



Meanwhile, back in Algerton on the previous Friday Afternoon, Carey's absence had not yet been revealed except to the Churchill Family, Carl and the Squire. When Mrs. Churchill reported for work at the Jamieson home that afternoon, she felt it her duty to advise Mr. Jamieson of Carey's absence.

"I am not sure that you used good judgment in granting your permission, Mrs. Churchill," said Mr. Jamieson, "I wish that you had consulted me first."

"But it all sounded so reasonable," she replied, "and Carey seemed so confident and eager to participate in the hunt. Do you think that Mr. Harris would ill advise him if there was any danger involved?"

"Now please do not worry, Mrs. Churchill, Carey is a capable young man, and carries the burden of responsibility quite well. I am sorry if I have caused you any concern. If it is any comfort to you, I will go immediately and consult with Mr. Harris, and do what I can to provide additional security for his safety."

The Squire entered the post office, and finding Carl alone, he inquired, "Well, has the boy left town?" with a hopeful expression upon his face.

"Yes, on the noon train, bound for Buffalo. Have you prepared a letter to Jack, announcing his arrival?"

"—I sent a wire from the depot telegraph operator," he replied, with a look of relief from a burden of care.

"Oh!" responded Carl, with evidence of disappointment, "and what was the nature of your message?"

"I instructed him to make contact with the boy at the Chicago post office, using any subterfuge he thought necessary."

"I see; then you think it unlikely that Carey will meet up with Flint—er, Mortimer, I mean."

"Very unlikely, that was only our plan of deception you know—to explain the boy's absence."

Mr. Jamieson was observed approaching the post office, and the Squire cut short any further remarks regarding Carey, and assumed an expression of concern.

"Afternoon, Squire—Carl," greeted Mr. Jamieson, "I've heard of your misfortune, Squire, and the disappearance of your son; have you any new reports?"

"No, but we have adopted a plan; we have sent the Churchill boy in search—"

"I've heard of your plan," interrupted Carl, "sending good money after bad; eh!"

"How's that?" asked the Squire.

"Never mind; forget it; but just the same, I don't like it; understand?"

"—If I'd needed your advice, counselor, I'd have asked for it."

"Just remember, the interests of the Churchill Family—and the boy—is my affair, Squire."

"Very well," replied the Squire, not knowing how to answer, "please excuse me gentlemen. I really must be going."

"Now, Carl," continued Mr. Jamieson, after the Squire had left, "do you think you acted wisely, in supporting the Squire's plan?"

"I had a motive in mind, but there have been some complications," he replied, "I must ask your co-operation—and complete confidence."

"I'm listening," Mr. Jamieson added.

Further discussion was not advisable, since the entrance of other people made it necessary to continue their conversation in private, however, as Mr. Jamieson was leaving, these parting remarks were overheard.

"Very well, Carl, I will await your further orders."

When left alone again, Carl sat down and penned the note which Carey received on Monday morning.

Carey read the note a second time, then crumpled it in his hand. The contents were clear and explicit enough, but mystifying. He decided to obey orders.

"What does it say?" asked Flint, curiously.

"We are to meet a man here," answered Carey, guardedly.

"A man? Why?"

"I don't know. Perhaps it was believed that I needed assistance in searching for you."

"Then why not dismiss him, since his assistance is not needed," Flint suggested.

"No, Flint; you had better let me handle this. Let's hear what he has to say."

"But there is no one here that seems to be looking for you—or anyone else, for that matter."

"The man may not have arrived yet."

"Psst!"

The sound, barely audible, came from the direction of a street window where a man was observed by the boys, looking out of the window. The man appeared to have no interest in them. There were other people in the lobby, but they also seemed to have no interest in the boys. The man at the window was tall, gaunt, and shabbily dressed. Carey directed his gaze in another direction, hoping to find a man who seemed to be searching for someone. Perhaps the man would not be expecting to find two boys together, Carey mused.

"Let's separate for a while, Flint," said Carey, informing him of his idea. Carey then produced a postal card and addressed it to Carl. He had only just begun to write these words "I am here—" when he heard the familiar sound again.

"Psst!"

It was the same man. This time he beckoned to Carey to approach him. Carey put the unfinished card in his pocket and walked over to the man.

"You from Algerton?"

"Who's the other kid?"

"--A friend of mine," answered Carey, guardedly.

"Get rid of him--and follow me out of the building."

"I can't; he is in my charge."

"Bring him along then; follow me, but don't get too close. I'll join you later."

"Yes, sir," replied Carey, with some hesitancy.

The man turned and walked away. Carey joined Flint who had observed the conversation with considerable curiosity.

"Wasn't that the man, after all," asked Flint, seeing the man walk away.

"Yes," replied Carey, "We are to follow him. At first he objected to your presence. It's all very mysterious."

They followed him for several blocks, keeping well behind him until they were in a somewhat deserted street, then they observed the man turn and walk toward them. As he passed, he said, without looking at them, "follow me."

They turned and followed. The man stopped at an intersection where a street car was waiting. As the boys came up, he ordered them to get on board. He followed them, the car doors closed and the trolley moved on up the street.

"Will one of you boys pay the fare; I don't have any change," he remarked.

Carey offered the conductor a dollar from his wallet and received the change. The man stood behind Carey and was in a position to observe a well filled wallet. Carey and Flint took an unoccupied seat and the man as yet a stranger, took a seat close behind them. The boys had no opportunity to converse with him. As the trolley neared the end of the line, the boys observed they were in a suburban area which might have been identified as a small village. The man prepared to leave the car and motioned the boys to follow him. There were no other passengers, and for the first time, the man volunteered to talk openly, after leaving the car.

"Now," he began, addressing Carey, "You are from Algerton?"

"Yes, but why all this secrecy, sir?"

"Just let me get my bearings first, boy, what's your name?"

"Carey Churchill, sir."

"Humph, never heard of you; who's he," he asked, jerking his head toward Flint.

"I'm Mortimer S. Campbell," Flint replied, pulling off a glove and offering his hand. "You may call me Flint."

"That! Not old Skinner's boy?" he asked, ignoring Flint's hand.

"Are you referring to my father's middle name?" inquired Flint.

"Of course I am; we used to call him Skin, for short."

"What a crude name," responded Flint, taking offense.

"Oh, he deserved it; he was nothing but a deadbeat, and a skinflint; always trying to skin the customers."

"My father?" asked Flint, looking surprised. "I don't believe it."

"You don't have to believe it; but it's

true, just the same."

"Sir," interrupted Carey, "who are you? and why are we here?"

"You can call me Jack; you were invited, he wasn't; what'd you say your name was boy?" he asked, addressing Flint.

"You can call me Flint; everyone does; it was my mother's name."

"Don't blame you for that; you don't deserve the name of Skinner, 'less you've earned it."

Flint felt insulted. Carey intervened.

"Sir, will you please tell us why I have been invited here?"

"Don't know about Skin's boy here, but I got a wire from Skin asking me to put you up, while you're in the city; how is it that you came along, boy," he inquired, addressing Flint.

Carey interrupted, "He didn't come along exactly; we met on the way here."

"What's your business here, boy?" Jack asked, addressing Carey.

"I was sent to search for Flint, and I found him quite by accident; if I hadn't found him, I was supposed to wait in Chicago for orders; but now that I have located Flint, perhaps we should return at once. We needn't bother you any longer," he said, dismissing Jack's responsibility.

"No hurry, boy," said Jack, taking Carey's arm and pulling him along, "stranded, was ye, boy?" addressing Flint, "needed money to get home on, did ye?"

"Well, in a way, I was stranded," said Flint, flushing.

Jack paused, pulling Carey to a halt, but keeping a firm grip upon his arm; they were in front of a small story and a half house, badly weatherbeaten and much in need of repair. Carey took the opportunity to pull his handkerchief from his pocket and mop his brow. He was concerned about the sincerity of Jack.

"Here's my humble abode," said Jack, pulling Carey along again, "probably not as comfortable as you boys are accustomed to, but it's the best I have to offer."

Jack's grip was firm, giving evidence of a muscular body, it seemed useless for Carey to resist him at the moment. Flint followed along behind, suspecting nothing.

Jack opened the door, motioned Flint to walk in, then pushed Carey in behind him. The furnishings of the house were in no better condition than the outward appearance of the house. There was a musty odor of a combination of unidentified things, such as soiled clothing and spoiled food. It smelled as if the house had not had a breath of fresh air in ages.

"There's the stair door which leads to your private room, boys; go up and rest a spell, while I put on a pot of coffee."

Jack opened the door and invited them to enter. Carey thought at least it would be a welcome relief to have a moment of privacy to decide their fate. He wondered now of Mr. Harris' sincerity in sending him here. They ascended the stairs and entered an unfinished attic room with no windows except for a small opening under the gables at each end of the room. The boys heard the latch on the stair door turn, and a cynical laugh coming from Jack. "Hee, hee, hee."

CHAPTER XXVI TWO WEBS

BY FORREST CAMPBELL



Flint, looking down the stairs of the semi-darkened attic room, heard the noise and the laugh, and a moment of fear seized him. He stepped a bit closer to Carey and asked, "What was that?"

Carey, unnerved momentarily, hesitated, and with a note of despair in his voice, replied, "It sounded as if we have been locked in a trap."

"But, why?" asked Flint, hoping that there must be some mistake.

"I don't know why; but we shall perhaps learn soon enough."

"I want out of here," cried Flint, starting down the stairs.

"So do I; but I think we shall find that it is hopeless," Carey responded, following Flint down the stairs.

Flint tried the latch, and both boys pressed their weight against the door, but found that it was securely fastened.

Excitedly, Flint called, "Mister — what's his name, Carey?"

"He said to call him Jack; Jack!" called Carey, "what is the meaning of this?"

There was no reply. The boys waited impatiently, and intermittently called to Jack, but with no response. They pounded upon the door, hoping to attract attention; hopelessly, they ascended the stairs again. Their eyes being somewhat accustomed to the darkness, looked around and inspected their quarters. The room was barren except for a heap of old clothes which were scattered about the room. The room had an odor of soiled clothes, dampness, plaster and wood shingles. Feeling a weakness which comes with uncertainty and despair, the boys dropped to a sitting position on some old clothing. Jack, being downstairs, was sitting at a small table, smoking his pipe and sipping a cup of black coffee. He was waiting-out their attempts to be heard, and to escape. Like a fisherman, he had given them time to wear themselves out. All was quiet now, and believing them to be sufficiently subdued to talk without violence, he opened the stair door and invited them down. The boys willingly descended the stairs to find Jack facing them with a black-snake whip in his hand. Jack spoke first.

"The doors are locked, the windows are nailed shut, and my whip bites worse than a mad dog. Now, shall we talk; or would you like to try and escape?"

"We'll talk," whimpered Flint.

"—And we'll listen," added Carey, "and remember; what you say, may be used against you."

"You don't scare me none, boy; if I need to explain; I'll say that I'm holding you two run-aways until your guardian calls for you."

"The truth will out," added Carey, "in the meantime, we can do nothing but obey your wishes."

"That's better," responded Jack, but

with some reservation, for he realized that there was a lot of truth and wisdom in the straightforward remarks of this young prisoner. He added, cautiously, "I have been instructed to hold you as my guest," he said, pointing to Carey, "he, Skin, that is, didn't say nothin' about you," pointing to Flint, "and unfortunately Skin didn't send any money, so, I guess you boys will have to pay your own board bill — in advance — if you want to eat, while you're my guests. So, let me have your wallets," he added, waving the whip.

"I don't have any money," cried Flint, "honest I don't."

"I'm paying his expenses," added Carey, producing his wallet, and offering it to Jack.

Jack stepped back and said, "Toss it on the floor before me, and don't try any tricks, boy."

Carey did as instructed, and Jack picked it up cautiously, then stepped back still further, wedged the whip under his left arm, and examined the contents of the wallet. Its contents pleased him and he whistled in delight.

"Got any more money about you, boy?"

"No, sir."

"That's a nice watch you have there, let me see it."

Carey hesitated, but surrendered the watch carefully. Jack's eyes sparkled with delight. He added, "I'd better keep this for you. This is a bad neighborhood; thieves, you know," he said grinning, and rolling his eyes.

"Sir," said Carey, not knowing how to address Jack correctly, "Jack, how long do you intend to keep us confined here?"

"As long as your board money holds out," he replied, "or until Skin instructs me to release you; in the meantime, your confinement won't be cramped; you'll have the whole upper flat to yourselves, only don't get noisy, as I'm a light sleeper."

"But my mother will worry if I don't let her know where I am," pleaded Carey.

"You bring tears to my eyes, boy," said Jack, producing a dirty handkerchief and wiping his nostrils, "I'll ask Skin to console her."

