

this route, so that more than two weeks elapsed before he arrived at the principal village of the town of Meredith.

It was on the day following the trial of Richard and Stephen, and this, as might be supposed, was a prominent subject of conversation with the townpeople.

As the old man was weary by reason of broken slumbers on the previous night, he determined to look up quarters in the best hotel in town, and then to take a square meal before searching out his grandsons. While he was doing justice to the viands that were set before him at the hotel, his attention was drawn to the conversation of the landlord and a townsman. It had turned upon the subject of the trial.

"So this Richard Bennet, book agent and thief, was sent to his close quarters this morning," remarked the later worthy.

"Yes, so it seems," was the reply. "They had covered up their tracks admirably to be sure, but were at last found out. It is astonishing that two boys, outwardly so uncommonly promising as they, should stoop so low. I would as soon have believed that the President had been found guilty of dealing in oak hams and wooden cucumber seeds."

At the beginning of the colloquy, Mr. Bennet dropped his knife and fork, muttering to himself:

"Then they have turned out as badly as Isabel's cast-away of a boy. They were all destined to ruin on account of the disobedience of their parents. I might as well let Dudley have the property and think no more about it."

As the landlord finished speaking, however, he whirled his chair around and sharply questioned him.

"What is that you were talking about," he asked.

The landlord, in reply, willingly furnished him with a complete account of the affair from beginning to end.

"It was hard for us to believe," he said in conclusion, "but their guilt was made very manifest."

"Then why was not the younger brother convicted?" asked the old man.

"Well, there were several reasons," replied the landlord. "One was that he was constantly in the village, while his brother was absent most of the time; he was consequently better known to us. Again, he seemed to be far different from his brother in disposition; more frank and honest appearing. But the chief reason was, of course, that nothing could be proved against him one way or the other. One would have supposed that he would have purloined from Mr. Sykes, but he did not. There was nothing to show that Richard was not the only guilty one, and that he concealed his doings from his brother."

The old man silently pondered this reply for several minutes, and then arose without finishing his breakfast. He soon after left the hotel, his conduct suggesting many theories to the two men.

"It will not do for me to leave the matter thus," thought Mr. Bennet, as he found himself upon the street. "There seems to me a possibility that the younger boy was not guilty, and, perhaps, the older one also. Such things have happened. I will examine the whole matter and satisfy myself."

He first sought Mr. Sykes. As he neared the cotton mill belonging to the latter, his attention was again drawn to a remark of one bystander to another.

"There goes that young Stephen Bennet. I guess he has come after his things and is now leaving for good. He looks rather down-cast."

By following their gaze, Mr. Bennet saw a boy crossing the street and going in nearly the same direction as himself. He scrutinized him until he was out of sight as a cat watches a mouse.

"Now I can't say that he has a dishonest face," thought the old old man. "He seems to have Richard's self-reliant, go-ahead way. I shall see what can be done for him."

The old man felt even more remorse