

Around spun the boat and a landing was made near the woods. A short time later the entire party met on the marsh side of the river.

"So ye're down agin!" said Durkee, as he shook hands with the young man whom Ed had called Mr. Hawkes. "Joe tole me he was expectin' ye—but how's this, Mr. Kipp weth a pair o' birds, an' you got none? If I remembers right," a grin moving his features, "you used to be the gunner."

"Yes," Hawkes answered, somewhat ruefully, "Fred's my pupil."

"Well, I've seen ye bring 'em down afore to-day," said Durkee, "an' I knows yer capable of it. So school's out, eh?"

"School's out forever with us," replied Hawkes. "This is our last trip to Essex. We've got to go to work, Sam."

Durkee's laugh echoed again and again. "Work!" he shouted, "much work you'll do! Boys as was born weth a bank full o' money left 'em, an' that money 'cumulatin' fer over twenty year! Yer work'll be to spend the income!" with another roar. "But where's Brigham? He used to be one o' yer crowd."

"Arthur's at the house," Ed answered, after a pause. "Yes," as Hawkes made an exclamation of surprise, "he come down las' night an' got into the winder 'thout wakin' anybody." Then observing the angry flush which spread over Hawkes' face, he added quickly: "Mr. Grillis 's here, Sam, ye'd better come over this afternoon, we're goin' out after ducks; ye aint seen Mr. Grillis fer a long time."

"I'll be over," Durkee answered, as he betook himself to his boat. "I want to see Mr. Grillis, I want to argy weth him 'bout the condition o' the men in his mills. I've got some pinters from my chums. Bob Barr an' Bill Munsey. Bob an' Bill says there's got to be trouble in Millbury. I think Mr. Grillis ought ter know it. I'll be over, boys," and the boat darted up the stream.

"I think I'll start for home to-day," said the young man who had been Kipp's sporting companion.

"No you won't, Pattern!" exclaimed Hawkes, shortly. "Brigham's being here need not break up our party. If you'd only stand up and face him," with some impatience, "he wouldn't nag you so. Well, no matter," as a quick flush covered Pattern's heavy, handsome face, "if he's surly and insults us I'll thrash him. If we meet I suppose I've got to thrash him any way," with a sheepish glance at Kipp.

A brisk tramp of half an hour brought the party in sight of a large farm house, the last habitation on Essex point.

"Who's that talking with Mr. Grillis?" asked Hawkes, motioning toward the farm house gate, "it's not Arthur Bingham."

"That's Mr. Burrows," answered Ed. "He's a lawyer, or something o' that sort, in the city. His mother lives in the brick house jes' this side o' the causeway. That's Missus Burrows's horse at the gate. Half this point used to be owned by the Burrows's, but they've had bad luck."

A short, stout, gray-haired man came forward to meet the returning party. He was dressed in a neat business suit; a stubby, gray beard covered his lip and chin. His features were small and his eyes twinkled as he saw the birds in Fred's hand.

"P'raps you'd better try fishin', Hawkes," he said, with a sly glance at Ed, "you're no good gunnin'." Then, as Hawkes only shrugged his shoulders, "here's a fellow named Burrows says he knows me, seen me in the city. He's a stock broker."

"Gunning!" remarked Burrows, after the introductions were over, "gad! how I have killed the birds down here. Thousands of 'em! Thousands! You should go over to Ed's father's place; there's where you'll find birds."

Burrows was about thirty years of age, pale faced and sandy haired. He was dressed in the latest city fashion, and he switched a light riding whip jauntily.

"We were going there this afternoon," said Ed, "won't you come, Mr. Burrows?"

"I'll be glad to," Burrows answered, promptly, as he turned to mount his horse.

"Stay to breakfast with us, Mr. Burrows," called out a voice, and Joe Mills, the owner of the farm house, appeared in the doorway.

"Can't, Joe, mother expects me; just rode out for a breath of Essex air before breakfast. Only came down last night. I'll be over and go ducking this afternoon," and saluting the party he galloped away.

"I suppose Ed's told you about Arthur's being here, boys," said Joe, to the group. "He's in a mighty surly temper—says he came down to get even with some one. He wouldn't say who, but whimpered and threatened all in one breath."

Mr. Grillis' bright eyes wore a shrewd expression as he glanced at Hawkes.

"Some one ran away with the Goldthurst girl the night of the college dance," he said. "Arthur looks on Miss Goldthurst as his special property."

Mr. Grillis was here interrupted by Joe's wife, Susie, who summoned the party to breakfast. Almost at the same instant Hawkes' name was pronounced sharply by a young man who came hurriedly through the gate. The newcomer's face wore a threatening scowl as he exclaimed—

"I wish to speak to you!"

"Well, Brigham," Hawkes answered, "I'll listen to you."

"But not here," said the other, angrily.