

Horatio Alger Jr.

The Young Outlaw: or, Adrift in the Streets



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PREFACE

"The Young Outlaw" is the sixth volume of the Tattered Tom Series, and the twelfth of the stories which are wholly or mainly devoted to street-life in New York. The story carries its moral with it, and the writer has little fear that the Young Outlaw will be selected as a model by the boys who may read his adventures, and be amused by the scrapes into which he manages to fall. In previous volumes he has endeavored to show that even a street-boy, by enterprise, industry and integrity, may hope to become a useful and respected citizen. In the present narration he aims to exhibit the opposite side of the picture, and point out the natural consequences of the lack of these qualities.

This may be a proper occasion to express gratitude for the very remarkable favor with which these stories of humble life have been received throughout the country. The writer is glad to believe that they have done something to draw attention to a neglected class of children, whom it is important to elevate and redeem.

NEW YORK, March 25, 1875.

CHAPTER I. THE YOUNG OUTLAW

"Boy, is this Canal Street?"

The speaker was evidently from the country. He was a tall man, with prominent features, and a face seamed and wrinkled by the passage of nearly seventy years. He wore a rusty cloak, in the style of thirty years gone by, and his clothing generally was of a fashion seldom seen on Broadway.

The boy addressed was leaning against a lamppost, with both hands in his pockets. His clothes were soiled and ragged, a soft hat, which looked as if it had served in its varied career as a football, was thrust carelessly on his head. He looked like a genuine representative of the "street Arab," with no thought for to-morrow and its needs, and contented if he could only make sure of a square meal to-day. His face was dirty, and marked by a mingled expression of fun and impudence; but the features were not unpleasing, and, had he been clean and neatly dressed, he would undoubtedly have been considered good-looking.

He turned quickly on being addressed, and started perceptibly, as his glance met the inquiring look of the tall, stranger. He seemed at first disposed to run away, but this intention was succeeded by a desire to have some fun with the old man.

"Canal Street's about a mile off. I'll show yer the way for ten cents."

"A mile off? That's strange," said the old man, puzzled. "They told me at the Astor House it was only about ten minutes walk, straight up."

"That's where you got sold, gov'nor. Give me ten cents, and you won't have no more trouble."

"Are you sure you know Canal Street, yourself?" said the old man, perplexed. "They'd ought to know at the hotel."

"I'd ought to know too. That's where my store is."

"Your store!" ejaculated the old man, fixing his eyes upon his ragged companion, who certainly looked very little like a New York merchant.

"In course. Don't I keep a cigar store at No. 95?"

"I hope you don't smoke yourself," said the deacon (for he was a deacon), solemnly.

"Yes, I do. My constitushun requires it."

"My boy, you are doing a lasting injury to your health," said the old man, impressively.

"Oh, I'm tough. I kin stand it. Better give me a dime, and let me show yer the way."

The deacon was in a hurry to get to Canal Street, and after some hesitation, for he was fond of money, he drew out ten cents, and handed it to his ragged companion.

"There, my boy, show me the way. I should think you might have done it for nothing."

"That aint the way we do business in the city, gov'nor."

"Well, go ahead, I'm in a hurry."

"You needn't be, for *this* is Canal Street," said the boy, edging off a little.

"Then you've swindled me," said the deacon, wrathfully. "Give me back that ten cents."

"Not if I know it," said the boy, mockingly. "That aint the way we do business in the city. I'm goin to buy two five-cent cigars with that money."

"You said you kept a cigar-store yourself," said the deacon, with sudden recollection.

"You mustn't believe all you hear, gov'nor," said the boy, laughing saucily.

"Well now, if you aint a bad boy," said the old man.

"What's the odds as long as you're happy?" said the young Arab, carelessly.

Here was a good chance for a moral lesson, and the deacon felt that it was his duty to point out to the young reprobate the error of his ways.

"My young friend," he said, "how can you expect to be happy when you lie and cheat? Such men are never happy."

"Aint they though? You bet I'll be happy when I'm smokin' the two cigars I'm goin to buy."

"Keep the money, but don't buy the cigars," said the deacon, religion getting the better of his love of money. "Buy yourself some clothes. You appear to need them."

"Buy clo'es with ten cents!" repeated the boy, humorously.

"At any rate, devote the money to a useful purpose, and I shall not mind being cheated out of it. If you keep on this way, you'll end in the gallus."

"That's comin' it rather strong, gov'nor. Hangin's played out in New York. I guess I'm all right."

"I'm afraid you're all wrong, my boy. You're travellin' to destruction."

"Let's change the subject," said the street boy. "You're gittin' personal, and I don't like personal remarks. What'll you bet I can't tell your name?"

"Bet!" ejaculated the deacon, horrified.

"Yes, gov'nor. I'll bet you a quarter I kin tell your name."

"I never bet. It's wicked," said the old man, with emphasis.

"Well, we won't bet, then," said the boy. "Only, if I tell your name right, you give me ten cents. If I don't get it right, I'll give back this dime you gave me. Aint that fair?"

The deacon might have been led to suspect that there was not much difference between the boy's proposal, and the iniquity of a bet, but his mind was rather possessed by the thought that here was a good chance to recover the money out of which he had been so adroitly cheated. Surely there was no wrong in recovering that, as of course he would do, for how could a ragged street boy tell the name of one who lived a hundred and fifty miles distant, in a small country town?

"I'll do it," said the deacon.

"You'll give me ten cents if I tell your name?"

"Yes, and you'll give me back the money I give you if you can't tell."

"That's it, gov'nor."

"Then what's my name, my boy?" and the deacon extended his hand in readiness to receive the forfeit of a wrong answer.

"Deacon John Hopkins," answered the boy, confidently.

The effect on the old man was startling. He was never more surprised in his life. He stared at the boy open-mouthed, in bewilderment and wonder.