"Please, sir," pleaded Flint, "won't you let me go?"

Jack did not answer. Flint's suggestion gave Carey an idea.

"It will cost you less to feed one, than two of us," suggested Carey.

"I'll think about it," replied Jack, "Now get back to your quarters; both of you; as I've got to go out and buy some grub," brandishing the whip in front of them.

The boys re climbed the stairs, and Jack bolted the door behind them, and left the house immediately. Unknown to the boys, Jack's first stop was at the nearest saloon, where he stayed for several hours. Without a noon-time meal, the boys waited restlessly for Jack's return.

CHAPTER XXVII A REVELATION

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

In the attic room where the boys were confined, it was growing dark with the season's early sunset, which added additional gloom to their depressed spirits. They had had nothing to eat since early morning and were getting hungry. The room was not heated and the chill of the evening was becoming noticeable. The boys were seated close together for the comfort of body warmth, and with their knees drawn up beneath their chins, held with clasped hands. The hopelessness of the situation produced a mood of quietness between the boys, with a note of despair in their predicament. Conversation between them seemed useless, and only added to their dejected thoughts; yet it was only natural to seek comfort in the sound of their voices.

"What time is it, Flint?" asked Carey, now having to depend upon Flint's watch.

"It's most five o'clock I believe," replied Flint, squinting at his watch in the darkness; "Why, are you going somewhere?" he asked, trying to inject a bit of sarcastic humor into the hopeless situation.

"Very funny, Flint," replied Carey, frowning, and resenting the reminder of their confinement.

"It's you that got us into this mess," charged Flint, "how do you propose to get us out of it?"

"You are right, Flint; but I was only acting according to instructions. I don't know what we can do, except submit to Jack's wishes for the time being."

"We shall probably die from thirst, hunger, and exposure," added Flint.

"There is no point in getting yourself all worked up, Flint," said Carey, "it won't help matters any."

"There must be some way of escape from this room," returned Flint, looking around, uselessly, "if the situation gets desperate, we should attempt something."

"Yes," replied Carey, "perhaps by to-morrow we may think of a plan."

"But our escape would be much easier while Jack is away. I don't like the looks of that whip. Do you?"

"No; and I believe he would show no mercy in applying it either."

A noise downstairs announced the arrival of Jack who was heard to enter with an unmistakably unsteady step. He was heard to stumble in the early darkness, and the rattle of packages was also heard as he dropped them on a table. After a moment of quietness the boys heard him fumble with the bolt on the stair door. Finally it was opened and a ray of light shone up the stairway. The boys eager to be released from confinement, came down without invitation. They found Jack confronting them with a lighted lamp in one hand and the whip in the other.

"You boys will have to get your own supper; I've had mine," Jack stated.

Flint looked hopefully at Carey.

Carey, resigned to the fact that if they were to satisfy their hunger, he was un-animously elected. Jack recognized his submission to the assignment.

"Now," began Jack, "you boys stay together; I can't watch two places at once. First, take this grub to the kitchen, you there," pointing to Carey; "and you there, Skinny," addressing Flint, "get some wood from the woodbox and start a fire in the kitchen stove; move!"

Flint moved quickly, as directed.

"Hold on!" demanded Jack, "wait for Sonny Boy, here."

Flint halted; moved closer to Carey while he was gathering up the bundles, then they proceeded together to the kitchen. Flint found the woodbox and examined it. It contained wood chips, bark, a small amount of kindling and stoverwood. Although it was a new experience for him, it seemed like a simple operation.

"I don't have any matches," Flint stated, looking at Jack.

"Good," replied Jack, "how about you, Sonny Roy," Jack asked Carey.

"No," replied Carey, "I have had no use for them."

"Good;" answered Jack, "boys shouldn't have matches; they're dangerous. You lay the wood, Skinny, and I'll light it."

Carey busied himself inspecting the bundles. He found an assortment of canned beans, hominy, a loaf of baker's bread, potatoes, turnips and a soup bone.

"Stand aside while I light this kitchen lamp," ordered Jack, and the boys moved to a corner. Jack tucked the whip under his arm, produced a match and with an unsteady hand, succeeded in lighting the lamp and dropped the remainder of the match in the open stove. He blew his breath which reeked with the odor of liquor, upon the burning match which spread into a small flame and soon the wood was burning brightly.

"Pump a little water into that pot, and drop in the soup bone," ordered Jack, "and peel a few of those potatoes and turnips, and drop them in with the bone."

Carey inspected the pot. It had not been washed since it was last used.

"Go ahead, use it," snapped Jack, "the boiling water will sterilize it; and you, Skinny; peel some of those vegetables!"

Flint moved quickly, fearing the feel of the whip.

"Now," said Jack, addressing Carey, "if you want to be so clean; wash some of those dirty soup bowls; and spoons too."

Carey was depressed with the condition of the kitchen and the utensils at his disposal. He had been accustomed to tidiness in his mother's kitchen. The slovenly sight before his eyes made him lose his appetite. Flint, too, looked as if he would be sick, for he was accustomed to a reasonably high degree of elegance in his father's dining room, with fresh linen tablecloths, napkins, sparkling silverware

and china. With tempting, well seasoned food served by a housekeeper hired by his father, but at an expense which he objected to, but it beneath his dignity as Squire of the village, to provide anything less.

The items of food now in the pot were intended as a stew, or at least a broth, and Carey wondered if this was to be the complete menu for their supper, and perhaps other meals to come. While the food was simmering in the pot, the boys were ordered to set the table. It was covered with newspapers which had become stained and sticky from use. Instead of removing previously used dishes from the table, they were ordered to push them aside. They were then ordered to be seated until the stew was ready. Jack pulled up a chair opposite the boys, drew in a spittoon a little closer with his foot; deposited a worn out chaw, and took a fresh one, and sat down.

"So you're old Skin's boy, are ye, Skinny? Yes, sir, the more I look at ye, yer the spittin' image of old Skin."

Flint did not answer.

"I haven't seen old Skin in many a year. Last time was in old New York. We lived high in those days; yes, sir. He was my golden goose; yer paw was, Skinny. Every thing he touched turned to gold, leastwise to silver anyway. Old Skin wa'n't much for gold; he didn't care to spend it neither. That was my department. Always saltin' it away, he was. Then he went highbrow on me, and up an got himself married, an we lived apart after that. I guess then you came along in a year or so. No, sir, don't believe I ever seen ye as a baby. Yer maw didn't cotton to my visits. Old Skin and me kept operatin' as partners though, till the panic come along and we was forced to hust up an leave town; too many creditors y'know. Yer paw an maw went one way, an I went t'other. Didn't know where he landed. Wher'd you say yer from Skinny?"

"Algerton," replied Flint, "and don't call me Skinny. I don't like it," he added in a surly tone.

"Don't get yer back up, boy; it's a compliment. Jingoos, yes, sirree, you're the spittin' image of old Skin; an you have his high falutin' air about ye too; Algerton, y'say; is that in York state? must be, cause his ol' lady wouldn't get too far from s'ciety; like out here in the sticks."

Flint's face reddened with rage at the reference to his mother. "My mother is dead," he cut in, "and she was a respectable lady. You must have known where we lived; didn't you say you received a wire from my father?"

"My apology, Skinny. God rest her soul. Yer paw an me has a man in Chicago actin' as our own private postmaster, who forwards our messages for us. Yer paw didn't know where I was; and I didn't know where he was. Soup's b'ilin' ain't it, Sonny boy? better set up to the table. I ain't hungry."

The boys although reluctant to partake

of the food, but driven by hunger, ate enough to satisfy them. Now, as for Jack, with a loose tongue, and endeavoring to stay awake, continued, "Yer paw an me divided our loot, our hard earned savin's, an agreed to separate to confuse the law, an far's I know, we succeeded. I played the stock market 'n the horses, 'n gambled my pile. Being unlucky, I've been reduced to my present station in life. I suppose yer paw is a wealthy man, same as he always was. It didn't do no good to appeal to your ol' man; he never answered any of 'em; and our private postmaster wouldn't tell me where he was. That was the rule, y'know. Yer paw's seen to that. He pays the man to hold his tongue, I s'pose."

"How much money did you and the Squire split between you," Carey asked curiously.

"You mean ol' Skin of course, hee, hee; why, about twenty thousand I s'pose. Ol' Skin may have had more; y'see he didn't gamble. He only invested in sure things."

"My father is an honorable man," Flint informed him, defensively. "And he has been a good father to me."

"Course he's honorable, on the surface, leastwise. A man can be a good father, an still be shrewd in business matters."

Carey was amazed at the information being revealed. He wondered if it were true. The description seemed to fit the character of the Squire quite well. Carey agreed that the Squire was a shrewd man. He began to be concerned about the safety of his mother, and the finances at home, while at the mercy of this shrewd man. He began to suspect a plot to grasp their little home by default in the mortgage payment. Carey felt that he must escape, or be released from confinement in some manner.

"What time is it by my watch?" Carey asked, really concerned of it's safety.

"Oh, didn't I tell you? I left it with a friend for safe keeping. He has a big heavy safe. It's safe enough now."

"You pawned it, didn't you," Carey inquired, anxiously.

"Well, call it that if you like. He paid me twenty five dollars just to keep it for you. You can redeem it any time you please."

"Why, that watch was worth twice as much," Carey replied, disgustedly.

"Sure, and you probably will pay that much to get it back," Jack added.

"If you want or need money so badly, perhaps we could guarantee you a ransom for our release," offered Carey.

"That's a good idee; but I'm making no deals with boys," replied Jack, showing signs of sobering up. "You boys better get off to bed now. Here you, Skinny, take this lamp; an' you, Sonny Boy, take a couple of these blankets; now be off to bed with you," he said, raising the whip.

The door was closed behind them and bolted, and before the boys could get bedded down comfortably, the flickering flame of an empty lamp died out completely, leaving them in darkness.

The boys spent an uncomfortable night, such as neither were accustomed to, and the best that could be said of the situation, was that they had a roof over their heads. It was a question of removing their clothing to preserve their appearance, or leave them on for the additional warmth they would provide. They decided upon removing their outer garments and huddling together. Their periods of sleep were restless, and both welcomed the cold gray dawn of another day. While they listened for sounds of Jack's movements down stairs, each pondered their plight, with hope that they might be released before another night.

They found that Jack did not seem to be an early riser. After he had confined the boys to their attic room, he brought out a half filled bottle of brandy and sat at the kitchen table until the contents were consumed, so his sleep was not a normal or healthy sleep, but more of an unconscious stupor. Before coming into his present windfall, he had been unable to afford this luxury, and now with sufficient funds to purchase more, he had not the willpower to practice temperance.

Jack's trade, or occupation, when in need of money was such that required little skill. When all other sources of income failed him, he took on the role of a scissors grinder, plying the neighborhood with a little wagon in which he carried a grindstone. He was his own boss. He kept hours suitable to his needs.

After the autumn sun was high enough to clear the bank of morning clouds, the sun rays found their way into the attic room. The restless boys got up, put on their outer garments and stomped around, hoping to arouse Jack from his sleep. Their attempts were lengthy and appeared to be useless, however, eventually they were rewarded with the desired effect. The disturbance awakened Jack, and with a taste of brandy in his mouth, he reached for his bottle which he found to be empty. He had not bothered to remove his clothing, and after testing his equilibrium, he was able to make his way to the stair door by the support of the walls and furniture. He had the presence of mind to equip himself with his whip before sliding the bolt in the door.

The boys needed no further invitation. They recognized his condition immediately and Carey wondered if they dared to take advantage of his condition and attempt an escape; or would he be even more cruel and unleash his fury without cause. Carey decided to be cautious. Jack ordered them to start a fire and make some coffee. After a meager, unappetizing breakfast, of which Jack did not partake except for coffee, he set the boys to work in doing household chores which had gone undone for many a day. About mid-day, Jack,

having the funds for more brandy, herded the boys upstairs again and went out. Needless to say that Jack felt no concern for the comfort of the boys. His only concern was his thirst for brandy, a luxury that had been denied him due to his financial status. For several days the pattern of his activities closely paralleled that of the first day. He would return to his home at dusk, allow the boys to prepare themselves a meal, then send them back to their attic room.

The saloon keeper willfully served Jack whatever he wanted as long as the drinks were paid for. Jack also bought drinks for his new friends which he had acquired since he had become flush with money. No one questioned the source of his present wealth. The number of his new friends grew rapidly each day, and more and more of Jack's present wealth passed over the bar. Then one day the saloon keeper discovered that Jack's wealth had come to an end. He refused to serve him without pay. Jack's new friends and followers deserted him, and he sat alone at the bar, a miserable wretch.

"That day is it?" asked Flint, one day in mid-afternoon.

Carey looked at some marks he had made on one of the rafters, and made a quick calculation.

