

Take a seat, sir.  
Bill sat down. Then Mr. Moran, handing the note to Con, said that it contained an introduction to a leading merchant in London, and recommended them as responsible young men, worthy of situations in his establishment, and asking him, as a particular favor, to employ them, or, at least, use his influence to obtain them places.  
Thank you, sir; we will try to prove deserving of your kindness.  
I don't doubt that you will.  
Good morning, sir, said both Con and Bill as they left the library.  
Their wardrobe was not large, so they soon packed it up, Con, in the meantime, explaining the mystery of their departure. And, after taking a farewell of Maria, they left for London.

Chapter VI.

Somewhat sobered by their adventures, our two friends settled down to work with the determination of doing credit to the kind recommendation of Mr. Moran. Bill was in the counting-house, and Con sold goods. Two years of steady, faithful labor passed in this way, and our two heroes were changed into a couple of steady young men of twenty-one and twenty-three.

During the two years they had heard but little of their benefactor. They knew he was alive and well, but nothing more. When, therefore, one day, they received invitations to spend Christmas week at his residence, they were agreeably surprised.

What shall we do about this? asked Con.

Rests with you, said Bill.

Guess we'd better accept.

All right. What do you suppose is the meaning of this move?

Haven't the least idea. Don't suppose he means to patronize us, do you?

Perhaps.

I want go, then.

You've changed in the past few years; once, you believed in getting all out of the world that you possibly could. I'm going to make this visit on that principle.

True.

You had better follow my example. Guess I will. We'll try it anyhow, and if we are not suited, we can come back.

In consequence of this determination, the day before Christmas found Con and Bill bound for the residence of their Devonshire friend. They arrived in safety, and were warmly welcomed by Mr. Moran, who directly conducted them to the apartment which they were to occupy.

I thought you would prefer to room together, as you had become so accustomed to it, said Mr. Moran.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness, replied Bill.

You know the way to the drawing-room, continued Mr. Moran. When you are ready, you will please join us there.

Mr. Moran then left the room. Our heroes were soon becomingly arrayed, not in purple and fine linen, but in broad cloth coats, latest styles of waist-coats, and lavender colored pantaloons. Con, in addition to the above mentioned attire, was actually guilty of wearing a turn-down collar, a la Byron. The reason of this act of insanity was that, somehow or other, he had become firmly impressed with the idea that he bore a striking resemblance to that handsome author. Con wasn't at all conceited.

They at once proceeded down the staircase and entered the parlor, where were congregated five or six young ladies. For a wonder, the introduction passed off without any mistakes. Con immediately plunged into conversation, while Bill withdrew into the deep recess of one of the bay-windows, and listened to their merry chatter.

While in the midst of an animated discussion, they were interrupted by the entrance of a young lady. She was very beautiful, but not of the kind easily described. Every new thought imparted a different beauty to her expressive countenance, and a rarer grace to her motions.

Con started, with a movement of half-recognition. She, however, seemed not to see him. He resumed his seat with a disappointed look upon his face. At that instant a voice behind him said,—

Mr. Fredericks, Miss Howson; Miss Howson, Mr. Fredericks.

Stepping forward, and bowing, Con said, in a pleasant tone,—

We have met before, Miss Howson. You, doubtless, have forgotten me; but do you remember the day upon the Mississippi, and your involuntary bath, or have all recollection of the three years in St. Louis escaped you?

Not at all. But is it possible that you are the brave little Con Fredericks, who rescued me from drowning, and

afterwards so devotedly carried my books to school for me, and complied with my every caprice and whim? How happy I am to meet you! and she gave him her pretty white hand, which he not only took, but pressed. He was progressing, you see.

All this had passed in an undertone; but the young lady who had introduced them overheard it, and, with a mischievous expression on her face, cried,—

A romance, a romance, girls! O Louey, tell us what it is—that's a dear!

Do! do! do! echoed the others.

Louisa, for it was the little Louisa Howson of steamboat memory, saw the flush that mounted to Con's face, and wisely concluded that he did not desire a revelation of his past history; so she said,—

Excuse me, my dears; but there are circumstances connected with it that are painful to Con—I mean, Mr. Fredericks.

O dear! And the inquisitive maidens pouted; but, seeing Bill's head protruding from the tapestry that covered the window, turned to him, and besought him, in their most persuasive accents, to tell them all about it.

Of course, he didn't, and, as a reward for his reticence, was instantly introduced to Louisa.

From the time of the meeting of Con and Louisa, the other young ladies lost all their charms in the eyes of the former, and he shamefully neglected them. Bill did his best to make up the deficiency, but that wasn't much; for, in addition to being anything but a lady's man, all his thoughts were monopolized by a certain bright-eyed, airy little sylph named Carrie Bascomb, who was visiting Mr. Moran's daughters.

