beefsteak, an' eggs, an' tea, an' coffee, an' a few little things like that? I thought I'd split."

"Yes," said Dick, laughing, "I guess the' ain't nothin' the matter with Ame's heart, or he'd 'a' fell down dead.—Hullo, Ame!" he said when the gentleman in question came back after ministering to his guest, "got the Prince o' Wales fixed up all right? Did ye cut that pickled el'phant that come last week?"

"Huh!" grunted Amos, whose sensibilities had been wounded by the events of the evening, "I didn't cut no el'phant ner no cow, ner rob no hen roost neither, but I guess he won't starve 'fore mornin'," and with that he proceeded to fill up the stove and shut the dampers.

"That means 'git,' I reckon," remarked Bill as he watched the operation.

"Wa'al," said Mr. Elright, "if you fellers think you've spent enough time droolin' 'round here swapping lies, I think *I'll* go to bed," which inhospitable and injurious remark was by no means taken in bad part, for Dick said, with a laugh:

"Well, Ame, if you'll let me run my face for 'em, Bill 'n I'll take a little somethin' for the good o' the house before we shed the partin' tear." This proposition was not declined by Mr. Elright, but he felt bound on business principles not to yield with too great a show of readiness.

"Wa'al, I don't mind for this once," he said, going behind the bar and setting out a bottle and glasses, "but I've gen'ally noticed that it's a damn sight easier to git somethin' *into* you fellers 'n 't is to git anythin' *out* of ye."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE next morning at nine o'clock John presented himself at Mr. Harum's banking office, which occupied the first floor of a brick building some twenty or twenty-five feet in width. Besides the entrance to the bank, there was a door at the south corner opening upon a stairway leading to a suite of two rooms on the second floor.

The banking office consisted of two rooms—one in front, containing the desks and counters, and what may be designated as the "parlor" (as used to be the case in the provincial towns) in the rear, in which were Mr. Harum's private desk, a safe of medium size, the necessary assortment of chairs, and a lounge. There was also a large Franklin stove.

The parlor was separated from the front room by a partition, in which were two doors, one leading into the inclosed space behind the desks and counters, and the other into the passageway formed by the north wall and a length of high desk, topped by a railing. The teller's or cashier's counter faced the street opposite the entrance door. At the left of this counter (viewed from the front) was a high-standing desk, with a rail. At the right was a glass-inclosed space of counter of the same height as that

portion which was open, across which latter the business of paying and receiving was conducted.

As John entered he saw standing behind this open counter, framed, as it were, between the desk on the one hand, and the glass inclosure on the other, a person whom he conjectured to be the "Chet" (short for Chester) Timson of whom he had heard. This person nodded in response to our friend's "Good morning," and anticipated his inquiry by saying:

"You lookin' for Dave?"

"I am looking for Mr. Harum," said John. "Is he in the office?"

"He hain't come in yet," was the reply. "Up to the barn, I reckon, but he's liable to come in any minute, an' you c'n step into the back room an' wait fer him," indicating the direction with a wave of his hand.

Business had not begun to be engrossing, though the bank was open, and John had hardly seated himself when Timson came into the back room and, taking a chair where he could see the counter in the front office, proceeded to investigate the stranger, of whose identity he had not the smallest doubt. But it was not Mr. Timson's way to take things for granted in silence, and it must be admitted that his curiosity in this particular case was not without warrant. After a scrutiny of John's face and person, which was not brief enough to be unnoticeable, he said, with a directness which left nothing in that line to be desired, "I reckon you're the new man Dave's ben gettin' up from the city."

"I came up yesterday," admitted John.

"My name's Timson," said Chet.

"Happy to meet you," said John, rising and

putting out his hand. "My name is Lenox," and they shook hands—that is, John grasped the ends of four limp fingers. After they had subsided into their seats, Chet's opaquely bluish eyes made another tour of inspection, in curiosity and wonder.

"You alwus lived in the city?" he said at last.

