

STRONG AND STEADY

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XIV.

Now that he was again in his native village, Walter realized how unpleasant had been his position at Mr. Drummond's from the new elasticity and cheerfulness which he felt. There had been something gloomy and oppressive in the atmosphere of his temporary home at Stapleton, and he certainly had very little enjoyment in Joshua's society. Mrs. Drummond was the only one for whom he felt the least regard.

He passed a few days quietly, renewing old acquaintances and friendships. Nancy Forbes had gone to live with a brother, who was an old bachelor, and very glad to have her with him. Her savings and the legacy left her by Mr. Conrad together amounted to a thousand dollars, or rather more—sufficient to make Nancy rich, in her own opinion. But she was not quite satisfied about the legacy.

"They say, Walter, that you'll be left poor," she said. "You'll need this money."

"No, I shan't, Nancy," answered Walter. "Besides, there's a lot of mining stock that'll come to something—I don't know how much."

"But I don't feel right about taking this money, Walter."

"You needn't feel any scruples, Nancy. I can take care of myself. I can paddle my own canoe."

"But you haven't got any canoe," said Nancy, who did not comprehend the allusion. "Besides, I don't see how that would help you to a living."

"I shall get a canoe, then, and I'll steer it on to fortune."

"At any rate," said Nancy, "I will leave you my money when I die."

So the conversation ended. Nancy agreed, though reluctantly, to take the legacy, reserved some time or other to leave it to Walter. If she had known how little he really had left, she would not have consented to accept it at all. The same evening Walter sat in the lawyer's comfortable sitting room, and together they discussed the future.

"So you want to be a book agent, Walter?" said Mr. Shaw. "I can't say I think very highly of that plan."

"I don't mean to spend my life at it. I am more ambitious than that. But it will give me a chance to travel without expense, and I always wanted to see something of the world. You see, Mr. Shaw, that, as I am so young, even if I spend a year at this business, I shall not be too old to undertake something else afterward. In the meantime I shall see something of the world."

"Well, Walter, I won't oppose you. If I had not so much confidence in you, I should warn you of the temptations that are likely to beset your youth, left, as you will be, entirely to yourself. Of course, you will be thrown among all kinds of associates."

"Yes, sir; but I think I shall be wise enough to avoid what will do me no good."

"So I hope and believe. Now, what is the name of this publisher you were speaking of?"

"Pusher. He's of the firm of Flint & Pusher."

"I have heard of them. They are an enterprising firm."

On Monday morning Mr. Shaw handed Walter a pocketbook containing a roll of bills. "You will need some money to defray your expenses," he said, "until you are able to earn something. You will find fifty dollars in this pocketbook. There is no occasion to thank me, for I have only advanced it from money realized from your father's estate. If you need any more, you can write me, and I can send you a check or money order."

"This will be quite enough, Mr. Shaw," said Walter, confidently. "It won't be long before I shall be paying my way; at least, I hope so. I don't mean to be idle."

"I am sure you won't be, or you will belie your reputation. Well, good-by, Walter. Write me soon and often. You know I look upon myself as in some sort your guardian."

"I will certainly write you, Mr. Shaw. By the way, I never thought to ask you about the furniture of my room at the Essex Classical Institute."

"It was purchased by the keeper of the boarding house; at a sacrifice, it is true, but I thought it best to let it go, to save trouble."

"I should like to see Lem," thought Walter, with a little sigh as he called to mind the pleasant hours he had passed with his school-fellow. "I'll go back and pay the old institute a visit some time, after I've got back from my travels."

Walter reached New York by ten o'clock. Though his acquaintance with the city streets was very limited, as he had seldom visited it, he found his way without much trouble to the place of business of Messrs. Flint & Pusher. As they did not undertake to do a retail business, but worked entirely through agents, their rooms were not on the first floor, but on the third. Opening the door of the room, to which he was guided by a directory in the entry beneath, Walter found himself in a large apartment, the floor of which was heaped up with piles of books, chiefly octavos. An elderly gentleman, with a partially bald head, and wearing spectacles, was talking with two men, probably agents.

"Well, young man," said he, in rather a sharp voice, "what can I do for you?"

"Is Mr. Pusher in?" asked Walter.

"He went out for a few minutes; will be back directly. Did you wish particularly to see him?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take a seat then, and wait till he comes in."

Walter sat down and listened to the conversation.

"You met with fair success, then?" inquired Mr. Flint.

"Yes, sir, the book takes well. I sold ten in one day, and six and eight in other days."

