

his father would do to him. He had been punished with great severity many a time, though his faults had never before been so grievous as this present one; the mere thought of being punished at all was more than in his present physical and mental condition he could bear.

Sudden^y an old thought occurred to him: he would run away. He had many a time determined to do so, but on such an occasion the weather was too cold, or too hot, or he had an uncompleted trade on hand, or he was penniless, or something. Now, however, the expected punishment overbalanced every lesser fear. Perhaps he would starve, but he would not be so dreadfully sorry if he did; he would escape the scoldings and punishments that he knew of, while that which might come after death would at least have the alleviating quality of novelty. But there was little likelihood of his starving; runaway boys in books and story papers never did anything of the kind—they always fell upon streaks of luck, and finally married heiresses. Jack did not care to marry an heiress; nice little Mattie Barker was rich enough for him, but alas! she would have to remain a sweetly mournful memory. He would at least strive to obtain her sympathy; he would write her a touching, a tenderly-worded farewell, and then, as he came into his fortune in other lands, he would write her respectful, anonymous letters—perhaps, even, he might write her in verse, though about that he could not speak with certainty at present. One thing he knew—he did wish his head would stop aching so dreadfully.

Arrived at home, he went softly to his own room, bolted the door, and sat down to write. He wrote and tore at least a dozen letters before he could pen one which seemed to suit him; this, when completed, read as follows:

'Miss Mattie Barker:

Dear Madam, Farewell forever.

JACK WITTINGHAM.'

It then seemed to him that his father deserved a parting word, so he wrote:

'Dear father:

You want me to be good, and so do I, but circumstances over which I seem to have no control prevent the consummation of my earnest desire and intention.* When I come back, I shall be a man, and rich enough to comfort you in your declining years, and mother too.

Your affectionate son,
JACK.'

*Jack had found his sentence in a note from one of his father's unfortunate debtors, and he had been carefully saving it for years until a proper opportunity for using it should occur.

This letter had been begun at the top of the page, with the intention that it should cover the entire front, but as it was, there was a considerable blank space at the bottom. So Jack laboured hard to devise a postscript, but his head was not equal to much composition. Suddenly his fond resolution came to mind; it was to have been a dead secret, but now it seemed only just that his father should have something to break the shock of his son's departure—something particularly comforting and uplifting. So he wrote:

'P. S. The first thousand dollars I earn, I'm going to send to you, to pay for the stable that burned down on account of the matches in my jacket pocket getting crunched under Rob Pinkshaw's foot.'

This postscript gave Jack a great deal of comfort as he looked at it, but he doubted whether it was the part of prudence to linger over it. So he sealed and addressed both letters, and put his father's on the mantel in the doctor's room, just under the hook where the doctor's watch was always hung at night; the other letter he determined to mail at the first post-town he reached in his wanderings.

Then he got a little hand-valise of his father's, having failed to find a pocket-handkerchief large enough to hold the travelling outfit which he considered necessary. He packed all his fishing tackle, a pair of swimming tights, the box containing the remains of nice little Mattie Barker's bouquet, some underclothing, his Sunday suit, and his whole assortment of old felt hats. He looked around the room lest he might have forgotten something, and beheld the little Bible which his mother had given him on his tenth birthday. He had not read a word from it for a month, but then runaway boys always carried their mother's Bibles or Testaments, he was not sure which—and they beat everything for turning off murderous bullets or the daggers of assassins. Then he remembered how his mother had looked at him and kissed him when she gave him that Bible, and he wished that she had always looked so, and he nearly cried without knowing why, and he longed to go and find his mother and give her a great hug and kiss, but it would be just like her to ask awkward questions if he did. He would have a last look at her anyhow, come what might, so he tiptoed to the sitting-room, and there she sat darning one of Jack's stockings, with a lot of others before her, and she was looking very tired and seemed to have been crying.

'She won't have to darn stockings any more,' said Jack to himself, 'and that'll be