STRONG AND STEADY

By HORATIO ALGER, JR.

CHAPTER XXI.

Though Walter was in a room on the second floor, the distance to the ground was not so great but that he could easily hang from the window sill and jump without injury. Before following him in his flight, we will pause to inquire how the robber, unexpectedly taken captive, fared.

Nothing could have surprised Jack more than this sudden turning of the tables. But a minute since Walter was completely in his power. Now, through the boy's coolness and nerve, his thievish intentions were baffled, and he was placed in the humiliating position of a prisoner in his own house.

"Open the door, or I'll murder you!" he roared, kicking it violently.

There was no reply, for Walter was already half way out of the window, and did not think it best to answer. Walter had proceeded half a mile when he stopped to rest. Two or three times he had tripped over projecting roots which the darkness prevented his seeing in time to avoid.

"I'll rest a few minutes, and then push on," he thought.

It was late, but the excitement of his position prevented him from feeling sleepy. He wished to get out of the woods into some road or open field, where he would be in less danger of encountering Jack, and where perhaps he might find assistance against him.

He was leaning against an immense tree, one of the largest and oldest in the forest. Walter began to examine it. He discovered, by feeling, that it was hollow inside. He ascertained that the interior was eaten out by gradual decay, making a large hollow space inside.

"I shouldn't wonder if I could get in," he said to himself.

He made the attempt, and found that he was correct in his supposition. He could easily stand erect inside.

"That is curious," thought Walter. "The tree must be very old."

He emerged from the trunk, and once more threw himself down beside it. Five minutes later and his attention was drawn by a sound of approaching footsteps. Jack had tripped over a root, and was picking himself up in no very good humor. The enemy, it appeared, was close upon him.

Walter started to his feet in dismay. His first thought was immediate flight, but if he were heard by Jack, the latter would no doubt be able to run him down.

"What shall I do?" thought Walter, in alarm.

Quickly the hollow trunk occurred to him. With as little delay as possible he concealed himself in the interior. He was just in time, for Jack was by this time only a few rods distant. Walter counted upon his passing on; but on reaching the old tree Jack paused, and said aloud, "Where can the young rascal be? I wonder if I have passed him? I'll rest here five minutes. He may straggle along."

With these words he sank upon the ground, in the very same place where Walter had been reclining two minutes before. He was so near that our hero could have put out his hand and touched him.

It was certainly a very uncomfortable situation for Walter. He hardly dared to breathe or to stir lest his enemy should hear him.

"He's led me a pretty tramp," muttered Jack, "but I'm bound to get hold of him to-night. If I do, I'll half kill him."

"Then I hope you won't get hold of him," Walter ejaculated, inwardly.

He began to wish he had run on instead of seeking this concealment. In the first case, the darkness of the night would have favored him, and even if Jack had heard him it was by no means certain that he would have caught him. Now an unlucky movement or a cough would betray his hiding place, and there would be no chance of escape. He began to feel his constrained position irksome, but did not dare to see relief by change of posture.

"I wish he'd go," thought our hero.

But Jack was in no hurry. He appeared to wish to waylay Walter, and was constantly listening to catch the sound of his approach. At length Walter was relieved to hear him say, "Well, I shan't catch him by stopping here, that's sure."

Then he started, and Walter, listening intently, heard the sound of his receding steps. When sufficient time had elapsed, he ventured out from his concealment, and stopped to consider the situation.

What should he do? It was hardly prudent to go on, for it would only bring him nearer the enemy. If he ventured back, he would be farther away from the edge of the woods, and might encounter Meg, who might also be in pursuit. He did not feel in danger of capture from this quarter, but the woman might find means of communicating with her husband. On the whole, it seemed safest, for the present, at least, to stick to the friendly tree which had proved so good a protector. He stood beside it, watching carefully, intending, whenever peril threatened, to take instant refuge inside. This was not particularly satisfactory, but he hoped Jack would soon tire of the pursuit, and retrace his steps toward the cabin. If he should do that, he would then be safe in continuing his flight.