Walter pricked up his ears. He wondered whether the book was the one recommended to him. If so, a sale of ten copies would enable the agent to realize twelve dollars and a half, which was certainly doing very well.

Just as the agents were going out, Mr. Pusher bustled in. His sharp eyes fell upon Walter, whom he immediately recognized.

"Ha, my young friend, so you have found us out," he said, offering his hand.

"Yes, sir."

"Come to talk on business, I hope?"

"Yes, sir, that is my object in coming."

"Mr. Flint," said Mr. Pusher, "this is a young friend whose acquaintance I made a short time since. I told him, if ever he wanted employment, to come here, and we would give him something to do."

Mr. Flint, who was a slower and a more cautious man than Mr. Pusher, regarded Walter a little doubtfully.

"Do you mean as an agent?" he said.

"Certainly I do."

"He seems very young."

"That's true, but age isn't always an advantage. He looks smart, and I'll guarantee that he is all he looks. I claim to be something of a judge of human nature, too."

"No doubt you're right," said Mr. Flint, who was accustomed to defer considerably to his more impetuous partner. "What's the young man's name?"

"My name is Walter Conrad," said our hero.

"Very good. Well, Conrad," continued Mr. Pusher, in an off-hand manner, "what are your wishes? What book do you want to take hold of?"

"You mentioned a book the other day—'Scenes in Bible Lands.'"

"Yes, our new book. That would be as good as any to begin on. How's the territory, Mr. Flint?"

"Most of the territory nearby is taken up," he said. "Does Mr. Conrad wish to operate near home?"

"I would rather go to a distance," said Walter.

"As far as Ohio?"

"Yes."

"In that case you could map out your own route pretty much. We haven't got the West portioned out as we have the Middle and New England States."

"In other words, we can give you a kind of roving commission, Conrad," put in Mr. Pusher.

"That would suit me, sir," said Walter. "Still it would be best not to attempt to cover too much territory. A rolling stone gathers no moss, you know. There is one important question I must ask you to begin with. Have you got any money?"

"Yes, sir, I have fifty dollars."

"Good. Of course, you will need money to get out to your field of labor, and will have to pay your expenses till you begin to earn something. Fifty dollars will answer very well."

"As I don't know very well how the business is managed," said Walter, "I must ask for instructions."

"Of course. You're a green hand. Sit down here, and I'll make it all plain to you."

So Mr. Pusher, in his brief, incisive way, explained to Walter how he must manage. His instructions were readily comprehended, and Walter, as he listened, felt eager to enter upon the adventurous career which he had chosen.

CHAPTER XV.

Walter, by advice of Mr. Pusher, bought a ticket to Cleveland. There was a resident agent in this city, and a depository of books published by the firm. As Walter would be unable to carry with him as large a supply of books as he needed, he was authorized to send to the Cleveland agency when he got out, and the books would be sent him by express.

"I will give you a letter to Mr. Greene, our agent in Cleveland," said Mr. Pusher, "and you can consult him as to your best field of operations."

Walter went downstairs, and emerged into the street. He had no particular motive for remaining in New York, and felt eager to commence work. So he bought a through ticket to Cleveland, via Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Though he had not much money to spare, he determined not to neglect the opportunity he would have of seeing this great natural wonder, but to stop over a day in order to visit the falls.

He selected a comfortable seat by a window, and waited till the train was ready to start. He realized that he had engaged in quite a large enterprise for a boy of fifteen who had hitherto had all his wants supplied by others. He was about to go a thousand miles from home, to earn his own living—in other words, to paddle his own canoe. But he did not feel in the least dismayed. He was ambitious and enterprising, and he felt confident that he could earn his living as well as other boys of his age. He had never been far from home, but felt that he should enjoy visiting new and unfamiliar

scenes. So he felt decidedly cheerful and hopeful as the cars whirled him out of the depot, and he commenced his western journey.

Walter put his strip of railway tickets into his vest pocket, and his pocketbook, containing the balance of his money, into the pocket of his pantaloons. He wished to have the tickets at hand when the conductor came round. He sat alone at first, but after a while a lady got in who rode thirty miles or more, and then got out. A little later a young man passed through the cars, looking about him on either side. He paused at Walter's seat, and inquired, "Is this seat taken?"

"No, sir," said Walter.

"Then, with your permission, I will take it," said the stranger. "Tiresome work traveling, isn't it?"

"I don't know," said Walter; "I rather like it; but then I never traveled much."

