

"Do you understand the business?"

"No, sir, but I can learn, for I am young and strong."

"Strength is not what is needed, but experience. Ours is not the kind of work for Paddies."

"Well, sir," said Dennis, rather shortly, "I'm not a Paddy."

The dapper little retailer frowned slightly at Dennis' tone and continued:

"You spoke as if main strength was the principal thing. Have you had any experience at all?"

"No, sir."

But seeing intelligence in the young man's face, and scenting a sharp bargain, he said:

"Why, then, you would have to begin at the very beginning, and learn the name of everything, its quality, &c."

"Yes, sir; but I would do my very best."

"Of course, of course; but nothing can take the place of experience. I expect, under the circumstances, you would look for very little remuneration for the first year?"

"How much could you give?"

The man named a sum that would not have supported Dennis alone.

He replied that though his services might not be worth more than that, he was so situated that he could not take a very small salary.

"Then bring something besides ignorance to the market," said the man, turning on his heel.

Dennis was now hungry, tired and disappointed. Indeed, the calls of appetite became clamorous that he sought a cheap restaurant. After demolishing a huge plate of such viands as could be had at little cost, he sat brooding over a cup of coffee for an hour or more. The world wore so different an aspect from what it had on the morning that he was lost in a sort of dull, painful wonder.

But the abundant meal and slight element of coffee that colored the luke-warm water, quite heartened him again. He resolved to go back to his hotel and find a more quiet and comfortable place in which to lodge until something permanent offered. He made what he considered sufficient inquiry as to the right direction, and resolved to save even the car fare of five cents by walking the distance.

But whether he had not understood the directions rightly, or whether, brooding over the events of the day, his mind had been too pre-occupied to heed them, he found, to his great disgust, after walking two or three miles, that he had gone away instead of towards his destination. Angry with himself, out of humor with all the world, the latent obstinacy of his nature began to manifest itself. Though everything went "contrary," there was one thing under his control—himself—and he would make that do the bidding of his will.

Turning on his heel, he resolved, with dogged resolution, to walk back the whole distance. He would teach himself a lesson. It was fine business, just when he needed his wits so sorely, to commence blundering in this style. No wonder he had failed during the day; he deserved a rail in other respects, since in this one he had not shown the good sense of a child.

When people are "out of sorts," and things are going wrong, the disposition to blame somebody or something is almost universal. But we think that it will be found a safe general rule, that the nobler the nature, the less worthy of blame, the greater tendency to blame self rather than anything else. Poor Dennis had no great cause for bitter self-reproaches, and yet he plodded on with an intense feeling of self-disgust.

To think that after New England schools and three years in college he should write such a hand and have no definite knowledge

of bookkeeping! "What had he learned, he'd like to know?" Then to go and lose his way like a country bumpkin, as he was—and he gnawed his lips with vexation.

The street cars glided often and invitingly by, but he would not even look at them.

At last, footsore and fairly aching with cold and fatigue, he reached the little hotel, which appeared more miserable, obscure and profligate than ever. But a tempting fiend seemed to have got into the gin and whisky bottles behind the red-nosed bar tender. To his morbid fancy and eyes, half blinded with wind and cold, they appeared to wink, beckon, and suggest:

"Drink and be merry; drink and forget your troubles. We can make you feel as rich and glorious as a prince, in ten minutes."

For the first time in his life Dennis felt a strong temptation to drink for the sake of the effects. When was a man ever weak that the devil did not charge down upon him?

But the evil and ruin wrought in one case proved another's safeguard, for the door opened and a miserable wreck of a man entered. As Dennis looked at his blotched, sodden face, trembling hand, shuffling gait, and general air of wretchedness, embodying and suggesting the worst ills of humanity, he decided not to drink for the sake of the effects.

Then came another rush of self-disgust that he had even entertained such a temptation, and he flung himself off supperless to bed.

As he bowed that night he could not pray as usual. For anger, passion with one's self, as well as with any one else, renders true prayer impossible. But he went through the form, and then wrapped himself up as before. The wearied body soon mastered the perturbed mind, and he fell into a heavy sleep that lasted till morning.

