

STRONG AND STEADY

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

The boy, who had made sure of a sale, took back the fruit reluctantly, and passed on, crying out: "Here's your oranges and apples!"

Walter set about thinking what had become of his money. The more he thought, the more certain he felt that he had put his pocketbook in the pocket in which he had first felt for it. Why was it not there now? That was a question which he felt utterly incompetent to answer.

"Have you lost anything?" inquired a gentleman who sat just behind Walter. Looking back, he found that it was a gentleman of fifty who addressed him.

"Yes, sir," he said, "I have lost my pocketbook."

"Was there much money in it?"

"About forty dollars, sir."

"Who was that young man who was sitting with you a few minutes since?"

"I don't know, sir."

"He was a stranger, then?"

"Yes, sir; I never met him till this morning."

"Then I think I can tell you where your money has gone."

"Where, sir?" demanded Walter, beginning to understand him.

"I think your late companion was a pickpocket, and relieved you of it, while he pretended to be reading. I didn't like his appearance much."

"I don't see how he could have done it without my feeling his hand in my pocket."

"They understand their business and can easily relieve one of his purse undetected. I once had my watch stolen without being conscious of it. Your pocketbook was in the pocket toward the man, and you were looking from the window. It was a very simple thing to relieve you of it."

CHAPTER XVI.

Walter went through two cars, looking about him on either side, thinking it possible that the thief might have taken his seat in one of them. There was very little chance of this, however. Next he passed into the smoking car, where, to his joy no less than his surprise, he found the man of whom he was in search playing cards with three other passengers.

He looked up carelessly as Walter approached, but did not betray the slightest confusion or sign of guilt. To let the reader into a secret, he had actually taken Walter's pocketbook, but was too cunning to keep it about him. He had taken out the money, and thrown the pocketbook itself from the car platform, taking an opportunity when he thought himself unobserved. As the money consisted of bills, which could not be identified as Walter's, he felt that he was in no danger of detection. He thought that he could afford to be indifferent.

"Did you get tired of waiting?" he asked, addressing our hero.

"May I speak to you a moment?" asked Walter.

"Certainly."

"I mean alone."

"Then, gentlemen, I must beg to be excused for five minutes," said the pickpocket, shrugging his shoulders, as if to express good-natured annoyance. "Now, my young friend, I am at your service."

Walter proceeded to the other end of the car, which chanced to be unoccupied. Now that the moment had come, he hardly knew how to introduce the subject. Suppose that the person he addressed were innocent, it would be rather an awkward matter to charge him with the theft.

"Did you see anything of my pocketbook?" he said, at length.

"Your pocketbook?" returned the pickpocket, arching his brows. "Why, have you lost it?"

"Yes."

"When did you discover its loss?"

"Shortly after you left me," said Walter, significantly.

"I'm very sorry indeed. I did not see it. Have you searched on the floor?"

"Yes; but it isn't there."

"That's awkward. Was your ticket in the pocketbook?"

"No, I had that in my vest pocket."

"That's fortunate. On my honor, I'm sorry for you. I haven't much money with me, but I'll lend you a dollar or two with the greatest pleasure."

This offer quite bewildered Walter. He felt confident that the other had stolen his money, and now here he was offering to lend him some of it. He did not care to make such a compromise, or to be bought off so cheap; so, though quite penniless, he determined to reject the offer.

"I won't borrow," he said, coldly. "I was hoping you had seen my money."

The pickpocket turned and went back to his game, and Walter slowly left the car. He had intended to ask him point-blank whether he had taken the money, but couldn't summon the necessary courage. He went back to his old seat.

"Well," said the old gentleman who sat behind him, "I suppose you did not find your man?"

"Yes, I did."

"You didn't get your money?" he added, in surprise.

"No, he was perfectly cool. Still, I think he took it. He offered to lend me a dollar or two. What would you advise me to do?"

"Speak to the conductor."

