

CHAPTER XIII THE MYSTERIOUS SILVER DOLLARS

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

Naturally, Mr. Jamieson objected to the interruption at this point in his conversation with Carl, since it had been progressing favorably, and a revelation was about to be made regarding the welfare of his client, Carey. He hoped the Squire would call for his mail and leave without any further interruption.

"Well! Good morning Gentlemen," greeted the Squire, trying to conceal his inquisitive look, "is our local post office in need of legal advice this morning?"

"Good morning Squire," returned Mr. Jamieson.

"Mornin' Squire," repeated Carl, "just trying to be friendly without the influence of my office."

"If I had the time," replied the Squire, "I would join your friendly little conversation, but I must be about my business of keeping our little village supplied with work; for idle hands make—"

"Then don't keep the Squire waiting," interrupted Mr. Jamieson, "my time is of little importance, Mr. Postmaster."

"What can I do for you Squire?" asked Carl.

"You may give me my mail. Do I have anything from the City?" asked the Squire.

"I don't concern myself about the origin of my Patron's mail, Squire. May I sell you some stamps today?" asked Carl.

"As a matter of fact, you may;" responded the Squire, "you may sell me a sheet of letter stamps."

"Do a lot of writing, Squire?" asked Carl.

"No," returned the Squire, searching Carl's face for the reason of the question, "the last stamps that I bought were purchased from the former postmaster, why?"

"Your son Flint has been our best customer this week," replied Carl.

"That is strange," returned the Squire, "perhaps he has taken a fancy to the new Columbus design." He offered a five dollar note from his wallet.

"Got any silver, Squire?" asked Carl, "I'm short of change this morning."

"I never carry small bills, or silver," replied the Squire with some degree of sincerity, "the fact is, I haven't seen a silver dollar for some time."

"Perhaps your son Flint, has taken a fancy to them also," added Carl.

"Why do you say that?" asked the Squire, "and furthermore, my son's name is not Flint, it's Mortimer, and I prefer that you refer to him with proper respect!"

"Sorry, Squire," apologized Carl, "Your son Mortimer has been our best supplier of silver dollars in payment for his stamps."

"Well—he does receive a generous weekly allowance; perhaps he converts his allowance into silver at the local bank; children like to jingle money in their pockets you know—I seem to be on the witness stand; if there are no further questions, may I be excused?"

"Certainly; no offense, Squire."

"Very well then; Good day Gentle—"

"One moment, Squire," interrupted Mr.

Jamieson, "I would like—"

"I have just left the witness stand, Mr. Attorney," sneered the Squire.

"Then will you see me in my office, Squire?" asked Mr. Jamieson.

"If I come at your request, I should be permitted to charge a fee as lawyers do. My time is valuable, Mr. Jamieson, and you are keeping me on my feet—"

"A thousand pardons, Squire," interrupted Carl, speaking through the bars of the service window, "I would invite you in, but there is only one chair; the department—"

"Should furnish a cracker barrel, if you are going to compete with the general store for local gossip. Mr. Jamieson, I do not care to discuss any further business in public places!"

"My business can wait, Squire," replied Mr. Jamieson, "It was only a trifle, anyway; I wouldn't want to embarrass you in public."

"Then Good day Gentlemen," said the Squire coloring, and with an uneasy feeling, he left the post office lobby.

There was a rather awkward silence; Carl and Mr. Jamieson each waited for the other to speak out first and offer an explanation of the Squire's reactions to their questions; Mr. Jamieson, due to his profession as an attorney, volunteered to lead off.

"I don't know what to make of it, Mr. Harris; the Squire was very much on the defense with me, and perhaps irritated with you; I hope I am not coming between two old friends."

"The Squire is not an old friend; I have told you truthfully, that I had only heard of him before I came to Algerton."

"Then perhaps he was obligated to another person, when he recommended you without having known you personally?"

"Mr. Jamieson, I can see that you know how to handle a witness. Just let me say that I used my influence to get where I am, just by mentioning the name of an acquaintance of the Squire."

"Algerton people know very little of the Squire's past, and it is always a subject dear to the hearts of our curious people. This is the first contact with his past—"

"Let's let it be the last, for the present, please, Mr. Jamieson; We have a lot of irons in the fire. Where were we when the Squire came in?" asked Carl.

"Why we—let's see, Oh yes, We were talking about the missing stamps and—that Carey might be accused. I couldn't help but notice that you pursued this line of questioning with the Squire. You would make a real good investigator, Carl—"

"I always wanted to be a detective," interrupted Carl, "It seems now that the Squire had not asked his son Flint—er, Mortimer to purchase any stamps and that he has not tried to dispose of them to his father."

"I am a bit confused about these stamp purchases, Carl, will you please try to explain it to me?"

It is not necessary to repeat what happened, however, Carl told Mr. Jamieson exactly what took place.

"Then Flint is concealing the real motive for his stamp purchases, I presume," stated Mr. Jamieson.

"Whatever the reason for the original purchase, he has stumbled on to a means of obtaining stamps without payment—at least, he hopes so."

"The original purchase may have been a legitimate purchase, but why the interest in the silver dollars?" inquired Mr. Jamieson.

"That is a subject which you should know more about as a local resident, than I would know. Carey has revealed to me that the Squire, or his son may have found a local hoard of silver dollars which is said to be hidden around the village somewhere."

"Yes, I am aware of the local theory about a possible hoard; and Carey wonders if it may have been found by the Squire, or Flint?"

"Yes, that is Carey's theory; but the Squire seems to have eliminated himself by denying the possession of any silver."

"There is a possibility that Flint is getting his supply from the local bank."

"We can check that source, easily enough," added Carl.

"If the bank is the source, his possession may clearly be a childish whim to attract attention with money to jingle," continued Mr. Jamieson.

"If the bank is not, then it appears that Flint knows of a secret place of supply. What happens then?"

"Well, in the first place, Flint is a minor in the eyes of the law and as such, he cannot lawfully hold or possess property; secondly, if such were the case, the Squire would take immediate possession as nearest relative of the minor; third, he may have unlawful possession of this silver—"

"What do you mean?" asked Carl.

"Unlawful possession could mean a number of things; the most common assumption is stealing of course, then supposedly finding such a hoard on another's property which was thought to be concealed in a safe hiding place from dishonest people—"

"What if it was found on his own property?" asked Carl.

"Are you implying that—"

"That the Squire has a hoard which he thought to be securely hidden on his own premises."

"It is a reasonable assumption," added Mr. Jamieson, "and then it was found by his own son, who is secretly spending it."

"The Squire did seem to be in a hurry to be excused; do you suppose that he was anxious to investigate—"

"Yes, I do. We seem to have hit upon a pattern which was not intended for our attention," added Mr. Jamieson.

"This is all very interesting," replied Carl, "if I were free, I would like to know where the Squire is, about now."

"I am free, but I have no legal right to make an investigation without the interest of a client involved, and I cannot see that Carey is involved here."

"At least, not yet;" responded Carl, "will you take me as a client, to make the investigation?"

"What interest would you have in this investigation, Mr. Harris?"

"An outlet for stolen money, and receiving stolen money; take your choice."

"I see, then you have just retained me as counsel, acting as your agent in the investigation of one Mortimer S. Flint Campbell."

"—and/or one Mortimer S. Campbell, Sr." added Carl.

"I see, and what about the two dollar shortage, or the missing stamps?"

"Circumstantial evidence; I could prove nothing."

"Then if you will excuse me, I shall be about your business," replied Mr. Jamieson, as he started for the door.

The first place that Mr. Jamieson decided to investigate, in running down any clues as to the source of the silver dollars, was the local bank, which was operated by two men who lived in the area. One was Mr. Gilbert West, the President, and at one time, the largest depositor, but currently, the Squire's deposits and accrued interest had surpassed Mr. West's deposits and he therefor was retaining his office as President only because of the favor of the Squire, who knew he could declare Mr. West a puppet of the bank whenever he chose. The other employee was a young married man who had worked for the bank even before the arrival of the Squire and was permitted to work without being a depositor; however, recently the Squire, as one of the directors, had requested that no employee could continue without also being a depositor of at least one hundred dollars. Now, Mr. Drummond, the young married man, was a poorly paid bank clerk and had only a few dollars with which he might open a savings account. Upon confiding this information to the Squire, the Squire drew up an agreement whereby he loaned Mr. Drummond the required amount and without interest, but not without obligation, for as the Squire put it, you may be able to do me a favor some day. Such was the picture at the local bank as Mr. Jamieson entered to make his initial investigation.

"Good morning, Mr. Drummond," he greeted, "is the Honorable Mr. West in this morning?"

"No sir, Mr. Jamieson, not at the moment, may I wait upon you?" he inquired.

"Well, I don't know; it depends upon how much authority you have."

"If you want to arrange for a loan, even Mr. West has to get authorization from our loan officer now."

"Who is that?"

"Haven't you heard? It's Squire Campbell."

"No, I hadn't heard, but I didn't come in for a loan, Mr. Drummond; I only need some information."

"I am not allowed to give out information regarding our depositors. It's a new ruling."

"I see, and Squire Campbell made this new ruling?"

"Yes."

"I see. Can a depositor make a withdrawal without the Squire's approval?"

CHAPTER XIV FLINT GETS THE THIRD DEGREE

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"Yes," replied Mr. Drummond, "but only up to fifty dollars."

"I see," said Mr. Jamieson, anxious to get at his investigation without exciting undue alarm, "can such withdrawals be made in silver dollars?"

"It would be unusual," answered the clerk with an inquiring look, "why do you ask?"

"I was curious as to their popularity; do you have many calls for silver dollars?"

"There is very little demand; the last bag of dollars that we received is still unopened."

"I see," he replied with a puzzled look, "then you have none in your cash till?"

"No, sir, they are in the safe."

"Could I see a sample of them, please?"

"I'll see if Mr. West has opened the safe this morning," he said as he walked over to it, "yes, it is open; would you step through the gate please; the bag is heavy, you know."

"Thank you," replied Mr. Jamieson with a feeling of honor, to be admitted behind the counter, "May I examine one, please?"

"Here you are; shiny aren't they?"

"Yes, and in a way, they are beautiful; it is a shame that they are much too heavy to carry around."

"Of course they were minted this year."

"That's right, the date reads 1894, but there is no mint marking to identify—"

"The identification on the bag reads Philadelphia," added Mr. Drummond, "although our coin shipments come from New York City, I believe all of our bags are labeled Philadelphia."

"Well, this has been very interesting; I'll try to see Mr. West another time; thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Drummond."

"You are welcome, Mr. Jamieson."

Mr. Jamieson hastily retraced his steps to the post office, knowing that the trail left by the Squire was getting cold, but he was of the opinion that it was more important at the moment to converse with Mr. Harris. Carl was still alone when he entered and was sucking on a corn cob pipe.

"Mr. Harris, do you still have those silver dollars?"

"Yes, I still have them; no one wants to carry around all that weight; what's up?"

"Let's see the date on them."

"Is that important?" asked Carl, spreading them out on the counter and turning them over with the date side up.

"They're all dated 1884!" exclaimed Mr. Jamieson.

"Is that unusual?" asked Carl, looking perplexed.

Mr. Jamieson then explained to Carl that Flint did not seem to be involved in any transactions at the bank, and they both agreed that Flint's source of supply of silver dollars was at present, still a mystery.

"These dollars have been in storage," remarked Carl, examining them closely.

"How do you determine that," asked Mr. Jamieson, picking up one.

"They show no evidence of wear, and being ten years old, they should if they have been in circulation."

"That's right," responded Mr. Jamieson, rubbing one on his sleeve, "and notice the luster coming out after a little buffing. Do you suppose this means that—"

"That Flint has uncovered a hoard of silver dollars which may belong to the Squire. I don't suppose you have had a chance to—"

"No, and to attempt to trail him now, would be useless; but one source of supply has been eliminated at least."

"How is that?"

"These dollars were minted in 1884."

"So?"

"Well, this man Alger has been dead since 1874, and if there is such a hoard somewhere—"

"I see what you mean; it could not have contained any coins newer than 1874."

"Yes, and some of them could be 15 years older than that."

"What will be your next move?" asked Carl.

"Well, I will keep the Squire under a little closer surveillance, but I cannot spend all of my time at it, as I do have other responsibilities."

"Couldn't you deputize Carey to do some of the investigation work for you?"

"An excellent idea; he could keep me posted on any suspicious activities of the Squire."

"It was just a suggestion."

"But can you spare him?"

"His free time is at your command; I'll get along somehow."

"Then I will speak to him this afternoon, but I must get home now—"

"Oh, ah—Mr. Jamieson—"

"Yes?"

"Since you are my legal counsel in this matter—there's a few things that I have not told you; I believe that I should."

"Well naturally; counsel is entitled to the truth."

Since the testimony was confidential and meant only for the ears of counsel, we cannot record their personal conversation.

"And the Judge knows of this?" asked Mr. Jamieson, after hearing the testimony.

"Yes. The Judge is a very intelligent person. The night that I received the approval of the townspeople, the Judge questioned me in private, and I could not conceal my true identity or purpose from him. The Judge is very shrewd in this respect."

"Does Carey know about this?"

"Not a word; and neither does his mother."

"Well, this clears up a point or two in my mind, of course I will treat it as confidential."

"Thanks, because if I were exposed, I would have to leave."

