

criminality by pursuing the course he had taken and deserved no praise or reward. Those to whom I confided the further fact that it was he who attempted to rob and kill me on that midnight when I received a bullet in the leg, said emphatically that the scoundrel had forfeited all claim upon my regard, and that if he appeared again the only prudent course was to have him locked up. There was something in this, for Mark had shown that he considered he had a proprietary right in me, that I owed my existence to him as much as though he had cut me out of a piece of cardboard with a pair of scissors. On the night of the robbery he had shown the eccentric condition of his mind on this question, and although the circumstances were unfavorable for a careful delineation of his theory I knew he felt that if he had killed me then, instead of meriting death for murdering me he would deserve praise for having lengthened my days by four years. To me his notion indicated a species of lunacy, but I knew that unless cured of it, he would, now that four years had increased to seven, feel that his toleration was amazing and that I was vastly his debtor. If he felt three years ago that he was legally and morally entitled to kill me whenever he choose and to despoil me of all he could carry, what recompense for supplying me with life for seven years would he hesitate to ask?

Surely the man had a streak of insanity in him and a review of his conduct showed it. Did he not strike me a blow that would have killed a common man when we first met, and didn't he trap me with his questions and incite the others to murder me, and did he not plan the entire scheme of stuffing me in that hollow tree? Then was it not only a whim that caused him to smash his friends over the head so that I could escape; more, would a sane man run serious risks in making whiskey and then decline

five hundred dollars offered him as a gift? Would he do this and then try to rob and murder me when he could lawfully receive the five hundred dollars I again offered him? And then his absurd claim that my life belonged to him! There never was such a man.

One day in the office one of my clerks brought me a telegram. One or two wires had just been strung up that summer and telegraphy was not what it has since become. Opening the message it proved to contain the remarkable words:

CHIPALOO, N. Y.

TO HENRY L. WILSON, Barrister.

Am arrested on a charge of murder. Come at once and spend that five hundred dollars in getting me off.

MARK.

Here was my friend at last. Arrested on a charge of murder and ordering me to come and free him as though my life depended on his! Evidently he did not consider that putting a bullet in my leg had at all voided his proprietary rights in me. The way the message read, too—not a petition to one who might be a friend, but a command to one who dare not refuse!

No doubt he had killed somebody: perhaps he had only strangled another life owned by him as he professed to own mine. In that case he would feel innocent and greatly abused. But could I go to the rescue of a man whom I doubted not was a murderer, and if I succeeded in getting him free would that balance our accounts according to his eccentric notions or would he promptly appropriate his own by finishing me? Would he let loose the fate Bill and Andy had prepared for me and which he had "considerately intercepted" for seven years?

The impudence of his demand astonished me and then the novelty and singularity of my whole connection