"It must be about Saturday, November the tenth, if I haven't made any mistakes," Carey added dejectedly.

"How long have we been here?" Flint asked again.

"Thirteen days," Carey replied.

"Almost two weeks!" exclaimed Flint, "Can't you think of some way that we might escape?" he asked.

"There just doesn't seem to be a way. He watches us very closely, and if we arouse his temper, he would show no mercy with that ugly whip," replied Carey.

"What will become of us? Why doesn't someone rescue us?" whimpered Flint.

"It's probably because no one knows where we are. We haven't been able to write home since—" Carey faltered.

"Since when?" asked Flint.

"Flint, do you remember that day we met Jack in the Chicago post office?"

"Yes."

"I was writing a card to Mr. Harris, to inform him where we were, and I don't remember of mailing it."

"Then you probably still have it."

Carey searched his pockets. "I don't have it, perhaps I lost it," he replied.

There was a sound downstairs of someone entering the door. "Can that be Jack?" asked Flint, "Home so soon?"

"He doesn't usually return until dusk," added Carey, hopefully.

The boys waited anxiously at the top of the stairs. It was Jack. He drew the bolt, opened the door, and appeared before them with whip in hand.

"Come down, Sonny Boys," Jack demanded, "it's time we had a little conference."

Although surprised at his early arrival and curious to learn the reason for a conference, the boys willingly descended the stairs. Jack motioned them to be seated, but he himself remained standing.

"Boys," he began, "We've run out of funds. Your money is all gone--"

"Then you are going to release us?" asked Flint, hopefully.

"Not so fast! Skinny;" cut in Jack, "did you boys have any luggage?"

This subject reminded the boys that they had not had a change of clothing in two weeks.

"Yes," offered Flint, "but it is at the hotel--"

"What's in it?" interrupted Jack.

"A change of clothing," replied Flint.

"Anything else?" asked Jack.

"No," answered Flint, wondering why the question was asked.

"I found in your wallet," said Jack, producing a folded slip of paper, "a receipt for two hundred dollars, which is being held at the Burke Hotel!"

"Oh, that!" exclaimed Carey, looking troubled; he hesitated, and was reluctant to answer.

"But, that's not--I meant--" stammered Flint.

"What he means," offered Carey, "is that the Burke Hotel is not in Chicago."

Jack examined the receipt again, "and where is Kala--mazoo?" he asked, having difficulty pronouncing the name.

"In Michigan," offered Carey, "about a half day's journey from Chicago."

"That's a lot of money," said Jack, "and doing no one any good where it is; it'll be safer here--and useful too--if you boys want to continue to eat."

The boys did not answer.

"You write me an order to pick up your money, Sonny Boy," ordered Jack, "then I'll pick up your luggage--I suppose that's in your Chicago hotel, isn't it?"

"But our room rent has not been paid--they'll hold it for room charges--" Carey advised.

"Curses! you're right, boy," admitted Jack, "got anything else that might be sold?"

The boys shrugged their shoulders.

"That's a nice overcoat you were wearing, Skinny; get it."

Flint hesitated.

"Get it!" he ordered, raising the whip.

Flint ascended the stairs and returned with the coat.

"That's nice coat," said Jack, feeling the texture of the fabric, approvingly, "it'll bring five dollars, which should pay my fare to Kam--what's the name of that place?"

"It cost fifteen!" said Flint, feeling insulted.

"Don't doubt it a bit," replied Jack, "someone'll be glad to pay ten for it."

It was useless for the boys to object. They were at his mercy.

"Now back to your room, Sonny Boys," ordered Jack, "while I go out and find a buyer for this coat."

The boys could do nothing but comply

with his wishes. In an hour Jack was back, and ordered them to come down.

"I got seven fifty for the coat, and brought you a few snacks for you to eat while I'm gone."

"Then are you going?" inquired Carey.

"First thing to-morrow morning, bright'n early."

"But--to-morrow is Sunday, isn't it?" suggested Carey.

"It is? Jingoos, you're right, boy."

There was no point in stalling as far as Carey's suggestion was concerned; yet he was not anxious to hasten the time when they would be confined for an unknown length of time.

"That's the matter with Sunday?" added Jack, "The hotel will be open, won't it?"

"I suppose so," replied Carey, "will the trains be running?" he added hopefully, trying to think of a reasonable delay in Jack's departure.

"Right again," Jack admitted, "the early morning train probably won't be running to-morrow; curses on the luck!"

Although Carey had seemingly won his point, it had little known value, however, it was only natural that he did not want Jack to obtain this money if it could be avoided. If there was anything at all they could do to escape, they must do it soon. What could they do? To gain Jack's sympathy seemed out of the question; to attack him in an unguarded moment seemed unwise, for Jack was extremely cautious, and if given a cause, Carey believed he had the will to be extremely cruel.

With the prospect of two hundred dollars at his disposal for the taking, Jack was restless to be on his way; or do something. This forced waiting period before taking action was making him uneasy.

"Better write out that order, Sonny Boy," Jack ordered, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; I've heard said."

"What shall I write?" Carey inquired.

"Why--just tell them that you needed some money bad, and you sold your right to the money to me."

Jack's own words suggested to him that he might also sell the receipt at once--and at a reduced price--for a quick sale.

"Yes, tell them that, but don't mention my name, Sonny Boy; just say you've sold your rights to the bearer, or something like that."

"Will you release us if I do?" asked Carey, hopefully.

"I'm makin' no promises, boy, you go 'head'n write!"

"Have you considered what will happen to you when we are found?" Carey asked, boldly, and unwilling to give up.

"We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," replied Jack, becoming angry, and fingering the whip nervously, "Come on! Write!"

Carey wrote. Then handed it to Jack.

"Sounds pretty good to me;" said Jack, after reading the note. "now you boys get your supper over with. I want to go out."

Reluctantly, and with little appetite under the circumstances, the boys prepared what they could from the meager stock of food at their disposal.

Meanwhile back in Algerton, Squire Campbell's visit to the home of Mrs. Churchill gave him no satisfaction. She did not yield to his offer of companionship, and gave him no encouragement. He did not press the matter, but decided instead to continue his efforts at another time. Neither did she give him any reason to hope that she would be unable to meet the annual payment on her mortgage. The Squire departed with his unsolicited assurance that he would inform her if he heard anything from the boys.

The neighbors also dropped in including Carey's friends, Patience Jamieson, Pete Bates, and his Algebra teacher, Mr. Weeks, who expressed his confidence in Carey's good judgement, and ability to protect himself.

Mrs. Churchill consulted with Mr. Harris at the post office. She was told of the card which had just been received and Carl referred to it as a ray of hope. He also, assured her of Carey's ability of taking care of himself.

That afternoon she consulted with Mr. Jamieson at his home. He explained to her that Judge Dixon had been sent for, and he assured her that the judge would do all in his power to locate Carey. However, expressed confidence and assurance without immediate action was little comfort to her.

Three days later on Saturday, Mr. Jamieson received a letter from the judge. He stated that unfortunately he would be detained in his court for another week, but would come at his earliest convenience. He stated that he had received a letter from Carey informing him of Michael's interest in the violin, and he enclosed ten dollars so Michael could start violin lessons with professor Zeikel. The announcement of the Judge's delay caused Mrs. Churchill further frustration because she could do nothing.

The Squire called on Mrs. Churchill again that evening. He had no news to report regarding the whereabouts of his son. He had heard no reports, nor rumors of reports. He was hopeful that he might learn something from Mrs. Churchill, but she knew very little and told him even less. Carl and Mr. Jamieson had cautioned her to be extremely secretive when questioned by the Squire.

Michael was in no mood to show any interest in violin lessons, yet he reported to professor Zeikel each day for an hour, and spent many hours at home fondling the instrument and practicing. It did provide some comfort and kept his mind occupied. His mood had an effect upon the tone of the violin. The professor noted that Michael's melancholy mood was reflected in the music he produced. He preferred to

obtain cheerful music from his young student, yet he saw some benefit in the mood music. A style acceptable for more advanced scholars, even geniuses. He decided not to discourage the mood, but to choose more carefully the lesson material for Michael.

The week, one of torment for Mrs. Churchill passed, and on Saturday afternoon, November 10th, Judge Dixon arrived. He was met at the station by Mr. Jamieson and they immediately went into conference with Carl at the post office.

"I am sorry that I could not get away sooner," began the judge, "but I am free now until this whole matter is cleared up. Are there any new developments?"

"We have heard nothing more," replied Carl, "I feel responsible for this turn of events, and that it is my duty to go in search of Carey, but I could not leave my post."

"I understand your position. Have you determined where Clyde is?" he asked.

"Yes. It is a small settlement on the outskirts of Chicago."

"The Squire—is he involved in Carey's disappearance?" the judge asked.

"Yes, indirectly; as we informed you by letter," answered Carl, "but I assume the responsibility of his implication."

"Does the Squire know of our plan to take up the search?"

"No."

"Does Mrs. Churchill know?"

"Yes, but she does not know the full details."

"I see. I suppose she is at a point of collapse from anxiety."

"Yes."

"Poor soul. I must see her at once."

"Shall I accompany you?" asked Mr. Jamieson.

"No, it will not be necessary. But I shall want you to accompany me on the search. Can you get away?"

"Yes. I've planned on it. I've already been deputized to represent our local law enforcement agency."

"Good. When can we leave?"

"There's an evening train," volunteered Carl.

"Excellent. I'll see Mrs. Churchill at once, and meet you here at train time."

"I'll keep the Squire occupied until you two return," added Carl, "It's the least I can do."

"By the way," asked the judge, "any news from the Squire's son?"

"No; not to my knowledge," returned Carl.

"Carey hinted in a letter," added the judge, "that he might be on the right track."

"Yes, but we have heard nothing more."

"What is your theory on the Campbell boy's disappearance?" asked the judge.

"My theory is," replied Carl, "that the boy was despondent. Took some of the Squire's money and voluntarily left home."

"Are there other theories?" asked the judge.

"At first, the Squire suspected Carey," replied Carl, "because of the Churchill's need of money to meet their mortgage payment; but now he believes he was robbed by a stranger, who may have been caught in the act by his son, then kidnapped Flint to prevent him from sounding an alarm."

"Oh, yes," said the judge, "the Squire holds the Churchill mortgage, doesn't he?"

"Yes."

"When is it due?"

"Next week. Thursday."

"How much is due?"

"One hundred dollars, plus the legal rate of interest."

"And she cannot meet the payment?"

"No. It's part of the Squire's plan."

"The scoundrel! Whatever does he want with the poor widow's home?"

"It may not be the home as much as it is his principle. Still, I don't know. The Churchill family is one that he has had no control over. I think this may be his motive," replied Mr. Jamieson.

"Do you have any theory, Mr. Harris?" asked the judge.

Carl shrugged his shoulders, "No," then he added, "if you wish to call upon Mrs. Churchill, you have just two hours before train time."

"Very well," replied the judge, "I'll be off now; and I'll see you at train time, Mr. Jamieson."

Mr. Jamieson made a hasty exit also, to make last minute preparations before leaving. Mrs. Churchill, Ethel and Michael received the judge with great joy. It was like a parting of the clouds which revealed the sun. At last, Mrs. Churchill felt a ray of hope for her son.

"I am so happy that you have come," she greeted him.

"I am sorry that I just couldn't come any sooner," he replied.

"You must be hungry. Let me fix you a bite to eat," she offered.

"If I won't be a bother. I am famished," he revealed.

"No bother. Ethel, you and Michael entertain the judge, while I set out some food."

"Fine," he replied, turning his attention to Ethel and Michael, "I suppose you miss your brother very much."

"We do," they replied in unison, "Seems like he's been away ages," added Ethel.

"We'll get him home; you can count on that," the judge replied, cheerfully.

Ethel and Michael smiled hopefully.

"And how are you coming with your violin lessons, Michael?" asked the judge.

"I'm afraid I don't please the professor," replied Michael.

"Nonsense!" joined in Ethel, "He's doing very well, Judge Dixon. Michael, play a tune for him."

"I'm sure of it," replied the judge, "yes, I'd like to hear you play, Michael."

Michael, not accustomed to an audience, was nervous but determined to overcome it, turned his glance aside, and the movements of his head and shoulders swayed with the mood of the music.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the judge as Michael finished, and addressing his remarks to Mrs. Churchill, who had just entered the room, "We have the makings of a genius here!"

Michael was embarrassed, but pleased.

"He comes by it naturally," replied Mrs. Churchill, "His father was an accomplished violinist, but do come and sit down at the table, Judge Dixon, and eat a bite."

"Why this is delicious!" complimented the judge, after sampling a variety of food. "Do you know, Mrs. Churchill, I've never tasted such delicious food."

