

Warnings, cautions, and moral lessons derived from this incident had due weight with Dave for several days; in fact, until his cut healed over. Then he forgot them and became as bad as ever.

CHAPTER II

HOW DAVE FAILED TO PROFIT BY HIS EXPERIENCE. OF PAOLO TOSCANELLI AND CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS. OF A NEW SHORE DAVE AND DOLLY REACHED BY EXPLORATION, ROUND THE CORNER; AND OF OTHER NAVIGATORS WHO HAD, IN THIS CASE, MADE IT FOR THEMSELVES. OF THE PUBLIC SPIRIT OF DAVE AND DOLLY, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A BARRAGE. HOW MRS. TAPPING AND MRS. RILEY HEARD THE ENGINES. OF A SHORTAGE OF MUD, AND A GREAT RESOLVE OF DAVE'S. WHY NOT SOME NEW MUD FROM THE NEW SHORE?

THE interest of Dave's accident told in the last chapter is merely collateral. It shows how narrow an escape the story that follows had not only of never being finished, but even of never being written. For if its events had never happened, it goes near to certainty that they would never have been narrated. Near, but not quite. For even if Dave had profited by these warnings, cautions, and moral lessons to the extent of averting what now appears to have been Destiny, some imaginative author might have woven a history showing exactly what might have happened to him if he had not been a good boy. And that history, in the hands of a master—one who had the organ of the conditional præterpluperfect tense very large—might have worked out the same as this.

The story may be thankful that no such task has fallen to its author's lot. It is so much easier to tell something that actually did happen than to make up as you go.

Dave was soon as bad as ever—no doubt of it. Only he kept clear of that post. The burnt child dreads the fire, and the chances are that admonitions not to climb up on posts had less to do with his abstention from this one than the lesson the post itself had hammered into the back of his head. Exploration of the outer world—of the regions imperfectly known beyond that