

# STRONG AND STEADY

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

## CHAPTER XVII.—(Continued.)

He began to replace the book in its brown paper covering.

"I don't know but I might give you twenty-five cents more. Come, now, I'll give you two dollars and a quarter."

"I can't take it," said Walter, shortly. "Three dollars and a half is the price, and I will not take a cent less."

"You won't get it out of me, then," retorted the lady, slamming the door in displeasure.

Walter had already made up his mind to this effect, and had started on his way to the gate.

"I wonder if I shall meet many people like her?" he thought, and he felt somewhat despondent.

Walter began to think that selling books would prove a harder and more disagreeable business than he had anticipated. He had been brought face to face with meanness and selfishness, and they inspired him with disgust and indignation. Not that he expected everybody to buy his books, even if they could afford it. Still, it was not necessary to insult him by offering half price.

He walked slowly up the street, wondering if he should meet any more such customers. On the opposite side of the street he noticed a small shoemaker's shop.

"I suppose it is of no use to go in there," thought Walter. "If they won't buy at a big house, there isn't much chance here."

Still he thought he would go in. He had plenty of time on his hands, and might as well slip no chance, however small. He pushed open the door, and found himself in a shop about twenty-five feet square, littered up with leather snavings and finished and unfinished shoes. A boy of fourteen was pegging, and his father, a man of middle age, was finishing a shoe.

"Good-morning," said Walter.

"Good-morning," said the shoemaker, turning round. "Do you want a pair of shoes this morning?"

"No," said Walter. "I didn't come to buy, but to sell."

"Well, what have you got to sell?"

"A subscription book, finely illustrated."

"Let me look at it."

He wiped his hands on his apron, and taking the book, began to turn over the leaves.

"It seems like a good book," he said. "Does it sell well?"

"Yes, it sells largely. I have only just commenced, but other agents are doing well on it."

"That's the way to talk. How much do you expect to get for this book?"

"The price is three dollars and a half."

"It's rather high."

"But there are a good many pictures. Those are what cost money."

"Yes, I suppose they do. Well, I've a great mind to take one."

"I don't think you'll regret it. A good book will give you pleasure for a long time."

"That's so. Well, here's the money."

Walter was all the more pleased at effecting this sale, because it was unexpected. He had expected to sell a book at the great house he had just called at, but thought that the price of the book might deter the shoemaker, whose income probably was not large.

During the next hour Walter failed to sell another copy. At length he managed to sell a second. As these were all he had brought with him, and he was feeling somewhat tired, he went back to the tavern, and did not come out again till after dinner.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

Walter found a good dinner ready for him at 12 o'clock, which he enjoyed the more because he felt that he had earned it in advance. He waited till about 2 o'clock, and again set out, this time in a different direction. In some places he was received politely; in others he was treated as a humbug. But Walter was by this time getting accustomed to his position, and found that he must meet disagreeable people with as good humor as he could command. One farmer was willing to take the book if he would accept pay in apples, of which he offered him two barrels; but this offer he did not for a moment entertain, judging that he would find it difficult to carry about the apples, and probably difficult to dispose of them. However, he managed to sell two copies, though he had to call at twenty places to do it. Nevertheless, he felt well repaid by the degree of success he met with.

"Five books sold to-day!" thought Walter, complacently, as he started on his walk home. "That gives me six dollars and a quarter profit. I wish I could keep that up."

But our young merchant found that he was not likely to keep up such sales. The next day he sold but two copies, and the day succeeding three. Still, for three days and a half the aggregate sale was eleven copies, making a clear profit of thirteen dollars and a seventy-five cents. At the end of the week he had sold twenty copies; but to make up this number he had been obliged to visit one or two neighboring villages.

He now prepared to move on. The next place at which he proposed to stop for a few days we will call Bolton. He had already written to Cleveland for a fresh supply of books to be forwarded to him there. He had but two books left, and his baggage being contained in a

small valise, he decided to walk the distance, partly out of economy, but principally because it would enable him to see the country at his leisure. During the first five miles he succeeded in selling both books, which relieved him of the burden of carrying them, leaving him only his valise.