Mr. Jamieson soon left the post office and headed toward home. Since the Squire lived across the road from his home, it

would be a simple matter to occasionally observe the Squire's actions. The children were just leaving the school building as he passed by. Carey came down the steps with Flint at his heels. Carey could always count on Flint being close by if possible, to ridicule him at any opportunity.

"There is your escort again, Churchill," said Flint, "is that all he has to do?"

"I might as well dismiss him, Flint, I shan't need him since you are being such a faithful follower."

"Carey, may I speak with you for a moment," asked Mr. Jamieson.

"Certainly, Mr. Jamieson, what can I do for you?"

"Well, first you may dismiss your body guard," he said, looking at Flint.

"Flint, do you mind?" asked Carey.

Flint was about to make an issue of his right to be on the school grounds, but remained silent; he turned away and busied himself with loosening a stone from the sod with the toe of his shoe, trying desperately to hear the conversation.

"Carey, I must see you after school, this is very important--and confidential."

"Certainly, Mr. Jamieson, I shall first report to Mr. Harris and ask to be excused for a while."

"That will not be necessary, what I have to say to you can be told in the presence of Mr. Harris."

"Very well," said Carey, curiously.

"All right, Carey, after school then."

"Yes, sir," replied Carey courteously.

"What did he have to say to you, Churchill," asked Flint, brazenly.

"Flint, if Mr. Jamieson had wanted you to know, he would have invited you also."

Flint finally succeeded in loosening the stone, picked it up and looked for a target. A dog was trotting along behind a small boy on the opposite side of the road. The moving target was a challenge to Flint and he released the stone with all the force he could muster. Flint was a good shot, having much practice in this respect. The stone found its mark in the ribs of the dog who howled with pain.

"Flint, why are you so mean?"

"Dogs are always barking at me; I never allow them in my yard."

"Some day, Flint, you will meet your match in meanness, and I hope you are shown the same mercy."

"There is no one around here who can equal me in--"

"Meanness?" interrupted Carey, "isn't that what you meant to say, Flint?"

"Of course not, I'm far superior in many ways, but I don't claim to be the--"

The conversation was interrupted, much to Carey's relief, by the Squire calling for Flint to hurry along home. Carey had more important things to do anyway, than partake in such idle talk. Flint did not hurry as he was instructed; he was in no hurry to receive the reprimand which usually accompanied his father's commands. Upon the Squire's arrival at home, he had hurriedly made a detailed search of certain areas of the building.

Things seemed to be in order and undisturbed, but he wanted to make sure. He decided to question his son to determine if there was any evidence of unauthorized liberties about the house.

"My son, how old are you now?" he asked.

"Sixteen, father."

"Ah, yes, and I suppose you are beginning to covet the ways of manhood?"

"I don't quite understand you, sir."

"Of course; I shall come to the point; you resent having to associate with boys of your age and want to associate with older boys."

"I suppose so father."

"And have you acquired a taste for wine?"

"No, father."

"You know of course, of my wine cellar?"

"Yes, father."

"You have not attempted to enter it?"

"No, father."

"Very well, my son, under no circumstances, are you to enter it. Do you understand?"

"Yes, father."

"Very well."

"Will that be all, sir?"

"One thing more. Do you have any silver on you?"

"No, sir."

"How much is your allowance, my son?"

"Five dollars a week, sir."

"And you have no silver left from it?"

"I still have the five dollar bill that you gave me last Saturday, sir."

"I see, then perhaps your allowance is too large."

"No, sir, not of I am to associate with the older boys."

"Then how is it that you still have five dollars left?"

"I have been charging some items at the confectioner's, sir."

"I see, and do you owe more than you can pay?"

"No, sir."

"Then how much do you owe?"

"Three dollars, sir."

"You have consumed three dollars worth of confections since last Saturday?"

"No, sir. I have treated the older boys."

"Is this necessary?"

"Yes, sir, it's the easiest way to gain their favor, sir."

"And have they invited you to gamble?"

"To what, sir?"

"Never mind, my son, it is strictly an adult expression."

"Yes, sir."

"Do you borrow money from the older boys?"

"No, sir."

"Then do the older boys owe you money?"

"No, sir."

"Have you been saving any money from your allowance?"

"No, sir."

"I see. Then do you have an interest in postage stamps, perhaps?"

"Postage stamps, sir?"

"Yes, could it be that you have a school project which calls for the purchase of a large amount of postage stamps?"

"No, sir."

"Then, dash it all, boy, why are you buying stamps, and paying for them with silver? Where are you getting this silver, boy?"

"I would rather not say, sir!"

CHAPTER XV CAREY PLAYS DETECTIVE

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

We shall leave the Squire and his son Mortimer here, to continue their conversation in private. It is embarrassing to be questioned in this manner and the Squire may obtain better results if we allow him absolute secrecy. Suffice to say that Mortimer did return to school that afternoon, and apparently received no punishment. We turn our attention to Carey and find him at the dinner table with his family.

"Well, mother, how are you getting along at the Jamieson's?" asked Carey.

"Well, while I was there yesterday afternoon, Mrs. Jamieson just visited mostly, and showed me some of her old clothes and asked me if I thought they were worth mending."

"Do you think the work will be difficult and perhaps tire you too much?"

"No, in fact I don't feel that they will have too much work to be done. I think it is a 'Good Samaritan' act, more than anything else."

"Well, it's nice to have good friends; Mr. Jamieson wants to consult with me after school on a confidential matter."

"I'm glad to have a son who is capable of handling our affairs, it is a comfort."

"I hear Pete Bates calling," said Carey, "will you excuse me mother?"

"Of course; you may go, my son."

With Carey's responsibilities as head of their household, he was no longer able to spend time with Pete as had been customary, and their walks to and from school were about the extent of their association together. Pete had remained loyal to Carey and the two of them had shared many happy hours together. Flint sometimes showed evidence of irritation with expressions of bitterness because Pete would not patronize his style of friendship. It provoked Flint that Pete preferred Carey's company rather than his. Flint would have preferred to see Carey walk alone and unescorted, with the entire group of boys at his own heels, but this, Flint had not succeeded in doing. Many of the smaller boys would have preferred to claim Carey as their idol, and go to him for advice, but nearly all were bullied into associating with Flint or suffer the consequences. On the way to school Carey and Pete overtook a youngster about Michael's age and who was no doubt in Michael's class.

"Hi there, Chester," greeted Carey, "If you will slow up a bit, Michael will be along soon."

The boy gave a faint smile of recognition which quickly changed to an expression of fear and he hastened on instead.

"Now that's odd," stated Pete, "are not Chester and Michael friends?"

"I thought they were," answered Carey, "I'll speak to Michael about it."

"Carey, are you prepared for our mid-semester algebra test next Friday?"

"I've been pretty fortunate so far, but I never feel that I am fully prepared. You are not worried are you?" he asked.

"Yes, I am," he replied, "I think old Weeks was looking right at me when he referred to our proficiencies being compared with daylight and darkness."

"I don't think you have a thing to worry about," Carey said encouragingly, "I've heard you recite."

"Well, I'm no nine o'clock scholar like you," replied Pete, with a complimentary smile.

"If it should come to a contest," said Carey, "I shouldn't want to be competing against you for the highest honors."

We leave the two friends here to decide the issue between themselves. This high degree of loyalty between friends is seldom surpassed. Carey, remembering his appointment with Mr. Jamieson, reported promptly at the post office after school, but found that Mr. Jamieson had not yet arrived.

"Mr. Harris," said Carey, "I was supposed to meet Mr. Jamieson here; Is there any message?"

"There is no message," he replied, "perhaps he has been detained. He has been a busy man lately and has no doubt, neglected his duties."

"Here he is now!" said Carey, as Mr. Jamieson entered the door.

"Yes," he replied, hearing Carey's remark, "I am late, but I rather expected that you would be on time. I was consulting with your mother. She is employed at my home you know."

"Yes, I know, somehow it doesn't seem right for her to—"

"Don't worry, don't let it bother you. We are not slave drivers," he interrupted.

"Very well, Mr. Jamieson," he replied.

"Now Carey," began Mr. Jamieson, "You know about the shortage here, and the silver dollars used by Flint to pay for his purchases of postage stamps, don't you?"

"I believe so sir," he answered, looking inquiringly at Mr. Harris.

"It's all right Carey," assured Carl, "Mr. Jamieson has been informed of what has taken place."

"Oh!" replied Carey, relaxing from his tenseness.

"Yes," added Mr. Jamieson, "and I have been retained by Mr. Harris to try and clear up this matter."

"I see," answered Carey.

"Mr. Harris and I think the silver dollars may have been stolen, and we are concerned about where the money is coming from. We are reasonably sure that they were not obtained from the bank and they are not old enough to be from the elleged Alger treasure."

"Then you think that—"

"We don't know what to think, Carey," interrupted Mr. Jamieson, "and we want you to help us in our investigation."

"But I—"

"Mr. Harris will release you from your duties as often as you can be spared."

"But, what am I to do?"

"We want you to do a little detective work," answered Mr. Jamieson, "and since Flint has introduced the dollars, perhaps the search should start with him."

"Then I am to try and find where the dollars are coming from?" asked Carey.

"Exactly," answered Carl, "and this is confidential, you must not divulge your mission to anyone, not even your own family, or your best friend."

"I see," replied Carey, "This sounds like an interesting assignment. When do I start?"

"I shall need you here in the mornings of course," added Carl, "and in the afternoon, long enough to distribute the afternoon train mail."

"Train mail!" Carey exclaimed, "I had almost forgotten about that. Excuse me gentlemen, I have work to do."

"Carey!" cut in Mr. Jamieson, "I won't disturb you any more, but before I go, I just want to add that I shall want a daily report of your progress."

"Yes, sir."

It did not take Carey long to distribute the afternoon accumulation of mail, but Carl could see that Carey's new assignment was weighing heavily upon his mind.

"You may take the rest of the afternoon off Carey," invited Carl, "You will need time for concentration to formulate your new plans."

"Thank you Mr. Harris, I agree that I will need time for uninterrupted concentration, I must be sure of what I do, so I will not expose my purpose."

"Leave everything here to me, except the distribution of mail. In that respect, you are indispensable."

Carey halted outside the post office, he decided that he would not be able to concentrate at home while Ethel and Michael were home, and they would be curious too, as to why he would be coming home at an early hour. He turned his steps toward the school and pondered the enormity of the situation. The assignment was a bit frightening too. How could he explain his new freedom without resorting to falsehoods? How do real investigators and detectives conceal their true identity and missions? As near as he could determine, avoiding the issues and evading the questions were the answers. Perhaps evading a question by asking one himself. That's it! He would try that, if the occasion arose; but he must be quick, do not falter. That's it! Fast talking is the characteristic of an evasive person. Could he do it? I should like to try, he thought. But be careful now! One mistake is too many! He was now at the school grounds; some of the boys were still there, booting a soccer ball around the grounds.

"Well, Postal Boy, do your duties call for you to patrol the school grounds?"

"Yes, --er No!" said Carey excitedly, for he was startled with surprise when he discovered Flint behind him. Careful now, he thought, my facial expressions

are on exhibition, "Why do you ask," he added, recovering his presence of mind.

"Well, because you are not at the post office! Must our Government pay you to walk the streets?"

The assignment was not going to be an easy one; Carey could see that. Of course Flint was a difficult person to deal with, and extremely peculiar, or adept at repelling diplomatic relations. His questions were designed to incite irritation and fan the flame of temper. Carey, however, had a high boiling point, and was slow to anger. It is true that each one irritated the other. It was the nature of each to attempt to bring out his own characteristics in the other. Carey waited silently for a moment before giving a reply.

"You needn't worry, Flint, I've been given the rest of the afternoon off."

"If you're looking for work, I can put you to work in our stable."

"That is kind of you Flint, I could use some extra money; but no thank you, I---"

"Beggars should not be choosers---then perhaps you've come to play with the little boys; there's some of them still here."

"Chester!" Flint called, "Chester! come here with my ball! Come here, I say!"

The small boys ceased their game and relinquished the ball to Chester who immediately trotted over to where Flint was standing. Flint went to meet him so as to converse with Chester out of range of Carey's hearing. Carey, somewhat interested in what was taking place, could see that it was evident that Flint was demanding payment for the use of the ball. It appeared from what Carey could see, that Chester was unable to pay and Flint, showing that he meant business, caught Chester's arm, twisted it, causing Chester to turn to relieve the pain which he knew would come from it. Flint released his hold which may have been just a threat of future punishment. Chester straightened out his arm, hesitated slightly while he nursed his arm with his other hand, then ran away across the school grounds. Flint returned to Carey, showing no shame for his actions.

"Sooner or later," said Flint, "He'll be trotting at my heels---if he knows what's good for him."

"Do you expect me to trot at your heels, Flint?"

"You will! You will, unless you want to be a lone wolf---and a pauper!"

"You mean---you want to buy my friendship?"

"Yes, I'll pay you for certain services," he said, while displaying a silver dollar.

"How would you have me serve you Flint?"

"You can supply me with the correct answers to the algebra test on Friday."

"I'll be glad to coach you Flint, if you need help."

"I don't have time for home study periods, besides, it isn't necessary."

"Studying isn't necessary?" asked Carey.

"Not for me; I'll pay you to study for me."