"Well, I declare!" he ejaculated. "I never heard of such a thing."

"Aint I right, gov'nor?"

"Yes, my boy, you're right; but how on earth did you find out?"

"Give me the money, and I'll tell you;" and the boy extended his hand.

The deacon drew the money from his vest-pocket, and handed it to the young Arab, without remonstrance.

"Now tell me, my boy, how you know'd me."

The boy edged off a few feet, then lifted his venerable hat so as to display the whole of his face.

"I'd ought to know you, deacon," he said; "I'm Sam Barker."

"By gracious, if it aint Sam!" ejaculated the old man. "Hallo! stop, I say!"

But Sam was half-way across the street. The deacon hesitated an instant, and then dashed after him, his long cloak floating in the wind, and his hat unconsciously pushed back on the top of his head.

"Stop, you Sam!" he shouted.

But Sam, with his head over his shoulder, already three rods in advance, grinned provokingly, but appeared to have no intention of stopping. The deacon was not used to running, nor did he make

due allowance for the difficulty of navigating the crowded streets of the metropolis. He dashed headlong into an apple-stand, and suffered disastrous shipwreck. The apple-stand was overturned, the deacon's hat flew off, and he found himself sprawling on the sidewalk, with apples rolling in all directions around him, and an angry dame showering maledictions upon him, and demanding compensation for damages.

The deacon picked himself up, bruised and ashamed, recovered his hat, which had rolled into a mud-puddle, and was forced to pay the woman a dollar before he could get away. When this matter was settled, he looked for Sam, but the boy was out of sight. In fact, he was just around the corner, laughing as if he would split. He had seen his pursuer's discomfiture, and regarded it as a huge practical joke.

"I never had such fun in all my life," he ejaculated, with difficulty, and he went off into a fresh convulsion. "The old feller won't forget me in a hurry."

CHAPTER II. SAM'S EARLY LIFE

Three years before the meeting described in the previous chapter Sam Barker became an orphan, by the death of his father. The father was an intemperate man, and no one grieved much for his death. Sam felt rather relieved than otherwise. He had received many a beating from his father, in his fits of drunken fury, and had been obliged to forage for himself for the most part, getting a meal from one neighbor, a basket of provision from another, and so managed to eke out a precarious subsistence in the tumble-down shanty which he and his father occupied.

Mr. Barker left no will, for the good and sufficient reason that he had no property to dispose of. So, on the day after the funeral, Sam found himself a candidate for the poorhouse. He was a stout boy of twelve, strong and sturdy in spite of insufficient food, and certainly had suffered nothing from luxurious living.

It was a country town in Connecticut, near the Rhode Island border. We will call it Dudley. The selectmen deliberated what should be done with Sam.

"There isn't much for a lad like him to do at the poorhouse," said Major Stebbins. "He'd ought to be set to work. Why don't you take him, Deacon Hopkins?"

"I do need a boy," said the deacon, "but I'm most afeard to take Sam.

He's a dreadful mischievous boy, I've heerd."

"He's had a bad example in his father," said the major. "You could train him up the way he'd ought to go."

"Mebbe I could," said the deacon, flattered by this tribute, and reflecting, moreover, that he could get a good deal of work out of Sam without being obliged to pay him wages.

"You could train him up to be a respectable man," said the major.

"They wouldn't know what to do with him at the poorhouse."

So the deacon was prevailed upon to take Sam to bring up.

"You're goin to live with me, Samuel," said the deacon, calling the boy to his side.

"Am I?" asked Sam, surveying the old man attentively.

"Yes; I shall try to make a man of you."

"I'll get to be a man anyway, if I live long enough," said Sam.

"I mean I will make a man of you in a moral sense," explained the deacon.

This, however, was above Sam's comprehension.

"What would you like to do when you're a man?" asked the deacon.

"Smoke a pipe," answered Sam, after some reflection.

The deacon held up his hands in horror.

"What a misguided youth!" he exclaimed. "Can you think of nothing better than to smoke a pipe?"

"Dad liked it," said Sam; "but I guess he liked rum better."

"Your father was a misguided man," said the deacon. "He wasted his substance in riotous living."

"You'd ought to have seen him when he was tight," said Sam, confidentially. "Didn't he tear round then? He'd fling sticks of wood at my head. O jolly! Didn't I run? I used to hide under the bed when I couldn't run out of doors."

"Your father's dead and gone. I don't want to talk against him, but I hope you'll grow up a very different man. Do you think you will like to live with me?"

"I guess so," said Sam. "You live in a good house, where the rain don't leak through the roof on your head. You'll give me lots to eat, too; won't you?"

"You shall have enough," said the deacon, cautiously, "but it is bad to over-eat. Boys ought to be moderate."

"I didn't over-eat to home," said Sam. "I went one day without eatin' a crumb."

"You shall have enough to eat at my house, but you must render a return."

"What's that?"

"You must pay me for it."

"I can't; I aint got a cent."

"You shall pay me in work. He that does not work shall not eat."

"Have I got to work very hard?" asked Sam, anxiously.

"I will not task you beyond your strength, but I shall expect you to work faithfully. I work myself. Everybody works in my house."

Sam was occupied for a brief space in considering the great problem that connects labor and eating. Somehow it didn't seem quite satisfactory.

"I wish I was a pig!" he burst out, rather unexpectedly.

"Why?" demanded the deacon, amazed.

"Pigs have a better time than men and boys. They have all they can eat, and don't have to work for it nuther."

"I'm surprised at you," said the deacon, shocked. "Pigs are only brute animals. They have no souls. Would you be willing to give up your immortal soul for the sake of bein' idle, and doin' no work?"

"I don't know anything bout my immortal soul. What good does it do me?" inquired Sam.

"I declare! the boy's actilly gropin' in heathen darkness," said the deacon, beginning to think he had undertaken a tough job.

