

chap, and when you was down on your luck, it did you good to talk to him."

"That's so," said Mr. Hobbs. "It was a pity to make an earl out of *him*. He would have *shone* in the grocery business—or dry goods either; he would have *shone*!" And he shook his head with deeper regret than ever.

It proved that they had so much to say to each other that it was not possible to say it all at one time, and so it was agreed that the next night Dick should make a visit to the store and keep Mr. Hobbs company. The plan pleased Dick well enough. He had been a street waif nearly all his life, but he had never been a bad boy, and he had always had a private yearning for a more respectable kind of existence. Since he had been in business for himself, he had made enough money to enable him to sleep under a roof instead of out in the streets, and he had begun to hope he might reach even a higher plane, in time. So, to be invited to call on a stout, respectable man who owned a corner store, and even had a horse and waggon, seemed to him quite an event.

"Do you know anything about earls and castles?" Mr. Hobbs inquired. "I'd like to know more of the particulars."

"There's a story about some on 'em in the *Penny Story Gazette*," said Dick. "Its called the 'Crime of a Coronet; or, The Revenge of the Countess May.' It's a boss thing, too. Some of us boys 're takin' it to read."

"Bring it up when you come," said Mr. Hobbs, "an' I'll pay for it. Bring all you can find that have any earls in 'em. If there aren't earls, markises 'll do, or dooks—though *he* never made mention of any dooks or markises. We did go over coronets a little, but I never happened to see any. I guess they don't keep 'em 'round here."

"Tiffany'd have 'em if anybody did," said Dick, "but I don't know as I'd know one if I saw it."

Mr. Hobbs did not explain that he would not have known one if he saw it. He merely shook his head ponderously.

"I s'pose there is very little call for 'em," he said, and that ended the matter.

This was the beginning of quite a substantial friendship. When Dick went up to the store, Mr. Hobbs received him with great hospitality. He gave him a chair tilted against the door, near a barrel of apples, and after his young visitor was seated, he made a jerk at them with the hand in which he held his pipe, saying:

"Help yerself."