"I have to travel a great deal on business," said the other, "and I've got tired of it. How many times do you think I have been over this road?"

"Couldn't guess."

"This is the fifteenth time. I know it like a book. How far are you going?"

"To Cleveland."

"Got relations there, I suppose?"

"No," said Walter; "I am going on business."

He was rather glad to let his companion know that he, too, was in business.

"You're young to be in business," said his companion. "What sort of business is it?"

"I am agent for Flint & Pusher, a New York firm."

"Publishers, ain't they?"

"Yes, sir."

Walter's companion was a young man of twenty-five, or possibly a year or two older. He was rather handsomely attired, with a cutaway coat and a low-cut vest, double-breasted, across which glittered a massive chain, which might have been gold, or might only have been gilt, since all that glitters is not gold. At any rate, it answered the purpose of making a show. His cravat was showy, and his whole appearance indicated absence of good taste. A cautious employer would scarcely have selected him from a crowd of applicants for a confidential position. Walter was vaguely conscious of this. Still he had seen but little of the world, and felt incompetent to judge others.

"Are you going right through to Cleveland?" inquired the stranger.

"No; I think I shall stop at Buffalo. I want to see Niagara Falls."

"That's right. Better see them. They're stunning."

"I suppose you have been there?" said Walter, with some curiosity.



COMFORTS.

One cup sugar and two eggs beaten together, one-half teaspoon salt, one cup sweet milk, three cups flour, one teaspoon baking powder. Have ready a deep pan of hot lard and dip in a tablespoonful at a time, as if frying doughnuts. Dip your spoon in hot lard first and the mixture will not stick to the spoon. When brown on one side they will turn over. Fry brown and lay on paper to drain. Do not put too many in at once, as they must have room to turn over.

ALMOND MEAL.

Oatmeal merely softens the water; almond meal is a substitute for soap. It is made of 4 ounces of best almond meal, an ounce of powdered orris root, 2 ounces of caustic soap ground to a powder, half a dram of oil of bergamot and four drops of oil of bitter almonds. Mix well, and keep on the dressing stand in tightly covered glass jar. When washing pour a little of the meal into the hands and use as soap, treating the face with it.

MAPLE AND PRUNE PUDDING.

Soak two cups of well-washed prunes in water to cover overnight. In the morning simmer until perfectly tender, then remove seeds and stir in one cupful of chopped maple sugar, cut in small pieces. The prunes should be nearly dry. Cover with a good biscuit dough, rolled thin with a half cupful of shaved maple sugar rolled over it. Bake in a quick oven and serve with cream.

OATMEAL WATER.

A simple but efficacious spring medicine is oatmeal water. To make a tablespoonful of any steam-cooked variety is put at night into a glassful of water and let stand until morning. The liquid is then thoroughly stirred and strained off, the water being drunk as soon as one gets out of bed. This decoction may be taken every morning of the year, and undoubtedly has virtues.

LEMON SHERBET.

Squeeze all the juice from six lemons and one large orange. Put into this the grated rind of the orange and of three of the lemons and let it steep for an hour. Strain in a bag, squeezing this hard, add two cups granulated sugar and one pint water. Mix well and put into a freezer. Turn until frozen, pack and let it stand for an hour before serving.

HOW TO SAVE PIE JUICES.

In baking any kind of juicy pies, after getting the pie ready for the oven, take a strip of muslin cloth about an inch and a half wide, wring out of cold water, and put it around edge of pie, one-half on pie tin, and none of the juice will run out in the oven. When done lift the cloth right off the pie.

LEMON CUSTARD PUDDING.

Grated rind and juice two lemons, one large cup sugar, four heaping tablespoonfuls corn starch. Stir together and add two large cups boiling water and a tablespoon butter and let boil until it looks clear. Add yolks of three eggs, lastly the well-beaten whites stirred in well. When cold serve with whipped cream.

APPLE SAUCE CAKE.

Stir into one cupful sweetened apple sauce one teaspoonful soda. Cream half cup butter with one cup sugar and half teaspoonful salt. Beat this well into the apple sauce, adding one cup raisins or currants, or both, mixed, and spices to taste. Last of all stir in one pint flour. Bake in a loaf in slow oven.

BROWN BETTY.

Slice apples fine, crumble your bread and put a layer of crumbs in pudding dish, then a layer of apples. Sprinkle with cinnamon and currants. Continue until you have amount required, then drop bits of butter here and there on top. Add a little water and cook in slow oven until brown.

HOW TO JUDGE EGGS.