"What's that?" asked Sam, mystified.

"I haven't time to tell you now, but I must have a long talk with you some day. You aint had no sort of bringing up. Do you ever read the Bible?"

"No, but I've read the life of Cap'n Kidd. He was a smart man, though."

"Captain Kidd, the pirate?" asked the deacon, horrified.

"Yes. Wa'n't he a great man?"

"He calls a pirate a great man!" groaned the deacon.

"I think I'd like to be a pirate," said Sam, admiringly.

"Then you'd die on the gallus!" exclaimed the deacon with energy.

"No, I wouldn't. I wouldn't let 'em catch me," said Sam, confidently.

"I never heerd a boy talk so," said the deacon. "He's as bad as a – a Hottentot."

Deacon Hopkins had no very clear ideas as to the moral or physical condition of Hottentots, or where they lived, but had a general notion that they were in a benighted state, and the comparison seemed to him a good one. Not so to Sam.

"You're calling me names," he said, discontentedly. "You called me a Hottentot."

"I fear you are very much like those poor, benighted creatures, Samuel," said his new guardian; "but it isn't wholly your fault. You have never had any religious or moral instruction. This must be rectified. I shall buy you a catechism this very day."

"Will you?" asked Sam, eagerly, who, it must be explained, had an idea that a catechism was something good to eat.

"Yes, I'll stop at the store and get one."

They went into Pendleton's store, – a general country variety store, in which the most dissimilar articles were kept for sale.

"Have you got a catechism?" asked the deacon, entering with Sam at his side.

"We've got just one left."

"How much is it?"

"Ten cents."

"I'll take it."

Sam looked on with interest till the clerk produced the article; then his countenance underwent a change.

"Why, it's a book," he said.

"Of course it is. It is a very good book, from which you will learn all about your duty, and your religious obligations."

"You needn't buy it. I don't want it," said Sam.

"Don't want the catechism!" said the deacon, not without anger.

"No, it aint any good."

"My boy, I know better what is good for you than you do. I shall buy you the catechism."

"I'd rather you'd get me that book," said Sam, pointing to a thin pamphlet copy of "Jack, the Giant-Killer."

But Deacon Hopkins persisted in making the purchase proposed.

"Are there any pictures in it?" asked Sam.

"No."

"Then I shan't like it."

"You don't know what is for your good. I hope you will be wiser in time. But here we are at the house. Come right in, and mind you wipe your feet."

This was Sam's first introduction into the Hopkins' household. He proved a disturbing element, as we shall presently see.

CHAPTER III. A HARD CASE

The first meal to which Sam sat down at the deacon's house was supper. It was only a plain supper, – tea, bread and butter, and apple-pie; but to Sam, who was not used to regular meals of any kind, it seemed luxurious. He despatched slice after slice of bread, eating twice as much as any one else at the table, and after eating his share of the pie gazed hungrily at the single slice which remained on the plate, and asked for that also.

Deacon Hopkins thought it was time to interfere.

"You've had one piece a'ready," he said.

"I know it," said Sam; "but I'm hungry."

"I don't see how you can be. You've eat more than any of us."

"It takes a good deal to fill me up," said Sam, frankly.

"The boy'll eat us out of house and home," said Mrs. Hopkins, in alarm. "You can't have any more. You've had enough."

Sam withdrew his plate. He did not look abashed, for he was never much inclined that way, nor did his feelings appear to be hurt, for he was not sensitive; but he took the matter coolly, and pushing back his chair from the table was about to leave the room.

"Where are you a-goin'?" asked his new guardian.

"Out doors."

"Stop. I've got something for you to do."

The deacon went to the mantel-piece and took therefrom the catechism.

"You aint had no bringin' up, Samuel," he said. "You don't know nothin' about your moral and religious obligations. It's my dooty to make you learn how to walk uprightly."

"I can walk straight now," said Sam.

"I don't mean that – I mean in a moral sense. Come here."

Sam unwillingly drew near the deacon.

"Here, I want you to study the first page of the catechism, and recite it to me before you go to bed."

Sam took the book, and looked at the first page doubtfully.

"What's the good of it?" he demanded, in a discontented voice.

"What's the good of the catechism?" exclaimed the deacon, shocked.

"It'll l'arn you your duties. It'll benefit your immortal soul."

"I don't care if it will," said Sam, perversely. "What do I care about my soul? It never did me no good."

"Did you ever see such a heathen, Martha?" said the deacon, in despair, turning to his wife.

"You'll be sorry you ever took him," said Mrs. Hopkins, shaking her head.

"Set down in the corner, and l'arn your lesson, Samuel," said the old man.

Sam looked undecided whether to obey or not, but under the circumstances he thought it best to obey. He began to read the catechism, but it did not interest him. His eyes were not long fixed on the printed page. They moved about the room, following the movements of Mrs. Hopkins as she cleared off the table. He saw her take the pie and place it in the closet. His eyes glistened as he caught sight of an entire pie on the lower shelf, designed, doubtless, for to-morrow's supper.

"I wish I had it," he thought to himself. "Wouldn't it be jolly?"

Pretty soon the deacon took his hat and cane and went out. Then Mrs. Hopkins went into the next room, and Sam was left alone. There was a fine chance to escape, and Sam was not slow in availing himself of it. He dropped the catechism on the floor, seized his hat, and darted out of

the room, finding his way out of the house through the front door. He heaved a sigh of relief as he found himself out in the open air. Catching sight of the deacon in a field to the right, he jumped over a stone wall to the left, and made for a piece of woods a short distance away.

It was not Sam's intention to run away. He felt that it would be foolish to leave a house where he got such good suppers, but he wanted a couple of hours of freedom. He did not mean to return till it was too late to study the catechism any longer.