"I couldn't do that, Flint; No amount of money could induce me to encourage you to cheat."

CHAPTER XVI A FEW SECRETS REVEALED

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

Suffice to say that Flint was unable to break down Carey's determination to refuse aid in the form of cheating. His offer of money in any amount he found was useless. He showed evidence of his bitterness, which changed to fright as he thought of the consequences. There was no one else that he could depend upon to supply the correct answers to the algebra test. His cronies were of no use to him in this respect. He had anticipated receiving the highest marks of the class. This he knew that only Carey could help him attain. Flint turned his steps homeward, a picture of defeat, which was most always the case in any contest with Carey. Carey needed money, honest money, but Flint found that his money would not buy Carey's services. Flint did not understand. There was little time left. Study seemed the only course available to him. Carey had offered to coach him, but this would be a public admission of his ignorance.

Carey stood alone, victor of the situation, but without glory. He felt sorry for Flint. He wished that Flint would accept his offer to help with his studies. Carey realized that he and Flint were examples of a well known phrase "when an immovable object meets an irresistible force", perhaps Mr. Weeks, their algebra teacher could bring them together. He decided that he would consult Mr. Weeks about the matter on the following day.

Carey's thoughts and planning of his investigation of the silver dollars had been interrupted, but not without some gain. He noted that there was a possibility of Flint receiving money from little Chester and perhaps others, in the form of rental or extortion. This new development, however, was interfering with his reasoning. He could not concentrate. He decided to dismiss both subjects from his mind for the time, and turned his steps homeward.

After the evening meal, and with the chores completed, the family gathered around the table in the dining room, illuminated with one lamp in the center of the table. The children were reviewing their lessons for tomorrow, and Mrs. Churchill was doing some mending.

"Mother," asked Carey, "Are you enjoying your work at the Jamieson's?"

"Yes, my son, it is not tiresome; it is pleasant to have someone to talk with, and Mr. Jamieson thinks it best that I make the most of my time instead of feeling sorry for myself here at home during the day when I am alone."

"I was offered some part-time work, myself," remarked Carey, smiling.

"But you have no time for part-time work, do you?" asked his mother, taking him seriously.

"Did Flint offer to hire you again?" asked Ethel.

"Yes, but I have a standing invitation to hire out as his stable-boy. I could start any time."

"When do you plan to start?" asked Ethel, teasing him.

"But he has given me a better offer!"

"Do tell!" invited Ethel, "his ambition can be measured quite accurately by his weekly allowance."

"He wants me to supply him with the correct answers to our algebra test on Friday."

"Carey! You wouldn't!" exclaimed his mother, instantly.

"No, mother, of course not; I was not tempted in the least."

"His weekly allowance is becoming his downfall," added Ethel.

"Whatever it is, it cannot be enough to supply his needs," Michael added.

"How is that?" asked Carey, curiously.

"He makes the boys pay rental for the use of his playground equipment."

"Do you contribute to this?" asked Carey.

"No, but Flint has found out who can supply the money that he needs——"

"And who is that?" asked Carey, curiously.

"It's Chester," answered Michael.

"How is it that he can supply the money?" asked Carey.

"I'm not sure, sometimes he can't, and Flint threatens punishment."

"I suspected that this afternoon," said Carey, "aren't you and Chester good friends?"

"We were," answered Michael, "but Flint has discouraged our friendship. He doesn't want Chester to associate with me."

"I see, then you are excluded because of Flint," replied Carey.

"Actually because of you."

"Because of me?"

"Yes, because you are my brother, he——"

"I see," cut in Carey, "It's a form of retaliation, an unfair, and an unjust kind."

"In effect," added Ethel, "Flint is punishing Michael, because he cannot punish you."

"A sort of reprisal," added Carey.

"Carey, do you think Michael is in danger of being harmed?" asked Mrs. Churchill.

"He wouldn't dare touch me," said Michael.

"If he did, would you tell me," asked Carey, hopefully.

"I'd scratch his eyes out myself," responded Ethel, defensively.

"Yes, I would, but Chester does not dare to say anything——"

"Because he has no one to protect him, is that it?" asked Carey, quickly.

"Yes, he has no brothers or sisters, and his father has been dead for several years, and he has only his mother for advice and protection."

"How long has Chester's father been dead, mother?" asked Carey.

"I think he died in 1886; Yes, I am sure of it."

"How old is Chester, Michael?" asked Carey.

"He is about my age; He is nine."

"I wonder how Chester can afford to pay Flint for the rental of playground equipment," pondered Carey.

"It's not only for that. Flint makes him pay for what he calls protection," he added.

"And why does Chester want protection?"

"He doesn't want it, but Flint says since he has no father, he needs protection."

"But how can Chester afford to pay for

this protection that is forced upon him?"

"I don't know; Somehow he manages to keep Flint satisfied. If he can't pay, then Flint is mean to him." answered Michael.

"I will speak to Chester's mother tomorrow, and offer to help Chester.

We must take leave of the little family as they prepare to retire for the night.

Wednesday dawned and promised to be a full day for Carey with his added responsibility and his own personal projects of assisting Flint with his schooling and arranging for the defense of Chester. At the close of the algebra class period, when the students had left the room, Carey addressed Mr. Weeks.

"Yes, Carey, What is it?" he asked.

"Mr. Weeks, I am aware that Flint needs help with his algebra, but he refuses all offers to assist him."

"I am also aware of it Carey; he gets the same personal attention that the rest of my pupils get. He would get more if he would respond to my own personal offers."

"I am concerned about his chances of passing Friday's test. He could pull down the entire class average, as well as his own," Carey added.

"And his failure to pass the test would not be complimentary to my ability as an instructor," added Mr. Weeks, "Do you have any suggestions Carey?"

"I was thinking that the team-effort theory from the field of sports might be applied to the class-room -- If Flint could be urged to cooperate with the class---"

"A wonderful suggestion; You have given me an idea Carey, perhaps tomorrow we can put your theory into practice."

At the end of the school day, Carey promptly reported at the post office to perform the necessary duties that were expected of him and then Carl released him for the balance of the day. Carey turned his steps toward the school playground. He found Michael stationed across the road from the playground; he was not participating in the sport; he was just a spectator. There was a game of baseball in progress and Carey noted that Chester was stationed in the field nearest the road. Flint was not present. A crack of a bat was heard which indicated a solid hard hit. Carey saw the ball sail high over Chester's head and strike a tree in the Squire's yard and then it bounded lively toward the house; It had lost much of its momentum as it struck a basement window, then fell to the ground within reach of the players. Michael, offering his assistance in fielding the ball, arrived at the broken window at the same time as Chester. They both examined the damage for a moment before leaving. Not knowing what to do, the progress of the game halted. Carey had seen the entire play and offered his counsel.

"Of course you must report this to the Squire," Carey suggested, "and offer to pay for the damage. Who will volunteer?"

No one responded to his inquiry, so Carey continued, "Very well," he said,

smiling, "Since I saw the entire play, with your permission, I shall make the report and offer payment for damages."

There was a shout of approval from the boys who showed admiration for Carey in their facial expressions.

"Thank you boys, for your confidence; You may return to the playground now and start some other game. I shall return Flint's ball, and offer it as evidence."

Several of the boys, having discovered a new champion in Carey, danced gleefully around him, and then dispersed promptly and orderly. Carey ascended the steps to the Squire's front door and knocked. The Squire himself answered.

"Mortimer does not wish to be disturbed, he is studying, my child," announced the Squire, surmising the nature of the call.

"I have not come to inquire of Mortimer, sir, I have come to make a report."

"Then you bring me a message from our postmaster, I presume," suggested the Squire.

"No, sir, I---"

"Then what can be so important, that you should bother me child?"

"I wish to report that one of your basement windows has been broken from a game of ball, sir."

"Is this the ball?"

"Yes, sir, I---"

"Then I shall keep it until the repairs have been paid for."

"Your window shall be repaired, or the damages paid for, as you wish, sir, but the ball belongs to Mortimer."

"How can that be? He is in his room. Did he loan you his ball?"

"No, sir."

"Then how do you happen to have it?"

"I understand that he rents it to the boys, sir."

"Are you the one who broke the window?"

"No, sir, but all the boys will assume the responsibility and pay the damages."

"If the ball belongs to Mortimer, then what do you offer as security until the damages are paid?"

"I give you my word, sir."

"Humph; What window was it?"

"The one nearest the porch, sir."

"Oh, dear! No! Not that one! Did you enter the window to retrieve the ball?"

"No, sir, the ball did not enter the basement. It fell back upon the ground."

"Very well, my child," replied the Squire, looking relieved, "the window must be repaired at once."

"May I give you any assistance, Squire Campbell?" asked Carey.

"No! No! Begone! I must attend to this myself," he replied, nervously.

Later, at home, Carey and Michael were reviewing the incident and Carey concluded that he ought to go over and consult with Chester's mother.

"Then perhaps you should know what Chester and I saw through the broken window," remarked Michael.

"What did you see?" asked Carey, inquiringly, remembering the Squire's concern.

"Piles of full money bags!" he cried.

CHAPTER XVII GIFT OF A GOLD WATCH

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

Carey whistled to express his amazement. Mrs. Churchill and Ethel too, were astonished; their faces were void of any expression which might register the climax of their personal feelings. Like a flash of lightning, mixed feelings of hope and despair registered on Ethel's face as she blurted out — "There's your Alger fortune! Right in the Squire's own cellar!"

"Michael, are you sure?" his mother inquired.

"Well, we didn't actually see any money, we saw just the full white cloth bags."

"Michael, did you and Chester tell the other boys about this?" asked Carey.

"No, we only talked about it between ourselves," he replied.

"This will make the village gossip's tongues wag," said Ethel.

"I think," began Carey, "that we had all better remain quiet about this, for after all, it's the Squire's secret. We stumbled on to this information by accident. It was not intended that we should know."

"Carey is right, children," said Mrs. Churchill, "Not a word of this to anyone. Hold your tongues, even if it hurts."

"Michael," said Carey, "I would like to have you come with me to Chester's home; will you come along?"

"Mother?" asked Michael, inquiringly.

"Yes," she replied, "Do as your brother suggests."

Michael needed no further invitation; since information on the discovery was known only to Chester and himself; he revealed some pride in his expression as a possessor of secret information. Carey too, was sworn to secrecy at the request of Mr. Harris and Mr. Jamieson, in matters pertaining to the Squire and his son Mortimer. In a few minutes under the cover of darkness, Carey and Michael walked the short distance to Chester's home and announced themselves with a friendly knock on the door.

"Good evening, Mrs. Lester, I am Carey Churchill, and this is my brother Michael.

"Of course! Don't you come in?" she invited. "And how is your mother?"

"Mother is well, thank you, and I trust that you are in good health?"

"Yes, Chester and I have no reason to complain of our health, and the good Lord has provided for Chester and I since Mr. Lester has been gone. How are you folks making out?"

"Very well, thank you," replied Carey, courteously, not wishing to call attention to his own affairs. "I suppose you know why we are here."

Chester dropped his head to conceal his facial expression of embarrassment.

"Well, isn't it just a friendly call?" she inquired, sensing a reason for alarm. "Is there anything wrong?"

Carey sensed a difficult situation. "Do not be alarmed, Mrs. Lester," he began, "I can only guess that Chester has not yet confided in you, but I am sure that

he had every good intention, and I am here to assist. It seems that Chester and Michael have accidentally come across some information regarding Squire Campbell."

"Yes! Yes! Please go on!" encouraged Mrs. Lester.

Carey with the aid of Chester and Michael, related the story of the discovery of the money bags.

"Well, I declare!" gasped Mrs. Lester.

"I think it best that we do not reveal this information. I think Chester showed very good judgement, in being reluctant to talk about it, even to you, Mrs. Lester."

"It is a relief to know," sighed Mrs. Lester, "that Chester has done no wrong."

"But — there is another matter," continued Carey.

"Oh?" she inquired, curiously.

"Yes," continued Carey, "Flint has been charging the school children rental for the use of his personal playground equipment."

Chester again hung his head.

"Chester has contributed nickels and dimes to this fund, but I supposed it went to the school treasury," his mother replied defensively.

Again, Carey, with the aid of Chester, explained Flint's demands in detail, much to the surprise of Mrs. Lester.

"—and there is still another matter in which Flint has inflicted his demands upon Chester," added Carey.

"The brute! The overgrown bully!" exclaimed Mrs. Lester, "What more could he ask, I wonder?"

"Flint has been extorting protection money from Chester—"

"Protection — from what?"

Chester showed signs of extreme embarrassment and was ill at ease.

"Since he has no father, or older brothers, Flint promises protection from the harm of the older boys."

"Is this true, Chester?"

Chester nodded his head.

"More nickels and dimes, I suppose," she responded, not knowing the real truth, and expecting Chester to nod his head again, she was perplexed to see him shake his head revealing a negative answer to her question.

"Then in what manner have you managed to make these payments?" she asked, suspecting the worst.

Carey waited for Chester to answer, but Chester did not answer.

"Chester, answer me!" demanded his mother, losing control of her motherly affection for her only son.

"Perhaps I can make it easier for him," interrupted Carey, "whatever Chester has done, he has done it in desperation, and without the advise of counsel, he needs our assurance, more than condemnation."

"You are right," she admitted.

