You can throw up such things again me all you've a mind—I don't care—once in grace, always in grace, and I know I once was there. What bothers me is that *you* don't pay any attention to such things. I don't like to pest-er you about 'em, because it always makes you so glum, but I *do* feel as if it was my duty sometimes. You'd feel a good deal