"What's the use of wearin' out a feller's eyes over such stuff?" he thought.

It is not necessary to follow Sam's movements through the evening. At nine o'clock he opened the front door, and went in, not exactly abashed, but uncertain how the deacon would receive him.

Deacon Hopkins had his steel-bowed spectacles on, and was engaged in reading a good book. He looked up sternly as Sam entered.

"Samuel, where have you been?" he asked.

"Out in the woods," said Sam, coolly.

"Didn't I tell you to get your catechism?" demanded the old man, sternly.

"So I did," said Sam, without blushing.

"I am afraid you are telling a lie. Mrs. Hopkins said she went out of the room a minute, and when she came back you were gone. Is that so?"

"Yes, I guess so," said Sam.

"Then how did you have time to l'arn your lesson?"

"It wasn't long," muttered Sam.

"Come here, and I will see if you know anything about it."

The deacon took the book, laid it flat on his lap, and read out the first question, looking inquiringly at Sam for the answer.

Sam hesitated, and scratched his head. "I give it up," said he.

"Do you think I am askin' conundrums?" said the deacon, sternly.

"No," said Sam, honestly.

"Why don't you know?"

"Because I can't tell."

"Because you didn't study it. Aint you ashamed of your ignorance?"

"What's the use of knowin'?"

"It is very important," said the deacon, impressively. "Now I will ask you the next question."

Sam broke down, and confessed that he didn't know.

"Then you told me a lie. You said you studied the lesson."

"I didn't understand it."

"Then you should have studied longer. Don't you know it is wicked to lie?"

"A feller can't tell the truth all the time," said Sam, as if he were stating a well-known fact.

"Certainly he can," said the deacon. "I always do."

"Do you?" inquired Sam, regarding the old man with curiosity.

"Of course. It is every one's duty to tell the truth. You ought to die rather than tell a lie. I have read of a man who was threatened with death. He might have got off if he had told a lie. But he wouldn't."

"Did he get killed?" asked Sam, with interest.

"Yes."

"Then he must have been a great fool," said Sam, contemptuously. "You wouldn't catch me makin' such a fool of myself."

"He was a noble man," said the deacon, indignantly. "He laid down his life for the truth."

"What good did it do?" said Sam.

"I am afraid, Samuel, you are in a very benighted condition. You appear to have no conceptions of duty."

"I guess I haven't," said Sam. "I dunno what they are."

"It is all the more necessary that you should study your catechism. I shall expect you to get the same lesson to-morrow evenin'. It's too late to study now."

"So it is," said Sam, with alacrity.

"I will show you where you are to sleep. You must get up airly to go to work. I will come and wake you up."

Sam was not overjoyed at this announcement. It did not strike him that he should enjoy going to work early in the morning. However, he felt instinctively that it would do no good to argue the matter at present, and he followed the deacon, upstairs in silence. He was ushered into a small room partitioned off from the attic.

"You'll sleep there," said the deacon, pointing to a cot-bed in the corner. "I'll call you at five o'clock to-morrow mornin'."

Sam undressed himself, and got into bed.

"This is jolly," thought he; "a good deal better than at home. If it warn't for that plaguey catechism, I'd like livin' here fust-rate. I wish I had another piece of that pie."

In ten minutes Sam was fast asleep; but the deacon was not so fortunate. He lay awake a long time, wondering in perplexity what he should do to reform the young outlaw of whom he had taken charge.

"He's a cur'us boy," thought the good man. "Seems to have no more notion of religion than a Choctaw or a Hottentot. An yet he's been livin' in a Christian community all his life. I'm afeared he takes after his father."

CHAPTER IV. SAM FRIGHTENS THE HOUSEHOLD

Sam usually slept the whole night through; but to-night was an exception. It might have been because he was in a strange bed, and in a strange house. At any rate, he woke in time to hear the clock on the church, of which his guardian was deacon, strike two.

"Where am I?" was his first thought.

He remembered almost immediately, and the thought made him broad awake. He ought not to have been hungry at that hour, and in fact he was not, but the thought of the pie forced itself upon his mind, and he felt a longing for the slice that was left over from supper. Quick upon this thought came another, "Why couldn't he creep downstairs softly, and get it? The deacon and his wife were fast asleep, Who would find him out?"

A boy better brought up than Sam might have reflected that it was wrong; but, as the deacon said, Sam had no "conceptions of duty," or, more properly, his conscience was not very active. He got out of bed, slipped on his stockings, and crept softly downstairs, feeling his way. It was very dark, for the entries were unlighted, but finally he reached the kitchen without creating any alarm.

Now for the closet. It was not locked, and Sam opened the door without difficulty.

"I wish I had a match, so's to see where the pie is," he thought.

He felt around, but the pie must have been placed elsewhere, for he could not find it. It had really been placed on the highest shelf, which Sam had not as yet explored. But there are dangers in feeling around in the dark. Our hero managed to dislodge a pile of plates, which fell with a crash upon his feet. There was a loud crash of broken crockery, and the noise was increased by the howls of Sam, who danced up and down with pain.

The noise reached the chamber where the deacon and his wife were calmly reposing. Mrs. Hopkins was a light sleeper, and was awakened at once.

She was startled and terrified, and, sitting up in bed, shook her husband violently by the shoulder.

"Deacon – Deacon Hopkins!" she exclaimed.

"What's the matter?" asked the deacon, drowsily.

"Matter enough. There's robbers downstairs."

Now the deacon was broad awake.

"Robbers!" he exclaimed. "Pooh! Nonsense! You're dreamin', wife."

Just then there was another racket. Sam, in trying to effect his escape, tumbled over a chair, and there was a yell of pain.

"Am I dreaming now, deacon?" demanded his wife, triumphantly.

"You're right, wife," said the deacon, turning pale, and trembling.

"It's an awful situation. What shall we do?"