"Thank you."

"Is your wife a poor cook?" asked Michael.

"Michael!" retorted Ethel.

"That's all right," replied the judge, "she is; but you see, Michael, we have a housekeeper who also cooks our meals, fortunately."

Michael looked embarrassed, especially after being reprimanded.

Mrs. Churchill and the judge exchanged comments on the absence of Carey, and the judge assured her and the children that everything would now turn out all right. He was sure of it.

"Mrs. Churchill, you have a wonderful family. Your children must be a great comfort to you."

"They are a comfort to me," she replied, "I have been thrice blessed."

"Do you have any children, Judge Dixon?" asked Michael.

"Not a one, Michael," replied the judge, tenderly, "I guess I haven't deserved the blessing of children," he added, wiping away a tear, "you know, Michael, if your mother would permit, I'd like you to visit us next summer and give a violin recital at our home for our friends."

Michael looked pleased. He cast a glance toward his mother and smiled. The judge looked at his watch and was reminded that he must not miss the train which he was scheduled to take.

"Carey is so pleased with his watch," said Mrs. Churchill, being reminded of it.

"He deserved it. I hoped he would like it," replied the judge, "and now, Mrs. Churchill, just in case we do not return in time to stop the Squire from foreclosing the mortgage on your home, please take this envelope, and use the money if necessary, to make your mortgage payment."

"I can't take charity, Judge Dixon."

"It is not charity, Mrs. Churchill, it's just that I want to see justice done. Wouldn't you rather I hold the mortgage, than Squire Campbell?"

"Yes, of course," she replied.

"Then it's settled."

Mrs. Churchill smiled her approval, and the children looked grateful.

"Oh," said the judge, "here's another ten dollars, Michael, keep up those violin lessons," he said as he departed.

After the judge had gone, Michael, addressing Ethel and his mother, said, "You know, I like him!"

CHAPTER XXX CAREY'S WATCH DISCOVERED

N. Y.

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

Leaving Carey and Flint confined in their attic room, Jack hurried off to his friend and associate, Ebenezer Hinkel, who operated a small store in the village. The building which housed his business was his own home, however, his living quarters were now confined to two small rooms in the rear. Two rooms in the front had been carelessly redecorated for display and the storage of merchandise. Hand lettering on the window in the door identified his business as: EB. HINKEL - USED MERCHANDISE - BOUGHT AND SOLD - Please Knock.

A window shade had been drawn when Jack approached, and the word CLOSED could be seen beneath the sign. Jack's business with Eb was considered urgent to him, so he made his way to the rear door. Jack was admitted as a recognized friend, a regular patron, and a supplier of used merchandise.

"What brings you back again, Jack?" inquired Eb, looking curious. "Not another cent on the coat; it's soiled; It'll need to be cleaned before I can sell it."

"No, Eb; it's not about the coat. I've just bought the rights to a windfall, and I'll let you in on it."

"Business is slow. I probably can't afford it," replied Eb, cautiously, "didn't you bring it with you?" he inquired.

"Yes, I have it with me," answered Jack, producing slips of paper.

"What is that? Someone's worthless checks?" asked Eb, skeptically.

"No; a receipt for two hundred dollars, and an order assigning it to the bearer." Jack handed to two slips to Eb, proudly.

Eb examined them, and asked, "Where'd you get ahold of these?"

"I have contacts," replied Jack. "The source is confidential."

"How do you cut me in on this?"

"I'll sell it to you for half price."

Eb handed back the slips. "Not interested," he replied, with a decided expression.

"Why not?" asked Jack, disappointed.

"Too much risk; besides, there's expense involved, isn't there?"

"Well, all right," replied Jack, decisively, and offering to hand them back, "ninety dollars then; I'll stand the expense, and you take the risk."

Eb refused to take the papers. "I couldn't get away. The money's out of town, ain't it?"

"That's my very problem," said Jack. "I need the money now. I can't afford to wait. I'm willing to sell out cheap."

"Ten dollars, then; and I'll stand the expense, and I'll take the risk, too," offered Eb, slyly.

"You drive a hard bargain, Eb."

"Take it or leave it, Jack;" replied Eb, "that's my final offer."

"I'll take it then," said Jack, disappointed, but recalling his immediate thirst for brandy.

Eb accepted the papers, trying to con-

ceal the gleam in his eye. He had a plan whereby he might sell the papers himself for a neat profit. He was a shrewd man, and did drive a hard bargain. He was not destitute, and had no thirst for liquor. He ate frugal meals. He enjoyed his business, and his greatest enjoyment was received in converting a bargain into a profit. Eb accumulated ten crumpled dollar bills after searching several pockets. Jack pocketed the bills, and made a hurried departure. He turned his steps toward his favorite hangout, the neighborhood saloon, where he stayed until the saloon closed for the night. When Jack left, he carried two bottles of brandy with him. It would be a long week-end. The saloon would not open again until Monday morning.

As usual, when Jack came home supplied with brandy, the boys had a difficult time in arousing him the next morning. On this Sunday morning, the boys were unable to arouse him until a late hour. Although they were getting accustomed to the routine, it was almost unbearable, and there seemed to be no hope, yet their release was now but a matter of hours away.

The trip from Algerton to Chicago for Judge Dixon and Mr. Jamieson was an uneventful one, yet it was time consuming. They followed the same route taken by Carey and Flint. They stayed overnight in Buffalo; caught an early train the next morning and arrived in Chicago late that night. They spent the rest of the night in a hotel. About mid-morning after a hearty breakfast, and with instructions how to find the village of Clyde, they took a trolley in that direction. At the end of the trolley line, they alighted and stood for a minute to observe the surroundings. If they had but known, they were almost close enough, they could have called, and the boys might have heard them.

"What do you suggest we do first," asked Mr. Jamieson.

"I believe we should seek the village constable, or the office of the local law enforcement agency," was the answer.

"Of course. The center of the village seems to be further on up the street."

"Yes; let's proceed in that direction."

"How can the constable, or the agency help us?" asked Mr. Jamieson.

"Well, first, we will make inquiries; state our identity; and inform them of our mission in their village. We should be able to enlist their aid."

"I see; and our only clue is—"

"Not much of a clue; names are so easily changed, when seclusion is desired," added the judge.

"It is quite a large village," remarked Mr. Jamieson. "It will be like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack."

"Yes. We will make a house to house search if necessary, and as a last resort, but we will attack the problem first in a methodical manner."

"Excuse me, Judge, but this man approaching; why don't we ask him how to find the constable's office."

"Excellent idea;" said the judge, "make an inquiry."

"Excuse me, sir. Can you tell us how to find your constable's office?"

"Certainly; just turn right around the corner there. You'll see it."

They did as directed, and found the office. They entered and found a man seated on a stool behind a high bench. The room was furnished as a small court room with two globes on either side of the high bench. The man's only identification as a law enforcement officer was his nickel plated badge attached to his coat. The constable looked up from his papers and greeted them.

"Good morning, gentlemen; What can I do for you?"

"Good morning, officer," returned the judge. "I am Judge Dixon from Albany, New York, and this is Mr. Jamieson of Algerton, New York."

"How ja do, gentlemen. Name's Smith; Constable Smith. What brings you gentlemen here to Clyde?"

"We are in search of two boys who may be confined here--"

"Two boys, hey! What are they in for?"

"I don't think you understand, sir. They are not being held in jail; to our knowledge, at least. We believe they are being held captive."

"Captive, hey! Who's got 'em?"

"We don't know. We hoped you could furnish us with information regarding suspects who are known to have questionable characters," explained the judge.

"Well," returned the constable, "I guess we've got our share of 'em--same's any other suburb of Chicago; 'though most of 'em manage to stay beyond the reach of the law. How old be your boys?"

"About sixteen; I should say. But they are not the law breaker type. They are victims of treachery--possibly held as hostages."

"Hostages, hey! Be they your boys?"

"No, officer; they are not. We represent the law of New York State, and the law of the village of Algerton, New York. They are missing persons from our state, and we hope to gain custody of them and return them to their families."

"Missing persons, hey! I'll have to enter that in my daily report. How long they been missing?"

The judge was becoming exasperated, "About two weeks, I should say; but can't you make your report after you have tried to help us?"

"Guess I could, Judge. Usually have to enter a complaint first; you know."

"If you would, please. We are anxious to start our search."

"Search, hey! Want me to take you around? Don't like to close up the office during business hours."

"No," replied the judge, anxiously, "you need not accompany us, If you will furnish us with the possible location of questionable places where suspicious actions have been observed--places of bad report. Do you understand?"

"Don't get out much to observe--have to call in a woman to mind the office, when I do. Have to pay her fifty cents a day; even if it's only for an hour. Pretty steep, hey!"

"Don't bother," said the judge, "We wouldn't want to increase your expenses on our account."

"We do charge a fee for investigations," replied the constable, hopefully.

"We will try to get along by ourselves; thank you, sir," concluded the judge, as he turned toward the door.

"Don't forget to come back and enter a complaint," the constable reminded them, "I get a fee--"

The judge closed the door before the fee claiming constable had a chance to finish.

"Well," exclaimed Mr. Jamieson, "He wasn't much help; was he?"

"No," replied the judge, "We'll do much better by ourselves. He doesn't seem to have any knowledge of existing crime in his jurisdiction; unless it has been reported--for which he gets a fee," he added, smiling.

"Yes," answered Mr. Jamieson, with a grimace, "I hope he never falls a victim of his own reporting procedure."

"How is that?" asked the judge.

"Well, suppose someone reports the constable's house is on fire."

"I see. Reports before action."

"Yes; also an obstruction of justice."

They had been walking along while they were talking. Here, the judge stopped.

"We may as well start somewhere," exclaimed the judge. "This is a likely place for a start."

"Very well," agreed Mr. Jamieson. It was the house occupied by Eb Hinkel. The judge knocked at the door; and soon it was opened by the proprietor. He invited them in.

"Come in, gentlemen," he greeted them, smiling; but not recognizing them as his usual customers.

"Good morning, sir," returned the judge, identifying himself and Mr. Jamieson, "We are strangers to your village, and are on a mission on which we hope you will be able to help us," he continued.

"And what is that?" asked Eb.

"We are looking for two missing boys," replied the judge.

"Boys seldom come into my shop."

"Of course," acknowledged the judge, "but have you seen any strange boys in this area--that you didn't recognize?"

"No, sir; I don't get out much."

"I see. Would you mind if we looked around? Nice shop you have here."

"With pleasure, gentlemen. I have a nice variety of merchandise."

The judge was examining the contents of a glass showcase. Among the items displayed was a gold watch which attracted his attention.

"That's a nice watch. May I see it?"

"Certainly. It's a beauty, isn't it?"

The judge examined it carefully. He recognized the hunting case and engraving. He opened it. There was the inscription
---TO CAREY - FROM JOHN B. DIXON.

CHAPTER XXXI CAREY IS RESCUED

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

It was difficult for Judge Dixon to conceal his recognition of the watch in the presence of the merchant. He wished to call Mr. Jamieson's attention to the inscription without arousing suspicion. He turned toward the door and said, "Oh, is there someone at the door?"

Eb looked toward the door, and seeing no one, he walked over, opened the door and peered out. Immediately the judge pointed out the inscription to Mr. Jamieson, and held a finger to his lips as a signal for silence.

"You must have been mistaken," said Eb, returning from the door, "There is no one there."

"Sorry," replied the judge, "The watch appeals to me. How much do you want for it?"

"It's a nice watch; almost new, too," replied Eb, stalling, for he had not yet put a price tag upon it, "It's part of an estate, I'm told."

"Then you could identify the original owner?" the judge asked.

"Well, no, not exactly; one of the heirs borrowed some money on it to help pay the funeral expenses."

"Oh," replied the judge, "then perhaps it is not for sale."

"Oh, yes; it's for sale. Anything not called for by the owner in thirty days is put up for sale. In this case the owner is dead."

A dreadful thought, mused the judge. He hoped it was not so.

"Then if you will name your price," stated the judge, "I may be interested in it."

"It's a fine watch; all gold, too," responded Eb, hopeful of a nice profit. "The watchmaker is a well known reliable firm. It hasn't lost a second since I've had it. It'll keep good time for you."

"I'll give you twenty five dollars for it," said the judge, making an introductory offer.

Eb hesitated; he was thinking of asking fifty dollars for it.

"It's worth fifty," replied Eb.

"I know," said the judge, "but I can get a new one for that price."

"Forty dollars then," replied Eb.

"I'll take it," said the judge, "will you take my check?"

"Ought to have cash; you being a stranger and all."

"But I introduced myself; you do remember my name don't you?"

"Dixon, wasn't it? John Dixon?"

"That's right; however, I'll pay cash if you will make me out a bill of sale."