"It has always been my home," was the reply.

"What put it in your head to come up here?" with another stare.

"It was at Mr. Harum's suggestion," replied John, not with perfect candor; but he was not minded to be drawn out too far.

"D'ye know Dave?"

"I have never met him." Mr. Timson looked more puzzled than ever.

"Ever ben in the bankin' bus'nis?"

"I have had some experience of such accounts in a general way."

"Ever keep books?"

"Only as I have told you," said John, smiling at the little man.

"Got any idee what you'll have to do up here?" asked Chet.

"Only in a general way."

"Wa'al," said Mr. Timson, "I c'n tell ye; an', what's *more*, I c'n tell ye, young man, 't you hain't no idee of what you're undertakin', an' ef you don't wish you was back in New York 'fore you git through I ain't no guesser."

"That is possible," said John readily, recalling his night and his breakfast that morning.

"Yes, sir," said the other. "Yes, *sir;* if you do what I've had to do, you'll do the hull darned thing, an' nobody to help you but Pele Hopkins,

who don't count fer a row o' crooked pins. As fer's Dave's concerned," asserted the speaker with a wave of his hands, "he don't know no more about bankin' 'n a cat. He couldn't count a thousan' dollars in an hour, an', as for addin' up a row o' figures, he couldn't git it twice alike, I don't believe, if he was to be hung for't."

"He must understand the meaning of his own books and accounts, I should think," remarked John.

"Oh," said Chet scornfully, "anybody c'd do that. That's easy 'nough; but as fur 's the real bus'nis is concerned, he don't have nothin' to do with it. It's all ben left to me: chargin' an' creditin', postin', individule ledger, gen'ral ledger, bill-book, discount register, tickler, for'n register, checkin' off the N'York accounts, drawin' off statemunts f'm the ledgers an' bill-book, writin' letters—why, the' ain't an hour 'n the day in bus'nis hours some days that the's an hour 't I ain't busy 'bout somethin'. No, sir," continued Chet, "Dave don't give himself no trouble about the bus'nis. All he does is to look after lendin' the money, an' seein' that it gits paid when the time comes, an' keep track of how much money the' is here an' in N'York, an' what notes is comin' due—an' a few things like that, that don't put pen to paper, ner take an hour of his time. Why, a man'll come in an' want to git a note done, an' it'll be 'All right,' or, 'Can't spare the money to-day,' all in a minute. He don't give it no thought at all, an' he ain't 'round here half the time. Now," said Chet, "when I work fer a man I like to have him 'round so 't I c'n say to him: 'Shall I do it so? or shall I do it *so?* shall I? or sha'n't I?' an' then when I make a mistake—'s anybody's liable to—he's as much to blame 's I be."

"I suppose, then," said John, "that you must have to keep Mr. Harum's private accounts also, seeing that he knows so little of details. I have been told that he is interested in a good many matters besides this business."

"Wa'al," replied Timson, somewhat disconcerted, "I suppose he must keep 'em himself in *some* kind of a fashion, an' I don't know a thing about any outside matters of his'n, though I suspicion he has got quite a few. He's got some books in that safe" (pointing with his finger) "an' he's got a safe in the vault, but if you'll believe *me*"—and the speaker looked as if he hardly expected it—"I hain't never so much as seen the inside of either one on 'em. No, sir," he declared, "I hain't no more idee of what's in them safes 'n you have. He's close, Dave Harum is," said Chet with a convincing motion of the head; "on the hull, the clostest man I ever see. I believe," he averred, "that if he was to lay out to keep it shut that lightnin' might strike him square in the mouth an' it wouldn't go in an eighth of an inch. An' yet," he added, "he c'n talk by the rod when he takes a notion."

"Must be a difficult person to get on with," commented John dryly.

"I couldn't stan' it no longer," declared Mr. Timson with the air of one who had endured to the end of virtue, "an' I says to him the other day, 'Wa'al,' I says, 'if I can't suit ye, mebbe you'd better suit yourself.'"