"Chester," stated Carey, "I am sure that your mother will understand, when she knows the truth, and I give you my assurance that Flint will no longer have the power to hold you in bondage. Tomorrow, I shall personally put an end to Flint's demands upon you."

"Yes, my son, I am sorry for my hasty exasperation, and you may be assured of my understanding love and confidence."

Chester was at the point of tears for the shame of his actions, but brightened, with the assurance of an understanding mother, however, he remained with his head bowed as he revealed the awful truth, "I have been taking money from the fruit jar in the cellar," he admitted, flinging himself into his mother's open arms.

"There, there," she comforted, "and is there any left?"

The nature of this question made his answer come much easier than he expected.

"Oh yes, mother, I have only taken a few dollars."

"It seems them," interrupted Carey, "that we can stop Mr. Flint in time to save most of your life savings. The situation isn't as bad as it might have been."

Mrs. Lester explained that the silver dollars were all that was left of her late husband's savings, except for the money she had received from his life insurance. She thanked Carey for calling this dreadful situation to her attention; and with mother and son united in confidence again, Carey and Michael bid them good night.

"Carey," said Carl, the next morning at the post office, "here is a package for you."

"For me?" asked Carey, "I was not expecting any package."

"Pardon my curiosity," added Carl, "but I notice that it is from Judge Dixon."

It was a small package and very securely wrapped which Carey eagerly removed with excited interest. "A gold watch!" exclaimed Carey, "and in a hunting case! And look at this fancy engraving! It's Susie! There is her name inscribed below!" Carey opened the case which revealed a fancy dial with a sweep second hand. "Isn't it just dandy, Mr. Harris?, and look at this inscription inside, TO CAREY - FROM JOHN B. DIXON."

Carl displayed his own watch for comparison rather enviously and agreed that Carey had a very fine watch, and to Carey's additional surprise, he discovered that in the tissue paper wrappings, was a gold chain to match, with a pendant which could be used if desired. Although it was still early, Mr. Jamieson came in and was shown the watch and chain.

"I knew it was coming," he stated, "but I didn't want to spoil the surprise."

"I knew about it too," added Carl, "this explains the reason for no immediate reward and the delay is only due to the time required for engraving."

"I am very proud of it," beamed Carey.

"Have you any report to make, Carey, about the silver dollars?" asked Carl.

"Yes," Carey said, as he carefully wound his watch and set the dial; he then related the entire incident to them and they both agreed that he had been very fortunate in solving the mystery.

"Then the 1884 dollars that Flint has been passing can be definitely identified as having come from the Lester family," stated Mr. Jamieson.

"As a result of extortion," added Carl.

"Of course," he replied, "I wonder if Flint has any of them left."

"Chester claims that he took only a few dollars, and Flint has presented four of them here; he may have more. I shall try and determine this fact today, and ask Flint to return them," Carey said.

"Will you demand return of the stamps, Mr. Harris?" asked Mr. Jamieson.

"I will speak to his father at my first opportunity," Carl replied.

"Do you suppose that the Squire has found the Alger fortune?" inquired Carey.

"If it is not the Alger fortune, then I am curious to know just where it came from," answered Carl, "however, Carey, you do not need to concern yourself about this. Mr. Jamieson and I will proceed along this line. You may consider your investigation closed."

"What have you got there?" asked Flint of Carey, as they met at the school.

"Do you mean my new watch?" asked Carey proudly.

"Is that what it is?" returned Flint, "I didn't know old Hornaby stocked dollar watches; I had to send away to Buffalo for mine," he added, displaying a silver open faced watch.

"Would you like to examine it," invited Carey, holding the watch in his hand carefully at the chains length.

"Is it yours?" asked Flint, unwilling to believe his eyes.

"Yes," answered Carey, opening the case, "see, here is my name inscribed upon it."

"How much did it cost?" asked Flint, enviously.

"It is a gift, Flint," he answered, "I have no idea how much it cost."

"Then it can't amount to much," he replied, now willing to drop the subject.

"Believe what you will," invited Carey, also willing to drop the subject, "Flint, there is another subject which I must discuss with you."

"What about?" he inquired, suspiciously.

"It's about little Chester Lester."

"What has he been whining to you about."

"His mother has learned that you have been extorting money from him."

Flint's face colored as he spoke, "For charging for the use of my game equipment?"

"It is understandable that you should charge for its usage, but why invoke the penalty upon little Chester? That is bad enough, but this extortion for protection must stop at once!"

"He needs protection!"

"He doesn't need your protection. I will supply it when needed, and without charge."

"I'll murder the little tattletale!"

"If you so much as lay a hand upon him, you will answer to me, Mortimer Campbell, and furthermore, you will be expected to return whatever you have left of the money taken by extortion!"

"I've spent it," he replied nervously.

"And some of it for government stamps! Flint, this may be a serious crime. You had better think this over, Flint."

CHAPTER XVIII FLINT DEFEATED BY CAREY

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

It was evident that Flint was seriously thinking it over at the suggestion of Carey, for he seemed to be listless in the classroom, and with good reason, for he had been thwarted in his attempt to obtain easy money, and his right to bully little Chester Lester. The curtailment of his activities in these fields might spread. The outlook for his future was not too bright. Dejectedly, Flint gazed into the distance through the window, returning his eyes occasionally to the open text book before him; but he could not concentrate. There was no promise in the future. tomorrow he would be expected to participate in the algebra test for which he was not prepared. Painfully the morning passed and Flint left the classroom and the school premises without his usual jaunty air about him.

In contrast to Flint's defeated situation, Carey was surrounded with admirers as he left the school at noontime. His new gold watch was of course the reason for his renewed popularity. He displayed his watch with pride and assured the admirers that the gift was a complete surprise. Upon returning to school after the noon lunch period, Carey was hailed by Flint.

"I say there, Churchill; come here!"

Carey thought he recognized the familiar voice, and in turning, discovered that it was Flint. Instead of retracing his steps toward Flint, he waited courteously for Flint to come to him. It was a cool day and both boys wore waistcoats, however, Flint's coat matched his trousers, but Carey's did not. Flint reached into his coat pocket and produced two silver dollars as he addressed Carey.

"Here is two dollars that you can return to that Lester kid; it's all the money I have left," he said, trying to look sincere, "I don't like your trying to make trouble for me."

"Thank you, Flint, but will you make an effort to return the rest of it?"

"It's all the money I've got; but here is a sheet of stamps," he said, producing a folded sheet, and handing it to Carey, "You can turn them in for cash."

"Very well, Flint, I'll see what I can do," Carey said, as he put the silver and the stamps in his coat pocket.

Carey went on into the school building but Flint lingered behind as he did not wish to mingle with any of his classmates who usually could be found loitering in the cloakrooms after removing their coats. Flint was the last to enter the classroom. The afternoon wore on, from study period to recitation and back to study period again, during which time many of the students had occasion to leave the room and return again. Flint, upon returning from one of these occasions, stepped up to the teacher's desk and announced in a voice loud enough for all to hear.

"I've been robbed!"

"Robbed?" asked the teacher, "What is missing? Explain yourself, Mortimer."

"Well, I had broken the lead in my pencil, and knowing that I had a spare pencil in my coat in the cloakroom, I went to get it and--"

"--and you have been robbed of a pencil, then," added the teacher.

"No, sir, I've been robbed of two sheets of postage stamps, which I have been carrying in my coat pocket."

"How does it happen that you carry so many stamps around with you?"

"Tell, I buy a lot of things through the mail, and I send stamps instead of money."

"I see; do you suspect any one in this classroom?"

Flint colored, and hesitated before replying, "No, sir, but I think we should all submit to being searched."

"Then you believe the thief to be in this room?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Can you establish the fact that you had two sheets of stamps in your possession?"

"Sir," interrupted Carey, addressing the teacher.

"Yes, Carey."

"I can establish the fact that Mortimer had two sheets of stamps in his possession when he entered the school, for I saw them."

Flint looked relieved, and almost appreciative for this unexpected defense.

"Thank you, Carey; Will anyone volunteer to be searched?"

"I will," Carey answered.

Flint looked surprised, for he had expected Carey to object to being searched.

"Very well, Carey. Mortimer, you may escort Carey to the cloakroom and see that he brings to me his coat without first examining it himself."

Mortimer was pleased with this assignment and showed his pleasure in his facial expression. Carey sensed that Flint was up to something, and remembering what Mr. Harris had said about Flint's possible attempt to get him into trouble; he spoke to Flint after they had entered the cloakroom.

"Flint, if you are trying to trap me and accuse me of something that I did not do, I warn you, I shall expose you to the entire class."

Carey removed his coat from the wall hook and led the way back to the classroom, Flint hesitated and hung back in thought; Carey was right; Carey could cause him even more humiliation than he had already suffered. In a trial before the class, and with the teacher as a judge, the tables could be turned against him. Instead of humiliating Carey, he was quite apt to bring shame upon himself. He quickly decided to change his course of action.

"Carey," the teacher asked, "Do I have your permission to search your coat?"

"Yes, sir."

The teacher examined one coat pocket and pulled out one full sheet of stamps.

"What is this?" inquired the teacher.

Carey colored, "They are not mine," however, they were given over to my custody."

The teacher laid them on his desk and explored the other pocket, drawing out two folded sheets of stamps.

"And are these also yours, Carey?" asked the teacher, giving him a chance to defend himself.

"No, sir," said Carey, quietly holding back his surprise.

"Sir," interrupted Flint, "I think that I can explain."

"Please do," invited the teacher, who was becoming confused and not wishing to believe what he had actually seen.

"Well, you see---since my coat was next to Churchill's, I must have carelessly thrust them into his pocket.

"Then do you withdraw charges of theft?"

"I do," said Flint, willingly.

"Then, Carey, you may return your coat to the cloakroom, and Flint, you may return to your seat. Both boys looked relieved. Carey discovered when returning his coat to the cloakroom that Flint's coat was not, nor had not been next to his coat. It was a deliberate plant. At the end of the afternoon classes, Flint hurried away to avoid being questioned.

It was more of an accident when Michael and Professor David Zeikel met at the general store, since both happened to be inspecting the newly arrived mechanical musical machines.

"Look at this one, Michael," Prof. Zeikel said, "this new one has a wooden cylinder with needle like things sticking out on it. The needles strike a note, and when the cylinder turns, it plays a tune."

"What's this one over here," Michael wanted to know.

"That one is operated on the same principle, except, instead of a cylinder, it has a big flat disk, and when it revolves, it produces a tune."

"And this one over here," the Professor continued, "is like a player piano, but it is actually a pipe organ adapted with specially prepared paper in roll form."

"This is certainly an easy way to play music," Michael beamed, with interest.

"True," Prof. Zeikel replied, "but all these musical devices lack one thing."

"What is that?"

"Feeling."

"Feeling?" Michael asked.

"Yes, Michael, feeling."

"I'm not sure that I understand, sir," Michael replied.

"Then come with me to my home if you wish, and I will show you."

The Professor picked up his violin and with practiced fingers, plucked the strings to make sure that they were in tune. One was a bit off, but he remedied that by twisting one of the pegs.

"Now feeling is something only a human can give to the listener. Like a Beethoven symphony, or even a piece like the 'Battle Hymn of the Republic.'"

Michael still looked puzzled.

"Let me demonstrate."

The Professor brought the bow down upon the strings and out poured a sound which was sweet and melancholy, and sometimes gay and lively. Sometimes so soft it was barely audible, and sometimes so loud the music echoed and re-echoed from the walls.

After he had finished, Michael looked up and said, "It looks so easy, I wonder if I might try."

"Ah," replied the Professor, "it may look easy, but it isn't. If you draw the bow too lightly, you get nothing but a squeak, but if you draw the bow too heavily across the strings, you get nothing but a growling sound with a lot of scratch thrown in."

"But here," he said, handing the violin over to him. "I'll show you how to hold it. You place it under the chin like that. Then place the left hand on the neck of the instrument. You don't use the thumb, ever. Just the four fingers. Now this is how to hold the bow in the right hand. Now you are ready to make a sound. Draw the bow across the strings between the black fingerboard and this high thing which is called a bridge. The first note that Michael produced, made the tail of the professor's pet cat stand straight up.

"No, No! Michael, remember, not too heavy on the strings with the bow."

The session advanced with some progress, and before Michael left, he had actually played one of the simpler Bach tunes. The Professor made a mental note to see if he could get Michael as a student, as he seemed to have great possibilities.

After school, Carey reported promptly at the post office so he could relate to Mr. Harris of Flint's attempt to plant the stamps in his coat and accuse him of thievery.

"And when I threatened to expose him before the entire class, he decided to withdraw the charges, claiming that he accidentally put them in my pocket."

"Could that have been possible?"

"No, his coat was not next to mine."

"Then it was a definite attempt to cast suspicion upon you."

"Yes, and at noon he handed me these two silver dollars and this sheet of stamps to be returned to Mrs. Lester."

Carl examined the coins, noting the date and then handed them back. "You may tell Mrs. Lester that we will redeem the stamps---" Carl's remarks were interrupted by the entrance of the Squire. A respectful greeting was directed to Carl, and a slight acknowledgement was extended to Carey, "I believe, young man, that you did agree to assume responsibility for the broken window?"

"Yes, sir, I will be responsible."