Eb, eager to make the sale reached for a pad of sale slips and filled one out.

The judge opened the watch, and said, "will you record the serial number of the watch please?"

Eb did so.

"Did you notice the inscription in this watch?" asked the judge.

"No," replied Eb, examining it, then looking crestfallen at the judge.

"Mister Hinkel, sir," began the judge,

"I am the donor of this watch, and I have reason to believe the recipient is not dead! We arrest you on suspicion of purchasing and offering stolen goods for sale."

"But I—"

"You will be given a fair trial under the laws of this state. Mr. Jamieson, I authorize you to take custody of this man, and turn him over to the authorities of this village. Now, Mister Hinkel, sir, tell us how to find the person who sold you this watch!"

Eb was a picture of defeat. "But I've run a respectable establishment. I'm being falsely accused. I—"

"The law of this state will hear your defensive statement. Now you must not obstruct justice by withholding the information we ask of you. I ask you again, how can we find this person?"

"But my shop. I cannot leave it unattended—"

"We will lock it up—and hold the key; in fact we will have it padlocked until a further search can be made."

Eb could think of no further resistance to his arrest. "The man's name is Jack. I'll show you where he lives."

"That's better. Now, my good man, don't cause a scene to arouse attention in the street. We will want to surprise this man Jack, if we can."

Mr. Jamieson escorted Eb through the door. The judge locked up the building, and with Eb's direction they departed up the street.

At a nearby corner, Eb paused, "Jack lives down that street," he said.

"All right; which house?" asked Mr. Jamieson.

"The one with the vacant lot on either side."

"Good," responded the judge, "Mister Jamieson, you escort Mister Hinkel, here, to the constable's office, and make the charge; after he is in custody, escort the constable to Mister Hinkel's place and see that it is padlocked."

"Very well; then what shall I do?"

"Return to this vicinity and take a station where you can watch anyone entering or leaving the house. In the meantime, I'll try to make an entry. Oh, yes, better not bring the constable with you. We don't want to attract attention to our movements."

"Very well, Judge."

Mr. Jamieson and Eb left the judge standing on the corner, and they soon reached the constable's office.

"Mornin' Eb," greeted constable Smith, "Mornin' sir," addressing his second greeting to Mr. Jamieson, "met up with Eb, did you, hey?"

"Yes, we've met."

"Eb able to help you, was he, hey?"

"Yes, he has been very helpful."

"Still need the assistance of the law though, hey?"

"Yes, we will need your assistance. I

ask that you take custody of this man. The charge is suspicion of purchasing and offering stolen goods for sale."

"Hey?"

Mr. Jamieson repeated the charge.

"But I thought you and that other feller was looking for a couple of runaway boys? Where's the other feller?"

"That," said Mr. Jamieson, "is unimportant at the moment. Please take this man into custody."

"Put Eb behind bars, you mean?"

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean."

"You'll have to sign a charge."

"Of course."

"Must be some mistake, ain't they Eb, hey?"

Eb did not reply.

"Guilty, or not guilty, Eb, hey?"

Eb stood mute.

"We shall not decide this case at this time," responded Mr. Jamieson, anxiously, "place this man in custody; get a padlock, and come with me."

"A padlock, hey; what for?"

"You are to lock up Mr. Hinkel's place, and be responsible for it until a further investigation can be made."

"An investigation, hey; who got you into this mess, Eb?"

"I warn you, Mister Hinkel," replied Mr. Jamieson, "not to answer any questions until you have counsel, for anything you say may be used against you."

After some considerable time and effort, Mr. Jamieson was able to arouse the constable into action; and after leaving Mr. Hinkel's premises, the constable was urged to return to his office. Mr. Jamieson took a position near Jack's home as instructed by Judge Dixon.

The judge approached the door of Jack's residence, knocked, and listened. There was no sound of response to his knock; but he did hear muffled voices from within. He tried the door. It was locked. He examined the windows. The blinds had been drawn. He tried the back door. It was also locked. There was a window that could be reached from the porch. He tried it and found that it would open. He raised the window and looked in. It was the kitchen window and he could see evidence of poor housekeeping. He called out, "Is there anyone here?"

Again, he heard muffled voices, and at times it sounded as if someone was calling for help. This was encouraging. With some difficulty he managed to get himself through the window. He looked about cautiously. He called again.

"Carey, are you here?"

More muffled voices answered his call.

The judge hurried through the house.

"Carey, where are you?"

He discovered the voices were much more audible near the bolted stair door. He drew the bolt and opened the door. Carey fell into his arms.

"Thank God!" exclaimed the judge, "You are safe!"

"Judge Dixon! You are heaven sent!" exclaimed Carey, "How did you find us?"

"Is?" questioned the judge, "Who is

this with you?"

"It's Flint. Squire Campbell's son."

"The Squire's son? Of course; yes, but, well you can explain later. I'm so relieved to find you alive. Are you well? Are you both all right?"

"Yes, I believe we are all right; although we've been confined to that attic room up there most of the time, and we haven't been very well fed--"

"I think I can understand that," interrupted the judge, remembering the condition of the kitchen, "but tell me, where is your captor; this man, Jack?"

"He is away most of the time. He is out now; but tell me, Judge Dixon, how is my mother, and my brother and sister?"

"They are well, Carey; but quite naturally they have worried some. Do you expect this man, Jack, back soon?"

"It is usually evening time when he returns; but tell me, Judge Dixon, how did you find us?"

"Your card, and this," said the judge, displaying Carey's watch, "I found this in a nearby pawnshop a little while ago."

"My card? and--Oh, my watch!" exclaimed Carey, "Oh, I'm so glad to get it back. Jack took it from me."

"And my overcoat!" added Flint.

"And our money, too," added Carey.

"I'm not surprised to hear it;" the judge replied, "we may be able to recover your coat, my boy," addressing Flint, "but the money may not be so easy to recover."

"He has spent most of it for drink, no doubt;" Carey remarked, "he brought in very little food for us."

"You must have suffered. Has he harmed you in any way?"

"No, except for confinement upstairs, and having to sleep on the floor. When we were allowed to come down, we were continually at the mercy of his whip. This one," said Carey, picking up the whip.

"The beast!" declared the judge, "He shall be made to answer for his dastardly actions."

The judge consulted with them for some time; answering their questions and heard their story in great detail. He occasionally looked out of the covered window and was relieved to see Mr. Jamieson at his post across the street. He cautioned the boys to remain out of sight when Jack returned, and let him enter without any suspicion. He assured the boys that he and Mr. Jamieson, stationed outside, would be able to overpower and capture Jack. He was sympathetic to their hunger, for the wait might be a long one. He promised them a feast as soon as possible, and a good night's rest in a comfortable bed.

Suddenly, a step was heard at the door. A key was heard to turn in the lock. The boys moved back, and the judge stepped forward. The door opened and the bewildered Jack stood facing the judge.

"Jack, or John Doe, or whatever your name is, I arrest you for confinement and cruelty to these two boys, and robbery of their personal possessions!"

Jack, stunned from the sudden surprise, turned to escape, but dashed into the open arms of Mr. Jamieson.

CHAPTER XXXII CAREY HELPS CAPTURE JACK

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"Not so fast, my good man," said Mr. Jamieson, addressing his remarks to Jack who was squirming to release himself from the clutches of his captor. Jack was strong, and more than a match for Mr. Jamieson, and realizing his predicament, he exerted the fullest of his strength.

Judge Dixon, now aware of the uneven match of strength, gave what assistance he could. Neither the judge or Mr. Jamieson were muscularly able to defend themselves against brute strength. Mr. Jamieson was ably prepared to enter into a battle of wits, but the judge was unprepared for an offense of this kind. His command, as a man of authority, in this case was unheeded.

Carey and Flint moved to the doorway to observe the fracas. In their weakened condition, due to a lack of proper food and rest, they realized their uselessness to help. Flint had taken a stand behind Carey. Carey looked back over Flint's shoulder, spied the whip and dashed into the room to get it. He returned with a good grip on the handle and a look of determination on his face.

The whip was at least eight feet long and useless at close quarters, but if Jack succeeded in freeing himself, Carey was determined to use it. Carey snapped the whip in the air. Its familiar crack caused Jack to look up. The judge and Mr. Jamieson also relaxed their hold and turned to identify the noise. Jack slipped loose from their hold and stepped back. Carey shouted a warning to Jack.

"Stay where you are, or you shall be whiplashed!" he commanded.

Jack turned in an attempt to escape, Carey aimed the whip at his abdomen and swung with all his might. Jack doubled up, and fell writhing in pain.

"Stop!" screamed Jack.

Mr. Jamieson and the judge once more pounced upon him.

"Stand aside, gentlemen," commanded Carey. "This man knows what this whip will do; and he knows now that I will use it if necessary. I think he will listen to reason now."

The judge and Mr. Jamieson stood up and stepped aside. Jack managed to get on his feet rubbing his abdomen, and he had a painful expression upon his face.

"Thank you, Carey," said the judge, "if it hadn't been for you, I believe he would have escaped from us. Now, my man," he continued, addressing his remarks to Jack, "are you aware of the charges we make against you?"

Jack did not answer.

"You will be escorted to the constable's office and confined for the present on these charges. Then we shall arrange to return you to the State of New York."

Jack looked up curiously, but did not answer. A small crowd had been attracted by the confusion. They were quiet but curious. One man stepped up to the judge and said, "We have sent for the constable. Is there any thing we can do?"

"No," replied the judge, politely, "except to try and disperse this crowd of people. We shall not need any witnesses."

"Move along," the judge commanded of Jack.

Jack moved along slowly, with Carey and the judge close behind. In the street ahead, the constable and a few followers were seen to be approaching.

"Hi there, Jack;" greeted the constable, "helped these gentlemen round up their run away boys, did ye, hey?"

Jack did not answer.

"Plan to lock 'em up, do you, hey?" the constable asked of the judge.

"No, not the boys;" replied the judge, "it's this man here, that we wish placed in confinement."

"Who, Jack?" asked the constable, showing confusion.

"Yes; we shall make the charge in your office, if you don't mind."

The bewildered constable lead the way with the little group following him. Another group of curious people followed at a distance. The first entered the office, the other remained outside.

The prisoner and the judge were placed side by side by the constable in front of his high bench. He himself entered through a gate in the railing and mounted a high stool behind the bench. He looked down upon those before him.

"Constable Hi Smith presiding," he began, "for the Village of Clyde. Visitors take your seats—and keep quiet, or I'll clear the room." He waited impatiently, then continued.

"The bench recognizes before the bar, a colleague from the State of—where is it you're from, hey?"

"New York; proceed, your Honor."

"Hey? Oh, yes—New York—court will come to order. State your name—it's for the records, you know, judge."

The judge complied in a dignified manner, but smiling slightly.

"Will the prisoner state his name."

Jack stood mute.

"Come on, Jack, state your name," pleaded the constable, "got to have it for the records—hey?"

The judge had signaled for attention, "May I suggest, your Honor, that you bring in an identifying witness from outside."

"Have to pay them fifty cents if I do; come on, Jack, identify yourself—hey?"

The judge had signaled again. "Would your Honor like to charge the prisoner with contempt of court?"

"Hey? Oh, yes; Jack, I fine you—"

"My name is Jack B. Trade," Jack confessed, sullenly.

"It is? Don't know as you ever told me

before. Jack. Can't blame you none though."

There was a snicker from the room.

"Court will come to order," said the constable, with a stern look, "now," he continued, looking down upon the judge, "what are the charges?"

"This man is charged with confining these two boys," pointing out Carey and Flint, "against their wishes, cruelty and robbery."

"Is this true, Jack?" he asked.

"I took them in; provided them with food and shelter. I was reimbursed for my services," replied Jack, cautiously.

"Well now," he replied, "that doesn't sound like a crime to me."

"Your Honor, sir," interrupted the judge, "the prisoner's statement sounds commendable, to be sure; but there are extenuating circumstances. He took them in by force; confined them behind locked doors; prohibiting their liberty; provided only the bare necessities of food, which they were forced to prepare themselves; failed to provide proper bedding; robbed them of their money, clothing, and their personal possessions; and furthermore forced them to obey his commands with threats of punishment from this—weapon—this whip. Your Honor, these boys will testify to my statement; and I myself released them from a confinement of about two weeks."

"Is this true, Jack?" the constable asked again.

Jack gave no reply.

"Your Honor," interrupted the judge, "the correct terminology is guilty, or not guilty."

"Hey? It is? Oh, all right then; Jack, are you guilty, or not guilty of the charges?"

Jack still did not reply.

"Your Honor, sir," said the judge, "I have a further charge against this man. He is wanted for questioning in the State of New York. The charge is fraud. I ask that you authorize his release in my custody, that I may return him to the State of New York for questioning."