"Do? Go downstairs, and confront the villains!" returned his wife, energetically.

"They might shoot me," said her husband, panic-stricken.

"They're – they're said to be very desperate fellows."

"Are you a man, and won't defend your property?" exclaimed his wife, taunting him, "Do you want me to go down?"

"Perhaps you'd better," said the deacon, accepting the suggestion with alacrity.

"What!" shrieked Mrs. Hopkins. "You are willing they should shoot me?"

"They wouldn't shoot a woman," said the deacon.

But his wife was not appeased.

Just then the unlucky Sam trod on the tail of the cat, who was quietly asleep on the hearth. With the instinct of self-defence, she scratched his leg, which was undefended by the customary clothing, and our hero, who did not feel at all heroic in the dark, not knowing what had got hold of him, roared with pain and fright.

"This is terrible!" gasped the deacon. "Martha, is the door locked?"

"No."

"Then I'll get up and lock it. O Lord, what will become of us?"

Sam was now ascending the stairs, and, though he tried to walk softly, the stairs creaked beneath his weight.

"They're comin' upstairs," exclaimed Mrs. Hopkins. "Lock the door quick, deacon, or we shall be murdered in our bed."

The deacon reached the door in less time than he would have accomplished the same feat in the daytime, and hurriedly locked it.

"It's locked, Martha," he said, "but they may break it down."

"Or fire through the door – "

"Let's hide under the bed," suggested the heroic deacon.

"Don't speak so loud. They'll hear. I wish it was mornin'!"

The deacon stood at the door listening, and made a discovery.

"They're goin' up into the garret," he announced. "That's strange – "

"What do they want up there, I wonder?"

"They can't think we've got anything valuable up there."

"Deacon," burst out Mrs. Hopkins, with a sudden idea, "I believe we've been fooled."

"Fooled! What do you mean?"

"I believe it isn't robbers."

"Not robbers? Why, you told me it was," said her husband, bewildered.

"*I believe it's that boy.*"

"What, – Sam?"

"Yes."

"What would he want downstairs?"

"I don't know, but it's him, I'll be bound. Light the lamp, deacon, and go up and see."

"But it might be robbers," objected the deacon, in alarm. "They might get hold of me, and kill me."

"I didn't think you were such a coward, *Mr. Hopkins*," said his wife, contemptuously. When she indulged in severe sarcasm, she was accustomed to omit her husband's title.

"I aint a coward, but I don't want to risk my life. It's a clear flyin' in the face of Providence. You'd ought to see that it is, Martha," said the deacon, reproachfully.

"I don't see it. I see that you are frightened, that's what I see.

Light the lamp, and I'll go up myself."

"Well, Martha, it's better for you to go. They won't touch a woman."

He lighted the lamp, and his wife departed on her errand. It might have been an unconscious action on the part of the deacon, but he locked the door after his wife.

Mrs. Hopkins proceeded to the door of Sam's bed-chamber, and, as the door was unfastened, she entered. Of course he was still awake, but he pretended to be asleep.

"Sam," said Mrs. Hopkins.

There was a counterfeited snore.

"Sam – say!"

Sam took no notice.

The lady took him by the shoulder, and shook him with no gentle hand, so that our hero was compelled to rouse himself.

"What's up?" he asked, rubbing his eyes in apparent surprise.

"I am," said Mrs. Hopkins, shortly, "and you have been."

"I!" protested Sam, innocently. "Why, I was sound asleep when you came in. I don't know what's been goin on. Is it time to get up?"

"What have you been doing downstairs?" demanded Mrs. Hopkins, sternly.

"Who says I've been downstairs?" asked Sam.

"I'm sure you have. I heard you."

"It must have been somebody else."

"There is no one else to go down. Neither the deacon nor myself has been down."

"Likely it's thieves."

But Mrs. Hopkins felt convinced, from Sam's manner, that he was the offender, and she determined to make him confess it.

"Get up," she said, "and go down with me."

"I'm sleepy," objected Sam.

"So am I, but I mean to find out all about this matter."

Sam jumped out of bed, and unwillingly accompanied Mrs. Hopkins downstairs. The latter stopped at her own chamber-door, and tried to open it.

"Who's there?" asked the deacon, tremulously.

"I am," said his wife, emphatically.

"So you locked the door on your wife, did you, because you thought there was danger. It does you great credit, upon my word."

"What have you found out?" asked her husband, evading the reproach.

"Was it Sam that made all the noise?"

"How could I," said Sam, "when I was fast asleep?"

"I'm goin to take him down with me to see what mischief's done," said Mrs. Hopkins. "Do you want to go too?"

The deacon, after a little hesitation, followed his more courageous spouse, at a safe distance, however, – and the three entered the kitchen, which had been the scene of Sam's noisy exploits. It showed traces of his presence in an overturned chair. Moreover, the closet-door was wide open, and broken pieces of crockery were scattered over the floor.

A light dawned upon Mrs. Hopkins. She had solved the mystery!

CHAPTER V. SAM COMBINES BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE

"You came down after that pie," she said, turning upon Sam..

"What pie?" asked Sam, looking guilty, however.

"Don't ask me. You know well enough. You couldn't find it in the dark, and that's the way you came to make such a noise. Ten of my nice plates broken, too! What do you say to that, Deacon Hopkins?"

"Samuel," said the deacon, "did you do this wicked thing?"

A moment's reflection convinced Sam that it would be idle to deny it longer. The proofs of his guilt were too strong. He might have plead in his defence "emotional insanity," but he was not familiar with the course of justice in New York. He was, however, fertile in expedients, and thought of the next best thing.

"Mebbe I walked in my sleep," he admitted.

"Did you ever walk in your sleep?" asked the deacon, hastily.

"Lots of times," said Sam.