"I have arranged for the repair of the damage, and the charges will be two dollars; now since you are unable to pay---"

"But I am prepared to pay," interrupted Carey, remembering the two silver dollars in his pocket, he produced them in evidence, placed them in the Squire's open hand who grasped them eagerly and examined them carefully.

"Where did you get these, young man?"

"I would rather not say," Carey replied, not wishing to expose Flint without reason, "and on second thought, I have another use in mind for these; you will have to wait."

Reluctant to relinquish his right to them, the Squire hesitated in deep thought, then returned them to Carey, selecting his words very carefully, and with restraint.

"Very well, young man."

CHAPTER XIX THE SCHOOL BURNS

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"What time is it?" asked Michael again, admiring Carey's new gold watch.

"It is exactly ten minutes past seven," returned Carey, proudly displaying his new timepiece.

"You must write to Judge Dixon," added Mrs. Churchill, "and thank him for such a splendid gift."

"I will," replied Carey.

"Mother," Michael interrupted, "May I take violin lessons?"

"Heavens, child! Whatever put that thought into your head?" asked his mother.

"Well," he replied, "Professor Zeikel invited me to his home to see his violin, he let me hold it and try to play it, and he says that I may have talent."

"Are we going to have a musician in our family?" taunted Carey.

"It is not surprising that one of you should be attracted to the violin," his mother replied, "for your father was quite an accomplished musician on it."

"Do tell," urged Ethel, becoming interested.

"In fact," said Mrs. Churchill, "your father's violin is still packed away in the trunk upstairs."

"Could we see it, mother, please," Michael begged.

"Oh, could we please?" chimed in Ethel and Carey.

Mrs. Churchill willingly climbed the stairs, pleased that Michael had so surprisingly shown interest in the instrument she had so dearly loved to hear her husband play. She presented it with great pride, and the children examined it very carefully and with much pleasure.

"Since we were married, your poor father had very little time to enjoy it," she remarked, with a tear in her eye.

"Mother," faltered Michael, hardly daring to expect permission, "could I use it, and ask Prof. Zeikel to teach me?"

"If you will be very careful, you may use it, but I am afraid we could not afford violin lessons from Prof. Zeikel."

Michael's hopes were dashed.

"There must be a way," added Carey, cheerfully.

Michael's hopes brightened.

"Perhaps I could accompany Michael with something," suggested Ethel.

"Yes, with a tin cup," quipped Carey, stepping out of Ethel's range.

"Oh, fiddle faddle!"

Michael was permitted to fondle the instrument, which he did with loving care.

"You remind me of your father, the way you handle it so tenderly," said his mother, putting her arm around him.

Michael received the commendation with pride and handled it even more carefully.

"Mother," said Carey, "I must visit Mrs. Lester and return this money to her; may I go now?"

"Certainly, my son."

The Squire was sitting in his parlor, alone, and in deep, disturbed thought. Mortimer did not seem to be in the house, for it was very quiet. The Squire had one big problem that bothered him, and that was his money that had been stored in the

basement. He had moved it to a different location in the house so that the broken window might be repaired without attracting attention. He was sure that Carey must know of the money, and it appeared that Carey had attempted to pay him with his own money. "Could it be true?" he mused. Carey was becoming a problem to him. It seemed that Carey was an obstacle in many of his business affairs about town. "Would it be advisable to send the boy away? The boy probably would not consent as long as there was a chance to continue his education." While thus engaged, there was a knock at his front door which startled him back to reality. He was not expecting any callers, and he answered the summons with curiosity.

A man stood without the door, a stranger, for the Squire had made it his business to know on sight, each of the adult villagers. It was easy to see that the man was not his equal for he was dressed shabbily and looked gaunt and unkempt. He held a carpet bag with one hand and held the lapels of his thin coat together with the other.

"Please sir," the man began, "It's a cold night, and they tell me in the village that you might give me a bite to eat and let me sleep in your stable."

"I do not know you. I do not supply charity to strangers," stammered the Squire, thinking of his money stored in the house, "come back in the morning and I will let you earn your breakfast by cleaning the stables," and with this, the Squire attempted to terminate the conversation by preparing to close the door.

"But, sir," he said quickly, looking disappointed, "I am just passing through on my way to the city."

"Then begone! I cannot help you," he said, then closed the door and locked it. He returned to the parlor, and five minutes later another knock was heard at the door. "The man has returned to play on my sympathy, I suppose." He opened the door, selecting the words that he would use, but it was not the stranger. It was Dirk, commonly known to the townspeople as Carl Harris.

"Dirk!" What brings you here? What do you want?"

"It's cold outside. Aren't you going to invite me in?"

The Squire stepped aside to allow Dirk to enter. He followed the Squire to the parlor where a cheerful fire was blazing in the fireplace.

"Ah, you are very comfortable here, Squire," he said, with emphasis on the title, "It is much more cozy than my plain little room at the rooming house."

"What do you want?" asked the Squire, still standing.

"May I be seated?"

"Sit, then, but be brief."

"Isn't it about time we balanced our books and see how we stand?"

"What do you mean? What do you want from me? Are you not earning a comfortable living?"

"I am sharing my income, you know."

"That was your own arrangement."

"Carey tells me that you have a hoard of money in your cellar."

"Then he knows?"

"Your problem now is, that I know."

Beads of perspiration formed on the Squire's brow. He could think of no suitable response to Dirk's statement.

"Does any part of this belong to Jack?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I thought Jack might be interested."

"And if it does?"

"Then I want ten percent of Jack's share."

"It's mine! All mine!"

"Then would you give ten percent to silence my lips?"

"This is blackmail!"

"Would you like to take me to court?"

"Can't we compromise?"

"You could send for Jack, and——"

"Never!"

"Then what do you suggest?"

"I'll have to think it over."

"Was that your money that Carey had this afternoon?"

"I don't know. It could be."

"Do you know how he obtained it?"

"Isn't it obvious?"

"Carey is not a thief."

"Even if he were, I would not be in a position to accuse him."

"I see what you mean; then might it not have been your own boy?"

"I have considered that."

"Do you have any evidence?"

"No, at least not yet."

"If the money was discovered and reported; what would happen?"

"It would no doubt be confiscated."

"And what would happen to you?"

"I would be accused and charged with theft."

"Is Jack involved?"

"Certainly."

"And you would not implicate him?"

The Squire did not answer.

"Jack is a smart one; perhaps he could help you."

"No! No!"

"If you were accused, could you lead the law to the trail of Jack?"

"I think so; but you know where to find him; didn't you just come from him?"

"You forget, Squire, if you are accused, it is then too late. I would deny everything. What arrangements do you have in making contact with Jack?"

"There is a little country town in northern Illinois, just outside of Chicago, where we have arranged for contact."

"And this town is——"

"Why do you ask? Cannot you go direct to him?"

"Of course; but your arrangement sounds interesting, and just in case he moves out on me; I would like to know."

"I shall not divulge this meeting place except in a case of necessity."

"Do you have the money hidden in a new place?"

"Yes, why do you ask?"

"Suppose Carey leads the law here?"

"I would like to get rid of that boy!"

"What do you propose?"

"I would send him away, if I could."

"Where?"

"It wouldn't matter."

"Why not send him to Jack?"

The Squire was silent but was considering the possibility. "On what pretense?" he asked.

"Carey needs money; make it worth while to drop out of school for a short time."

"A short time would do no good."

"Once delivered to Jack; he would never return."

"I'll have to think it over."

"It might be the answer to all of your problems."

"Yes, if might."

The Squire could see many advantages.

"Well," said Carl, "I'll leave you now to form your own plans."

Carl returned immediately to his rooming house. Carey had long since returned home from his mission to the Lester home and all of Algerton was dark and quiet, except that the town watchman was awake at his post. Soon after midnight the townspeople were awakened by the ringing of the town bell, designed to arouse the people to an emergency. Shouting of male voices could also be heard in spite of the sound of the large bell. The Churchill family was awakened, and Carey was the first to inform the others of the emergency bell.

"There is a red glow in the sky, south of the village," he said, relieved in a sense that the post office was not involved. "It could be our school building!"

"Oh, dear!" cried Mrs. Churchill.

Ethel and Michael stood at the door, speechless with awe and fright.

"Mother, I must go and see if I can help," said Carey.

"Oh, dear! Do be careful, my boy."

"Yes, mother," he replied, and dashed upstairs to put on some clothes.

"What's happened?" Pete Bates asked, as they almost collided in the street.

"It must be the school, yes, it is the school, I can see its outline in the blazing light of the fire!"

"What do you suppose happened?" asked Pete, as they dashed along.

Haven't the slightest idea," answered Carey.

As they neared the school grounds, they found that the flames were coming from the basement area of the rear of the building. The men assigned for emergency duty of this nature were doing all they could to stop the flames from spreading. After an hour, with the supply of water almost gone, the fire was brought under control.

"How did it start?" someone inquired.

"No one seems to know," said another, "It did seem to get its start in the basement furnace room."

"Had the furnace been in operation?"

"No," said the school janitor, who had heard the question, "the days are warm enough during school hours, and there was no need of it."

"Has anyone seen Mortimer?" the Squire was asking, as he mingled through the crowd.

"Why do you ask?" someone inquired.

"His bed has not been used, and I have not seen him since the supper hour," he replied, extremely excited.



Friday dawned and Carey bounded out of bed almost automatically with it; he put on his clothes and crept silently downstairs, thinking of his mother whose sleep had been interrupted during the night. He looked in the direction of the school, concerned about its condition; but he could see nothing, since the blacksmith shop obstructed his view. He buttered a slice of bread and poured a glass of milk for a quick breakfast. He was anxious to learn of the exact damage to the school which could not be determined the night before in the darkened building. One man had been assigned to stand guard to spread the alarm if the fire flared up again. No additional alarm had been heard, and Carey supposed that the fire had not broken out again. As he neared the post office, he could see no evidence of damage and ventured as far as the center of the village where he could see the entire outline of the building. In outward appearance, it did not seem to be damaged, except for the windows in the rear which had burned out. Carey knew that there must be great damage inside the building.

Carey was also concerned about the whereabouts of Flint who was unreported when he left the scene of the fire. Carey tried to piece together events leading up to Flint's disappearance. He knew that he had been in a despondent mood. His bullying of little Chester had been stopped. Flint had not succeeded in charging him with thievery, and he was doubtful that Flint was prepared for today's algebra test. It seemed to him that the combination of these things might cause Flint to run away to avoid further embarrassment.

Who set the fire, also concerned Carey; but he could see no connection between Flint and the fire; yet it was possible, since his disappearance and the fire seemed to occur simultaneously. Could Flint be that mean, to destroy the school to avoid embarrassment in the algebra test? If Flint set the fire, intent upon its destruction, would it be necessary to run away—unless he felt he might be suspected, he mused.

Carey returned to the post office and set about his duties. Carl came in a little later than usual, showing evidence of a loss of sleep.

"Good morning, Mr. Harris," greeted Carey, with a smile, and searching Carl's face for evidence of good, or bad news.

"Good morning, Carey, I see you are as bright as ever, in spite of a loss of sleep."

"I will probably drop from exhaustion before the day is over. Do you have any news this morning?"

"Nothing since last night. Have you heard any reports this morning?"

"No, I have seen no one."

"Flint's disappearance is very mysterious, isn't it?"

"Perhaps. I have been trying to think of a reason for it."

"Do you have any ideas?"

"Only theoretically."

"Let's hear them."

"Well, Flint may have been despondent, due to the turn of events, including his unpreparedness for today's algebra test."

"Enough to leave home?"

"That is the unknown quantity, and only Flint can answer that."

"Do you see any significance between his disappearance and the school fire?"

"The thought had entered my mind."

"The Squire suspects a stranger that he turned away from his door last night," said Carl, adding a new thought.

"Oh!" Carey replied, with interest, "Do you have the details?"

Carl gave what information he had, as related by the Squire at the scene of the fire, and had just finished when the Squire himself, entered the post office.

"Good morning, Squire," greeted Carey and Carl, simultaneously.

"Any news from ah,—Mortimer?" added Carl.

"Indirectly; this morning I discovered our horse and buggy waiting at the stable doors."

"What does this mean?" asked Carl.

"I believe Mortimer may have been kidnapped by the stranger!"

This statement left Carl and Carey speechless. It certainly was possible.

"Did you find any clues?" asked Carl.

"Nothing much from the horse and buggy, but I have also discovered that I have been robbed!" the Squire added cautiously.

Carl remained silent, understanding the Squire's reluctance to admit it, and Carey, knowing that the Squire had a hoard of money hidden somewhere about the house, inquired, "Do you know how much was taken?"

The Squire hesitated, wondering if it was wise to admit having money about the house. If the thief was ever found, with the money in his possession, he would have no claim to it unless he first announced the loss of it.

"Two hundred dollars, I believe, but—" the Squire faltered nervously, "the money was not mine; I was holding it for another person," he added, looking at Carey, to see if he suspected a falsehood.

"Do you suspect the stranger then? —Mr. Harris has told me about the stranger's visit," Carey explained.

"That is what people will be led to believe," replied the Squire, "but there are other people about town who need money badly enough to submit to stealing," he added, looking directly at Carey.

The insinuation did not register with Carey, and he replied, thinking equally of the stranger and other townspeople, "Yes, I suppose no one can be charged without some evidence."