The constable being unfamiliar with such proceedings, asked to recess his court until he could consult with a higher authority. This resulted in the prisoner being assigned to a cell, and at the judge's recommendation, he was not placed in the same cell with Eb Hinkel. The judge arranged to meet with the constable again in an hour to search Eb's store for Flint's coat. Then the group went in search for a place to give the boys a good meal.

"Are you famished, boys?" asked Mr. Jamieson, as they were seated around a table in a private dining room of a local boarding house.

They gave an affirmative answer in unison, after halting long enough to give a legible answer. Then Carey continued, "We are acting like pigs, I suppose; This is a feast for kings, compared to our recent bill of fare."

"Don't eat too much tonight, boys," remarked Judge Dixon, "you mustn't make yourself sick by gorging your food."

"You're right, Judge Dixon," said Carey, pushing his plate away, "however, it doesn't sound sensible somehow, that we survived our past food, then get sick on this delicious food."

"Of course the difference being quantity, and not because of quality in this case," added Mr. Jamieson, with a smile.

"Of course, Mr. Jamieson," replied Carey, then continued, "may I ask if you were confronted with as much difficulty in placing this—Mr. Hinkel—under arrest as did Judge Dixon with Jack?"

"Well, not exactly, however, I hasten to add that it was not due to my skill before the bar, but rather that the constable was just about to leave for lunch."

"And a lot of patience is needed to cope with Mr. Smith in his judicious capacity," added the judge, "well," he continued, addressing Flint, "my boy, if you have had quite enough, perhaps we should meet with Mr. Smith and identify your coat at Mr. Hinkel's store."

"Yes, I'm ready, sir," replied Flint, as he tidied up with his napkin, then he asked, "do you suppose there will be any chance of getting back our receipt for the money we left in Michigan?"

"We shall try, my boy; if not, we shall try to retrieve the money without it."

The little group now returned to the constable's office. The constable had just returned with papers authorizing the release of Jack in the custody of the judge.

"Will you please search the prisoner, Mr. Smith," asked the judge, "we are looking for a receipt for two hundred dollars, believed to be on his person."

The constable did so, but found no papers answering the description.

"Mr. Trade," began the judge, "what have you done with the receipt we are looking for? Have you disposed of it?"

"Yes. I don't have it any more."

"Judge Dixon, sir," interrupted Carey, "he may have disposed of it through Mr. Hinkel."

"Of course. Mr. Smith, will you search Mr. Hinkel for the missing receipt?"

Mr. Smith found many papers, and some money in Eb's pockets, all of which was returned to him, but no such receipt was found.

"Mr. Hinkel, have you disposed of the missing receipt?" asked the judge.

"Yes. I don't have it."

"Perhaps it is in your shop?"

"No, it is not."

"Do you have the coat which belongs to this boy, which was sold to you by Mr. Trade?"

"No, I do not."

"Did you sell it?"

"Yes, I did."

"Did you also sell the receipt?"

"Yes, I did."

The judge turned to the constable, "Mr. Smith, this man may be lying, I ask you to accompany us in a search of his store."

The prisoners were left in their cells during the constable's absence. The little group proceeded in the direction of Eb's store with mixed feelings.

CHAPTER XXXIII HOMEWARD BOUND

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

After a thorough search of Eb Hinkel's store, his statement proved to be true. Flint's coat and the receipt were not found. Flint was disappointed.

"It is unfortunate that we are unable to recover your coat, Flint, my boy;" said the Judge, "we can demand restitution of equivalent value, but we cannot confiscate his funds for a new coat now. We must await authorization from the local court."

The Judge instructed Constable Smith to deliver Jack to him at a Chicago depot on the next morning. Then they departed for their hotel rooms. The absence of the boys was explained to the hotel clerk and their luggage was restored. Their suits were freshly pressed while the boys took much needed baths and changed into fresh clothing. Then they ate another late meal in the hotel dining room.

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Jamieson, "we should send a telegram to the hotel in Michigan, explaining the circumstances."

"And notify our folks that we have been found," added Carey.

"An excellent suggestion;" replied the Judge, "do so at once, Mr. Jamieson."

The boys looked weary, and were allowed to retire to their bed. Early the next morning after a good breakfast they departed for the depot. Constable Smith, with a freshly polished badge, and his prisoner handcuffed to him, was waiting for them. Mr. Jamieson was assigned custody of Jack and they all boarded the train for their homeward trip. In the late afternoon the Judge and the boys left the train at Kalamazoo, but Mr. Jamieson, with his prisoner, was instructed to continue the journey. Upon entering the hotel where Flint's valise had been left, the Judge identified himself as the sender of the telegram.

"Sir, do you recognize these boys?"

"Yes, sir; they were our overnight guests a couple of weeks ago."

"And do you recall anything of importance about their departure?"

"Yes, sir; they left a bag containing two hundred dollars in our care until their return."

"Good; and you received our telegram last night?"

"No, sir; it came this morning."

"Oh! Has anyone attempted to redeem the money?"

"Yes, sir. I understand a man was here last night to claim the money."

"Oh," exclaimed the Judge, looking disappointed, "then we are too late."

"No, sir; the money is still here."

"What!" cried the Judge, "I don't understand?" but he looked somewhat relieved.

"The night clerk does not have the combination to our large storage safe," explained the clerk, "and he was instructed

to return today. He protested, however. He said he would be away all day, and preferred to get the money at night when he returned. That would be tonight."

"Good. Then we may be able to catch the rascal. He has no rightful claim to the money. The money still belongs to these boys," returned the Judge.

"They are the same boys, without a doubt, who left the money in my care," added the clerk.

"Of course," replied the Judge, "Now I have a plan whereby we may be able to catch the criminal. May we have your cooperation?"

"Readily, sir."

"Good. First we shall need a room for our overnight stay. We will take the money now and place it in our room; then we will replace the money with something heavy."

"May I suggest sand, sir? We have some sand at the rear of the hotel."

"Good. We will let the man claim the money; then we will capture him when the transfer is made."

"As you say, sir. The night clerk will come on duty at six o'clock. You can depend upon his full cooperation."

The money bags were taken to their room and emptied. Then the bags were filled with sand and replaced in the valise and again put back in the hotel safe. A policeman was called and instructed to be near at hand when he was needed. The hotel clock struck six o'clock as they were eating their evening meal. Shortly, the night clerk came in and was given his instructions.

"Will you describe the man please," the Judge asked of the night clerk.

"He was rather tall, appeared to be middle aged, and had a heavy beard."

"Is there an evening train?" inquired the Judge.

"There is one Chicago bound at seven-thirty," returned the clerk.

"Then it is my guess that our man will show up just before train time," said the Judge.

"A logical deduction, sir," replied the clerk.

"Carey, you and Flint take seats across the lobby on that leather couch, and pretend to be reading a newspaper; so he cannot see your faces. It is not likely that he would recognize you, but an inquisitive expression on your faces may cause him to distrust you."

"Very well, sir," replied Carey.

"He should not recognize me, so I will take a seat near the desk, with my back to him."

It was now only six-thirty, but they took their stations in order to be ready. Carey seemed to be relaxed. However, Flint appeared to be restless. It was a busy time of day. Several people entered and left the lobby. Some consulted with the clerk, obviously on routine business. It was dark outside. The lamps in the

hotel lobby had been lit for some time. Several people passed by outside, and occasionally some looked in through the large glass windows. Each person that peered through the window, Flint suspected was the man they were waiting for, and each time, a cold chill ran up his back bone.

"Do you suppose the man will have a gun?" asked Flint, nervously.

"Yes, it is possible," replied Carey, in a manner that offered no reassurance to Flint.

"If he has a gun," added Carey, "he may escape; but not with our money."

Flint looked relieved. There was at least a ray of hope that the man would not shoot them dead. Carey could not see the clock in the lobby. He looked at his watch. It was seven-fifteen. Carey, himself, grew tense. It was about time for the expected arrival. Two men came in during the next few minutes, but both went straight to the stairs and ascended. Another man entered; tall and aged. This could be the man, thought Carey. The man stopped just inside the door and looked around as if hunting for someone. Then he left again. Still another man entered with the same description. "The first could have been an accomplice," thought Carey, "to see if the coast was clear."

The man went straight to the desk and consulted with the clerk. His back was turned to the boys. Carey lowered his paper and nudged Flint. Flint peered over his paper. What he saw excited him.

"That's my coat!" shouted Flint.

The man turned around in the direction of the voice, became alarmed and started for the door. Carey being closer to the entrance than the man, sprang forward to block his path.

"Out of my way, you young whipper-snapper, or I will bowl you over!"

Flint seemed frozen to his seat, but Carey with a determined look, held his position. The Judge was on his feet in a flash and grabbed the man.

"Flint! Call the policeman, quick!" shouted the Judge, "Now, my man," he added, addressing his prisoner, "calm down; you are no match for us!"

Flint, aroused to action at last, hastened to call the policeman. Carey assisted the Judge by grabbing the man's legs. The hotel clerk stood close by in case he was needed. The man had struggled to free himself, but was now convinced that his attempts were useless. Flint and the policeman came running up. Carey released his hold and stood up. He looked the man over thoroughly.

"I recognize you," said Carey, calmly, addressing the man, "you are the so-called thespian! Flint, this is your old friend Mike."

Flint looked perplexed, showing some disbelief. To prove his statement, Carey yanked at the man's beard and it came off in his hand. "Do you believe it now?" asked Carey, of Flint.

"It's Mike all right," answered Flint,

"but I don't understand?"

The Judge was also perplexed. "Boys," he asked, "do you know this man?"

"Yes, sir;" volunteered Carey, "he is the same man that robbed Flint of this same money before."

The Judge looked amazed.

The policeman looked closely at the man, "Perhaps I can explain, sir," he said, addressing the Judge. "This is the man all right. The boys dropped the charges when the man promised to return the money; however, upon learning he might be wanted in New York State, we held him three days. He was not claimed, so we were forced to release him."

"But how did he get my coat and the receipt?" asked Flint.

They all turned to the man for his answer; but he offered no explanation.

The Judge decided to attempt an appeal to the man's better judgement.

"Sir," he began, "the charge against you is an attempt to obtain money under false pretenses. This charge added to your first offense will be a serious one. The law will deal severely with you. Give us a reasonable explanation and I will ask leniency for you."

The man hesitated as if undecided what to do. He lifted his face, shrugged his shoulders, and looked the Judge squarely in the face. In his own estimation, the jig was up. He cleared his throat and began, resignedly.

"I was given the coat by an acquaintance in Illinois, and the cost of the fare here, if I would recover the money for him. He said the coat and the money were part of an estate."

"Did he expect that you would really return with the money?" asked Carey.

The man hung his head again.

"There is honor among thieves, Carey, my boy," the Judge replied. "But didn't you realize the chances you would be taking?" the Judge asked of the man, "And didn't you guess that it was the boys' money you were trying to recover?"

"Yes," was Mike's reply, "I knew I would be taking a risk. That's why I came at night. I didn't believe the night clerk would remember me. How is it the boys happen to be here? Did Eb double cross me? Did he send me here to be caught?"

"No, I don't think so," replied the Judge, "Eb has been arrested. He couldn't produce the receipt, so we presumed he sent someone after it."

"If it hadn't been for that cussed boy and his coat; I might have gotten away with it, too!" Mike added.

"You would have been welcome to the contents of the satchel, but we are pleased to recover the coat," replied the Judge.

Mike looked confused.

The Judge turned and addressed the clerk, "Give the man the contents of the satchel---if he wants it."

The clerk returned to the safe and brought back the valise and presented two bags of sand.

CHAPTER XXXIV ETHEL BREAKS AN ARM

BY FORREST CAMPBELL



Mike, in disbelief, thrust out a hand quickly, hoping to feel hard silver dollars, but felt only the soft sand. His hopeful countenance changed to dismay.

"So this is what I risked my neck for."

"Yes—Mike, you took a risk and failed again," replied the Judge, "fate was against you. Need I remind you that honesty is the best policy?"

Mike hung his head. He had no answer.

"Officer, take him away. I have promised leniency. After consulting with the boys I will advise your superiors of our decision."

"Well, boys," said the Judge, a little later, "what do you think should be done with our friend, Mike?"

"He may have set the school on fire," reminded Flint.

"Yes," replied the Judge, "we could have him held again for questioning. He might be returned for accusation and trial. He might be convicted of trespassing, but perhaps he had no intention of willfully destroying the school property."

"That's so," agreed Carey.

"If we make any charge," reminded the Judge, "we shall have to appear against him tomorrow. Do you wish to do that?"

"No," said Flint, thinking of his own involvement, and possible embarrassing admissions.

"No," said Carey, anxious to return home as quickly as possible.