Walter was strong and stout, and enjoyed his walk. There was a freshness and novelty about his present mode of life, which he liked. He did not imagine he should like to be a book agent all his life, but for a time he found it quite agreeable.

He stopped under the shade of a large elm and ate the lunch which he had brought with him from the inn. The sandwiches and apples were good, and, with the addition of some water from a stream near by, made a very acceptable lunch. When he resumed his walk after resting a couple of hours, the weather had changed. In the morning it was bright sunshine. Now the clouds had gathered, and a storm seemed imminent. To make matters worse, Walter had managed to stray from the road. He found himself walking in a narrow lane, lined on either side by thick woods. Soon the rain came pattering down, at first in small drops but quickly poured down in a drenching shower. Walter took refuge in the woods, congratulating himself that he had sold the books, which otherwise would have run the risk of being spoiled.

"I wish there were some house nearby in which I could rest," thought Walter. The prospect of being benighted in the woods in such weather was far from pleasant.

Looking around anxiously, he espied a small footpath, which he followed, hoping, but hardly expecting, that it might lead to some place of refuge. To his agreeable surprise he emerged after a few minutes into a small clearing, perhaps half an acre in extent, in the middle of which was a rough cabin. It was a strange place for a house, but, rude as it was, Walter hailed its appearance with joy. At all events it promised protection from the weather, and the people who occupied it would doubtless be willing to give him, for pay, of course, supper and lodging. Probably the accommodations would not be first class, but our hero was prepared to take what he could get, and be thankful for it. Accordingly he advanced fearlessly and pounded on the door with his fist, as there was neither bell nor knocker.

The door not being opened immediately, he pounded again. This time a not particularly musical voice was heard from within:

"Is that you, Jack?"

"No," answered Walter, "it isn't Jack."

His voice was probably recognized as that of a boy, and any apprehension that might have been felt by the person within was dissipated. Walter heard a bolt withdrawn, and the door opening, revealed a tall, gaunt, bony woman, who eyed him in a manner which could not be considered very friendly or cordial.

"Who are you?" she demanded abruptly, keeping the door partly closed.

"I am a book agent," said Walter.

"Do you expect to sell any books here?" asked the woman, with grim humor.

"No," said Walter, "but I have been caught in the storm, and lost my way. Can I stop here over night if the storm should hold on?"

"This isn't a tavern," said the woman, ungraciously.

"No, I suppose not," said Walter; "but it will be a favor to me if you will take me in, and I will pay you whatever you think right. I suppose there is no tavern nearby."

He half hoped there might be, for he had already made up his mind that this would not be a very agreeable place to stop at.

"There's one five miles off," said the woman.

"That's too far to go in such weather. If you'll let me stay here, I will pay you whatever you ask in advance."

"Humph!" said the woman, doubtfully, "I don't know how Jack will like it."

As Walter could know nothing of the sentiments of the Jack referred to, he remained silent, and waited for the woman to make up her mind, believing that she would decide in his favor. He proved to be right.

"Well," she said, half unwillingly, "I don't know but I'll take you in, though it isn't my custom to accommodate travelers."

"I will try not to give you much trouble," said Walter, relieved to find that he was sure of food and shelter.

"Humph!" responded the woman.

She led he way into the building, which appeared to contain two rooms on the first floor, and probably the same number of chambers above. There was no entry, but the door opened at once into the kitchen.

"Come up to the fire if you're wet," said the woman.

The invitation was hospitable, but the manner was not. However, Walter was glad to accept the invitation, without thinking too much of the manner in which it was expressed, for his clothes were pretty well saturated by the rain. There was no stove, but an old brick fireplace, on which two stout logs were burning. There was one convenience, at least, about living in the woods—fuel was abundant, and required nothing but the labor of cutting it.

"I think I'll take off my shoes," said Walter.

"You can't if you want to," said the girl, business.

