

The thief climbed the fence; the Sheriff still held his pistols, seeing which Mr. Garmen quietly seized one arm and the Major the other. The thief reached the top of the fence, saw the crowd, and growled:

"Who the devil are you?"

"Friends," replied the Major, "who were going to lynch you half-an-hour ago. Get out!"

Mr. Hixton followed his instructions with praiseworthy alacrity.

CHAPTER XX.

IN WHICH THE HERO STICKS TO HIS FRIENDS.

When Lem approached Mount Zion through the early dawn of the following morning, it was with aching head and weary limbs. Whatever qualms of conscience he had suffered during his long walk were lost in a mind never strong, and now too exhausted to consider questions of casuistry. Reaching the abandoned toll-house, he dropped upon the floor, and was asleep in an instant.

How long he slept he did not know, but he was finally aroused by feeling hands in his pockets. Opening his eyes, he found the hands belonged to the Sheriff of his own county, while that officer's deputy sat upon the floor a few paces away. Lem started up and the Sheriff retreated a step or two, looking at the startled boy with an expression of the most sincere sorrow.

"I'm awfully sorry for you, Lem," said the Sheriff; "sorrer than I ever was for anybody except that splendid steamboat clerk that I had to hang for killing a man. I never supposed you'd come down to running counterfeits on people."

"I haven't," said Lem, indignantly.

"I hope you didn't know about it," replied the Sheriff, "but it looks bad; there's four or five bills been traced back to you, and I've got a warrant for your arrest, and I searched you while you were asleep, thinking you mightn't feel so bad about it as if you were awake. You don't seem to have any bad money about you now. Suppose now, you explain how you got the bills that you spent in town, and maybe you can clear yourself before the thing can be made public."

Lem looked vacant, then confused, then dogged and sullen. The Sheriff watched his face closely, and finally asked:

"You didn't know they were counterfeits, did you?"

"No," said Lem with such vehemence that, added to the look of outraged inno-

cence his face took on, almost assured the officer that Lem was guiltless.

"Where did you get them, then?" asked the Sheriff.

Lem pondered a moment, and replied: "If I tell, *other* folks'll be arrested the same way, I s'pose. I won't do it. Besides, they'll tell themselves when they find that I've got into trouble about it."

"I hope they will, any way," said the Sheriff, "but until the matter's cleared up, I'll have to hold you a prisoner."

"Will—will I have to go to jail?" asked Lem. The Sheriff nodded gravely, and the unhappy prisoner dropped his head. Though he drew his hat down over his eyes, the Sheriff soon saw tears trickling down Lem's face.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Lem," said the Sheriff, "I'll leave you here, with Turner to watch you, until dark; then he can bring you up to the jail without anybody seeing you. And I'll not let on in town that we've found you, and I'll say everywhere that I don't believe you knew anything about the kind of money you were passing—I don't believe it, either."

"Thank you very much," said Lem; "and like enough it'll be all explained away before then."

"Well, Turner, you look out for him," said the Sheriff. "Have you got a deck of cards with you?"

"I reckon," said the deputy.

"Got pipes and tobacco?"

"Only one pipe."

"I'll lend Lem mine, then," said the Sheriff, producing a clay bowl with a reed stem. "Lem, my boy, will you give me your word that you won't try to run? I'm doing what I can for you."

"Yes, I will, Sheriff," said Lem. "I'm not afraid of anything happening to keep me in jail, and I'd rather be cleared in town than run away an' dodge it."

"Hurrah for he!" said the Sheriff. "I guess you'll come out all right. Now I'll put. I've been hanging around here all night."

The afternoon wore away rapidly. Lem smoked more than his weak head could stand with comfort, and played old sledge very steadily, for whatever intervals of thought he had were not comforting in their results. He hoped Binkle and Lodge would return, and at once clear him, as they undoubtedly could. Once there came into his head, as quickly and painfully as he imagined a bullet might have done, Bill Hixton's parting remark about strangers with plenty of money. Could it be that his friends were not officers after all? Might they not be dealers in bad money? The thought was so