"Ah!" said John politely, seeing that some response was expected of him; "and what did he say to that?"

"He ast me," replied Chet, "if I meant by that to throw up the situation. 'Wa'al,' I says 'I'm sick enough to throw up most anythin',' I says, 'along with bein' found fault with fer nothin'.'"

"And then?" queried John, who had received the impression that the motion to adjourn had come from the other side of the house.

"Wa'al," replied Chet, not quite so confidently, "he said somethin' about my requirin' a larger spear of action, an' that he thought I'd do better on a mile track—some o' his hoss talk. That's another thing," said Timson, changing the subject. "He's all fer hosses. He'd sooner make a ten-dollar note on a hoss trade than a hunderd right here 'n this office. Many's the time right in bus'nis hours, when I've wanted to ask him how he wanted somethin' done, he'd be busy talkin' hoss, an' wouldn't pay no attention to me more'n 's if I wa'n't there."

"I am glad to feel," said John, "that you can not possibly have any unpleasant feeling toward me, seeing that you resigned as you did."

"Cert'nly not, cert'nly not," declared Timson, a little uneasily. "If it hadn't 'a' ben you, it would 'a' had to ben somebody else, an' now I seen you an' had a talk with you—— Wa'al, I guess I better git back into the other room. Dave's liable to come in any minute. But," he said in parting, "I will give ye piece of advice: You keep enough laid by to pay your gettin' back to N'York. You may want it in a hurry," and with this parting shot the rejected one took his leave.

The bank parlor was lighted by a window and a glazed door in the rear wall, and another

window on the south side. Mr. Harum's desk was by the rear, or west, window, which gave view of his house, standing some hundred feet back from the street. The south, or side, window afforded a view of his front yard and that of an adjoining dwelling, beyond which rose the wall of a mercantile block. Business was encroaching upon David's domain. Our friend stood looking out of the south window. To the left a bit of Main Street was visible, and the naked branches of the elms and maples with which it was bordered were waving defiantly at their rivals over the way, incited thereto by a northwest wind.

We invariably form a mental picture of every unknown person of whom we think at all. It may be so faint that we are unconscious of it at the time, or so vivid that it is always recalled until dissipated by seeing the person himself, or his likeness. But that we do so make a picture is proved by the fact that upon being confronted by the real features of the person in question we always experience a certain amount of surprise, even when we have not been conscious of a different conception of him.

Be that as it may, however, there was no question in John Lenox's mind as to the identity of the person who at last came briskly into the back office and interrupted his meditations. Rather under the middle height, he was broad-shouldered and deep-chested, with a clean-shaven, red face, with—not a mole—but a slight protuberance the size of half a large pea on the line from the nostril to the corner of the mouth; bald over the crown and to a line a couple of inches above the ear, below that thick and somewhat bushy

hair of yellowish red, showing a mingling of gray; small but very blue eyes; a thick nose, of no classifiable shape, and a large mouth with the lips so pressed together as to produce a slightly downward and yet rather humorous curve at the corners. He was dressed in a sack coat of dark "pepper-and-salt," with waistcoat and trousers to match. A somewhat old-fashioned standing collar, flaring away from the throat, was encircled by a red cravat, tied in a bow under his chin. A diamond stud of perhaps two carats showed in the triangle of spotless shirt front, and on his head was a cloth cap with ear lappets. He accosted our friend with, "I reckon you must be Mr. Lenox. How are you? I'm glad to see you," tugging off a thick buckskin glove, and putting out a plump but muscular hand.

John thanked him as they shook hands, and "hoped he was well."

"Wa'al," said Mr. Harum, "I'm improvin' slowly. I've got so 'st I c'n set up long enough to have my bed made. Come last night, I s'pose? Anybody to the deepo to bring ye over? This time o' year once 'n a while the' don't nobody go over for passengers."

John said that he had had no trouble. A man by the name of Robinson had brought him and his luggage.

