

## CHAPTER XLI.

It was the latter part of John's fifth winter in Homeville. The business of the office had largely increased. The new manufactories which had been established did their banking with Mr. Harum, and the older concerns, including nearly all the merchants in the village, had transferred their accounts from Syrchester banks to David's. The callow Hopkins had fledged and developed into a competent all-round man, able to do anything in the office, and there was a new "skeezecks" discharging Peleg's former functions. Considerable impetus had been given to the business of the town by the new road whose rails had been laid the previous summer. There had been a strong and acrimonious controversy over the route which the road should take into and through the village. There was the party of the "nabobs" (as they were characterized by Mr. Harum) and their following, and the party of the "village people," and the former had carried their point; but now the road was an accomplished fact, and most of the bitterness which had been engendered had died away. Yet the struggle was still matter for talk.

"Did I ever tell you," said David, as he and his cashier were sitting in the rear room of the bank, "how Lawyer Staples come to switch round in that there railroad jangle last spring?"

"I remember," said John, "that you told me he had deserted his party, and you laughed a little at the time, but you did not tell me how it came about."

"I kind o' thought I told ye," said David.

"No," said John, "I am quite sure you did not."

"Wa'al," said Mr. Harum, "the' was, as you know, the Tenaker-Rogers crowd wantin' one thing, an' the Purse-Babbit lot bound to have the other, an' run the road under the other fellers' noses. Staples was workin' tooth an' nail fer the Purse crowd, an' bein' a good deal of a politician, he was helpin' 'em a good deal. In fact, he was about their best card. I wa'n't takin' much hand in the matter either way, though my feelin's was with the Tenaker party. I know 't would come to a point where some money 'd prob'ly have to be used, an' I made up my mind I wouldn't do much drivin' myself unless I had to, an' not then till the last quarter of the heat. Wa'al, it got to lookin' like a putty even thing. What little show I had made was if anythin' on the Purse side. One day Tenaker come in to see me an' wanted to know flat-footed which side the fence I was on. 'Wa'al,' I says, 'I've ben settin' up fer shapes to be kind o' on the fence, but I don't mind sayin', betwixt you an' me, that the bulk o' my heft is a-saggin' your way; but I hain't took no active part, an' Purse an' them thinks I'm goin' to be on their side when it comes to a pinch.'

"'Wa'al,' he says, 'it's goin' to be a putty close thing, an' we're goin' to need all the help we c'n git.'

"'Wa'al,' I says, 'I guess that's so, but fer



the present I reckon I c'n do ye more good by keepin' in the shade. Are you folks prepared to spend a little money?' I says.

"'Yes,' he says, 'if it comes to that.'

"'Wa'al,' I says, 'it putty most gen'ally does come to that, don't it? Now, the's one feller that's doin' ye more harm than some others.'

"'You mean Staples?' he says.

"'Yes,' I says, 'I mean Staples. He don't really care a hill o' white beans which way the road comes in, but he thinks he's on the pop'lar side. Now,' I says, 'I don't know as it'll be nec'sary to use money with him, an' I don't say 't you could, anyway, but mebbe his yawp c'n be stopped. I'll have a quiet word with him,' I says, 'an' see you agin.' So," continued Mr. Harum, "the next night the' was quite a lot of 'em in the bar of the new hotel, an' Staples was haranguin' away the best he knowed how, an' bime by I nodded him off to one side, an' we went across the hall into the settin' room.

"'I see you feel putty strong 'bout this bus'nis,' I says.

"'Yes, sir, it's a matter of princ'ple with me,' he says, knockin' his fist down onto the table.

"'How does the outcome on't look to ye?' I says. 'Goin' to be a putty close race, ain't it?'

"'Wa'al,' he says, 'tween you an' me, I reckon it is.'

"'That's the way it looks to me,' I says, 'an' more'n that, the other fellers are ready to spend some money at a pinch.'

"'They be, be they?' he says.

"'Yes, sir,' I says, 'an' we've got to meet 'em halfway. Now,' I says, takin' a paper out o' my pocket, 'what I wanted to say to you is this:

You ben ruther more prom'nent in this matter than most anybody—fur's talkin' goes—but I'm consid'ably int'risted. The's got to be some money raised, an' I'm ready,' I says, 'to put down as much as you be up to a couple o' hunderd, an' I'll take the paper 'round to the rest; but,' I says, unfoldin' it, 'I think you'd ought to head the list, an' I'll come next.' Wa'al," said David with a chuckle and a shake of the head, "you'd ought to have seen his jaw go down. He wriggled 'round in his chair, an' looked ten diff'rent ways fer Sunday.

"'What do you say?' I says, lookin' square at him, 'll you make it a couple a hunderd?'

"'Wa'al,' he says, 'I guess I couldn't go 's fur 's that, an' I wouldn't like to head the list anyway.'

"'All right,' I says, 'I'll head it. Will you say one-fifty?'

"'No,' he says, pullin' his whiskers, 'I guess not.'

"'A hunderd?' I says, an' he shook his head.

"'Fifty,' I says, 'an' I'll go a hunderd,' an at that he got out his hank'chif an' blowed his nose, an' took his time to it. 'Wa'al,' I says, 'what do ye say?'