"It is rather strange you should go to the closet in your sleep," said Mrs. Hopkins, suspiciously. "I suppose, if you'd found it, you'd have eaten it in your sleep."

"Likely I should," said Sam. "I was dreamin' of the pie. You know how to make pie, Mrs. Hopkins; I never tasted so good before."

Mrs. Hopkins was not a soft woman, but she was proud of her cooking, and accessible to flattery on that subject. Sam could not have defended himself better.

"That may be," she said, "about your walking in your sleep; but once is enough. Hereafter I'll lock your door on the outside. I can't be waked up every night, nor I can't have my plates broken."

"S'pose the house should catch fire," suggested Sam, who didn't fancy being locked up in his room.

"If it does, I'll come and let you out. The house is safer when you're safe in bed."

"My wife is right, Samuel," said the deacon, recovering his dignity now that his fears were removed. "You must be locked in after to-night."

Sam did not reply. On the whole, he felt glad to get off so well, after alarming the house so seriously.

"Do you mean to stay downstairs all night, Deacon Hopkins?" demanded his wife, with uncalled-for asperity. "If so, I shall leave you to yourself."

"I'm ready to go up when you are," said her husband. "I thought you mightn't feel like stayin' down here alone."

"Much protection you'd be in time of danger, Mr. Hopkins, – you that locked the door on your wife, because you was afraid!"

"I wasn't thinkin'," stammered the deacon.

"Probably not," said his wife, in an incredulous tone. "Now go up.

It's high time we were all in bed again."

Sam was not called at as early an hour as the deacon intended. The worthy man, in consequence of his slumbers being interrupted, overslept himself, and it was seven o'clock when he called Sam.

"Get up, Samuel," he said; "it's dreadful late, and you must be spry, or you won't catch up with the work."

Work, however, was not prominent in Sam's mind, as his answer showed.

"Is breakfast ready?" he asked, rubbing his eyes.

"It's most ready. Get right up, for it's time to go to work."

"I 'spose we'll have breakfast first," said Sam.

"If it's ready."

Under these circumstances, Sam did not hurry. He did not care to work before breakfast, nor, for that matter, afterwards, if he could help it. So he made a leisurely, though not an elaborate toilet, and did not come down till Mrs. Hopkins called sharply up the attic stairs, "Come down, you Sam!"

"All right, ma'am, I'm comin'," said Sam, who judged rightly that breakfast was ready.

"We shan't often let you sleep so late," said Mrs. Hopkins, who sat behind the waiter. "We were broken of our rest through your cutting up last night, and so we overslept ourselves."

"It's pretty early," said Sam.

"We'd ought to have been at work in the field an hour ago," said the deacon.

At the table Sam found work that suited him better.

"You've got a good appetite," said Mrs. Hopkins, as Sam took the seventh slice of bread.

"I most generally have," said Sam, with his mouth full.

"That's encouraging, I'm sure," said Mrs. Hopkins, drily.

There was no pie on the table, as Sam noticed, to his regret. However, he was pretty full when he rose from the table.

"Now, Samuel, you may come along with me," said the deacon, putting on his hat.

Sam followed him out to the barn, where, in one corner, were kept the hoes, rakes, and other farming implements in use.

"Here's a hoe for you," said the deacon.

"What are we going to do?" asked Sam.

"The potatoes need hoeing. Did you ever hoe potatoes?"

"No."

"You'll l'arn. It aint hard."

The field was some, little distance from the house, – a two-acre lot wholly devoted to potatoes.

"I guess we'll begin at the further corner," said the deacon. "Come along."

When they had reached the part of the field specified, the deacon stopped.

"Now," said he, "just see how I do it;" and he carefully hoed around one of the hills.

"There, you see it's easy."

"I guess I can do it. Are you goin to stay here?"

"No, I've got to go to the village, to the blacksmith's. I'll be back in about two hours. Jest hoe right along that row, and then come back again on the next. Do you understand?"

"Yes," said Sam.

"I want you to work as spry as you can, so's to make up for lost time."

"What time do you have dinner?" asked our hero.

"You aint hungry so quick, be you?"

"No, but I shall be bimeby. I thought I'd like to know when to quit work, and go to dinner."

"I'll be back before that. You needn't worry about that."

The deacon turned, and directed his steps homeward.

As long as he was in sight Sam worked with tolerable speed. But when the tall and stooping figure had disappeared from view he rested, and looked around him.

"It'll be a sight of work to hoe all them potatoes," he said to himself. "I wonder if the old man expects me to do the whole. It'll be a tough job."

Sam leisurely hoed another hill.

"It's gettin' hot," he said. "Why don't they have trees to give shade?"

Then it would be more comfortable."

He hoed another hill, taking a little longer time.

"I guess there must be a million hills," he reflected, looking around him thoughtfully. "It'll take me from now till next winter to hoe 'em all."

At the rate Sam was working, his calculation of the time it would take him was not far out probably.

He finished another hill.

Just then a cat, out on a morning walk, chanced to pass through the field a few rods away. Now Sam could never see a cat without wanting to chase it, – a fact which would have led the cat, had she been aware of it, to give him a wide berth. But, unluckily, Sam saw her.

"Scat!" he exclaimed, and, grasping his hoe, he ran after puss.

The cat took alarm, and, climbing the wall which separated the potato-field from the next, sped over it in terror. Sam followed with whoops and yells, which served to accelerate her speed. Occasionally he picked up a stone, and threw at her, and once he threw the hoe in the excitement of his chase. But four legs proved more than a match for two, and finally he was obliged to give it up, but not till he had run more than quarter of a mile. He sat down to rest on a rock, and soon another boy came up, with a fishing-pole over his shoulder.

"What are you doing, Sam?" he asked.

"I've been chasin' a cat," said Sam.

"Didn't catch her, did you?"

"No, hang it."

"Where'd you get that hoe?"