Alas! our heroes were in love, and the objects of their affection were conscious of, and encouraged, their advances.

Poor Maria was inconsolable for a while, but afterwards became conciliated by the attentions of a new, and very handsome assistant gardener, and was the most faithful ally of our lovers, carrying notes and bouquets for them. They thought that they were unobserved, while every one but Mr. Moran, Louisa's guardian, and Carrie's father, noticed the affair, and canvassed the probability of matches being made.

The three gentlemen, however, were not destined to remain in ignorance much longer. Their informant was the pompous butler, who had never forgiven Con for his appropriation of Maria. Suspecting that she was their emissary, he waylaid her, and, by dint of threats and force, compelled her to give up two notes, which he at once carried to Louisa's guardian and Carrie's father. They opened, read, and took them to Mr. Moran, and demanded that the young men be stopped from making love.

Mr. Moran was in a quandary; his sympathies were with Con and Bill; besides, courtesy would not allow him to turn them out of his house. And yet he stood in danger of losing the friendship of the two gentlemen, who were "exceedingly wrathful," unless he took some measures. So he spoke to our two heroes, and assuring them of his sympathy, and pledging himself to give all possible assistance, advised them to leave until the excitement blew over.

Con and Bill acquiesced, and packing up their things, started at once for London. The young ladies, unlike volatile Maria, were wretched, and looked in the glass every morning to see whether they were growing thin. When they discovered what part the butler had acted in bringing about their troubles, they played innumerable tricks upon him, and made him wish that he had minded his own business.

Chapter VII.

When they got back to town, our two lovers were rather melancholy. Con told a customer, who asked the price of a certain article, that it was worth fifteen Louisas; while Bill was considerably mortified to find, on looking over the book, that he had charged several Bills to Carrie Bascomb. In fact, they both felt that things were getting desperate, and at last they registered a vow to marry their Dulcineas, or die in the attempt.

They sent notes to the girls, informing them of their intentions, and Con received an answer, which told how Louisa's guardian was determined that she should marry a vulgar New York merchant named Sam Blow; while Bill quite succumbed under the intelligence that Carrie's father was bent on forcing her to unite herself with a drunken, stingy, Devonshire squire.

They at once despatched notes to their sweet-hearts, urging them to disregard parental authority, and fly with

them. Notes of acquiescence were received in return to these, but they were warned to expedite matters, as Louisa was to start for America very soon, and Carrie's marriage was set for a day two weeks distant. This news set our heroes to devising some way of accomplishing their object.

Bill, said Con, we're in a scrape.

I'm aware of it.

Let's get out of it.

I'm willing.

Don't be so obtuse. Suggest something.

Can't. All the ways have been tried. They are on the watch, and we'd get caught.

Let's try something on our own account, then. I have it! We'll disguise ourselves as travelling minstrels, clope with the girls—letting them know what our disguises are beforehand—and start for America at once.

And I think we had better take Mr. Moran in our confidence.

I agree with you.

Next morning they gave up their situations, much to the regret of their employer, who tendered them places in the American branch of the house, which was situated in New York city. They gladly availed themselves of this kind offer, and saying that they were obliged to be absent from the city for two weeks on urgent business, started on their romantic expedition.

Mr. Moran met them at their journey's end, and before they parted, had arranged a plan whereby to bring about the effecting of their project. Our heroes were to meet the young ladies in Moran's park, early next morning. They were to be attended by Maria and her handsome lover, both of whom were to be witnesses of the marriage ceremony.

In the meantime, Con and Bill procured licenses, and made arrangements with the minister to receive them at an early hour next morning. After enjoying, for the last time, the bachelor's privileges of a mug of beer, and a pipe in their own apartments, our intended Benedicts retired into the arms of Morpheus.

At the appointed hour next morning they were at a remote entrance of the park, with a close carriage. Having seen that the ladies were seated inside, with Maria and the handsome gardener, our heroes mounted the box with the driver, and telling him to make haste, started at a rapid pace for the house of the man of God. They arrived without the wagon breaking down, or any of the usual accidents happening. The minister wasn't up yet, and consequently there was some delay. At last, however, the tardy church dignitary appeared and, without further loss of time proceeded to unite our lovers in the holy bonds of matrimony.

After paying the minister, and procuring the necessary papers, our bridal party started for the carriage. Just as they reached the piazza, they heard a loud shout, and looking in the direction from whence it came, beheld, coming over an adjoining hill at a breakneck pace, a large party of men and boys, headed by what appeared to be two rather demoralized old gentlemen.

Oh! What shall we do? ejaculated both of the brides, in tearful accents.

Keep cool, answered Con.

Why, wh-a-a-t does this mean? stammered the minister.

Runaway match—old gentlemen after us. Too late; went amount to anything, answered Con, laconically.

