

Just then the raft struck the fence, but this latter being of the 'staked and ridered'\* pattern, the result was that the raft came to a sudden standstill, and the crew were thrown flat upon it, their respective heads hanging somewhat astern and in danger of being water-soaked.

'Blazes!' exclaimed Jack wrathfully, as he endeavoured to staunch a bleeding nose, 'what did a man need to have a staked and ridered fence just here for? Well, we'll have to push down a couple of stakes and push ourway through.'

The commanding officer's plan was speedily acted upon, and the raft went on swimmingly until it seemed to slide upon some obstruction, then it came to a dead stop.

'Grounded on an old corn hill, I suppose,' said Jack. "Well, 'sturn all,'" as old Barnstable says in the Fourth Reader.'

But no amount of pushing availed to move the raft, and the sudden breaking of Jack's rod gave affairs a new and discouraging aspect.

'We can't both fish with one rod,' said Jack, after descending into and emerging from the depths of his mind. 'I'll tell you what let's do, we'll take off our clothes, make them into a bundle, and carry them ashore on our heads, as explorers sometimes do when they ford rivers.'

'What!' asked Matt, 'and not get any fish for poor Mrs. Batty and her children?'

'That is a pity,' said Jack, with some signs of embarrassment, and the gathering together of the loose and fleeting ends of previous plans and resolutions. 'But, you see, it must be nearly eleven o'clock; we've used up an awful lot of time, and we've got to get ashore yet, and be back home the times school is out, else the folks 'll know we've been playing hookey. I wonder if we couldn't get the poor old woman some blackberries? It's only June now, though, and I never saw a ripe blackberry before the first of July. Perhaps there's some early cherries in Milman's orchard.'

With this slight salve for the consciences whose wounds had begun to smart, the boys stripped once more, waded ashore through a corn-field in which the hills of sharp cut stalks seemed omnipresent, dressed themselves, and sneaked into the Milman orchard, where they made wry faces while discussing the probable value to the widow Batty of the few pale pink cherries they found. Dinner was reached and, eaten, somehow with less appetites than was usual after a morning

\*A rail-fence across the angles of which two rails meet in X shape, their lowest ends driven into the ground a little way and a rail lying in the upper angle of the X.

spent in school, and then the boys, each by himself, made hasty search for whatever suitable material might be soonest found to insert between shirts and jackets, to break the force of what, in the memory of many old fellows who once were school-boys, was the inevitable penalty of truancy.

## CHAPTER II.

### A CORNER IN WHISKEY.

For several days after their unsuccessful fishing expedition, Jack and Matt were extremely obedient and undemonstrative. Village school teachers, in that country, were not frequently the stout-armed sons of farmers, and when they plied the rod, any memory of the occasion was not likely soon to become dimmed. It was perhaps for this reason that even when Matt or Jack amused himself by whistling, the airs selected were sure to have been written on minor keys, and that both boys sought earnestly, each by himself, for some method of setting some positive moral success against their late failure at benevolence.

The opportunity did not linger long. Matt was sitting in the house one evening, wondering whether to go to bed at once, or wrestle again with an exasperating problem in cube root, the answer to which, as printed in the book, he felt thrice assured was wrong, when a long whistle of peculiar volume and inflection informed him that Jack was outside and had something to communicate. Matt sprang to his feet, for only a matter of extreme importance would have brought Jack across town at so late an hour. The worst boy in town was found by Matt to be hanging across the garden gate and so powerfully charged with virtuous indignation that he was unable to contain it all.

'Look here, Matt,' said he, 'you know what an awful thing whiskey is, don't you?'

'I should think I did,' replied Matt, 'Haven't I been to every temperance meeting that's been held?'

'So you have,' said Jack, 'Well what do you think? There's Hocomine, the corner storekeeper, gone and bought seven barrels.'

'Isn't that dreadful!' exclaimed Matt. 'If he starts a rum-shop here, it'll spoil the custom of his store.'

'He isn't going to have a bar,' explained Jack, 'he's going to sell by the gallon. But what's the difference?—rum is rum, and it does harm, no matter in what way it is sold.'