"I'm to work for Deacon Hopkins. He's took me. Where are you goin'?"

"A-fishing."

"I wish I could go."

"So do I. I'd like company."

"Where are you goin to fish?"

"In a brook close by, down at the bottom of this field."

"I'll go and look on a minute or two. I guess there isn't any hurry about them potatoes."

The minute or two lengthened to an hour and a half, when Sam roused himself from his idle mood, and shouldering his hoe started for the field where he had been set to work.

It was full time. The deacon was there before him, surveying with angry look the half-dozen hills, which were all that his young assistant had thus far hoed.

"Now there'll be a fuss," thought Sam, and he was not far out in that calculation.

CHAPTER VI. SAM'S SUDDEN SICKNESS

"Where have you been, you young scamp?" demanded the deacon, wrathfully.

"I just went away a minute or two," said Sam, abashed.

"A minute or two!" ejaculated the deacon.

"It may have been more," said Sam. "You see I aint got no watch to tell time by."

"How comes it that you have only got through six hills all the morning?" said the deacon, sternly.

"Well, you see, a cat came along –" Sam began to explain.

"What if she did?" interrupted the deacon. "She didn't stop your work, did she?"

"Why, I thought I'd chase her out of the field."

"What for?"

"I thought she might scratch up some of the potatoes," said Sam, a brilliant excuse dawning upon him.

"How long did it take you to chase her out of the field, where she wasn't doing any harm?"

"I was afraid she'd come back, so I chased her a good ways."

"Did you catch her?"

"No, but I drove her away. I guess she won't come round here again," said Sam, in the tone of one who had performed a virtuous action.

"Did you come right back?"

"I sat down to rest. You see I was pretty tired with running so fast."

"If you didn't run any faster than you have worked, a snail would catch you in half a minute," said the old man, with justifiable sarcasm. "Samuel, your excuse is good for nothing. I must punish you."

Sam stood on his guard, prepared to run if the deacon should make hostile demonstrations. But his guardian was not a man of violence, and did not propose to inflict blows. He had another punishment in view suited to Sam's particular case.

"I'll go right to work," said Sam, seeing that no violence was intended, and hoping to escape the punishment threatened, whatever it might be.

"You'd better," said the deacon.

Our hero (I am afraid he has not manifested any heroic qualities as yet) went to work with remarkable energy, to the imminent danger of the potato-tops, which he came near uprooting in several instances.

"Is this fast enough?" he asked.

"It'll do. I'll take the next row, and we'll work along together. Take care, – I don't want the potatoes dug up."

They kept it up for an hour or more, Sam working more steadily, probably, than he had ever done before in his life. He began to think it was no joke, as he walked from hill to hill, keeping up with the deacon's steady progress.

"There aint much fun about this," he thought. "I don't like workin' on a farm. It's awful tiresome."

"What's the use of hoein' potatoes?" he asked, after a while. "Won't they grow just as well without it?"

"No," said the deacon.

"I don't see why not."

"They need to have the earth loosened around them, and heaped up where it's fallen away."

"It's a lot of trouble," said Sam.

"We must all work," said the deacon, sententiously.

"I wish potatoes grew on trees like apples," said Sam. "They wouldn't be no trouble then."

"You mustn't question the Almighty's doin's, Samuel," said the deacon, seriously. "Whatever he does is right."

"I was only wonderin', that was all," said Sam.

"Human wisdom is prone to err," said the old man, indulging in a scrap of proverbial philosophy.

"What does that mean?" thought Sam, carelessly hitting the deacon's foot with his descending hoe. Unfortunately, the deacon had corns on that foot, and the blow cost him a sharp twinge.

"You careless blockhead!" he shrieked, raising the injured foot from the ground, while a spasm of anguish contracted his features. "Did you take my foot for a potato-hill?"

"Did I hurt you?" asked Sam, innocently.

"You hurt me like thunder," gasped the deacon, using, in his excitement, words which in calmer moments he would have avoided.

"I didn't think it was your foot," said Sam.

"I hope you'll be more careful next time; you most killed me."

"I will," said Sam.

"I wonder if it isn't time for dinner," he began to think presently, but, under the circumstances, thought it best not to refer to the matter. But at last the welcome sound of the dinner-bell was heard, as it was vigorously rung at the back door by Mrs. Hopkins.

"That's for dinner, Samuel," said the deacon. "We will go to the house."

"All right!" said Sam, with alacrity, throwing down the hoe in the furrow.

"Pick up that hoe, and carry it with you," said the deacon.

"Then we won't work here any more to-day!" said Sam, brightening up.

"Yes, we will; but it's no way to leave the hoe in the fields. Some cat might come along and steal it," he added, with unwonted sarcasm.

Sam laughed as he thought of the idea of a cat stealing a hoe, and the deacon smiled at his own joke.

Dinner was on the table. It was the fashion there to put all on at once, and Sam, to his great satisfaction, saw on one side a pie like that which had tempted him the night before. The deacon saw his look, and it suggested a fitting punishment. But the time was not yet.

Sam did ample justice to the first course of meat and potatoes. When that was despatched, Mrs. Hopkins began to cut the pie.

The deacon cleared his throat.

"Samuel is to have no pie, Martha," he said.

His wife thought it was for his misdeeds of the night before, and so did Sam.

"I couldn't help walkin' in my sleep," he said, with a blank look of disappointment.

"It aint that," said the deacon.

"What is it, then?" asked his wife.

"Samuel ran away from his work this mornin', and was gone nigh on to two hours," said her husband.

"You are quite right, Deacon Hopkins," said his wife, emphatically.

"He don't deserve any dinner at all."

"Can't I have some pie?" asked Sam, who could not bear to lose so tempting a portion of the repast.

"No, Samuel. What I say I mean. He that will not work shall not eat."

"I worked hard enough afterwards," muttered Sam.

