

"Guess Bill brought him along fer a witness, an' I reckon he seen all he wanted to. I'll bet *his* neck's achin' some," added Mr. Larrabee with a laugh.

"How's that?" asked David.

"Well, he made a move to tackle you as you was escortin' Bill out, an' Mr. Lenox there caught him in the collar an' gin him a jerk that'd 'a' landed him on his back," said Dick, "if," turning to John, "you hadn't helt holt of him. You putty nigh broke his neck. He went off—he, he, he, he, ho!—wrigglin' it to make sure."

"I used more force than was necessary, I'm afraid," said Billy Williams's pupil, "but there wasn't much time to calculate."

"Much obliged," said David with a nod.

"Not at all," protested John, laughing. "I have enjoyed a great deal this morning."

"It *has* ben ruther pleasant," remarked David with a chuckle, "but you mustn't cal'late on havin' such fun ev'ry mornin'."

John went into the business office, leaving the banker and Dick.

"Say," said the latter when they were alone, "that young man o' your'n's quite a feller. He took care o' that big Smith chap with one hand; an' say, *you* c'n git round on your pins 'bout 's lively 's they make 'em, I guess. I swan!" he exclaimed, slapping his thigh and shaking with laughter, "the hull thing head-an'-shouldered any show I seen lately." And then for a while they fell to talking of the "sorril colt" and other things.

## CHAPTER XV.

WHEN John went back to the office after the noonday intermission it was manifest that something had happened to Mr. Timson, and that the something was of a nature extremely gratifying to that worthy gentleman. He was beaming with satisfaction and rustling with importance. Several times during the afternoon he appeared to be on the point of confiding his news, but in the face of the interruptions which occurred, or which he feared might check the flow of his communication, he managed to restrain himself till after the closing of the office. But scarcely were the shutters up (at the willing hands of Peleg Hopkins) when he turned to John and, looking at him sharply, said, "Has Dave said anythin' 'bout my leavin'?"

"He told me he expected you would stay as long as might be necessary to get me well started," said John non-committally, mindful of Mr. Harum's injunction.

"Jest like him," declared Chet. "Jest like him for all the world; but the fact o' the matter is 't I'm goin' to-morro'. I s'pose he thought," reflected Mr. Timson, "thet he'd ruther you'd find it out yourself than to have to break it to ye, 'cause then, don't ye see, after I was gone he c'd lay the hull thing at my door."



"Really," said John, "I should have said that he ought to have told me."

"Wa'al," said Chet encouragingly, "mebbe you'll git along somehow, though I'm 'fraid you'll have more or less trouble; but I told Dave that as fur 's I c'd see, mebbe you'd do 's well 's most anybody he c'd git that didn't know any o' the customers, an' hadn't never done any o' this kind o' work before."

"Thank you very much," said John. "And so you are off to-morrow, are you?"

"Got to be," declared Mr. Timson. "I'd 'a' liked to stay with you a spell longer, but the's a big concern f'm out of town that as soon as they heard I was at libe'ty wrote for me to come right along up, an' I s'pose I hadn't ought to keep 'em waitin'."

"No, I should think not," said John, "and I congratulate you upon having located yourself so quickly."

"Oh!" said Mr. Timson, with ineffable complacency, "I hain't give myself no worry; I hain't lost no sleep. I've allowed all along that Dave Harum'd find out that he wa'n't the unly man that needed my kind o' work, an' I ain't meanin' any disrispect to you when I say 't—"

"Just so," said John. "I quite understand. Nobody could expect to take just the place with him that you have filled. And, by the way," he added, "as you are going in the morning, and I may not see you again, would you kindly give me the last balance sheets of the two ledgers and the bill-book. I suppose, of course, that they are brought down to the first of the month, and I shall want to have them."

"Oh, yes, cert'nly, of course—wa'al I guess

Dave's got 'em," replied Chet, looking considerably disconcerted, "but I'll look 'em up in the mornin'. My train don't go till ten o'clock, an' I'll see you 'bout any little last thing in the mornin'—but I guess I've got to go now on account of a lot of things. You c'n shut up, can't ye?"

Whereupon Mr. Timson made his exit, and not long afterward David came in. By that time everything had been put away, the safe and vault closed, and Peleg had departed with the mail and his freedom for the rest of the day.

"Wa'al," said Mr. Harum, lifting himself to a seat on the counter, "how've you made out? All O. K.?"

"Yes," replied John, "I think so."

"Where's Chet?"

"He went away some few minutes ago. He said he had a good many things to attend to as he was leaving in the morning."

"E-um'm!" said David incredulously. "I guess 't won't take him long to close up his matters. Did he leave ev'rything in good shape? Cash all right, an' so on?"

"I think so," said John. "The cash is right I am sure."

"How 'bout the books?"

"I asked him to let me have the balance sheets, and he said that you must have them, but that he would come in in the morning and—well, what he said was that he would see me in the morning, and, as he put it, look after any little last thing."

"E-um'm!" David grunted. "He won't do no such a thing. We've seen the last of him, you bet, an' a good riddance. He'll take the nine



o'clock to-night, that's what he'll do. Drawed his pay, I guess, didn't he?"

"He said he was to be paid for this month," answered John, "and took sixty dollars. Was that right?"

"Yes," said David, nodding his head absently. "What was it he said about them statements?" he inquired after a moment.

"He said he guessed you must have them."

"E-um'm!" was David's comment. "What'd he say about leavin'?"

John laughed and related the conversation as exactly as he could.

"What'd I tell ye," said Mr. Harum, with a short laugh. "Mebbe he won't go till to-morro', after all," he remarked. "He'll want to put in a leetle more time tellin' how he was sent for in a hurry by that big concern f'm out of town 't he's goin' to."

"Upon my word, I can't understand it," said John, "knowing that you can contradict him."

"Wa'al," said David, "he'll allow that if he gits in the fust word, he'll take the pole. It don't matter anyway, long 's he's gone. I guess you an' me c'n pull the load, can't we?" and he dropped down off the counter and started to go out. "By the way," he said, halting a moment, "can't you come in to tea at six o'clock? I want to make ye acquainted with Polly, an' she's itchin' to see ye."

"I shall be delighted," said John.

"Polly," said David, "I've ast the young feller to come to tea, but don't you say the word 'Eagle' to him. You c'n show your ign'rance 'bout all the other kinds of birds an' animals you

ain't familiar with," said the unfeeling brother, "but leave eagles alone."

"What you up to now?" she asked, but she got no answer but a laugh.

From a social point of view the entertainment could not be described as a very brilliant success. Our friend was tired and hungry. Mr. Harum was unusually taciturn, and Mrs. Bixbee, being under her brother's interdict as regarded the subject which, had it been allowed discussion, might have opened the way, was at a loss for generalities. But John afterward got upon terms of the friendliest nature with that kindly soul.