Just at that moment the conductor entered the car. As he came up the aisle Walter stopped him, and explained his loss, and the suspicions he had formed.

"You say the man is in the smoking

car?" said the conductor, who had listened attentively. "Could you point him out?"

"Yes."

"I am glad of it. I have received warning by telegraph that one of the New York swell-mob is on the train, probably intent on mischief, but no description came with it, and I had no clew to the person. I have no doubt that the man you speak of is the party. If so, he is familiarly known as 'Slippery Dick.'"

"Do you think you can get back my money?" asked Walter, anxiously.

"I think there is a chance of it. Come with me and point out your man."

Walter gladly accompanied the conductor to the smoking car. His old acquaintance was busily engaged as before in a game, and laughing heartily at some favorable turn.

"There he is," said Walter, indicating him with his finger.

The conductor walked up to him and tapped him on the shoulder.

"What's wanted?" he asked, looking up.

"You've looked at my ticket."

"I wish to speak to you a moment."

He rose without making any opposition, and walked to the other end of the car.

"Well," he said, and there was a slight nervousness in his tone, "what's the matter? Wasn't my ticket all right?"

"No trouble about that. The thing is, will you restore this boy's pocketbook?"

"Sir," said the pickpocket, blustering, "do you mean to insult me? What have I to do with his pocketbook?"

"You sat beside him, and he missed it directly after you left him."

"What is that to me? You may search me if you like. You will find only one pocketbook upon me, and that is my own."

"I am aware of that," said the conductor, coolly. "I saw you take the money out and throw it from the car platform."

The pickpocket turned pale.

"You are mistaken in the person," he said.

"No, I am not. I advise you to restore the money forthwith."

Without a word the thief, finding himself cornered, took from his pocket a roll of bills, which he handed to Walter.

"Is that right?" asked the conductor.

"Yes," said our hero, after counting his money.

"So far, so good. And now, Slippery Dick," he continued, turning to the thief. "I advise you to leave the cars at the next station or I will have you arrested. Take your choice."

The detected rogue was not long in making his choice. Already the cars had slackened their speed, and a short distance ahead appeared a small station. The place seemed to be of very little importance. One man, however, appeared to have business there. Walter saw his quondam acquaintance jump on the platform, and congratulated himself that his only loss was a pocketbook whose value did not exceed one dollar.

The conductor on seeing the pocketbook thrown away had thought nothing of it, supposing it to be an old one, but as soon as he heard of the robbery suspected at once the thief and his motive.

CHAPTER XVII.

Walter stopped long enough at Buffalo to visit Niagara Falls, as he had intended. Though he enjoyed the visit, and found the famous cataract fully up to his expectations, no incident occurred during the visit which deserves to be chronicled here. He resumed his journey, and arrived in due time at Cleveland.

He had no difficulty in finding the office of Mr. Greene, the agent of Messrs. Flint & Pusher. He found that this gentleman, besides his agency, had a book and stationery business of his own.

"I don't go out myself," he said to Walter; "but I keep a supply of Flint's books on hand, and forward them to his agents as called for. Have you done much in the business?"

"No, sir; I am only a beginner. I have done nothing yet."

"I thought not. You look too young."

"Mr. Pusher told me I had better be guided by your advice."

"You had better go fifty miles off at least. The immediate neighborhood has been pretty well canvassed. There's Earle, now, a flourishing and wealthy town. Suppose you go there first?"

"I'll go this afternoon."

"You are prompt."

Walter arrived in Earle in time for supper. He went to a small public house, where he found that he could board for a dollar and a half a day, or seven dollars by the week. He engaged a week's board, reflecting that he could probably work to advantage a week in so large a place, or, if not, that five days at the daily rate would amount to more than the weekly terms.

He did not at first propose to do anything that evening, until it occurred to him that he might perhaps dispose of a copy of his book to the landlord in part payment for his board. He went into the public room after supper.

"Are you traveling alone?" asked the landlord, who had his share of curiosity.

"Yes," said Walter. "I am a book agent."