"Heard anything more about the fire?" asked Carl, changing the subject to avoid further embarrassment to Carey.

"No, but it appears that the school will not open until the necessary repairs can be made." replied the Squire.

"Do you still believe the stranger set the fire?" asked Carl.

"Yes, I believe he entered the furnace room for shelter; built a fire for warmth, then left it unattended while searching for food, and accidentally discovered my money. Then he hitched old Nellie for a get-away, but perhaps was seen by Mortimer, and kidnapped him to delay discovery of the theft--"

"And the furnace overheated and caused the fire," added Carl.

"Yes."

"We would all have been better off if you had given the man bed and board," Carl replied.

The Squire did not answer.

"For the sake of a crust of bread, the townspeople must suffer," Carl added.

"Don't preach to me now," pleaded the Squire, mopping his brow.

Carl remained silent, remembering the Squire's grief for the loss of his son. Carey turned away and continued with the sorting of mail, for the patrons would soon be coming in. Carl stepped out into the waiting room and continued his conversation with the Squire in a lowered voice.

"What do you plan to do about searching for ah,—Mortimer, and the missing money?"

"I hadn't planned to make a public announcement of my loss of money—or the kidnapping charge, at least for a while; I believe Mortimer will be released when the thief has covered a safe distance, and then he will return home and explain what happened."

"I see, but now that Carey knows—?"

"We must get rid of that boy—and by cracky, maybe we can—there's no school to keep him."

Carl remained silent.

"If all the evidence didn't point to the stranger, I'd have that boy arrested!"

"What for?"

"Stealing, of course!"

"Squire, I insist that Carey is not a thief!"

"He needs money. He knew I had money hidden. He could be tempted to steal."

"So could I," added Carl.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I, among others, could be accused for the same reasons."

"Then let's silence the boy, and get rid of him."

"Will you settle for sending him to Jack?"

The Squire objected to this method, but Carl could see by his nervous actions, that he might reconsider his objections.

"You say the word, and I'll handle Carey," encouraged Carl.

"Well, all right!"

"Good, now tell me the contact."

"It's the same as it has been, you know. how to reach him."

"But suppose Jack has been forced to move on, what then?"

"Oh, all right!" he answered, lowering his voice for additional secrecy. The Squire soon left and Carl returned to the office. The people were beginning to come for their mail, and for the next hour, they lingered to discuss the fire, and Flint's absence. After the last person had left the waiting room, Carl chose his words carefully before speaking to Carey.

"Carey, now that the school will be closed for repairs, how would you like to go on a mission?"

"On a mission?" Carey asked curiously.

"Yes, for the Squire. He wishes to recover his loss if possible, without any publicity. He was holding the money for another person, and does not care to be embarrassed by revealing the incident."

"But how could I help?"

"The Squire believes the man will head for Buffalo, perhaps even Chicago. He may be holding Flint in captivity for his own safety. If Flint does not return home soon, our delay in following their trail might prove to be useless."

"The Squire wants me to search for them?"

"Yes, and he would like for you to leave as soon as possible."

The proposed assignment was an enormous one to Carey; it sounded thrilling and adventurous, yet he thought of the welfare of his mother. "What about my family?" he inquired.

"With your mother's permission, of course. Have you ever been to Buffalo, or Chicago?"

"No, I have never been out of Algerton."

"Then you would find the trip exciting, don't you think?"

"Without a doubt."

"Will you consent to go, then?"

"Would I be expected to leave today?"

"Yes, if possible."

"What about the expenses?"

"Your wages will go on as if you were here, and will be paid over to your mother. The Squire will advance you one hundred dollars for expenses."

"If my search should prove to be fruitless—?"

"You are to wait in Chicago for instructions; you will inquire for any mail addressed to you in care of General Delivery."

"If I should be fortunate enough to find the man, and Flint, what should I do?"

"Have the man arrested, and charge him with theft. If Flint is in his custody, bring him home with you."

"I would have to tell mother the purpose of my trip."

"Of course, but persuade her to keep the Squire's secret. She may say that you have gone in search of Flint."

"Very well, I will accept the assignment on condition that my mother will approve."

"Of course, with her permission; could you arrange to leave on the noon train?"

"Perhaps I could."

"Then I will release you now from further duty. I will have your expense money for you when you are ready to board the train."

Needless to say, Carey's mother was very reluctant to have him leave home, but with the school closed for repairs, and his income from the post office assured, and the promise of adventure for her son, she gave her permission. Ethel and Michael were excited about his assignment, but promised not to reveal the real reason for his departure. After hasty preparations, the three of them accompanied Carey to the station. Mr. Harris was there to hand over the promised expense money, and handed him a ticket to Buffalo. With tears in their eyes, Carey's little family bade him farewell, and urged him to be careful and write to them as soon as he reached Buffalo.

"I will," said Carey, as he waved goodbye.



It was the first time that Carey had ever been inside of a railroad passenger coach. He had often gazed through the coach windows, and admired the interior decorations. He had often dreamed of the thrill of riding in one of the coaches. A pleasure which one could only dream of, but perhaps could never afford, yet, here he was, on the threshold of a thrilling adventure. As he entered the coach, its doors closed, shutting out his familiar world. A fleeting thought of fear flashed through his mind as he stood there facing strange surroundings. He stood motionless for a moment, thrilled with its extravagant splendor. The red plush seats contrasted beautifully with the mahogany finished woodwork and its artistic trimmings.

A warning toot of the locomotive whistle awakened him to the reality of his purpose. There were plenty of empty seats and he quickly dropped into one; through the window he could see his family and Mr. Harris waving to him and he returned their departing gesture. The train began to move, widening the gap between him and his familiar world. The thought of fear once more flashed through his mind. He looked around him. Not one person was familiar to him. A slight rumble beneath the coach caused him to turn his eyes to the window again. They were passing over the millrace trestle of the sawmill. The open countryside was coming into view. A horse in a distant pasture lifted his head to watch the passing train. Next, they crossed a country road; The road where farmer Brown lived.

This reminded Carey that he had not yet written to thank Judge Dixon for the gold watch. He decided that he must do so at once. He pulled the watch from his vest pocket, noted the time, and admired the beauty of the watch once again as he slid it back into his pocket. He felt for his wallet which was in his inner coat pocket, and was about to remove it to examine the contents when he thought better of it in the presence of strangers. He looked around him once again and noted that a man across the aisle was watching him. The man smiled as if he wished to be friendly. Carey returned the smile from a force of habit, but remembering to be cautious of strangers, he did not encourage any further association with the man. The conductor was approaching from the front of the coach, collecting tickets along the way. Carey reached in his pocket and had his ready when the conductor stopped at his seat.

"Aren't you the young postmaster from Algerton, young man?" he inquired.

Carey smiled and nodded as he spoke:

"Yes, did you know my father?"

"I knew him well; and you are the very image of him. Going to Buffalo, I see," he said, examining Carey's ticket.

"Yes, sir," said Carey, cautiously.

"Ever ride the train before?"

"No, sir; this is my first time."

"Then be careful, and don't make up with strangers," he warned.

"Thank you for your advice, sir; I'll try to be careful," said Carey, looking across the aisle. The man who had been seated there was gone, but returned after the conductor had left the coach.

"May I join you, young man?" he asked, addressing Carey.

Carey reluctantly gave permission by sliding across the seat a little closer to the window.

"If I'll not be crowding, or disturbing you, I'd like your company; it's rather useless to sit alone when there are others to talk with."

Carey nodded his approval, but did not encourage conversation.

"I say, young man, can you give me the time? I left home rather hurriedly, and left my timepiece at home."

Carey answered with caution, "We left the last station at 12:10 I believe."

"Ah, yes," returned the stranger, looking disappointed, "Have you eaten?"

"Yes," replied Carey.

"I thought you might join me in a sandwich when the train boy comes through the coach. Of course I'll pay."

"I think not, sir, thank you just the same," Carey replied, courteously.

"Going to the Falls?" inquired the man.

"I have no plans to do so, sir."

"I'm staying over in Buffalo, myself," he volunteered, "acquainted in the city?"

"No, sir," returned Carey, uncertain of the advisability of giving truthful answers under the circumstances.

"Be glad to show you around, if you don't know your way," he offered.

"Thank you, sir, but I'll be looking for someone," Carey answered, with a thread of truth.

"Just trying to be helpful, you know," said the man, looking disappointed again.

"Here comes the train boy," he added, "—sure you won't join me in a sandwich?" he said, motioning to the train boy.

"I am quite sure, sir," returned Carey.

"Here, boy, we'll have a sandwich," said the man, addressing the train boy.

"Yes, sir, will you have ham, sir? It's all I have," the boy replied.

"How much are they?" asked the man.

"Fifteen cents, sir."

"Can you change a twenty?" inquired the man, seemingly apologetic.

"No, sir, but I think I can get it changed for you, sir," the boy replied.

"Oh, I wouldn't want to trouble you," he returned, "I say, young man," addressing Carey, "can you loan me a dollar, until we get to Buffalo?"

"Sorry, sir, I have no small ——" Carey stopped abruptly, feeling he had been trapped into an admission, "but I have fifteen cents. I'll pay for your sandwich."

"Oh, very well, young man," he replied, registering disappointment, which was intended for embarrassment at such a trifle.

Carey handed over fifteen cents to the man who in turn paid the train boy, and

then he settled down to devouring his sandwich with evident hunger. After he had finished, he searched his pockets, being careful that Carey noted his fruitless search.

"I say, young man, do you smoke?"

"No, sir."

"I was about to offer you a cigar, but I do not have any left. You wouldn't happen to have one on you, would you?"

"No, sir."

"Then I'll just lean back and close my eyes; I seem to be getting drowsy."

"Yes, sir," replied Carey, wishing he had an excuse to leave his seat and take another where he would be by himself. The man slid forward, resting his knees against the back of the next seat. It would not be easy for Carey to leave his seat without disturbing the man. After about five minutes, the man appeared to be awakened by the conductor coming through the door in the front of the coach. The man straightened up, feeling, and searching in his breast pockets. As the conductor passed by, he increased his search intensely and attracted the attention of the conductor.

"Is anything wrong, sir?" asked the conductor.

"Yes, there is! I must have been robbed while I was sleeping," he answered.

"Of what, sir?" asked the conductor.

"Of my gold watch and chain!" said the man, looking suspiciously at Carey.

"Do you suspect this boy, then?" asked the conductor.

"Well, it may seem absurd to accuse such an innocent looking boy, but who else could have done it? I do remember being jostled, and it woke me up. If the boy is innocent, certainly he will not object to being searched."

The conductor looked at Carey, expressing with his eyes as best he could, without detection, that he believed Carey to be a victim of false accusation.

"Describe the watch," said the conductor, addressing his remarks to the stranger.

"Why, the watch and chain were solid gold. The watch was enclosed in a hunting case," he replied.

"Young man," said the conductor, addressing Carey, "do you have such a watch in your possession?"

"I do," replied Carey, nervously.

"May I examine it, please?" asked the conductor.

"Certainly," said Carey, handing over the watch very carefully to the conductor, feeling that he could be trusted.

"That's it!" shouted the stranger, "just hand it over, and I'll not press charges against the boy."

"Just a minute," said the conductor, opening the watch, "What is the make of your watch?"

The question was unexpected, and the stranger faltered momentarily, "Why--- it's one of the best make, ---it's a Waltham," he added, noting no sign of denial in the eyes of the conductor.

The conductor noted, however, that the answer was given more as a question, than an outright statement.

"And is there an inscription inside the

case?" he asked, giving the man some encouragement; but having chosen his words carefully to catch the suspected confidence man in a lie if possible.

"Why---" began the man, unsure of the right answer, and searching the eyes of the conductor for a clue, "---no, there is no inscription, you see---"

The conductor interrupted the man by turning to Carey.

"Young man, is there, or is there not an inscription in this watch?"

"Yes, sir, there is an inscription," answered Carey, with definite assurance.

"And just what does it say?"

"It says---TO CAREY - FROM JOHN B. DIXON."

The stranger showed evidence of his defeat, and looked around for a means of escape. A crowd had gathered in the aisle, and he was surrounded by men with surly faces.

"My good fellow," said the conductor, addressing his remarks to the man, and returning the watch to Carey, "I have caught you in an attempt to swindle this young man; if you will leave this train at the next station, I will advise the boy not to press charges against you."

The conductor urged the passengers to clear the aisle and return to their seats. The stranger needed no further invitation and hurried down the aisle to the door.

"Young Mr. Postmaster," said the conductor, addressing Carey, "You were fortunate that I was here to assist you. These confidence men are very sharp and know most all of the tricks; but I know a few myself. This may not be the last attempt to rob you, so be very careful, my boy."

"I will try, and thank you very much for your belief in my innocence."

"You are welcome, my boy. I guess I know an honest face when I see one," he said, as he turned to leave.

It was several minutes before Carey was able to relax from the excitement of it all, even to enjoy the scenery from the window of the moving train. Remembering his plans to write to Judge Dixon, he withdrew paper and pencil from his carpetbag and began to write. He first expressed his thanks for the gold watch and chain, then explained why he was enroute to Chicago, and about the attempted swindle. Then he detailed the events of the night before, including the stranger's visit to Squire Campbell's home, the burning of the school, the Squire's announcement of his own robbery, and the unexplained disappearance of Flint. He told of Michael's desire to take violin lessons; and he explained that he could be reached at general delivery in Chicago.

