

"Did you ever in all your born days," he said, "see such dum'd weather? Jest look out there—no sleighin', no wheelin', an' a barn full wantin' exercise. Wa'al, I guess I'll be moseyin' along." And out he went.

CHAPTER XXX.

If John Lenox had kept a diary for the first year of his life in Homeville most of its pages would have been blank.

The daily routine of the office (he had no assistant but the callow Hopkins) was more exacting than laborious, but it kept him confined seven hours in the twenty-four. Still, there was time in the lengthened days as the year advanced for walking, rowing, and riding or driving about the picturesque country which surrounds Homeville. He and Mr. Harum often drove together after the bank closed, or after "tea," and it was a pleasure in itself to observe David's dexterous handling of his horses, and his content and satisfaction in the enjoyment of his favorite pastime. In pursuit of business he "jogged 'round," as he said, behind the faithful Jinny, but when on pleasure bent, a pair of satin-coated trotters drew him in the latest and "slickest" model of top-buggies.

"Of course," he said, "I'd ruther ride all alone than not to ride at all, but the's twice as much fun in't when you've got somebody along. I ain't much of a talker, unless I happen to git started" (at which assertion John repressed a smile), "but once in a while I like to have somebody to say somethin' to. You like to come along, don't ye?"

"Very much indeed."

"I used to git Polly to come once in a while," said David, "but it wa'n't no pleasure to her. She hadn't never ben used to hosses an' alwus set on the edge of the seat ready to jump, an' if one o' the critters capered a little she'd want to git right out then an' there. I reckon she never went out but what she thanked mercy when she struck the hoss block to git back with hull bones."

"I shouldn't have thought that she would have been nervous with the reins in your hands," said John.

"Wa'al," replied David, "the last time she come along somethin' give the team a little scare an' she reached over an' made a grab at the lines. That," he remarked with a grin, "was quite a good while ago. I says to her when we got home, 'I guess after this you'd better take your airin's on a stun-boat. You won't be so liable to git run away with an' throwed out,' I says."

John laughed a little, but made no comment.

"After all," said David, "I dunno 's I blamed her fer bein' skittish, but I couldn't have her grabbin' the lines. It's curi's," he reflected, "I didn't used to mind what I rode behind, nor who done the drivin', but I'd have to admit that as I git older I prefer to do it myself. I ride ev'ry once in a while with fellers that c'n drive as well, an' mebbe better, 'n I can, an' I know it, but if anythin' turns up, or looks like it, I can't help wishin' 't I had holt o' the lines myself."

The two passed a good many hours together thus beguiling the time. Whatever David's other merits as a companion, he was not exacting of

response when engaged in conversation, and rarely made any demands upon his auditor.

During that first year John made few additions to his social acquaintance, and if in the summer the sight of a gay party of young people caused some stirrings in his breast, they were not strong enough to induce him to make any attempts toward the acquaintance which he might have formed. He was often conscious of glances of curiosity directed toward himself, and Mr. Euston was asked a good many questions about the latest addition to his congregation.

Yes, he had called upon Mr. Lenox and his call had been returned. In fact, they had had several visits together—had met out walking once and had gone on in company. Was Mr. Lenox "nice"? Yes, he had made a pleasant impression upon Mr. Euston, and seemed to be a person of intelligence and good breeding—very gentlemanlike. Why did not people know him? Well, Mr. Euston had made some proffers to that end, but Mr. Lenox had merely expressed his thanks. No, Mr. Euston did not know how he happened to be in Homeville and employed by that queer old Mr. Harum, and living with him and his funny old sister; Mr. Lenox had not confided in him at all, and though very civil and pleasant, did not appear to wish to be communicative.

So our friend did not make his entrance that season into the drawing or dining rooms of any of what David called the "nabobs' houses. By the middle or latter part of October Homeville was deserted of its visitors and as many of that

class of its regular population as had the means to go with and a place to go to.

It was under somewhat different auspices that John entered upon the second winter of his sojourn. It has been made plain that his relations with his employer and the kind and lovable Polly were on a satisfactory and permanent footing.

"I'm dum'd," said David to Dick Larrabee, "if it hain't got putty near to the p'int when if I want to git anythin' out o' the common run out o' Polly, I'll have to ask John to fix it fer me. She's like a cow with a calf," he declared.

"David sets all the store in the world by him," stated Mrs. Bixbee to a friend, "though he don't jest let on to—not in so many words. He's got a kind of a notion that his little boy, if he'd lived, would 'a' ben like him some ways. I never seen the child," she added, with an expression which made her visitor smile, "but as near 's I c'n make out f'm Dave's tell, he must 'a' ben red-headed. Didn't you know 't he'd ever ben married? Wa'al, he was fer a few years, though it's the one thing—wa'al, I don't mean exac'ly that—it's *one* o' the things he don't have much to say about. But once in a while he'll talk about the boy, what he'd be now if he'd lived, an' so on; an' he's the greatest hand fer childern—everlastin'ly pickin' on 'em up when he's ridin' and such as that—an' I seen him once when we was travelin' on the cars go an' take a squawlin' baby away f'm it's mother, who looked ready to drop, an' lay it across that big chest of his, an' the little thing never gave a whimper after he got it into his arms—jest went right off to sleep. No," said Mrs. Bixbee, "I never had no childern, an' I don't know but what I was glad of it at the

time; Jim Bixbee was about as much baby as I thought I could manage, but now——"

There was some reason for not concluding the sentence, and so we do not know what was in her mind.