Jack pushed on, believing that our hero was in advance. It had been a fatiguing day, and this made his present midnight tramp more disagreeable. His hopes of overtaking Walter became fainter and fainter, and nature began to assert her rights. A drowsiness which he found it hard to combat assailed him, and he knew he must yield to it for a time at least.

"I wish I was at home, and in bed," he muttered. "I'll lie down and take a short nap, and then start again."

He threw himself on the ground, and in five minutes his senses were locked in a deep slumber, which, instead of a short nap, continued for several hours.

While he is sleeping we will go back to Walter. He, too, was sleepy, and would gladly have lain down and slept if he had dared. But he felt the peril of his position too sensibly to give way to his feelings. He watched vigilantly for an hour, but nothing could be seen of Jack. That hour seemed to him to creep with snail-like pace.

"I can't stand this watching till morning," he said to himself. "I will find some out-of-the-way place, and try to sleep a little."

Searching about he found such a place as he desired. He lay down, and was soon fast asleep. So pursuer and pursued had yielded to the spell of the same enchantress, and half a mile distant from each other were enjoying welcome repose.

Some hours passed away. The sun rose, and its rays lighted up the dim recesses of the forest. When Walter opened his eyes he could not at first remember where he was. He lifted his head from his carpetbag, which he had used as a pillow, and looked around him in surprise; but recollection quickly came to his aid.

"I must have been sleeping several hours," he said to himself, "for it is now morning. I wonder if the man who was after me has gone home?"

He decided that this was probable, and resolved to make an attempt to reach the edge of the forest. He wanted to get into the region of civilization again, if for no other reason, because he felt hungry and was likely to remain so as long as he continued in the forest. He now felt fresh and strong, and prepared to start on his journey. But he had scarcely taken a dozen steps when a female figure stepped out from a covert, and he found himself face to face with Meg.

Not knowing but that her husband might be close behind, he started back in alarm and hesitation. She observed this, and said, "You needn't be afraid, boy. I don't want to harm you."

"Is your husband with you?" asked Walter, on his guard.

"No, he isn't. He started out after you before midnight, and hasn't been back since. That made me uneasy, and I came out to look for him."

"I have seen him," said Walter.

"Where and when?" asked the woman, eagerly.

It was strange that such a coarse brute should have inspired any woman with love, but Meg did certainly love her husband, in spite of his frequent bad treatment.

"Did he see you?"

"No, I was hidden."

"How long did he stay?"

"Only a few minutes, to get rested, I suppose. Then he went on."

"In what direction?"

"That way."

"I'm glad he did not harm you. He was so angry when he started that I was afraid of what would happen if he met you. You must keep out of his way."

"That is what I mean to do if I can," said Walter. "Can you tell me the shortest way out of the woods?"

"Go in that direction," said the woman, pointing, "and half a mile will bring you out."

"It is rather hard to follow a straight path in the woods. If you will act as my guide, I will give you a dollar."

"If my husband should find out that I helped you to escape, he would be very angry."

"Why need he know? You needn't tell him you met me."

The woman hesitated. Finally love of money prevailed.

"I'll do it," she said, abruptly. "Follow me."

She took the lead, and Walter followed closely in her steps. Remembering the night before, he was not wholly assured of her good faith, and resolved to keep his eyes open, and make his escape instantly if he should see any signs of treachery. Possibly Meg might intend to lead him into a trap, and deliver him up to her husband. He was naturally trustful, but his adventures in the cabin taught him a lesson of distrust.

CHAPTER XXII.

Walter followed Meg through the woods. He felt sure that he would not have far to go to reach the open fields. He had been delayed heretofore, not by the distance, but by not knowing in what direction to go.

Few words were spoken between him and Meg. Remembering what had happened at the cabin, and that even now he was fleeing from her husband, he did not feel inclined to be sociable, and her thoughts were divided between the money she was to be paid as the price for her services, and her husband, for whose prolonged absence she could not account.

