

With that, the subject dropped. He reconducted his charge to safe-footing, threw into his voice an unusual emphasis as he thanked the party for as many dimes as he had expected cents, and went home pondering what had been said to him, feeling sure beyond all shadow of doubt, *now*, that the gentleman had told him the truth. He could not believe that such generosity *could* go hand in hand with deception. But how unsuspecting is innocence; how unsuspecting was Charley, and yet how near unto trouble.

With the air of one who had made a great discovery: such an one as we may suppose Columbus to have worn when he discovered the Western World; or Newton when he discovered gravitation; or Fulton when noticed the power of steam, and thought of the uses to which it could be put as a motive power, Charley embraced his first opportunity to relate to his father all that had transpired between himself and the gentleman; and with the expectation that he would go off into ecstasy over it. But how rapidly did his ambition run down, his inspiration evaporate, and his resolution tremble, as his father said: "Charley that man is a base hypocrit, and has basely deceived you. Had I suspected that he had designs upon unsophisticated boys, you should not have gone with him. I am sorry you have so much as heard of the Freemasons. They are a vile set; banded together for the most nefarious purposes. Nearly all the theaves, highwaymen, and burgulars in the country, belong to them. They seek to get hold of the political reins of the country, that they may drive all who are not of their number, to ruin. Beware of them, my boy. But why should I warn you? when you are a man, and learn more about them, I have no fear of your meddling with them." "But, father," interposed the boy, "you are not a Freemason, and never was; how do you know them to be such characters as you describe?" "One of their number, Mr. Morgan by name, has written a book which gives a complete expose of all their secret rites, and I have read it." "How do you know it is true?" "Because it corroborates so fully the previous opinion had of them, by so many good men; and among them, Bro. Allwise, the pastor of our church." The boy thoughtfully hung his head a moment, then asked, "May I read it too, father, and know for myself the wicked things they do?" Certainly, my son. As soon as you have had your head partly turned in the wrong direction, I will be glad to have you employ the means that will set it perfectly right again; if what I have said, has not already done so."

The book was brought forth from the family chest, where it was securely kept under lock and key, and handed to the boy, with the charge to keep it securely, and return it when finished. Charley carried it up to his room, and put it in his box, and turned the key upon it; came down and did his chores; when, being weary from his tramp up the mountain side, he retired to his room; not to sleep however: but to read an hour or two, before committing himself to the arms of Morpheus.

He read until the family clock struck twelve, when he sprang up in astonishment that so long a time had elapsed; prepared for bed, offered his evening devotions, and was soon lost in sleep; to dream of the kind gentleman, and his firm denial of the truthfulness of all his father had said.

In a few evenings he had finished the book; and as he closed it, after reading the last page, he said to himself, half audibly, "And if this is