"Meeting with pretty good success?"

"I'm just beginning," said Walter, smiling. "If you'll be my first customer, I'll stop with you a week."

"What kind of a book have you got?"

Walter showed it. It was got up in the

usual style of subscription books, with abundance of illustrations.

"It's one of the best books we ever sent out," said Walter, in a professional way. "Just look at the number of pictures. If you've got any children, they'll like it; and, if you haven't, it will be just the book for your center table."

"I see you know how to talk," said the landlord, smiling. "What is the price?"

"Three dollars and a half."

"That's considerable."

"But you know I'm going to take it out in board."

"Well, that's a consideration, to be sure. A man doesn't feel it so much as if he took the money out of his pocket and paid cash down. What do you say, Mrs. Burton?" addressing his wife, who just then entered the room. "This young man wants to stay here a week, and pay partly in a book he is agent for. Shall I agree?"

"Let me see the book," said Mrs. Burton, who was a comely, pleasant-looking woman of middle age. "What's the name of it?"

"Scenes in Bible Lands," said Walter.

He opened it, taking care to display and point out the pictures. So Walter made the first sale, on which he realized a profit of one dollar and a quarter.

"It's a pretty easy way to earn money," he reflected, with satisfaction. "If I can only sell copies enough. One copy sold will pay for a day's board."

He went to bed early, and enjoyed a sound and refreshing sleep. He was cheered with hopes of success on the morrow. If he could sell four copies a day, that would give him a profit of five dollars, and five dollars would leave him a handsome profit after paying expenses.

The next morning after breakfast he started out, carrying with him three books. Knowing nothing of the residents of the village, he could only judge by the outward appearance of their houses. Seeing a large and handsome house standing back from the street, he decided to call.

"The people living here must be rich," he thought. "They won't mind paying three dollars and a half for a nice book."

Accordingly he walked up the gravelled path and rang the front door bell. The door was opened by a housemaid.

"Is the lady of the house at home?" asked Walter.

"Do you want to see her?"

"Yes."

"Then wait here, and I'll tell her."

A tall woman, with a thin face and a pinched expression, presented herself after five minutes.

"Well, young man," she asked, after a sharp glance, "what is your business?"

Her expression was not very encouraging, but Walter was bound not to lose an opportunity.

"I should like to show you a new book, madam," he commenced, "a book of great value, beautifully illustrated, which is selling like wildfire."

"How many copies have you sold?" inquired the lady, sharply.

"One," answered Walter, rather confused.

"Do you call that selling like wildfire?" she demanded, with sarcasm.

"I only commenced last evening," said Walter, "I referred to the sales of other agents."

"What's the name of the book?"

"Scenes in Bible Lands."

"Let me see it."

Walter displayed the book.

"Look at the beautiful pictures," he said.

"I don't see anything remarkable about them. The binding isn't very strong. Shouldn't wonder if the book would go to pieces in a week."

"I don't think there'll be any trouble that way," said Walter.

"If it does, you'll be gone, so it won't trouble you."

"With ordinary care it will hold long enough."

"Oh, yes, of course you'd say so. I expected it. How much do you charge for the book?"

"Three dollars and a half," repeated the woman. "You seem to think people are made of money."

"I don't fix the price, madam," said Walter, rather provoked; "the publishers do that."

"I warrant they make two-thirds profit. Don't they, now?"

"I don't know," said Walter. "I don't know anything about the cost of publishing books. But this is a large one, and there are a great many pictures in it. They must have cost considerable."

"Seems to me it's ridiculous to ask such a price for a book. Why, it's enough to buy a nice dress pattern!"

"The book will last longer than the dress," said Walter.

"But it is not so necessary. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'd like the book well enough to put on my parlor table. I'll give you two dollars for it."

"Two dollars!" ejaculated Walter, scarcely crediting the testimony of his ears.

"Yes, two dollars; and I warrant you'd make money enough, then."