"Then we shall drop the charges," said the Judge, "after all, we do have Jack in our custody. If Mike persists in his life of crime, he shall no doubt be caught again soon."

"What is the date?" asked Carey.

"It is Tuesday, the thirteenth," replied the Judge, "Why?"

"Our mortgage payment is due on the fifteenth," replied Carey anxiously.

"Will we be home by then?"

"Yes," replied the Judge, understanding Carey's concern, "if we are not delayed."

"It doesn't look as if we shall be able to make the payment to—to your father," said Carey, addressing Flint.

Flint, thinking of his own predicament, expressed no sympathy, but replied, "I'll be in for it too, but at least I'm returning the money I took. I don't know what my father will say."

"Your father, my boy," said the Judge, "should be glad to have you returned, and he is indebted to Carey for your return, and the return of his money. I shall try to see that justice is done, but we shall have to wait and see what develops."

"Sir," said Flint, addressing the Judge, "is it because of us—Carey and I—that you are charging Jack with fraud? Are you concerned about the money he took from Carey, I mean?"

"I am not at liberty to say, my boy," replied the Judge, "the order to return him comes from an unidentified and confidential source."

"Did my father order his return?" asked Flint.

"Not to my knowledge. Why do you ask?"

"Well, Jack claims he knows my father."

"He does?"

"Yes, he claims they were once in business together."

"Is that right?"

"Yes. Then you didn't know?"

"No, I didn't, my boy. I know nothing about your father except his business affairs with Carey's mother."

"I don't know much about my father either. I was always closer to my mother."

"Do you have some hesitancy about returning to your father, my boy?"

"Yes; some."

"Tell me again; why was it that you left your father?"

"I was despondent, I guess. My father didn't understand me. I had no friends at school. My allowance was not large enough to suit me, and I wasn't doing so well at school. Leaving home seemed to be the answer. I guess it wasn't."

"I think I understand you, my boy, though your father didn't seem to. You needed love and attention from your father, after your mother died. There may have been some resentment to your father's attitude since then. Am I right?"

"Perhaps. My mother always called me Flint, but my father resented it."

"Why did your mother call you Flint?"

"It was her name before she married my father."

"I see; and you have a certain fear of your father, especially at this time."

"Yes. I suppose I deserve the punishment I will get, but I don't think I will be satisfied to remain at home under the circumstances."

"Of course. Perhaps it will be best for you if you do not go home at once; at least until your father has become reconciled—shall I say—until his temper has abated somewhat. It is apparent that he needs counsel regarding a harmonious relationship between father and son."

"But where would I stay? I have no real close friends."

"I've always been willing to be your friend, Flint—if you would let me," said Carey.

Flint looked embarrassed. He had never treated Carey as a friend, nor even encouraged friendship between them. He had always felt that Carey was beneath his social level. He had always tried to keep Carey in his proper place as a social outcast, due to his poverty. He had always thought of Carey as his servant, and would have willingly purchased his services, if Carey would have submitted to his wishes. He knew now, after the past two weeks in Carey's company, that such a friendship was to be desired. He felt humiliation. A tear came to his eye.

The Judge, having some knowledge of the past differences between the boys, sensed

the birth of a new relation between them. He also sensed that Carey was about to invite Flint to his own home. This would never do, since on the day of their arrival, the Squire was quite apt to be at Carey's home.

"I'm sure you boys will now become fast friends, and get along very well together from now on," said the Judge, "but I believe it will be best for Flint if we ask Mr. Jamieson to provide temporary quarters for you, Flint, my boy."

Flint looked relieved. At least, the discipline he expected would be delayed; and perhaps lessened after his father learned the stolen money was being returned. And so, after the excitement of the evening wore off and their plans well prepared for their arrival in Algerton, they went to bed. They departed the next morning on an early train and arrived in Buffalo late at night. They found they could not get a train for Algerton until the next morning, so they stayed over night again in a hotel.

It was Tuesday in Algerton. The Judge and Mr. Jamieson had been gone three days without any word from them. The new-born hope at the Churchill home was turning to despair again. The Squire had not been seen in the village for several days. The repairs on the school building were about completed, and it was scheduled to open again the following week. It had rained the day before, preventing the usual Monday wash-day. At the Churchill home Ethel had done the entire family washing and was preparing to take a large basket of clothes out to be hung on the line. Holding the large basket before her with both hands, she stepped from the porch to the top step. As she did so, the step sank under the weight of her and the basket. She lost her balance and fell forward. The basket overturned and some of the clothes spilled out. Ethel lay stunned for a moment. As she fell, she had attempted to protect herself by thrusting out her left arm to prevent her fall. She tried to right herself by using this same arm. It did not respond to her attempt. Something was wrong.

"Mother! Mother; Michael! Come quick!" cried Ethel.

Mrs. Churchill and Michael heard her cry, and came rushing to the door. Mrs. Churchill dashed out onto the small porch.

"Mother!" cried Ethel, "Stop! Watch out for that top step! It's broken!"

Mrs. Churchill gave it a hasty glance and proceeded cautiously down to Ethel's side. Michael fairly flew down the steps.

"Ethel, dear!" sobbed Mrs. Churchill, "What happened?"

"First, help me up," pleaded Ethel.

Michael was already in action. He tenderly turned Ethel over and assisted her to a sitting position.

"Ethel, are you all right?" sobbed Mrs. Churchill, in fright.

"My arm," said Ethel, "I think it's broken."

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed her mother, "Michael, go after the doctor at once!"

Michael was off like a shot. Mrs. Churchill helped Ethel to her feet and escorted her to the porch where she could sit down. Mrs. Churchill examined the arm.

"Oh, dear! I fear it is broken Ethel, dear. Are you in pain?"

"My heart is thumping; and I feel all jittery; but surprisingly enough, my arm doesn't hurt. It just feels funny."

"Oh, if I could only get you in the house. You mustn't try to climb those steps again. Do you feel like walking to the front door?"

"Just let me sit here a few minutes, until my nerves calm down. Isn't it a shame about those clothes. Some of them will have to be washed over."

"Don't you worry about the clothes. Michael and I will attend to them. I wonder what happened to those steps?"

"They have been wobbly for the last few days," said Ethel, "but I had forgotten about them."

"If Carey were only here; I'm sure he could fix them. Do you feel like walking now?"

"Yes. I think so."

Ethel was assisted up the front steps and through the door with great care; made comfortable in a rocker with a pillow under her arm. Mrs. Churchill provided smelling salts and a drink of water to comfort her. Michael and the doctor arrived in a short time. He found that Ethel's arm was broken between the elbow and the shoulder. He took her in his buggy to his office; set her arm and applied a splint. Her arm was supported in a sling. He returned her to her home and advised her to be extremely careful for a few days and give the broken bone a chance to knit.

Michael assisted his mother with the washing and also tried to think of ways to comfort his sister. Ethel remembering that no one had yet gone for the morning mail, asked Michael to go and see. Michael soon returned, breathlessly.

"You have a telegram, mother!"

"Oh, dear! I hope it isn't bad news."

"Open it, mother," exclaimed Ethel, excitedly.

With trembling hands, she succeeded in extracting and unfolding the yellow sheet before her. Her beaming smile revealed good news.

"What does it say?" chimed Ethel and Michael in unison.

"Thank God, Carey is safe!" exclaimed Mrs. Churchill. "It's from Mr. Jamieson, children. I'll read it to you."

"It's dated Monday-evening," she informed them, then continued, "Carey has been found. All is well. Coming home immediately."

Michael, standing near Ethel, smiling, but with tears of joy in his eyes, threw his arms around her and kissed her.



The atmosphere of gloom in the Churchill home quickly changed to one of joy. The anticipation of Carey's announced return was a tonic to them all. A similar message addressed to the Squire announcing the return of Flint was still at the telegraph office undelivered, since the Squire was not at home. He had departed early that morning to attend an auction sale in a nearby rural neighborhood. As was his custom, he left not a stone unturned to add another dollar to his wealth by his craftiness; but always at the expense of the unsuspecting people of the community.

Arriving early at the scene of the auction, he consulted with the clerk and the auctioneer.

"I expect to make many purchases today, and will no doubt cause the bidding to run higher than usual," he announced, "and -- ah--many of my purchases will be purely for speculation. If I find I am over-supplied, I may decide to try and resell, however, I will take that risk. I will guarantee you that I will purchase at least five hundred dollars worth of your merchandise; but for this guarantee I shall ask for a ten per cent discount on anything that I might buy. If you are interested in my proposal, I will give you my check now in the amount of four hundred and fifty dollars as my guarantee. Is my offer agreeable to you?"

The offer was an unusual one. The clerk and the auctioneer consulted with the owner who was aware of the Squire's cunning manner, but found it extremely difficult to refuse advance payment and a guarantee of four hundred and fifty dollars worth of his live stock, farm equipment and household items. They accepted his check and his terms. After the sale at which the Squire had bought over the subscribed amount, he singled out the bidders who had opposed him. His remarks went something like this:

"I find I have over-bought and I am willing to let you have the merchandise you wanted for the exact amount I paid for it." In this manner the Squire was able to dispose of all the merchandise he had purchased and went away with a nice profit for the day of over fifty dollars. Upon his return to Algerton, he learned of the announced return of his son. There were no other details in the message. He was somewhat relieved of his concern for his boy, but was perhaps more concerned about the missing two hundred dollars. He had entertained little hope of ever recovering the money and still believed in the theory that the stranger had robbed him. His thoughts turned to suitable ways to punish his son. He had not yet learned of Carey's expected arrival.

Mr. Jamieson, with his prisoner, arrived on Wednesday. He placed Jack in the local jail without arousing suspicion of his identity. He then went to the

Churchill home and explained the details to Mrs. Churchill and the children.

"Yes, Judge Dixon and the boys should arrive sometime tomorrow," he said, "but I am not permitted to reveal all the details at this time; and I must warn you that complete secrecy is desired until after the Judge arrives."

He was assured of their cooperation but was questioned as to Carey's health and why he had not written as he had promised to do.

"You shall know the details tomorrow, and I assure you that Carey would have written if he had been able to do so. Now, Ethel, tell me about this accident of yours."

Ethel did so, assisted by comments from her mother and Michael.

"She had promised that she would be willing to give her right arm to hear of Carey's safety," said Michael, in a jovial mood.

"My prayers were answered though, for we got your message right afterward, Mr. Jamieson," Ethel rejoined, smiling, then added, "and I've still got my right arm for you, Michael," she said, raising her arm, indicating a slap, but which developed into an embrace.

Mr. Jamieson looked at his watch, excused himself and hurried home to his own family.

The Judge, Flint and Carey stepped off the train at Algerton on Thursday morning. The Judge whisked Flint into a waiting carriage and directed the driver to take them to Mr. Jamieson's home. Carey was instructed to go home immediately and remain there for the expected visit of the Squire. Carey took a look around. Everything seemed the same. In some ways it seemed like awakening from a dream. He was tempted to stop in and say hello to Mr. Harris, but that could wait. Thoughts of home caused him to quicken his steps. His familiar step on the porch was recognized. Michael swung open the door and embraced his big brother.

"Michael! Gee, it's good to see you again; Mother, dear!" he added, thrusting out one arm to receive her embrace. "And Ethel; Ethel! What in the world?"

"That can wait. Let me look at you, my dear boy," said his mother with tears of joy in her eyes.

"Oh, mother, I'm so glad to be home again; I've missed you all so very much!"

"We've missed you too, son; and we were worried about you. Are you sure you are all right?"

"Yes, I'm all right, mother dear, but the details are a long story. Now, Ethel," he added, trying to include her in his embrace, "what has happened to you?"

Ethel, who had been waiting for an opportunity, entwined her good arm about

Carey, received his affectionate kiss and returned one of her own.

"It's a sacrificial price she had to pay for your safe return," cut in Michael, gleefully.

"Oh, Michael, be still;" ordered Ethel, "my prayers for your safe return have been answered though."

"Sacrifice? Prayers?" inquired Carey, "Will someone please explain?"

"Ethel broke her arm on the back steps, Carey, dear," explained his mother, "But the details can wait, Carey. Tell us all about your long absence."

Carey revealed the entire story from beginning to end, including the identity of Jack, and his past association with Squire Campbell; but cautioned them that the details must not be revealed until after the Squire's expected visit.

"Has the Squire bothered you about the mortgage while I've been away?" asked Carey.

"He called only once; and seemed determined as ever to foreclose on the mortgage," his mother replied.

"We can't meet the payment; can we, mother?" asked Carey, dejectedly.

"Yes, we can;" replied Mrs. Churchill, "the Judge has provided a way." Then she proceeded to explain that if the worst came to the worst, the Judge would hold the mortgage.

"I see;" answered Carey, "well, that's temporary relief anyway; isn't it?"