He extended his wet feet toward the fire, and felt a sense of comfort stealing over him. He could hear the rain falling fiercely against the side of the cabin and felt glad that he was not compelled to stand the brunt of the storm.

He looked around him guardedly, not wishing to let his hostess see that he was doing so, for she looked like one who might easily be offended. The room seemed remarkably bare of furniture. There was an unpainted table, and there were also three chairs, one of which had lost its back. These were plain wooden chairs, and though they appeared once to have been painted, few vestiges of the original paint now remained. On a shelf were a few articles of tin, but no articles of crockery were visible, except two cracked cups. Walter had before this visited the dwellings of the poor, but he had never seen a home so poorly provided with what are generally regarded as the necessities of life.

"I wonder what Lem would say, if he should see me now," thought Walter, his thoughts going back to the Essex Classical Institute, and the friend whose studies he shared. They seemed far away, those days of careless happiness, when as yet the burdens of life were unmet and scarcely even dreamed of. Did Walter sigh for their return? I think not, except on one account. His father was then alive, and he would have given years of his own life to recall that loved parent from the grave. But I do not think he would have cared, for the present at least, to give up his business career, humble though it was, and go back to his studies. He enjoyed even his present adventure, in spite of the discomforts that attended it, and there was something exciting in looking about him, and realizing that he was a guest in a rough cabin in the midst of the woods, a thousand miles away from home.

Guarded as he had been in looking around him, it did not escape without observation.

"Well, young man, this is a poor place, isn't it?" asked the woman, suddenly.

"I don't know," said Walter, wishing to be polite.

"That's what you're thinking, I'll warrant," said the woman. "Well, you're not obliged to stay, if you don't want to."

"But I do want to, and I am very much obliged to you for consenting to take me," said Walter, hastily.

"You said you would pay in advance," said the woman.

"So I will," said Walter, taking out his pocketbook, "if you will tell me how much I am to pay."

"You may give me a dollar," said the woman.

Walter drew out a roll of bills, and, finding a one-dollar note, handed it to the woman.

She took it, glancing covetously at the remaining money which he replaced in his pocketbook. Walter noticed the glance, and, though he was not inclined to be suspicious, it gave him a vague feeling of anxiety.

(To be continued.)

## A Fabulously Rich Nation.

The United States is a fabulously rich nation. The money in circulation amounts to \$3,250,000,000 and that in the Federal treasury to \$345,246,500. The value of domestic merchandise exported is \$1,853,718,000, and that of all manufactures \$14,802,147,000. The farm wealth of the country produced in 1907 is in round figures \$7,412,000,000; the added mineral wealth for the year is \$3,000,000,000. It has been pointed out with truth during the October "panic" that the national prosperity is not based on Wall street and its workings, but more deeply, on the country's vast agricultural production. If this is the case—and it surely is—an inventory of the various crops reveals figures to comfort and cheer. That he who reads may learn, the values of the various farming industries are presented herewith: Wheat, \$500,000,000; cotton, \$675,000,000; corn, \$1,350,000,000; hay, \$600,000,000; poultry and eggs \$600,000,000; dairy products, \$173,765,000; live stock, \$4,875,000,000. The sum representing our commerce with foreign nations in 1907 has more than trebled in the past three decades, and that year was the third running in which both exports and imports have totaled more than a billion of dollars. This statement of our national assets, this inventory of the fundamental prosperity of our country and its constituent States relieves all carping care, all need for financial worryment. It is something more than encouraging—it is inspiring.

## The Retort Courteous.

An official of the Department of the Interior tells of an incident at one of the government schools for the Indians.

A patronizing young woman of Cincinnati was being shown through the institution, when she came upon a fine looking Indian girl of perhaps 16 years of age. The Indian girl was hemming napkins, which the girl from Cincinnati watched for some moments in silence. Then she said to the Indian "Are you civilized?"

The Sioux raised her head slowly from her work and glanced coldly at her interrogator. "No," she replied, as her eyes again sank to her napkins; "are you?"