After walking for fifteen minutes, they came to the edge of the forest. Skirting it was a meadow, wet in parts, for the surface was low.

"Where is the road?"

"You'll have to cross this meadow, and you'll come on it. It isn't mor'n quarter of a mile. You'll find your way well enough without me."

Walter felt relieved at the prospect of a speedy return to the region of civilization. It seemed to him as if he had passed the previous night far away in some wild frontier cabin, instead of in the center of a populous and thriving neighborhood, within a few miles of several flourishing villages. He drew out a dollar bill and offered it to Meg.

"This is the money I agreed to pay you," he said. "Thank you, besides."

"I hear my husband's steps," she said, hurriedly. "Fly or it will be the worse for you."

"Thank you for the caution," said Walter, rousing to the necessity for immediate action.

"Don't stop to thank me. Go!" she said, stamping her foot impatiently.

He obeyed at once, and started on a run across the meadow. A minute later, Jack came in sight.

"Why, Meg, are you here?" he said, in surprise. "Have you seen the boy?"

He did not wait for an answer, for, looking across the meadow, he saw the flying figure of our hero.

"There he is, now," he exclaimed, in a tone of fierce satisfaction.

"Let him go, Jack," pleaded Meg, who, in spite of herself, felt a sympathy for the boy who, like herself, had been unfortunate.

He threw off the hand which she had placed upon his arm, and dashed off in pursuit of Walter.

Walter had the start, and had already succeeded in placing two hundred yards between himself and his pursuer. But Jack was strong and athletic, and could run faster than a boy of fifteen, and the distance between the two constantly diminished. Walter looked back over his shoulder, as he ran, and, brave as he was, there came a sickening sensation of fear as he met the fierce, triumphant glance of his enemy.

"Stop!" called out Jack, hoarsely.

Walter did not answer, neither did he obey. Only a few rods in advance was a deep ditch, at least twelve feet wide, over which a single plank was thrown as a bridge for foot passengers. Walter sped like a deer forward and over the bridge, when, stooping down, he hastily pulled it over after him, thus cutting off his enemy's advance.

"Put back that plank," roared Jack.

"I would rather not," said Walter.

"You'll be sorry for it, then," said Jack, fiercely.

He had walked back about fifty feet, and then faced round. His intention was clear enough. He meant to jump over the ditch. Our hero took the plank and put it over his shoulder, moving with it farther down the edge. An idea had occurred to him, which had not yet suggested itself to Jack, or the latter might have been less confident of success.

Jack stood still for a moment, and then, gathering up his strength, dashed forward. Arrived at the brink, he made a spring, but the soft bank yielded him no support. He fell short of the opposite bank by at least two feet, and, to his anger and disgust, landed in the water and slime at the bottom of the ditch. He scrambled out, landing at last, but with the loss of one boot, which had been drawn off by the clinging mud in which it had become firmly planted. Still he was on the same side with Walter, and the latter was now in his power. This was what he thought; but an instant later he saw his mistake. Walter had stretched the plank over the ditch a few rods farther up, and was passing over it in safety.

(To be continued.)

Why He Kicked.

"Some people are chronic kickers," growled the hotel clerk, "and it's no use trying to satisfy them."

"What's the trouble now?" queried the reporter.

"You saw that solemn looking chap making a get-away as you came in?" rejoined the man behind the ten-carat sparkler. "Well, he registered about half an hour ago and was shown to his room. Now what do you suppose happened?"

"I pass," said the pencil pusher.

"A few minutes later," continued the key juggler, "he rushed back to the office, mad as a March hare, and jumped all over me, figuratively speaking. It seems that he had come here for the purpose of doing the suicide act by turning on the gas and I assigned him to a room lighted by electricity."

Part of the Treatment.

"So you believe in charging heavy fees?"

"Yes," answered the physician, "but only for the patient's own good. If you can make him feel that he has an investment with you he is more likely to follow instructions carefully in order to get his money's worth."—Washington Star.

In a Quandary.

Brother—Yes, I like Jack well enough, but how did you ever happen to marry a man a head shorter than you are?

