

CHAPTER TWO.

Ross Murray's Substitute.

HELP! Help! Chicken thieves!" So shouted the woman of the house in whose flower bed Austin lay.

The dog barked furiously and bounded to the end of his chain, which creaked with a horrible grind around its post.

In answer to the woman's cry for help, the man who stood on the next door veranda came around to the side of the house. Of course it was Mr. Marsden, for in his ignorance of the locality, Austin had run right into the person he was trying to avoid.

Austin could not rise. There was not time, and his head pained from hitting the hard ground. So he just looked up at Mr. Marsden rather defiantly. "I was trying to go home by a short cut," he explained rather lamely.

His father's photographer knew him at once, but was discreet enough not to fill the mouth of the neighbor woman with news. "It's all right, Mrs. Neal," he explained, helping Austin to rise. "I am acquainted with this young man; he is one of Mr. Hunt's boys. No, he's not badly hurt, I guess. He just got hung on your clothesline; really it ought not to be there."

Mr. Marsden led Austin to his own room, where the lad dropped into a chair looking ruefully at the tear in the knee of his trousers. "What are you doing here?" asked the photographer gravely.

"Do you think you have a right to ask that question, sir?" returned the other a bit defiantly.

"Perhaps not; yet it is surely a question any man might put to another."