Bolled eggs which adhere to the shell are fresh. A good egg will sink in water. Stale eggs are glassy and smooth of shell. The shell of a fresh egg has a lime-like surface. A bolled egg which is done and dries quickly on the shell when taken from the saucpan is fresh.

MAPLE PARFAIT.

Beat four eggs slightly in a double boiler, pour in one cup of hot maple sirup, stirring all the time. Cook until thick, cool, and add one pint of thick cream beater stiff. Pour into a mold and pack in equal parts of ice and salt. Let stand three hours.

SUGGESTIONS.

A sponging with a solution of one part ammonia to ten parts of water is said to brighten the colors of a faded carpet.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Boats of 200 to 3,000 tonnage now ply between Japan and Formosa on regular three and five-day schedules.

A discovery of large deposits of tin ore is reported as having been made recently in the Brooks mountains in Alaska. The details of the strike are not given.

In the public schools of Strassburg, Germany, men teachers get \$342.72 to \$637.72 per annum, according to the years of service, and women teachers get from \$333.20 to \$666.40.

In consequence of a Lahore literary society announcing a lecture, "Man, the Index of Creation," the city authorities sent twenty-five armed constables down to the lecture hall, which only held fifty people.—Labor Tribune.

An incandescent lamp in its green shade will, when turned upward toward the ceiling, spread a soft and pleasantly diffused light, plenty strong enough for a room where no one is reading. When the lamp is so used no shadows are cast.

Science so far has failed to furnish any explanation of the mystery of seedless fruits. They are not the outcome of the work of man. Man perpetuates them; he does no more. The seedless orange was found in a state of seedlessness.—Vegetarian.

A Boston woman who has just celebrated her golden anniversary as a cook boasts of having made and cooked 394,000 pies, 2,000,000 doughnuts and something more than 1,500,000 puddings, besides a multitude of other dainties and no end of baked beans. Her receipts are all her own and she refuses to write a cook book.

The clubwomen of Massachusetts are fighting against the movement to lower the milk standard in that State. This fight is said to be winning more recruits to the cause of woman suffrage than anything that has come up in the last ten years. Mothers have come to agree with Mrs. Charlotte Perkins Gilman in asserting that politics which affects the purity of milk and water is "not outside the home, but inside the baby."

During the year ending last month there were 485 new electric plants put into operation in the United States, Canada and Mexico, which makes the total 5,498. The activity in the electrical industry from the most recent figures shows a decided inclination to recover from the financial stress which has been affecting all business during the last year. The gain is equally pronounced when the item of capitalization is considered.

"Bushranger," once a respectable term, has now sunk to the lowest depths. In the early Australian newspapers such advertisements as "Wanted, a good bushranger," were quite common. The word then was synonymous with "bushman," one skilled in knowledge and experience of bush life. But now a "good bushranger" would be as ridiculous as an honest burglar, for a bushranger is the superlative bad man of the antipodes—a bank robber, a despoiler of gold escorts and mail coaches and the terror of the countryside.

"Alligator" is merely another form of the Spanish "el lagarto," the lizard. Shakespeare classed the alligator as a fish, to judge from Romeo's description of the contents of the apothecary's shop: "An alligator stuf'd, and other skins of ill-shaped fishes." Somewhat like "alligator," the lizard is the "hyena," which merely means sow, and "ostrich," which comes from the Latin word for bird and a Greek word that meant either a sparrow or an ostrich, as the case might be—any bird, in fact. The ostrich is just the "bird-bird," according to etymology.

So great have been the ravages caused by the dodder—a leafless, twining, parasitic plant—that a decree has been issued by the French president prohibiting its importation into the country. It is a veritable agricultural scourge, attacking and destroying hops, vines, clover, peas, tomatoes and many other kinds of agricultural produce. Once having found its way into any district, it is most difficult to get rid of, and constitutes a permanent source of anxiety to the farmer. Cutting down, burning and poison have all been tried with unsatisfactory results.—London Globe.

Massage, as a remedy for insomnia and other ills, is most ancient. The very word "massage" comes from the Arabic word "massa." It was stolen from the Arabian doctors by the French doctors. In the "Odyssey" the heroes are massaged after a battle. The word "shampoo" is from the Indian word "tshampoo." Masseurs were employed in India by Alexander the Great. Massage is one of the things they discovered in ancient China. Captain Cook was massaged for a quarter of an hour by twelve natives of Tahiti. They cured his rheumatism. Paracelsus tells how the Egyptians practiced massage.