The train now seemed to be traveling through a thickly settled area, which he believed might be the suburbs of Buffalo. He looked at his watch. It was 2:10 and the train was scheduled to arrive at 2:15. He put away his writing materials and made preparations to leave the train. He remembered that he would also be leaving the familiar and friendly face of the conductor. He remembered also, that the purpose of his mission might prove to be even more dangerous than the man who had attempted to steal his watch.

CHAPTER XXII THE TRAIL LEADS WEST

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"Shine yer boots, mister?"

"Paper, mister?"

These two greetings were directed at Carey simultaneously by two young street merchants as he stepped off the train in Buffalo. He hesitated, giving no reply. His attention was attracted to the hustle and bustle of the city. The view was new to him; strange and exciting. Street vehicles unlike those of Algerton were scurrying about. On the horizon above the lower buildings along the street loomed taller buildings which seemed to pierce the sky. The sounds of the city were also unlike those of Algerton. There was an indefinable din which seemed to be coming at him from all directions. It is understandable then that Carey unaccustomed to city ways, stood speechless. In this short interim of time, the young lads who had addressed Carey, had immediately sized him up as a country boy who was seized with the wonder of it all. They quickly turned their attention to other prospective customers. Carey, coming out of his trance, concentrated upon the remarks which had been addressed to him. He looked down at his shoes. They were still neatly polished; he would have given a courteous reply, but the lad was now busily engaged shining the shoes of another gentleman. Did he want a paper? No, he believed that a paper at present would not fill his immediate needs; but he did need information; perhaps the lads could be helpful to him after all.

"Oh, young man!" hailed Carey.

"Paper, mister?" the lad responded.

"Well, no, you see I am a stranger here---"

"Oh, are you, now?"

"Yes; I am looking for some one---"

"The mayor's out of town today. I've been delegated to greet all his guests."

"Oh, I see," Carey said, catching on, and smiling, "the person I am looking for does not expect me."

"I'll take yer wherever yer want ter go---fer a dollar."

"You don't understand. I don't want to go anywhere. I just want to ask you a question."

"Shoot---"

"I'm looking for a young man about my age who may have gotten off the morning train here today."

"Was he a dandy?"

"A dandy?"

"Yeah, fit to kill; spats, 'n gloves, 'n joolrey, 'n stuff."

"Oh, why, yes, perhaps he may have been dressed like that."

"Tot'n his old man, was he?"

"How's that?" asked Carey.

"I said, was he with his old man? his father?" he replied, with some irritation.

"Oh, why, yes, there may have been a man with him."

"Then I guess I see'd 'im. He tossed me a cart wheel fer a shine, 'n he 'n his old man took a hack for Central Station."

Carey looked hopeful; he wanted to aid the boy for this bit of helpful information. He opened his change purse, selected a dime and handed it to the boy. The boy pocketed the coin and was about to leave.

"Oh, I say---"

"Sorry, I ain't got no small change."

"No, no, I didn't expect any change, but can you direct me to the post office?"

"Take yer there fer half a buck."

"If you would only tell me, perhaps I could find my way," replied Carey, smiling.

"It's over there," said the boy, pointing down the street, and not wishing to be detained longer without additional compensation, he hurried away.

Carey felt pleased with his unexpected progress on the trail of Flint and wanted to mail his letter to Judge Dixon without any further delay. He walked in the direction suggested by the boy and found the post office to be only two blocks away. He purchased a postal card and penned a hasty message to Mr. Harris, relating his discovered evidence of Flint's arrival in Buffalo, and undoubtedly as heading west, and that he would follow as instructed, toward Chicago. He decided that he should try to leave immediately, and learned that Central Station was not far away.

"What time does the next train leave for Chicago?" Carey asked, addressing his remarks to the station ticket agent.

"At six o'clock," was the reply.

"What time did the last train leave for Chicago?"

"At twelve, noon-time," was the answer.

"And what time did the last train leave for New York?" inquired Carey, wondering if Flint may have gone in the opposite direction.

"Same time; twelve noon," was the impatient reply.

"Thank you, sir," said Carey, stepping away from the window. Carey believed that Flint might head west, but he could not be positive.

"Do you recall seeing a young man about my age boarding one of the noon trains?" Carey asked of a porter on the station platform.

"How was he dressed?" asked the porter.

"Well dressed," Carey replied, remembering the newsboy's description.

"Flashy, perhaps?"

"Well, yes, perhaps."

"Yes, I remember seeing a boy answering that description."

"Which train did he take?" Carey asked, excitedly.

"Westbound," was the reply.

"Did he seem to be with anyone?"

"Well, there was a man that got on at the same time. Don't know as they were together though; the man wasn't dressed as fashionable as the boy."

"Thank you, sir," said Carey, handing a dime to the porter.

"Thank you kindly, sir," replied the porter, showing his appreciation.

Carey believed he was on the right trail, so he retraced his steps to the ticket

agent and purchased a ticket for Chicago. He realized that he had quite a long wait before train-time, and since he was not yet hungry, he decided to explore the city. He realized that with his carpet-bag he was conspicuous and could easily be identified as a stranger to the city. He walked toward what seemed to be the center of the city where he might get a good view of the tall buildings. Presently he found himself at Lafayette Square and decided that he would not go any farther. He sat down upon a park bench to rest, and almost immediately a man sat down heavily beside him.

"Whew!" sighed the man, "I'm all tired out from sight-seeing."

Carey smiled, but gave no answer.

"Been seeing the city too?" the man asked.

"Just resting," Carey replied.

"Going to visit the Falls?" asked the man, trying to get a conversation started. "There's a sight-seeing hack across the street. It's heading for the Falls in a few minutes. Care to go along?" he inquired.

"No, thank you," Carey replied; trying to terminate the conversation.

"It's only twenty miles up the river, the hack'll have you back by supper-time, and drop you off right in front of your hotel. I'm staying at the Niagara House, just around the corner there. Where are you stopping, Pal?"

"I'm not stopping; I'm going on——"

"I'm going on, too—in the morning, you going east too?"

"No," replied Carey, truthfully and relieved, "I'm going west."

"West? Why sure! that's what I meant. Did I say east?"

Carey nodded, dejectedly, recognizing the subtle deceptive approach of another confidence man.

"Capital! Then stay overnight with me, and we'll go together in the morning."

Carey felt that he was getting himself in a tight place; fortunately, he saw a policeman approaching, and hailed him.

"Oh, officer!"

The man realized that he had failed to win the confidence of this boy from the country, and hastily made his departure, muttering some inaudible threat.

"Any trouble, son?" asked the officer.

"Perhaps there might have been." Carey replied, "I needed some protection from that man's unsolicited company," he added, pointing to the departing man.

The man was hurrying away, but keeping the movement of the officer in view.

"Shall I stop him?" asked the officer.

"No," returned Carey, "he has done me no harm, but I am sure he would have molested me if you had not come along."

"Yes, I am sure he would, for I recognize him. Trouble is, I can't haul him in without a complaint."

"Thank you, Officer, I'll try to keep my distance from such men in the future."

Carey turned his steps in the direction of the railroad station, and looking at his watch, he found it was already five o'clock. In returning his watch to his

vest pocket, he decided that although he admired it and enjoyed displaying it, he had best keep it concealed from view, for it only seemed to identify him as a prospect for confidence men. Upon entering the waiting-room of the station, he sat down and took out a sandwich which his mother had prepared for him before he left home. He decided that he would write a letter to his mother and tell her of his experiences so far, and the progress that he seemed to be making. As he was preparing the envelope, the porter announced that the train for Detroit was now loading.

"Is that the train I take for Chicago?" asked Carey, of another porter.

"Yes, suh," replied the porter, "You'll change trains in Detroit, suh."

"Where can I mail this letter please, sir?"

"Right over there in that box, suh; there's plenty of time."

Carey hastily dropped his letter in the box, felt for his watch, his wallet, and after examining his bag, he headed out on the platform. There was a string of eight coaches, and much nicer than those he had been in before. They were neatly polished, and sparkled in the evening sunlight. Carey presented his ticket to another porter who was waiting at the entrance of a coach. The porter examined the ticket and directed Carey forward to about the middle position of the string of coaches. Carey was shuttled up the steps and on the platform of the coach by another porter. As he stepped into the coach, he saw a long aisle between two rows of green plush seats. The woodwork was trimmed with a soft pleasing yellow. He was in the day-coach and it did not contain many passengers, at least not yet. He selected a seat in the rear and took a position near the window. Outside he could see people hastening along looking for the proper place to enter their coach. Carey sat impatiently waiting for the train to start. The conductor appeared on the station platform and was talking with the porter. They seemed in no great hurry, however, the conductor did examine his watch quite often. Suddenly, the conductor hastily escorted a passenger up the steps, gave a signal with his hand toward the engineer, and now seemed very anxious to get his train moving. There were a few short toots from the locomotive, and as the train started to move, the conductor stepped aboard. As the train moved along, it gained momentum and passed between buildings which seemed to be very near to the window. Suddenly, they were clear of the buildings and the Niagara River came into view, and now they were on the trestle above the river. It seemed to Carey as if they were suspended in the air. As they approached the opposite shore, someone remarked, "We are now in Canada." This was fascinating to Carey who expected to see mysterious things, but he couldn't see anything that looked any different than in New York State. Nevertheless, Carey kept his eyes to the window, hoping to see some unusual sight in a foreign land which he might fondly remember. He was thrilled with a thought of adventure.

CHAPTER XXIII FLINT IS FOUND IN KALAMAZOO

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

N. Y.

The evening twilight period was short; darkness fell quickly and the view from Carey's window was limited to an occasional lighted street or building. The train was moving swiftly now through the countryside. The illuminating lights of the coach had been lighted and Carey's attention was now drawn to the activities in the coach. So far, it had not been necessary for Carey to share his seat with other passengers. Carey hailed the conductor as he passed down the aisle.

"Sir," said Carey, "what time do we arrive in Detroit?"

"Approximately two A.M." he replied, "You are going on to Chicago, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you will change trains in the same station, but there will only be a short wait. I notice that you carry a watch; you will have to set it back an hour before we reach Detroit."

"Thank you, --I will probably fall asleep; would you awake me, sir?"

"Of course; better let me take your valuables too, son --I have a safe place to keep them while you are sleeping."

"Thank you, sir," said Carey, handing over his wallet and watch, "I have had some close calls already."

"How much money is in your wallet, son?"

"One hundred dollars,"

"I'll give you a receipt; mind if I verify the amount?"

"No, sir."

Carey pocketed the receipt with extreme care, and after the conductor had moved on he decided that he would write a letter to his friend Pete Bates, and he wondered if he should also write to his friend Patience. He decided against this, but would write to Mr. Jamieson instead, and ask to be remembered to Patience.

With the two letters written, he began to feel drowsy. The rhythm of the sounds of the coach in motion and the gentle sway was an inducement to sleep. It reminded him of his mother's lullabies when he was but a mere child. He noted the difference in the sound of the locomotive whistle, as compared with the sounds heard at home.

Carey was awakened by a slackening movement of the train. In his sleep he had slumped toward the window in a very uncomfortable position. He straightened up and rubbed his eyes. He noted people preparing to leave the train.

"Where are we?" Carey asked of the conductor who was nearby.

"We are approaching the St. Thomas station. It's about ten o'clock, and only about half way to Detroit," he said, smiling.

"Thank you, sir," said Carey, turning his attention to the window where he could see the movement of a passing train

going in the opposite direction on the track next to his window. Suddenly the movement stopped. They must be at the station now, he mused, for the people were leaving the coach. The coach outside his window had also stopped. He could see people with heads drooped in sleep. He could hear voices of trainmen outside who were loading baggage in preparation to leave again. When the activity ceased, the coach doors could be heard when they closed. From his window, he sensed that they were now in motion, for they were leaving the other train. This, he watched as the lighted windows flashed by. Suddenly they had cleared the other train, or so it seemed, for he discovered his coach had not moved. It was the other train that had pulled out of the station. The illusion had caused him to pitch forward, and he had braced himself for the expected sudden stop. It was a very confusing sensation. Finally his coach was set in motion and except for occasional lurching, the rhythm once more put him to sleep.

Carey was awakened again after what seemed to be only a short while. The conductor was shaking him.

"Better wake up, young man; We'll be in the Detroit station very shortly now."

"Oh! Have I been asleep that long?"

"Yes. Here is your watch and chain, and your wallet. Will you examine it please."

"Thank you. Yes, it is all here. Thank you, sir."

"You're welcome. Now may I have my receipt, please."

"Oh, yes; here you are, sir."

"When you get off this train, just ask a porter where to find your Chicago train."

"Yes, sir; thank you."

The Detroit station seemed to be much larger than the Buffalo station, and considering the hour, it was quite active, however, the city looming up in the darkness appeared to be dormant. Carey approached a porter nearby.

"Where do I board the Chicago train, sir?"

"Depends on what route you want to take, suh, let me see your ticket."

Carey produced his ticket which was purchased in Buffalo.

"You're routed on the Central; there's your train over there; you'll be leaving in about half an hour."

"What time does it arrive in Chicago?"

"If it's on time, I 'spect it will be during the noon hour."

"Thank you, sir."