The man who tells tiresome stories usually has a big strong voice, lots of determination, and gets to the end in spite of interruptions.



"I did not see you in church last Sunday." "I do not doubt it. I took up the collection."—Bohemian.

Caller (to child)—Is this papa's little boy or mamma's little boy? Child—Dunno; the judge hasn't decided yet.—Life.

Hyker—Bronson tells me he is taking mud baths now. Pyker—Why, I thought he was out of politics.—Chicago Daily News.

She—It's funny you should be so tall. Your brother, the artist, is short, isn't he? He (absently)—Yes, usually.—Town and Country.

"Has the patient a generous reserve force, nurse?" "No, doctor; he has nothing but a mean temperature."—Baltimore American.

Grace—So you have at last made up your mind to marry Jack? Lola—Yes, I'm tired of having him hang around the house every evening.—Chicago Daily News.

"Don't you ever get homesick, captain?" asked the passenger on the ocean liner. "No; I'm never home long enough," replied the captain.—Exchange.

Bronson—My next-door neighbor is always looking ahead for trouble. Woodson—For example. Bronson—Well, this morning I saw him sharpening his lawn mower.

Miss DeMuir—I wish I could think of some new and unusual birthday present to surprise mamma with this year. Mr. Spoonmore—How do you think she'd like a son-in-law?

Cleverton (who has hired a taximeter cab to propose in)—Say "yes," darling? Miss Calumet—Give me time to think. Cleverton—Heavens! But not in here! Consider the expense!—Life.

The Lady (to hastily-retreating burglar)—Pardon me, but won't you please wait till my husband sees you? I told him there was some one in the house, and he said "Rubbish!"—Harper's Bazar.

Dick—You look worried, old fellow. Wick—I have cause for worry. Dick—What's the trouble? Wick—My wife says if I don't accompany her to the seashore this summer she'll stay at home.

Boy (who has been naughty and sent out into the garden to find a switch to punish him with)—Oh, mummy, I couldn't find a switch anywhere, but here's a stone you can throw at me.—Punch.

Physician—Well, what do you complain of? Policeman—Sleeplessness, doctor. Physician—At what time do you go to bed? Policeman—Oh, I don't mean at night. I mean in daytime, while I'm on my beat.

She (on her bridal tour)—Oh, Dad, I'm so unhappy. Dan—Why, what is the matter, darling? She—If I am as much to you as you say, you can't be sorry your first wife died, and that makes you too brutal for me to love.—Life.

Doctor—The room seems cold, Mrs. Hooligan. Have you kept the thermometer at seventy, as I told you? Mrs. Hooligan—Shure, an' Oi hov, docthor. There's th' devilish thing in a toomler av warrum wather at this blissid minut.—Judge.

Mamma—Good gracious, Georgie! What is the matter with Freddie Jones? Is the child having a fit? Georgie—No, mamma. You know Freddie stutters, and we bet he couldn't say "alittudiously" before Bobbie ran twice around the block.—Puck.

Towne—Do you believe in dreams? Browne—I used to, but I don't any more. Towne—Not as superstitious as you were, eh? Browne—Oh, it wasn't a question of superstition. I was in love with one once, and she jilted me.—The Catholic Standard and Times.

Cyrus—Reuben got bunked. Silas—How so? Cyrus—Why, he read the advertisement of a firm that stated if he would send a dollar they'd send him some light reading. Silas—And did they send it? Cyrus—Yes, they sent him two books entitled "The Age of the Arc Lamp" and "How to Make Candles."

"John," she whispered, "there's a burglar in the parlor. He has just knocked against the piano and hit several keys at once. 'I'll go down,' said he. 'Oh, don't do anything rash!' 'Rash! Why, I'm going to help him. You don't suppose he can remove the piano from the house without assistance?'—The Throne.

"I tell you," said one man to another as they emerged from the corridor of a concert hall, "I envy that fellow who was singing." "Envy him!" echoed the other. "Well, if I were going to envy a singer I'd select somebody with a better voice. His was about the poorest I ever heard." "It's not his voice I envy, man," was the reply; "it's his tremendous courage."—Philadelphia Inquirer.

## SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Seven of the sons and daughters of the Merstham, England, centenarian, Mrs. Maynard, married seven brothers and sisters named King.

The Somali soldier keeps himself in perfect fighting condition on a diet of nuts. He eats only twenty a day, but they are of a very nourishing kind.

Roumania is the most illiterate country in Europe. The last census shows that in a population of about 6,000,000 nearly 4,000,000 neither write nor read.

There are 26.78 miles of railroad line in the United States for every 10,000 inhabitants, as against 6.2 miles in Germany, 5.5 in the United Kingdom and 7.4 in France.

According to Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory, there are now published in the United Kingdom alone no fewer than 2,353 newspapers, of which London contributes 404, including thirty-one dailies.

Guanajuato holds the world's record as a silver producer, having yielded \$1,000,000,000 Mexican in the last three and a half centuries. The actual results from the mills in operation in Guanajuato at the moment show that they are producing silver at three times the average rate as shown by the old records.—Wall Street Journal.

The Berlin Medical Society recently discussed the sanatorium question. Dr. Frankel insisted that the "Heilbadten" do a great deal of good. Other speakers declared them superfluous, pointing out that in France and England, where there are no sanatoriums like those in Germany, there has been nevertheless a steady decline in the mortality from tuberculosis.

Senator Harte, who introduced at Albany a bill against the sale and manufacture of cigars, has many original views. These he has the talent to express in terse and striking terms. Discussing medicine, in which he places none too great faith, Senator Harte said at a recent Albany banquet: "Medicine is the art of amusing the patient while nature cures the disease."

T. P. O'Connor was presented with his portrait in oils at Leeds, Saturday night, by the Irish League of Great Britain, in commemoration of his unbroken presidency of the league for twenty-five years. John E. Redmond made the presentation and paid a tribute to Mr. O'Connor as a safe, consistent and courageous guide for the Irish people in Great Britain. John Dillon also spoke.

A girl of twenty-two, Miss Gertrude Wren, is the first of her sex to win the Perella medal for excellence in chemistry, one of the most highly prized awards of the Pharmaceutical Society of London. At the age of eighteen she began the study of her specialty at a girls' high school in Camden Town. Botany is another study in which Miss Wren has taken a great interest, and some time ago she won a silver medal for superiority in that field.

A traveler waited at a certain English provincial town in vain for the much overdue train on the branch line. Again he approached the solitary sleepy-looking porter and inquired for the twentieth time, "Isn't that train coming soon?" At that moment a dog came trotting up the line and a glad smile illuminated the official's face. "Ay, yes, sir," replied the porter, "it'll be getting near now. Here comes the engine-driver's dog."—Liverpool Post.

Edward Rice relates that when Herr van Bulow was in Boston Napier Lowthion, musical director at the Boston theatre, introduced him, saying: "Herr van Bulow, this is Mr. Rice, a Boston man, who knows nothing about music whatever, but who has written two operas." "So?" said Von Bulow, interrogatively. "Ve haf also in Europe a shentleman vat knows nothing about moosic, und haf written already plenty operas—Meesstor Verdi."

General Lord Grenfell, who was recently promoted to the rank of field marshal, received high praise at the hands of Miss Eunace Mauderson, speaking to a peace society in England. "He has been a soldier for about forty-five years," she said, "and his men have killed human beings in many parts of the world. But let us remember to his credit that he published an order as general commanding the forces in Ireland against cigaret smoking by the troops."

Some kinds of lizards break in two when suddenly startled. In the bush in Australia the traveler often comes across a number of these little silvery reptiles basking on a log or piece of old bark. As soon as they perceive the invader there is a great commotion; they dart hither and thither so quickly that the eye can scarcely follow their movements. The effects of the shock are evident from the quantity of wriggling tails lying about which have been cast off in the hurry; while the mutilated owners may be seen scurrying away to safety still wagging the stumps that remain.