CHAPTER V.

A HORNET'S NEST.

Dennis awoke greatly refreshed and strengthened. For half an hour he lay quietly thinking over the scenes of the preceding day; something of his old anger returned, but he compressed his lips, and with a face expressing the most resolute purpose, determined that the day before him should tell a different story. Every faculty and energy he possessed should be skilfully bent to the attainment of his objects. Wise deliberation should precede everything. He would write a few lines to his mother, decide as to a lodging place, and then seek better success in another part of the city. He went to the bar and inquired as to his bill, and found that so far as bed and meals were concerned, such as they were, he could not find anything cheaper in the city, the house evidently not depending on these for its revenue. Disgusted as he was with his surroundings, he resolved to lose no time in looking for a new place, but, after writing to his mother, start off at once in search of something permanent. He was in no mood to consult personal pleasure or wishes, and the saving of time and money settled the question.

Where should he write? There was no place save a desk at the end of the bar. Looking askance at the half-filled villainously-smelling bottle at his elbow, he wrote in a hand stiff and unnatural (for he had resolved to change his scrawl to a business hand at once), the following note:

"Chicago, Ill., Jan. 10th.

"DEAR MOTHER,—I arrived safely, and am very well. I did not, yesterday, find a situation that suited to my taste, but expect better success to-day. I am just on the point of starting out on my search, and when set-

tled will write you full particulars. Many kisses for yourself and the little girls. Your affectionate son,

DENNIS."

"There! there is nothing in that to worry mother, and soon I shall have good news for her." If he had seen its reception, he would have learned differently. The intuitions of love are keen, and this formal negative note in the constrained hand told more of disappointment than any words. While he knew it not, his mother was suffering with him. She wrote a letter in reply full of general sympathy, intending to be more specific when he gave her his confidence.

Dennis folded the letter most carefully and mailed it—for he was now doing the least thing with the utmost precision—with the air of one who meant to find out the right thing to do, and then to do it to a hair's breadth. Nothing should go wrong that day. So quite early in the morning he again sallied forth.

Not far from the hotel there was a new grocery store at the point of being opened by two young men, formerly clerks, but now starting up for themselves. They stood at the door receiving a cart load of goods as Dennis approached. He had made up his mind to ask at every opportunity, and take the first thing that promised fairly; he would also be very polite. Touching his hat to the young men—a little act pleasing them in their newly acquired dignity of becoming heads of a firm which as yet had no subordinates—Dennis asked if they would need any assistance. Graciously replying to his salutations, they answered:

"Yes, they wanted a young man."

Dennis explained that he was from the country, and showed the ministerial letter. The young grocers looked wise over it, seemed pleased, said they wanted a young fellow from the country that was not up to city tricks. Chicago was a hard place on young men—spoiled most of them. Glad he was a member of the church—they were not, but believed a man must be mighty good to be one. As the young man they hired must sleep in the store, they wanted one they could trust, and would prefer a church member.

The salary they offered was not large, but pretty fair in view of his having so much to learn, and it was intimated that if business was good, and he suited, it would be increased. The point uppermost in their minds seemed to be to find some one with whom they could trust their store and goods, and this young man from the country, with a letter from a minister, seemed a God-send.

They engaged him, but just as he was starting, with heart swelling with self-satisfaction and joy, one of the firm asked carelessly:

"Where are you staying?"

"At Gamblin's Hotel."

The man turned sharply, and looked most suspiciously at him, and then at his partner, who gave a low whistle of surprise, and also eyed the young man for a moment askance. Then the men stepped aside, and there was a brief whispered consultation. Dennis' heart sank within him. He saw that something was wrong, but what, he had not the least idea. The elder member of the embryo firm now stepped up and said decidedly:

"Good morning, young man; we shall not need your services."

"What do you mean?" cried Dennis, in a voice of mingled dismay and indignation.

The man's face was growing red with anger, but he said coldly:

"You had better move on. We understand."

"But I don't understand, and your course toward me is most unjust."

"Look here, young man, we are too old