"Yes. It is a blessing."

"Oh, yes. Now will someone tell me about this sacrifice; and prayers answered. How did this happen, Ethel?"

"Ethel said she'd give her right arm for your safe return," offered Michael.

"Michael, don't tease your sister."

"It's true though;" cut in Ethel, "and we got your message right after it happened."

"What did happen?" asked Carey.

Ethel proceeded to explain the details, assisted from time to time by her mother, and Michael.

"The back steps, was it?" asked Carey, "I didn't know there was anything wrong with them," he added.

"Yes," replied his mother, "won't you examine them and see if you can fix them?"

"I'll take a look at once, mother dear."

Carey's plans were interrupted by a knock at the door.

"The Squire!" all three exclaimed with bated breath. But it was not the Squire, they found; much to their relief. It was Judge Dixon and Mr. Jamieson. Mrs. Churchill expressed her appreciation to the Judge for his assistance, and he responded with an expression of concern for her anxiety, and for Ethel's condition. Then he instructed them how to receive the Squire when he arrived. He explained that Mr. Jamieson had arranged to detain the Squire until after his noon-time meal.

"Now," said the Judge, "we have some time before the Squire arrives; shall we

all examine the scene of Ethel's unfortunate accident?"

The group, led by Michael, went out the front door and walked around to the back steps.

"See how the top step has sunk down," said Ethel, pointing, "that's where I met my downfall."

"The support for the top step seems to have slipped from its foundation," said Carey.

"Perhaps two of us could lift the steps back upon it," suggested the Judge.

The Judge and Mr. Jamieson took positions on each side and lifted the steps. Carey attempted to place the supports back upon the foundation, but the wooden supports were warped and weakened and would not rest upon the foundation.

"Perhaps the old supports should be replaced with new lumber," suggested Mr. Jamieson.

"You may be right," agreed the Judge, "let's turn the steps over and examine them."

After this was done, it was found that the supports should be replaced. In the mean time Mrs. Churchill was conscious of an accumulation of dirt and leaves covering the foundation.

"Michael," said Mrs. Churchill, "reach that broom there on the porch and sweep away that mess of leaves."

Michael followed instructions industriously, pleased to be asked to take part in the project. When the accumulation had been swept away, a slab of concrete, or possibly stone was revealed with the porch supports resting on each end.

"I believe it is stone," said Mrs. Churchill, "and such a large one it is."

Ethel was standing nearby, and her attention was drawn to it by her mother's remark. Ethel gasped. She put her hand to her mouth to stifle her amazement.

"Ethel!" cried her mother, "Whatever is the matter?"

"The stone!" cried Ethel, excitedly.

Her outcry caught the attention of the others.

"What about the stone?" asked her mother in alarm.

"I do believe it is the Alger stone! Yes, I am almost positive."

The Judge looked bewildered. Mr. Jamieson looked at Carey, seeking his opinion as expressed in his eyes. Carey dropped to his knees to examine the stone more carefully.

"Oh, you must be mistaken, Ethel," said Mrs. Churchill, looking relieved, having suspected a snake.

"What makes you so positive, Ethel," asked Carey.

"I'd know it anywhere;" she replied, "it's the other half of the corner stone from the old Alger home foundation!"

"What does this mean?" asked the Judge, "Will someone please tell me?"

Ethel gave the details of rumors heard, and handed down by the village residents.

"It also means," added Carey with jubilation, "that we may have discovered the long lost Alger fortune at last!"

CHAPTER XXXVI CONCLUSION

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

The Judge's face registered some degree of skepticism on hearing this tale of fantasy of theirs. He looked at his watch; then spoke.

"It is nearly eleven o'clock. We may have time to make an investigation before the Squire arrives—if we hurry."

"It appears to be a mighty heavy stone," said Mr. Jamieson, "we'll need something more than brute strength."

Carey supplied timbers and stove wood from the wood shed; and with considerable effort they were able to prop up the porch and slide the heavy stone from its resting place. The stone had covered an opening of almost equal size, and it was formed by layers of smaller stones. The contents were an amazing sight. To the very top of the opening tarnished silver dollars could be seen. The Judge's skepticism quickly changed. The effect on the Churchill family ranged from shouts of jubilation to tears of joy. The Judge recommended removal of the coins to determine the extent of the treasure. The children provided buckets, sacks, and boxes. After several containers were filled it was discovered that the balance of the treasure was in gold coins. Upon examination they were all found to be twenty dollar gold pieces. Michael's estimate of a million dollars was not questioned by the Judge but his opinion, which he kept to himself, was closer to fifty thousand.

The Judge looked at his watch again. It was approaching the noon hour and so the containers of coins were hurriedly placed in the kitchen. The project of replacing the stone and repairing the steps was deferred until later. With last minute instructions, should the Squire arrive before he returned, the Judge went home with Mr. Jamieson for lunch and the Churchill family prepared a hasty lunch for themselves. They had just finished eating when a knock was heard at the front door.

"That must be the Squire;" announced Carey, "you know what to do now, mother?"

"Yes, I believe so," she said, as she, with Ethel and Michael went to the door.

"Good afternoon, Squire Campbell;" she greeted, with a despondent look on her face, "it's a pleasant day."

"Good afternoon, my dear lady;" he replied, "yes, it is a pleasant day, and a happy one for me; for I have heard that my boy has been found, and is on his way home."

"That is good news. I am glad to hear it, but," she added, changing the subject, "Ethel has broken her arm, and—"

"How unfortunate;" he responded, with apparent concern, "then perhaps this prevented you from calling at my home this morning."

"Calling at your home?" she asked, inquisitively.

"Yes; in case you have forgotten, you

were supposed to bring me your annual payment on the mortgage before noon today."

"Oh! yes, during the excitement, I did forget. But I have the money for you, Mr. Campbell."

"You have? Where did you get it? I mean, I thought you wouldn't be able to meet the payment."

"I was able to borrow a small amount to meet the payment from a friend. Ethel, will you bring my parcel from the bedroom please," she replied.

"Just a moment;" interrupted the Squire, "ahem, your time was up at noon; you have defaulted. The entire amount is now due and payable, or I shall have to foreclose the mortgage. Who will pay this for you?"

"Oh, dear!" sighed Mrs. Churchill.

"I ask you again, Mrs. Churchill; who will pay this for you?"

"I will!" shouted Carey, entering the room from the kitchen.

"You are here?" cried the Squire, taken by surprise, and rising to his feet.

"Yes, I am here, and it seems I am just in time; doesn't it?" he replied, smiling.

"But—I thought you—how did you get—where did you come from?" returned the Squire, fully perplexed.

"I arrived on the morning train; and I am prepared to make the total payment on your mortgage, Squire Campbell. Now, how will you have it; in gold, or silver?"

"In gold?" asked the Squire, "Where did you get—did you find the—?"

"The Alger fortune? Yes," supplied Carey, "We found it in the nick of time."

"But it is too late. You have defaulted. If you have discovered the fortune on the premises; it is mine. All mine."

"Oh," said Carey, trying to look dejected, "then you expect to claim it?"

"Yes, I do claim it;" replied the Squire, relieved, "who will stop me?"

"I will!" said Judge Dixon, stepping into the room from the kitchen, "You will find your payment in the mail at the post office; and it is postmarked as of twelve noon, today."

"But, I must foreclose. I have the right. I'll go to court."

"I advise you not to do so; and I must warn you that if you accept this payment by mail, it will be another charge against you; another federal charge of obtaining money under false pretenses."

"Another federal charge? What do you mean? Who could prove such a charge?"

"I intend to try," said Mr. Jamieson, entering the room, with Jack handcuffed to him.

"Where did you—who is this man with you?" asked the Squire, perspiring.

"Hello, Skin," greeted Jack.

"Who is he talking to?" asked the Squire, pretending.

"To you," said Mr. Jamieson, "Montimer Skinner Campbell, his former partner."

"I don't know this man. I'm being framed," cried the Squire.

"It's no use. The jig is up, Skin," replied Jack.

"Then Dirk squealed did he?" returned the Squire.

"Dirk?" questioned Jack, "Who's Dirk?"

"Why, the man you sent to me."

"I didn't send any man to you, Skin.

"What did you say his name was?"

"Dirk. Dirk Bledsoe;" repeated the Squire, "don't you remember him?"

"Never heard of him," replied Jack, then asked, "Where is he now?"

"Why, he's acting as our postmaster, the scoundrel. He's as guilty as we are; he threatened to expose me if I didn't take care of him. It was blackmail. He's an imposter; he calls himself Carl Harris; better go after him gentlemen, before he gets away."

"Here I am, Skin," said Carl, or Dirk, or whatever his name might be, as he stepped into the room from the kitchen.

"There he is! There's Dirk! The jig is up Dirk. Grab him, gentlemen, before he gets away."

The man made no move to escape. Neither did Mr. Jamieson, or the Judge make an effort to grab him. The Squire looked bewildered.

"Allow me to introduce myself, Skin," said the man who had been known as Carl Harris, "I am really Carl Harris, special investigator for the Post Office Department. I was assigned here to bring you and your former partner Jack B. Trade together, and charge you jointly with fraud; using the United States Mail to do so. The specific charges will be presented in a federal court in due time; of course you know what the charges are."

"Curses," exclaimed the Squire, as we have been accustomed to address him, "you fooled me, and you tricked me; you didn't know where to find Jack after all."

"No, Skin, we needn't address you as Squire any longer," said Mr. Harris, "I didn't know where to find Jack, but thanks to you, and your plot to send Carey away, which I submitted to with some regret, you led us to his hideout. My apologies to Carey for subjecting him to such a dangerous assignment. I had great confidence in you, Carey, though I will readily admit I was worried at times. Your assignment seemed the only way to bring these culprits together. Your clever way in getting the message to us was remarkable strategy."

"That message?" asked Carey.

"Why, the postal card we received from Clyde. It was only through the postmark that we were able to determine your location. A clever piece of work."

"But I didn't mail it," said Carey, "I must have lost it in Clyde."

"Oh," replied Mr. Harris, "then you had a guardian angel; anyway, your rescuers here, tell me of your cool headedness while captive, and your act of bravery in the capture of Jack is enough to qualify you for the reward of a thousand dollars for events leading to the arrest of these two law breakers."

The faces of the Judge, Mr. Jamieson, and the Churchill family beamed with delight upon hearing this announcement, but Jack and Skin only scowled at the outcome of their predicament.

"A thousand dollars!" exclaimed Carey, "Why now we will be able to save our home!"

"Don't forget, you are already wealthy, having found the Alger fortune on your own premises," reminded the Judge.

"But is it really ours? The Squire——"

"Don't worry about what Skin said; I doubt if he will ever try to collect the remainder of the mortgage; or claim the Alger fortune," interrupted the Judge, then added, "The way I see it, after the Department claims their share of his estate, the rest will be returned to the good people of Algerton, since they too, have suffered because of his swindles."

"That's the way I see it too," agreed Mr. Jamieson.

"I'll recommend your suggestion to the Department too," added Mr. Harris.

"Then you're not really our postmaster," inquired Carey, of Mr. Harris.

"No, my boy; but I hope to leave the office in good hands. I have a reliable person in mind whom I shall recommend to the people here."

"Who will you recommend?" asked Carey.

"Your mother, my boy."

"My mother?" exclaimed Carey.

Mrs. Churchill beamed with pleasure.

"You, mother?" asked Carey.

"Yes, my son."

"You see, Carey," added Mr. Harris, "under my direction, your mother has been receiving business training from Mr. Jamieson, however, until last night, she did not know that the offer of the postmastership would be offered to her."

The Churchill children gathered around their mother, embraced her, and smothered her with affection.

"Oh, mother; now may I be your assistant sometimes?" asked Ethel.

"On what grounds do you think you could qualify as an assistant?" asked Carey.

"Oh, I just know I could help out in some way," beamed Ethel.

"How come? Just because you are accustomed to playing postoffice with the boys?" asked Carey, backing off with a smile.

"Oh, fiddle faddle!"

The Squire, alias Skin, as he came to be known in Algerton, was sent away with Jack, and their trial resulted in a long term in prison. The people of Algerton unanimously approved of the appointment of Mrs. Churchill as their postmaster. After the estate of our former Squire was settled, his home was put up for sale and Mrs. Churchill was the highest bidder. After the coins in the Alger fortune were counted, it was discovered that it resulted in something over fifty thousand dollars. Flint, as he is openly addressed now, without fear of reprimand from his father, still has his own room, but of course it is now the property of the Churchill family.

Flint and Carey will be going off to college soon. Michael is now receiving advanced lessons on the violin. Ethel is assisting her mother in the postoffice, and they will all not soon forget the days when Carey was The Young Postmaster.

THE END.