As much as Carey would have liked to look around, there was little time, and the hour was not appropriate for sight-seeing. He approached the Chicago train and showed his ticket to another porter at the entrance to a coach.

"Yas, suh, this is your train; get right on; we'll be leaving soon's everybody gets aboard."

"Thank you, sir."

"Oh, by the way, sir, do I have time to post my letters? Is there a post box nearby?"

"Yas, suh, but let me take them for you, I'll drop them in the box myself."

"Thank you, sir," said Carey, as he climbed the steps.

The coach was decorated and furnished equally as nice as the coach he had just left. Some of the passengers who had just entered the coach were settling down and making themselves comfortable. Carey selected a seat in the rear where he could watch the activities in the coach. He was almost asleep when he sensed the coach in motion. His eyes were heavy, but he believed he had better stay awake until the conductor came around. He was unsuccessful and was awakened by the conductor who was gently shaking him.

"Your ticket, my boy."

"Yes, sir, here you are, sir."

"Traveling alone, young man?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not running away from home are you, son?" asked the conductor.

"No, sir; but I have been sent in search of a boy who has."

"Is that so? then you think he went west? perhaps to Chicago?"

"I have no theory of my own, sir; I am traveling under orders."

"I see; ever been in Chicago before?"

"No, sir."

"It's a big city; it will be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

"I suppose so; do you have any suggestions, sir?"

"Better report immediately to the police; they will look after you, and perhaps be able to help you. Stray boys have a habit of ending up with the police."

"Thank you, sir. —I may fall asleep, as I am a sound sleeper. Will you please keep your eye on me. I could not afford to be robbed."

"I'll watch over you like you were my own son, my boy."

"Thank you, sir."

Carey did fall asleep, but was not molested. The sunrise about seven o'clock awakened him. He wondered where he was. He stood up and straightened his clothes. He noticed that across the aisle was a wash room. He decided to freshen himself up as best he could, after which he felt wide awake, but hungry. He settled down to watch the scenery from the window. The smoke from the locomotive hung close to the ground and often blotted out his view. He could see the distorted shadow of the moving coach in the early morning sunlight. In spite of its handicap of traveling along a high bank or dipping into the deep ditches, it was keeping up with the moving coach. He could also see the distorted images of the passengers in the shadow. He wondered which was his shadow. He timidly waved and saw his shadow do the same. He was glad that he was not subjected to the rough ride outside with his shadow. Suddenly the train slackened its speed and he noticed that they appeared to be approaching a small city. The train slowed to a crawl, and presently it stopped. His coach was on a trestle over a river.

There was quite a long wait. Presently the conductor entered the front of the coach and was making an announcement to the passengers as he proceeded up the aisle. Carey listened.

"A switch engine from the C.K. and S. Railroad has been derailed on our tracks. There will be some delay. If you wish to leave the train for any reason, go through two coaches and the porter will let you off at a street intersection. If you wish you may then wait at the depot. The engineer will give you a five minute warning with four short blasts when we are ready to proceed."

"Sir," asked Carey, of the conductor, "Where are we?"

"We are in the outskirts of Kalamazoo; the depot is about six blocks ahead."

"Do you suppose there will be time enough to find a place to get some breakfast?" Carey asked.

"Perhaps more; your ticket will be good on the next train if you wish to stay over."

Carey followed a group of other passengers who were leaving the train; some because of curiosity, some because of hunger. The coaches had been separated at the intersection to allow street traffic to pass. Carey inquired of a porter:

"Which way do I go to get down town?"

"One block to the left, then turn right, suh."

"Thank you, sir," said Carey, and he turned in that direction. At the intersection he noticed a street car track in the center of the street and decided to go in that direction. He was hungry and wanted to find a respectable place in which to purchase some breakfast. He crossed over a series of railroad tracks and near a depot he saw a hotel sign which identified it as the American House. It looked respectable, and he went in. He was directed to a lunch room where he would be served. After satisfying his hunger, he continued up the street, examining the shops and stores as he walked along. His attention was drawn to a sign setting on the boardwalk near the entrance of a saloon. The sign in large letters read: FREE LUNCH. A young man was just leaving the place, and much to Carey's surprise, he recognized the person.

"Flint! well for land sake! what are you doing here?"

"Churchill! is it you? what are you doing here?"

"I have been sent in search of you; but I had no idea that I would find you here. I was enroute to Chicago, but my train has been delayed."

"—I --We," began Flint, "arrived last night—"

"We?" queried Carey, "Who are you with?"

"Oh, a traveling companion, I picked up, worse luck!"

"A traveling companion? and you stayed here overnight? Flint, let's go to your room and talk this over."

"I can't go back to my room," replied Flint, "I couldn't pay our hotel bill, and I've been kicked out!"

"Then let's sit down somewhere, Flint, and tell me all about it."

CHAPTER XXIV BEARDING THE LION

BY FORREST CAMPBELL



It was a cool morning, so Carey decided against sitting down out of doors.

"Let's go to the depot, instead. it may be more comfortable in the waiting room." Carey suggested.

"All right," agreed Flint, turning in the proper direction.

"Where is your luggage," inquired Carey, "you do have some, don't you?"

"I had a suitcase and a valise; my companion, and my valise were missing this morning when I awoke; and the hotel clerk is holding my suitcase because I couldn't pay my room rent." he replied.

"Then you were robbed?"

"Yes."

"And you accuse your companion?"

"Yes."

"How much money did he take?"

Flint hesitated, choosing his words carefully, "He took all I had, except for a few loose coins in my pocket."

"Have you eaten, Flint? How did you happen to meet up with this person --and why did you run away?"

"Yes, I have eaten," then he hesitated, reluctant to admit that he had been out-smarted, and ashamed to reveal the reasons for his mysterious departure.

"Flint," continued Carey, "be honest with me, now; perhaps I can help you; did you notify the police about the robbery?"

"No; I didn't want to become involved, it seemed wise to keep quiet about the whole thing--you see it wasn't really my own money--"

"Flint! then you did rob your own father?"

"I took it," corrected Flint, feeling that his choice of words would be admitting a lesser crime.

"Two hundred dollars in silver? and is that what he took in the valise?"

"Yes; you knew the exact amount, then?"

"Your father informed Mr. Harris and me of the amount; he accused the stranger of robbing him, and kidnapping you--is it possible? how did you meet your companion? did you know the school burned?"

Flint looked curious. Perhaps he could have denied the robbery. "The stranger?" he asked, "the school burned?"

"Then you didn't know about the school?"

"Of course not! what happened?"

Carey related the event of the school incident, the theory of the robbery and kidnapping. "Now just how did you meet your companion? be honest with me, now!"

"Well," hesitated Flint, "I was despondent about conditions at home--and at school; I brooded about it for a while; then I made up my mind to leave home; I took the money, and some clothes, hitched old Nell to the buggy and quietly left for the next village. On the way, this man appeared and asked to be taken to the next village."

"And this man was your traveling companion?" interrupted Carey.

"Yes, answered Flint, "he convinced me that he needed help, and in exchange for his companionship, I agreed to pay his fare to Chicago. We slept in the buggy

until daybreak, then I sent old Nell and the buggy back home--did she come back?"

"Yes."

"Then--here's the Burke Hotel, where we stayed, the depot is just up the street--we took the morning train for Buffalo, then took the next train for Chicago; Mike--he said to call him Mike--thought we ought to get off here and get a good night's sleep, and continue our trip this morning on the first train."

"The first train?" mused Carey, "Flint, perhaps your companion--Mike--is still here; he may be at the depot now! My train was delayed, remember?"

"That's so!"

"Perhaps we had better call an officer; there is one ahead," said Carey, as he recognized a police uniform.

"Wait!" said Flint, hesitating, "what will happen to me?"

"You may have to suffer the consequences; we must try to recover your father's money by any manner of means; if you wish me to assist you now, you must do as I say. Oh, officer!"

"Hello there. young men," he replied, recognizing them to be strangers in town, "lost, are ye?"

"No," replied Carey, "we are not lost, but my friend has lost some money. He was robbed!" Carey related for Flint, just what had happened at the hotel, and of his theory of finding the robber around the depot.

"Good reasoning, my boy; of course he is not apt to be waiting out in the open; he'll be concealed somewhere until his train pulls in. You boys step into that store there, and I'll make an investigation around the depot premises. If I find him, I'll bring him here. Your description won't help too much; he'll be disguised."

The boys waited in the store as requested, at a point where they could watch the movements of the officer.

"Carey," whimpered Flint, "I'm getting frightened; what will happen to me? will I be arrested too?"

"Perhaps not. If you will place yourself in my custody, I'll do what I can for you; stop trembling! You are being conspicuous!"

Flint seemed somewhat relieved, but could not control his trembling.

"The officer is coming back already--and with a man," exclaimed Carey, "Flint, is that your traveling companion?"

"No, it can't be. Mike had no beard--this man has a red beard, and he doesn't have my valise; no luggage at all!"

Carey was disappointed. They stepped outside to greet the officer.

"I think this is the man you are looking for, young men," said the officer.

"It can't be," returned Flint, "this man has a red beard--"

"But it comes off," said the officer, giving the beard a yank and removing it, much to the surprise of the accused man, and the boys.

"It's Mike!" exclaimed Flint.

"Who are these boys?" asked Mike, feigning innocence to the officer.

"They are accusing you of robbery," he replied.

"But I have never seen him before," he said, looking at Carey in particular.

"You have seen me before," said Flint, with some courage, "what have you done with my valise, and money?"

"I am being falsely accused, officer, I am a noted thespian, and will be trodding the boards of your local opera house tonight, let me give you a pass, my friend."

"That may be true," said Flint, willing to believe the sham, "but I still say that you took my valise--and money."

"Perhaps we had better ask the hotel clerk for further identification, and the opera house stage manager should recognize you; come along, we'll stop at the station house too."

If the officer was using convincing strategy, he couldn't have said it better, for the accused man balked and said:

"If the money is returned; will you drop the charges, officer?"

The officer looked to Carey and Flint for an answer.

Carey answered, "If the valise and its contents are recovered, yes, we will drop the charges." Flint willingly nodded his head in agreement.

"Very well, then, Mr. Thespian," said the officer, "lead us to the hiding place."

"Here is the claim check; the baggage master has the valise. Now will you release me?"

"Not so fast; just you wait until we recover the stolen money."

The four of them marched to the depot, attracting some attention in the process, and the baggage master turned over to the officer the valise which proved to contain the contents reported stolen.

"Now will you release me? you have no charges against me now."

The officer again turned to Carey and Flint for an answer.

"This man is suspected of setting fire to our school back in Algerton, New York, officer," replied Carey.

"I guess," said the officer, "that you won't be trodding the boards tonight, Mr. Thespian, we'd like your picture and your autograph down at the station house, come along," the officer winked at the boys as he left, shoving the man ahead of him.

"Now," said Carey to Flint, as they stood alone, "We'd better get over to your hotel, pay your room rent, and recover your suitcase."

"Carey," said Flint, with seeming sincerity, "I suppose I should be grateful to you, but I will still have to answer to my father."

"You have it coming," said Carey, "A fatherly lecture won't hurt you, and it might do you some good."

Flint said nothing in return.

"How much money have you used from the valise, Flint?" asked Carey.

"Nothing, so far; I had some money in

my wallet, but I've used it all, now."

"Good," replied Carey, "We'll keep it that way; if you are able to return the entire amount, it will be better for you."

"Must we return at once, Carey?" asked Flint, with pleading eyes.

"I was supposed to wait in Chicago for further orders; do you still have your Chicago ticket?"

"Yes," he replied, producing it.

"Then it won't cost us any more to go on; and tomorrow is Sunday, the post office will not be open; there is no great hurry; we may as well stay over in your room and leave tomorrow. Here is your hotel; I'll pay your rent and arrange for us to occupy your room for tonight."

With Flint's luggage recovered, and room arrangements taken care of, Carey left the valise with the hotel clerk in his name, and after the clerk assured him it would be secure in the hotel safe, they returned to the street.

"Hello there, boys!"

It was the police officer speaking.

"We've just given your friend Mr. Thespian free lodging for a few days, until we learn if anyone wants him."

"I meant to ask you," said Carey, "How did you find him so easily?"

"I found him at the depot, in the men's wash room, waiting for his train to arrive; fortunately for you, his train was late. There's a derailed engine down the track that was holding up his get-away train."

"Yes, I know," replied Carey, "I was on it; if it hadn't been for that, I would have been on the same train with him and wouldn't have known it."

"Can you beat that for luck," replied the officer, "Providence is good to those who deserve it."

After a tour of the small city, including trolley rides; the lines which were designed to meet the transportation needs of its patrons, terminated at two suburban cemeteries and a race track, provided little recreation for the boys. After a good night's rest, they once more resumed their journey. Carey decided to leave the valise in the custody of the hotel authorities, who supplied him with a receipt for the contents. He made arrangements to pick it up on his return to Algerton.

Upon their arrival in the big city of Chicago, they once again sought out a modest but respectable hotel for their overnight stay. Carey and Flint were waiting in line at the big post office when the general delivery window opened on Monday morning.

"Do you have any mail for Carey Churchill?" he inquired.

After a short search, the clerk handed him a letter. Carey hastily opened it. It read as follows:

Carey: Confidential, destroy after reading. A man will meet you at the post office. Go with him. Inform me of your destination. Carl.