By this time, the crowd had reached the gate, and, with a shout of triumph rushed in, headed by Louisa's guardian and Carrie's father, both of whom were breathless from their race.

Is it too late? gasped they, both speaking at once.

Alas! it is, replied Con, with mock gravity, and a very solemn looking countenance.

Then there was a noise, as of the bursting forth of a mighty torrent. The old gentlemen raved and stormed; but, after wasting an hour in this amusement, concluded that they had better make the best of the affair. They said so, and you may rest assured that our heroes did not hesitate about accepting their overtures of peace. They all returned to Mr. Moran's house, a happy company, with the exception of the butler, who had received a severe talking to; for it turned out that he had been sneaking around at the time the bridal party started for the parson's and conveyed intelligence of their flight to the two old gentlemen. That night they had quite a celebration; wine flowed plentifully, and general good feeling reigned.

The Devonshire squire bore his loss philosophically, drank the health of the

young couples, and asked Carrie to introduce him to a bouncing country-girl, dressed in pea-green silk, with a red sash around her waist, and blue ribbons in her hair, whom he confidentially informed his former betrothed, he intended to marry.

Little more remains to be written. At the appointed time, Con and Bill, accompanied by their two wives, Louisa's guardian and Carrie's father, who wanted to see America, started for the United States. On their arrival at their destination they were met by Sam Blow, who, contrary to all expectation, had grown up into a fine, manly sort of fellow, a little rough, it is true, but all right in the main.

On the first night after their arrival they had a pleasant social gathering, at which Con and Bill told stories of their adventures; while Sam Blow related their boarding-school experience, and made the crowning toast of the evening, which was, "Here's to the Two Vagabonds!"

The Power of Children.

A man was leaning, much intoxicated, against a tree; some little children coming from school saw him there, and at once said to each other,—

What shall we do for him?

Oh! I'll tell you, said one, presently let's sing him a temperance song, away the bowl, away the bowl, and so on in beautiful tune.

The poor fellow enjoyed the singing, and when they had finished that song, he said,—

Sing again, little girls, sing again.

We will, they said, if you will sign the temperance pledge.

No, no; we are not at a temperance meeting; there are no pledges here.

I have a pledge, cried one; and I have a pencil, cried the other! holding up the pledge and pencil, they besought him to sign it.

No, no; I won't sign it now. Sing for me.

So they sang again.

"The drink that's in the drunkard's Is not the drink for me."

Oh, do sing that again, said he, as he wiped the tears from his eyes.

No, no more, said they, unless you'll sign the pledge; sign, and we will sing for you.

He pleaded for the singing, but they were firm, and declared they would go away if he would not sign.

But, said the poor fellow, striving to find an excuse, there's no table here; how can I write without a table?

At this, a modest, quiet, pretty little creature with a finger on her lips, came and said,—

Yes, you can spread the pledge on the crown of your hat, and I will hold it for you.

Off came the hat, the child held it, and the pledge was signed, and the little ones burst out with

"Oh, water for me, bright water for me! Give wine to the tremulous debauchee."

I heard that man in Worcester Town Hall, with uplifted hands and quivering lips say,—

I thank God for the sympathy of those children; I shall thank God to all eternity that he sent those little children as messengers of mercy to me.

A long-haired young local editor of an Arkansas paper does an obituary notice thus: "The sister angels of the lovely deceased, pining at her absence from their heavenly abode, floated down on jewelled pinions and bore her back to her native skies. She was a good worker, and was known from the Great River of the West to the Eastern Seas as a pre-eminently lovely type of radiant girlhood."

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SELECT STORY.

ENTERPRISE; OR THE TWO VAGABONDS.

[CONCLUDED.]

I would, sir, said the butler, and the sooner the better, you—you—

Keep quiet, John! commanded Mr. Moran.

The astonished butler obeyed. Turning to the ladies—the interview had taken place in the drawing-room into which he had impetuously rushed—Con apologized for such conduct, in their presence. He was just about to leave the room, when a messenger came from Mr. Moran, who had withdrawn to the library, while Con was talking with the ladies, saying, that master would like to see him afore he left.

Tell him I'll be there presently, said Con, in a very nonchalant manner.

The lackey stared open-mouthed at the impudence, as he thought, of his fellow-servitor. But Con soon followed the messenger to Mr. Moran's library.

The two had a long conversation, in which Con gave him a sort of history of his life. His former master was as deeply interested as though he was reading an exciting novel. When Con had finished, Mr. Moran arose, and, touching a bell, summoned a servant.

Go, he said, and tell Bill Crowley, the assistant gardener that I would like to see him.

Then he sat down and wrote a note. By the time he had finished, Bill knocked at the door.

Come in! said Mr. Moran.

Bill entered.

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