

and soon won the esteem of all. But while the two brothers were enjoying so much prosperity, an unforeseen calamity befel them.

They had been in Meredith nearly three months, when one afternoon, a young man, or rather boy, for he was plainly yet in his teens, entered the office of Mr. Sykes where Stephen was employed. The latter was not present at the time, and the stranger, after cautiously observing this, approached the superintendent.

The new comer was quite well dressed, and although his countenance was of an unprepossessing cast, yet few would feel warranted in drawing unfavorable surmises from his appearance.

After mutual salutations, the stranger gave the superintendent a letter of introduction from a Mr. Garnett, of the neighboring town of Moultonborough. The letter stated the bearer, Daniel Johnson, to be an exemplary young man in his employ; that a robbery had been perpetrated upon himself, and that Mr. Sykes could probably assist in bringing the thieves to justice; also, other matters which, owing to a lack of time on his part, he would leave the bearer to disclose.

"This is all right," remarked Mr. Sykes, as he concluded his perusal of the letter. "Please be seated, sir."

Johnson accepted the invitation, and the superintendent resumed:

"Mr. Garnett is an old and confidential friend of mine. You will please state your business, as I am quite busy this afternoon."

The stranger drew his chair nearer, and conversed in a low tone.

"A regard for your interest," said he, "impelled both Mr. Garnett and myself to inform you of this matter, since you have in your employ a questionable character, and can also assist in bringing the robbers to justice. On Wednesday last, a boy of about seventeen and by name Richard Bennet canvassed Moultonborough for a history of the late war. He stopped over night with us, having been overtaken by

the darkness.

"To judge by his looks, he was the last one to entertain suspicions of. But the next day, Mr. Garnett found that a valuable watch and about sixty dollars in money had been stolen from his desk. And this was not all, for a little later in the day, Mr. Garnett found this paper in the room that the fellow had occupied."

As he spoke, Johnson gave the Superintendent a small paper, folded into a very small compass. It was written in pencil and read as follows:

Dear Joe:—I have by this time nearly canvassed Meredith, Moultonborough and Centre Harbor. I know the lay of the land perfectly. I have found two good hiding places near the road from Meredith to Squam Lake. I have borrowed a number of articles; meanwhile, I hope you have done as well. We can begin at our little business in fine style by the middle of April. Our cellar is a good place for operating in. Keep whist. From your old chum,
DICK."

"This letter seems to have an obscured meaning," said Mr. Sykes. "But from its purport I infer that the Dick mentioned belongs to a co-partnership of thieves of some other town, and that he is about to start an illicit business here. The articles mentioned as 'borrowed' are, perhaps, to defray expenses."

"A few petty thefts have been committed in Centre Harbor during the last few days," added Johnson.

"Are there any other circumstances that indicate Richard Bennet as the thief?" queried the Superintendent.

"There were no persons in the house while he was there except the members of the household, nor was there the least disturbance. Mr. Garnett is very careful. He keeps a good watch-dog," said Johnson.

"It seems impossible when I consider the character of the boys heretofore," said Mr. Sykes. "I will compare this writing with a specimen of Richard's, which I have here."

The Superintendent rummaged his drawers until he found the desired article