"E-up!" said David with a nod, backing up to the fire which was burning in the grate of the Franklin stove, "'Dug' Robinson. 'D he do the p'lite thing in the matter of questions an' gen-'ral conversation?" he asked with a grin. John laughed in reply to this question.

"Where 'd you put up?" asked David. John said that he passed the night at the Eagle Hotel.

Mr. Harum had seen Dick Larrabee that morning and heard what he had to say of our friend's reception, but he liked to get his information from original sources.

"Make ye putty comf'table?" he asked, turning to eject a mouthful into the fire.

"I got along pretty well under the circumstances," said John.

Mr. Harum did not press the inquiry. "How'd you leave the gen'ral?" he inquired.

"He seemed to be well," replied John, "and he wished to be kindly remembered to you."

"Fine man, the gen'ral," declared David, well pleased. "Fine man all 'round. Word's as good as his bond. Yes, sir, when the gen'ral gives his warrant, I don't care whether I see the critter or not. Know him much?"

"He and my father were old friends, and I have known him a good many years," replied John, adding, "he has been very kind and friendly to me."

"Set down, set down," said Mr. Harum, pointing to a chair. Seating himself, he took off his cap and dropped it with his gloves on the floor. "How long you ben here in the office?" he asked.

"Perhaps half an hour," was the reply.

"I meant to have ben here when you come," said the banker, "but I got hendered about a matter of a hoss I'm looking at. I guess I'll shut that door," making a move toward the one into the front office.

"Allow me," said John, getting up and closing it.

"May's well shut the other one while you're about it. Thank you," as John resumed his seat.

"I hain't got nothin' very private, but I'm 'fraid of distractin' Timson's mind. Did he int'duce himself?"

"Yes," said John, "we introduced ourselves and had a few minutes conversation."

"Gin ye his hull hist'ry an' a few relations throwed in?"

"There was hardly time for that," said John, smiling.

"Rubbed a little furn'ture polish into my char'cter an' repitation?" insinuated Mr. Harum.

"Most of our talk was on the subject of his duties and responsibilities," was John's reply. ("Don't cal'late to let on any more'n he cal'lates to," thought David to himself.)

"Allowed he run the hull shebang, didn't he?"

"He seemed to have a pretty large idea of what was required of one in his place," admitted the witness.

"Kind o' friendly, was he?" asked David.

"Well," said John, "after we had talked for a while I said to him that I was glad to think that he could have no unpleasant feeling toward me, seeing that he had given up the place of his own preference, and he assured me that he had none."

David turned and looked at John for an instant, with a twinkle in his eye. The younger man returned the look and smiled slightly. David laughed outright.

"I guess you've seen folks before," he remarked.

"I have never met any one exactly like Mr. Timson, I think," said our friend with a slight laugh.

"Fortunitly them kind is rare," observed Mr. Harum dryly, rising and going to his desk, from a drawer of which he produced a couple of cigars, one of which he proffered to John, who, for the first time in his life, during the next half hour regretted that he was a smoker. David sat for two or three minutes puffing diligently, and then took the weed out of his mouth and looked contemplatively at it.

"How do you like that cigar?" he inquired.

"It burns very nicely," said the victim. Mr. Harum emitted a cough which was like a chuckle, or a chuckle which was like a cough, and relapsed into silence again. Presently he turned his head, looked curiously at the young man for a moment, and then turned his glance again to the fire.

"I've ben wonderin' some," he said, "pertic'lerly since I see you, how 't was 't you wanted to come up here to Homeville. Gen'l Wolsey gin his warrant, an' so I reckon you hadn't ben gettin' into no scrape nor nothin'," and again he looked sharply at the young man at his side.

"Did the general say nothing of my affairs?" the latter asked.

"No," replied David, "all 't he said was in a gen'ral way that he'd knowed you an' your folks a good while, an' he thought you'd be jest the feller I was lookin' fer. Mebbe he reckoned that if you wanted your story told, you'd ruther tell it yourself."