Sister—I had to choose between a little man with a big salary and a big man with a little salary.

Useless Sacrifice.

Edyth—It's too bad that Clara was in love with Jack when he proposed to me. I feel sorry for the poor girl.

Mayme—Why, she is in love with Tom. She never cared for Jack.

Edyth—Oh, dear! I never would have accepted him had I known that.

The Choctaws and Chickasaws.

Together when history dawned upon the continent, together when the white man drove them past the Mississippi, and together in the twilight of the tribes, the Choctaws and the Chickasaws are passing into the body politic and the citizenship of Oklahoma side by side. These two tribes—now 70 per cent of mixed blood, and nearly all as capable a set of citizens as their white neighbors—can hardly be dealt with in separate stories.

The Chickasaws and Choctaws, both of Mobilian stock, lived in Mississippi when De Soto marched across the land, and the Chickasaws gave him some terrific battles. When the French rose into power in Louisiana, the twin tribes disagreed. The Choctaws fought for the French and the Chickasaws boldly withstood the invaders. Several French expeditions were defeated, a number of French officers were burned at the stake, and the Chickasaws, allied with the Natchez, threatened New Orleans. Only the courage of the colonists and the assistance of the Choctaws saved Louisiana.

In later years the tribes grew friendly again, refrained from trouble with the whites, and even fought the Creek and Seminole for the paleface intruder. This did not save them from exile, and, about seventy years ago, the two tribes totaling about 20,000, were taken to Indian territory. There they flourished and grew rich, only to lose lands, wealth and slaves during the Civil War. Since that time they have climbed steadily up again, and have intermixed continually with the whites.

When the rolls were prepared for allotment last year, the Choctaws had about 19,000 full and mixed-blood members, and the Chickasaws about 6,000. These rolls must have been gloriously swelled somehow, for the State census of Oklahoma shows only about 17,000 Indians in the counties that once composed the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations. Nearly 10,000 negroes and 2,200 intermarried whites were also included in the allotments. With the Chickasaws, and, it is said, retaining to the last their sun worship and other strange Aztec rites, live the remnant of the Natchez, perhaps 300 souls.

It has been repeatedly asserted by army officers who have served in both Indian territory and the Philippines that the language of the Igorrotes is identical with that of the Mobilian Indians, which would indicate that these tribes came from the orient countless ages gone by. There are many tribes on the Pacific coast bearing the unmistakable stamp of Chinese and Japanese extraction, and others which have customs, totems and tattooing methods similar to the tribes of the Pacific isles.

POLITENESS IN WASHINGTON.

A City of Leisurely Ways and Proud Yet Courteous Manners.

Washington is bounded on the east by the Capitol and on the west by the White House. Between them flows a restless stream of sightseers. There may be other districts of the national capital worth seeing, but only a Washingtonian knows it. The tourist has time and strength only to hit the high places.

In New York there are probably as many tourists as in Washington, but with this difference, the New Yorker does not mind mixing with the tourist class. In fact, if the tourist have money and a fondness for Broadway and contiguous resorts, the New Yorker is more than willing, so Mr. Tourist emerges his identity with the New York "push." Washingtonians never let you forget you are a tourist. Resident women slightly raise their skirts with an indescribable yet eloquent air when they happen to rub elbows with a mere tourist of the same sex in a hotel or department store elevator. A Washingtonian looks straight ahead at nothing; the tourist is known by the angle at which she crooks her neck.

Resident Washington is divided into three distinct sets—old families, people with money and people without money. Those without money work hard to keep up appearances with those who have money. Those with money work hard to secure social recognition from the old families. The old families are indifferent equally to those with money and those without. The hardest-worked class of all are those who, having accepted public office and removed their lares and penates to the national capital, find that the salary will not pay for the game. You know their women folk by the fact that they wear ready-made gowns. Your real Washingtonian considers the wearing of factory-made garments equivalent to sinking to the lowest sartorial depths.