"After I came back – yes, I know that. You worked well part of the time, so I gave you part of your dinner. Next time let the cats alone."

"Can I have some more meat, then?" asked Sam.

"Ye-es," said the deacon, hesitating. "You need strength to work this afternoon."

"I s'pose I get that catechism this afternoon instead of goin to work," suggested Sam.

"That will do after supper, Samuel. All things in their place. The afternoon is for work; the evening for readin' and study, and improvin' the mind."

Sam reflected that the deacon was a very obstinate man, and decided that his arrangements were very foolish. What was the use of living if you'd got to work all the time? A good many people, older than Sam, are of the same opinion, and it is not wholly without reason; but then, it should be borne in mind that Sam was opposed to all work. He believed in enjoying himself, and the work might take care of itself. But how could it be avoided?

As Sam was reflecting, a way opened itself. He placed his hand on his stomach, and began to roll his eyes, groaning meanwhile.

"What's the matter?" asked Mrs. Hopkins.

"I feel sick," said Sam, screwing up his face into strange contortions.

"It's very sudden," said Mrs. Hopkins, suspiciously.

"So 'tis," said Sam. "I'm afraid I'm going to be very sick. Can I lay down?"

"What do you think it is, Martha?" asked the deacon, looking disturbed.

"I know what it is," said his wife, calmly. "I've treated such attacks before. Yes, you may lay down in your room, and I'll bring you some tea, as soon as I can make it."

"All right," said Sam, elated at the success of his little trick. It was very much pleasanter to lie down than to hoe potatoes on a hot day.

"How easy I took in the old woman!" he thought.

It was not long before he changed his mind, as we shall see in The next chapter.

CHAPTER VII. SAM MEETS HIS MATCH

Sam went upstairs with alacrity, and lay down on the bed, – not that he was particularly tired, but because he found it more agreeable to lie down than to work in the field.

"I wish I had something to read," he thought, – "some nice dime novel like 'The Demon of the Danube.' That was splendid. I like it a good deal better than Dickens. It's more excitin'."

But there was no library in Sam's room, and it was very doubtful whether there were any dime novels in the house. The deacon belonged to the old school of moralists, and looked with suspicion upon all works of fiction, with a very few exceptions, such as Pilgrim's Progress, and Robinson Crusoe, which, however, he supposed to be true stories.

Soon Sam heard the step of Mrs. Hopkins on the stairs. He immediately began to twist his features in such a way as to express pain.

Mrs. Hopkins entered the room with a cup of hot liquid in her hand.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"I feel bad," said Sam.

"Are you in pain?"

"Yes, I've got a good deal of pain."

"Whereabouts?"

Sam placed his hand on his stomach, and looked sad.

"Yes, I know exactly what is the matter with you," said the deacon's wife.

"Then you know a good deal," thought Sam, "for I don't know of anything at all myself."

This was what he thought, but he said, "Do you?"

"Oh, yes; I've had a good deal of experience. I know what is good for you."

Sam looked curiously at the cup.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's hot tea; it's very healin'."

Sam supposed it to be ordinary tea, and he had no objection to take it. But when he put it to his lips there was something about the odor that did not please him.

"It doesn't smell good," he said, looking up in the face of Mrs.

Hopkins.

"Medicine generally doesn't," she said, quietly.

"I thought it was tea," said Sam.

"So it is; it is wormwood-tea."

"I don't think I shall like it," hesitated Sam.

"No matter if you don't, it will do you good," said Mrs. Hopkins.

Sam tasted it, and his face assumed an expression of disgust.

"I can't drink it," he said.

"You must," said Mrs. Hopkins, firmly.

"I guess I'll get well without," said our hero, feeling that he was in a scrape.

"No, you won't. You're quite unwell. I can see it by your face."

"Can you?" said Sam, beginning to be alarmed about his health.

"You must take this tea," said the lady, firmly.

"I'd rather not."

"That's neither here nor there. The deacon needs you well, so you can go to work, and this will cure you as quick as anything."

"Suppose it doesn't?" said Sam.

"Then I shall bring you up some castor-oil in two hours."

Castor-oil! This was even worse than wormwood-tea, and Sam's heart sank within him.

"The old woman's too much for me," he thought, with a sigh.

"Come, take the tea," said Mrs. Hopkins. "I can't wait here all day."

Thus adjured, Sam made a virtue of necessity, and, shutting his eyes, gulped down the wormwood. He shuddered slightly when it was all done, and his face was a study.

"Well done!" said Mrs. Hopkins. "It's sure to do you good."

"I think I'd have got well without," said Sam. "I'm afraid it won't agree with me."

"If it don't," said Mrs. Hopkins, cheerfully, "I'll try some castor-oil."

"I guess I won't need it," said Sam, hastily.

"It was awful," said Sam to himself, as his nurse left him alone. "I'd rather hoe potatoes than take it again. I never see such a terrible old woman. She would make me do it, when I wasn't no more sick than she is."

Mrs. Hopkins smiled to herself as she went downstairs.

"Served him right," she said to herself. "I'll l'arn him to be sick.

Guess he won't try it again very soon."

Two hours later Mrs. Hopkins presented herself at Sam's door. He had been looking out of the window; but he bundled into bed as soon as he heard her. Appearances must be kept up.

"How do you feel now, Sam?" asked Mrs. Hopkins.

"A good deal better," said Sam, surveying in alarm a cup of some awful decoction in her hand.

"Do you feel ready to go to work again?"

"Almost," said Sam, hesitating.

"The wormwood-tea did you good, it seems; but you're not quite well yet."

"I'll soon be well," said Sam, hastily.

"I mean you shall be," said his visitor. "I've brought you some more medicine."

"Is it tea?"

"No, castor-oil."

"I don't need it," said Sam, getting up quickly. "I'm well."

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