"I should lose money," said Walter. "I couldn't think of accepting such an offer."

"In my opinion there isn't any book worth even two dollars."

"I see we can't trade," said Walter, disgusted at such meanness in a lady who occupied so large a house, and might be supposed to have plenty of money.

Big Collection.

Gunner—The Ultra-Van Tassels moved to-day. There were seven vans for the furniture and six extra vans.

Guyer—Indeed! And what were the extra vans for?

Gunner—Why, to remove their family skeletons.

The elephant beetle of Venezuela is the world's largest insect. It weighs a half pound.



Editor (in daily office)—Say, Buck, have you read my last editorial? "I hope so," was the crusty reply.—Minneapolis.

The Indignant One—The idea of 'm a-telling me 'ow children ought to be fed! Why, I've buried ten o' my own! —The Tatler.

Boy—Sixpen'orth o' cod liver oil, please, sir. An', I say, don't give me too much, 'cos it's me what's got to drink it.—Punch.

Smawley—Do you believe that money talks? Ardupp—You bet I do. I no sooner get my hands on a dollar than it says "Good-by."

Pat—Are ye engaged to Mike Dooley? Biddy—Faith, an' I'm not. Are ye after wantin' me? Pat—Not unless I can't git ye.—Peola Advocate.

Dick—Money doesn't always bring 'appiness and peace of mind." Bob (anxiously)—You are right; sometimes it tempts you to buy automobiles, biles.

Visitor—Well, Carrie, what do you think of your new baby brother? Carrie (aged four)—Oh, I don't think much of him. Why, he can't even speak English yet.

"Did you say the prisoner hit the plaintiff from the court house and the postoffice?" "No, I didn't. I said he hit him between the eyes."—Baltimore American.

Nell—She admits that she is terribly disappointed in her husband. Belle—How is that? Nell—She married him to reform him, and now she finds he doesn't need it.—Philadelphia Record.

"My hair is falling out," admitted the timid man in a drug store. "Can you recommend something to keep it in?" "Certainly," replied the obliging clerk. "Get a box."—Lippincott's Magazine.

Teacher—You have named all domestic animals save one. It has bristly hair, it is grimy, likes dirt, and is fond of mud. Well, Tom? Tom (shamefacedly)—That's me.—Chicago Tribune.

"Do you know that your chickens come over into my garden?" "I thought they must be doing that." "Why did you think so." "Because they never come back."—Cleveland Leader.

"You should never take anything that doesn't agree with you," the physician told Mr. Marks. "If I had always followed that rule, Marie," he remarked to his wife, "where would you be?"

Ascum—How on earth did you ever get a messenger boy to deliver your note and bring back the answer so quick? Wise—I took his dime novel away from him and held it as security.—Philadelphia Press.

Mrs. Jones—Good gracious, Mrs. Brown, why is your husband going through all those strange actions? Is he training for a prize-fight? Mrs. Brown—Not at all; he's merely getting in form to beat the carpets.—Harper's Weekly.

New Clerk—I notice some of these barrels of apples are marked X and some Z. Are they different kinds? Dealer—No; same kind, but differently packed. Some customers want a barrel opened at the bottom and some at the top.

Wife—I'm actually ashamed to go to church with this old hat on. It isn't up-to-date at all. Husband—Is the cook going to church this morning? Wife—No; I think not. Husband—Then why not borrow hers? —Philadelphia Inquirer.

Miss Rattle—Yes, that's a photo of my maiden aunt. Perhaps you saw her name in the papers last winter? She frightened away a burglar. Mrs. Winkler (closely inspecting the portrait)—Did she? Well, I don't wonder at it.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Mr. Justcott—Why, what are you crying about, dear? Mrs. Justcott—Oh, George! nice have got into the pantry and eaten up a beautiful custard pie I made myself! Mr. Justcott—There, there! Don't cry over a few little mice!—Western Christian Advocate.