Washingtonians do not hurry home from work. If you are anybody at all in Washington you must be leisurely. Only as a tourist do you hurry, and after a conductor has held you at arm's length when you are too hasty in boarding or leaving a car you begin to slow down, too. There is no rush hour in Washington, and there are cars enough to go around. Likewise you can cross the street at any point along the block without danger of being run down, yelled at or told to "step lively."

Politeness seems really common in Washington, and courtesy possible even in ten-dollar-a-week clerks. Drop into a real estate office. The young man behind the counter not only informs you how easily you could rent an apartment in the house occupied by Miss Hagner, Mrs. Roosevelt's social secretary, but he advises you as to employment agencies. And he stands up as long as you are in the office. In New York, the would-be tenant, man or woman, stands up—and the agent sits down—with his feet on a table if it is good renting weather; and it is much the same in other cities.

Accounts of twenty-two waterspouts noted on nine Swiss lakes have been collected by Prof. J. Frnh. That of June 19, 1905, on Lake Zug, was about 20 yards in diameter, and it stirred up the lake over a radius of perhaps 100 yards. Several photographs were secured. The whirling column—more than half a mile high—was hollow, had a left-handed motion and traveled eastward at the rate of a little more than seven miles an hour. No important evidence was found that any of these waterspouts were produced by the meeting of opposite winds.

C. G. Bates of the United States Forest Service has found in western Arkansas a species of hickory, locally known as "bull," or "alligator," hickory, which exhibits remarkable resistance to the effects of drought, as well as to forest fires. Its small, thick skinned leaves are assigned as a principal cause of its drought-defying powers. Like other hickories, it also sends down into the soil a long, strong tap root. Mr. Bates suggests that this tree would be useful for planting in prairie States and in dry situations in other localities. When fires frequently occur the alligator hickory is the sole survivor.

In a recent book on "The Evolution of Dress," W. M. Webb shows that many details of modern dress, generally regarded as products of caprice or accident, or of the invention of tailors and milliners, are traceable to primitive forms, and that fashion in costume is the result of a process of evolution in which early ideas continually crop out. The earliest form of dress seems to have been the shawl, or wrapper, and fringes date back to the first loom. The hatband is traced to the original fastening of the first cloth headdress. Puttees are as old as Mycenæ. A mystery yet unexplained is the sewing of the buttons on the right-hand side of a man's coat and the left-hand side of a woman's.

A bold and interesting generalization concerning the vast effects which malaria may have produced on the history of great and famous nations and peoples has recently appeared in England in the form of a book by W. H. S. Jones, supplemented with an introduction by Maj. Ronald Ross. It is suggested that the mosquito has been largely responsible for the decline of certain nations, as, for instance, Greece, in the character of whose people historians have recorded a great change during the fourth century before the Christian era. Major Ross's investigations suggest that malaria may have been introduced into Greece at that time. The conclusion is also drawn that malaria did not exist in Italy much before 200 B. C., and the suggestion is made that Hannibal's army introduced it. "Malaria," says M. Jones, "made the Greek weak and inefficient; it turned the sterner Roman into a bloodthirsty brute—atrabilis made its victims man." The moral seems to be that nations, like individuals, should beware of mosquitoes.

Explained.

The Aged Angler—Oh, ay; the last fish I caught were a proper big 'un, an' no mistake.

The Inquiring Angler—Indeed? Why didn't you have it stuffed?

The Aged Angler—Well, you see, I weren't more nor a lad at the time.—The Sketch.

The Circumstances.

"That rich heiress let me hold her hand last night."

"Don't tell me such yarns!"

"Fact! At the bridge table, while she answered a phone call."—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Yes, Indeed.

"Yes, he is worth a million, and he made every penny of it honestly."

"How old-fashioned!"—Houston Post.

Mysteries of Civilization.

"You have persuaded the Indian to give up his picturesque headdress and blankets and wear hats and trousers," said the sardonic person.

"Yes; in the interests of civilization."

"And I suppose it is also in the interest of civilization that we pay high prices for these cast-off garments of the Indian and use them for wall decorations."