

Now many boys, early in their teens if not before, are strongly disposed to go to sea, but overcome the idea as they grow older. In the case of Richard, as you say, it grew upon him, and it seems to me to have been more than a mere boyish fancy. I think that he should not have been discouraged. As for Isabel, I fear that false pride influenced you in her case. I have little doubt but that Kelley was of more real worth than nine-tenths of her wealthy suitors. Why should he not have been encouraged in life? It was not his fault he was born poor. He could have remedied his improvidence. I must say that I loath American aristocracy. Did Richard leave any children?"

"Yes, they are the ones referred to in this article," said the old man, giving Dudley the newspaper, and indicating the paragraph with his thumb.

"But are you sure?" quickly asked his nephew.

"Yes, quite sure," replied Mr. Bennet. "And as for my daughter Isabel, she died about eight years ago. She left a son, John Kelley, Junior, a worthless street Arab. He is now in Boston, doing I know not what."

"Had he been placed under good guardianship instead of being left to grow up like a weed, he would doubtless have turned out far otherwise," was Dudley's cutting reproof.

"I suppose I ought to have taken him in charge at the outset," said Mr. Bennet slowly, "but now it is impossible. I was disposed to assist him for a while, but when I found out what stuff he is composed of, I let him alone. I cannot take under my roof such an outcast as he."

"But if you cannot, there are Richard's two sons, abundantly worthy of your regard, so far as we know," suggested Dudley.

"Their father may have influenced them against me," objected the old man. "They evidently have Richard's spirit. They have made a good start in life and I fear would turn the cold shoulder to me.

"I doubt that," interposed Dudley. "Richard did not apply to you for help because you would not give him any, and he doubtless took you at your word. I cannot think that he would have done what you have just said. Those boys seem to me to be of more than ordinary material. I would look them up."

"I will think over this matter to-night," said his uncle.

The old man was deeply moved, as well by the stings of his own guilty conscience as by the arguments of his nephew, yet pride was holding him back. He arose in the morning, however, with a full determination to amend his conduct and right the wrongs that he had done in the past. On the same day he started for Boston.

CHAPTER II.

A THUNDER CLAP.

Let us now turn to Richard and Stephen Bennet, at their home in New Hampshire. As Mr. Bennet had surmised, they were his grandchildren. They were now orphans, for soon after the death of their father at sea, their mother was injured by an accident from which she never recovered. She died not long after, and although the sailor at his death was receiving a very comfortable income, the maintenance of his helpless widow absorbed nearly all that he left. The boys were then taken charge of by a friend of their father, but their misfortunes were not yet ended, for the home of their guardian was destroyed by fire, and himself left almost penniless.

As the boys knew of few other places to which they would be welcomed, and nothing of their grandfather, they preferred to shift for themselves. And so well did they do this, that, as we have seen, they went to Meredith and purchased a small yet comfortable house. Richard then took an agency for a book that had recently been issued and canvassed Meredith and the adjoining towns, while Stephen found employment in the office of the superintendent of a cotton mill. They were honest, intelligent and self-reliant