"But," cried Miss Woodby, indignantly, "since I declare to you that the joke is original with me, isn't it impudent of you to doubt it?" "Not at all," replied Mr. Chesterfield; "I should be still more impudent and ungrateful to believe you that old."—Philadelphia Press.

"Physical culture, father, is perfectly lovely. To develop the arms I grasp this rod by one end and move it slowly from right to left." "Well, well," exclaimed her father, "what won't science discover? If that rod had straw at the other end you'd be sweeping."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Irrigation is enlarging the oases of the Sahara desert.

The Nile contains a greater variety of fish than any other body of water.

There are upward of seventy species of edible seaweeds growing on the coasts of Hawaii, and about forty of these are in common use by the natives.

There are in Europe 10,000 women and girls who earn a living as artists' models. It is strange to say that there are not ten among them who possess a perfect face and figure.

Sleeplessness is often caused by the head being exposed to the cold, while the rest of the body is warm. In nine cases out of ten, if the head is covered with a silk handkerchief it will induce sleep.

Take water in which walnut hulls have soaked overnight and pour it on a spot of ground. In a very few hours the fishworms will come to the surface and can easily be secured for your expedition.

The vessel movement on the Great Lakes last season aggregated 73,769 vessels of 99,166,409 net tons register, cleared from the various lake ports, compared with 76,097 vessels of 94,094,316 net tons register cleared during the preceding season.

The Express mentions a case of a private who for failing to recognize and salute his officer was condemned to march past and salute a barrack pump for two hours each day for a week. The choice of the substitute anyhow showed modesty on the part of the officer.—London Punch.

Messrs. Palermo and Cingolani, the inventors of "tachyol" (fluoride of silver), an antiseptic employed in surgery, have found that a solution of one part in 500,000 of water will destroy all germs, including B. subtilis, its germicidal effect being much greater than that of chlorine, bromine or ozone.

Great activity is being displayed by the Turkish government in building bridges along the important strategic routes in Macedonia and eastern Roumelia. In the vilayet of Salonica a Belgian firm is building three great bridges, and a Bavarian firm is building a bridge entirely of military construction.

In the battle which has been waged against the water hyacinth which chokes up many of the rivers in the southern part of the United States, the matter has been complicated to a serious degree by the fondness which cattle exhibit for this plant. It is almost without food value, but there is something about it which attracts the animals and they have been known to be lured to death in the efforts to secure the hyacinth.

The typical American is popularly supposed to be a shrewd, hard, level-headed man of business, and that estimation is right, as far as it goes. But beneath these salient characteristics lies a fund of sheer sentimentality and emotionalism which can not be beaten in any other country. You will find it in American fiction, and you will get it in the archaic melodramas that still draw tears and cheers, sighs and smiles from American audiences.—Ladies' Field.

Owing to many swindles perpetrated recently through forged and stolen letters of introduction, a card of photographic identification invented by a Pittsburg man has become popular in that city. Now when the Pittsburger's friend asks him for a letter of introduction, he takes the friend to the nearest photographer and is photographed with him in an attitude of presentation. Then he writes his note on the picture. And when it is presented the recipient has no doubts as to the identity of his caller.

The great practical utility of the magnetic survey made in the Pacific ocean by the yacht Galilee since 1905 is shown by a new magnetic chart, from which it appears that the charts previously used by navigators in the Pacific ocean were erroneous along some much-traversed routes to the extent of from three to five degrees, and the errors at times were systematic. Errors of this magnitude are of importance in practical navigation, where the indications of the compass should be as accurate as possible.—Youth's Companion.

An organization has recently been effected with the object of conducting a complete scientific investigation and exploration of the Pacific ocean and its islands. While the chief energies of the institution will be devoted to ethnology, the geology and configuration of the region will also be investigated, and studies in zoology and botany will be carried out, as also of winds and ocean currents, with a view to throwing light on the distribution of animals, plants and of the human race. Expeditions are to be dispatched in a specially equipped vessel, and it is expected that fifteen years may be needed for the work.