"'Wa'al,' he says, 'I ain't quite prepared to give ye 'n answer to-night. Fact on't is,' he says, 'it don't make a cent's wuth o' diff'rence to me person'ly which way the dum'd road comes in, an' I don't jest this minute see why I should spend any money in it.'

"'There's the princ'ple o' the thing,' I says.

"'Yes,' he says, gettin' out of his chair, 'of course, there's the princ'ple of the thing, an'—



wa'al, I'll think it over an' see you agin,' he says, lookin' at his watch. 'I got to go now.'

"Wa'al, the next night," proceeded Mr. Harum, "I went down to the hotel agin, an' the' was about the same crowd, but no Staples. The' wa'n't much goin' on, an' Purse, in pertic'ler, was lookin' putty down in the mouth. 'Where's Staples?' I says.

"Wa'al," says Purse, 'he said mebbe he'd come to-night, an' mebbe he couldn't. Said it wouldn't make much diff'rence; an' anyhow he was goin' out o' town up to Syrchester fer a few days. I don't know what's come over the feller,' says Purse. 'I told him the time was gittin' short an' we'd have to git in our best licks, an' he said he guessed he'd done about all 't he could, an' in fact,' says Purse, 'he seemed to 'a' lost int'rist in the hull thing.'"

"What did you say?" John asked.

"Wa'al," said David with a grin, "Purse went on to allow 't he guessed somebody's pocketbook had ben talkin', but I didn't say much of anythin', an' putty soon come away. Two three days after," he continued, "I see Tenaker agin. 'I hear Staples has gone out o' town,' he says, 'an' I hear, too,' he says, 'that he's kind o' soured on the hull thing—didn't care much how it did come out.'

"Wa'al," I says, 'when he comes back you c'n use your own judgment about havin' a little interview with him. Mebbe somethin' 's made him think the's two sides to this thing. But anyway,' I says, 'I guess he won't do no more hollerin'.'

"How's that?" says Tenaker.

"Wa'al," I says, 'I guess I'll have to tell ye

a little story. Mebbe you've heard it before, but it seems to be to the point. Once on a time, I says, 'the' was a big church meetin' that had lasted three days, an' the last evenin' the' was consid'able excitement. The prayin' an' singin' had warmed most on 'em up putty well, an' one o' the most movin' of the speakers was tellin' 'em what was what. The' was a big crowd, an' while most on 'em come to be edified, the' was quite a lot in the back part of the place that was ready fer anythin'. Wa'al, it happened that standin' mixed up in that lot was a feller named—we'll call him Smith, to be sure of him—an' Smith was jest runnin' over with power, an' ev'ry little while when somethin' the speaker said touched him on the funny bone he'd out with an "A—men! Yes, Lord!" in a voice like a fact'ry whistle. Wa'al, after a little the' was some snickerin' an' gigglin' an' scroughin' an' hustlin' in the back part, an' even some of the seriourest up in front would kind o' smile, an' the moderator leaned over an' says to one of the bretherin on the platform, "Brother Jones," he says, "can't you git down to the back of the hall an' say somethin' to quiet Brother Smith? Smith's a good man, an' a pious man," the moderator says, "but he's very excitable, an' I'm 'fraid he'll git the boys to goin' back there an' disturb the meetin'." So Jones he worked his way back to where Smith was, an' the moderator watched him go up to Smith and jest speak to him 'bout ten seconds; an' after that Smith never peeped once. After the meetin' was over, the moderator says to Jones, "Brother Jones," he says, "what did you say to Brother Smith to-night that shut him up so quick?" "I ast him fer a dollar for For'n



Missions," says Brother Jones, 'an', wa'al,' I says to Tenaker, 'that's what I done to Staples.'"

"Did Mr. Tenaker see the point?" asked John, laughing.

"He laughed a little," said David, "but didn't quite ketch on till I told him about the subscription paper, an' then he like to split."

"Suppose Staples had taken you up," suggested John.

"Wa'al," said David, "I didn't think I was takin' many chances. If, in the fust place, I hadn't knowed Staples as well 's I did, the Smith fam'ly, so fur 's my experience goes, has got more members 'n any other fam'ly on top of the earth." At this point a boy brought in a telegram. David opened it, gave a side glance at his companion, and, taking out his pocketbook, put the dispatch therein.

## CHAPTER XLII.

THE next morning David called John into the rear room. "Busy?" he asked.

"No," said John. "Nothing that can't wait."

"Set down," said Mr. Harum, drawing a chair to the fire. He looked up with his characteristic grin. "Ever own a hog?" he said.

"No," said John, smiling.

"Ever feel like ownin' one?"

"I don't remember ever having any cravings in that direction."

"Like pork?" asked Mr. Harum.

"In moderation," was the reply. David produced from his pocketbook the dispatch received the day before and handed it to the young man at his side. "Read that," he said.

John looked at it and handed it back.

"It doesn't convey any idea to my mind," he said.

"What?" said David, "you don't know what 'Bangs Galilee' means? nor who 'Raisin' is?"

"You'll have to ask me an easier one," said John, smiling.

David sat for a moment in silence, and then, "How much money have you got?" he asked.

"Well," was the reply, "with what I had and what I have saved since I came I could get together about five thousand dollars, I think."