



A True Story of a Virginia Boy

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Introduction

My greatest ambition, when I was a boy about twelve-years-of-age was to get an education.

My father had already warned us that we had better learn all we could, while in school, because he didn't intend for us to continue very long. He was going to put us to work, so we could help him make money.

Poor father. Having been born a slave, he did not know the value of an education.

I made up my mind I would leave home and go to work, in order to get money to go to school.

I felt that I must have a good excuse for leaving home, so if my venture should fail, I could come back home and everything would be all right.

A peculiar incident happened in connection with this. I thought if I could have a policeman chase me away, that would be a sufficient reason for leaving. We boys were always throwing stones and doing many other things that might cause a cop to chase us. But I got in a fight and hit the other boy with a stone at the railroad station. A railroad employee got out a warrant for me, and the next day a cop arrested me and locked me up.

While I was sitting there (in jail), I thought how I had wanted a cop to chase me, so I could have the excuse to run away, and now my plan had gone to pieces, and here I was behind the bars.

My father came in and looked in each cell on the opposite side. I watched him as he went from one cell to another. He went on around and finally came to my cell. It was rather dark in there, so he looked in and (not immediately recognizing me) started off. He then turned suddenly, opened his eyes wide, and almost screamed, "*Boy, what are you doing in there?*"

I said, "I hit a boy with a stone, yesterday, at the railroad station."

I was taken into court about an hour later and the mayor of my little town fined me three dollars, as it was my first offense.

I went on home and my father went back to work. When he came home to dinner, he stopped in the door, put his hands on his hips and said to my mother, "What do you think?"

She asked him what he meant. He said, "I went up to get my license for my teams today and looked around to see who was locked up, and to my surprise this boy was sitting there behind the bars."

Chapter 1



It was early in the Autumn, when the leaves are just beginning to take on their golden hue, that a friend and I were going to attend the camp meeting which was held every year, about the time the leaves commenced to fall.

I borrowed the old black horse from father, known to all the family as Old Tom. We were going to the camp meeting to sell ice cream, lemonade, and other things, so we took the light wagon. My friend took his wife and sister, and we had a very pleasant time all the way there. We sold everything and started home early in the afternoon.

As it was Sunday, we anticipated going to church in the evening. So my friend hitched the horse, while I arranged the things in the wagon.

It was a beautiful day: the air was soft and balmy, and the odor from the turning foliage made it just delightful!

We were having a gay time along the road, then we started down a hill and Old Tom began to run. In hitching the horse, the back strap had been hooked too long, which allowed the wagon to run up on Old Tom's heels. Alas, we didn't find this out until it was too late!

My friend remarked, "Old Tom is feeling good and is hurrying home!"

Though I knew it was unusual for him to act that way, I never suspected for a moment that anything was wrong. On we went until we came to the next hill, which was a very long one.

Old Tom commenced to run, and we all laughed, until we realized he was running away. Soon he was sweeping down the hill like the wind.

What was to be done?

We were all in danger of being killed. The next moment my friend—who was driving—ran him off the road, smashed the running gear, and tore the harness.

The shafts were broken, and the poor brute, wild with fear, tried to run up the steep bank that bordered the side of the road. I jumped from the wagon and cut him loose. When I led him out into the road, trembling and bleeding where his legs had been striking the wagon in his mad rush, I suddenly realized what had happened.

The wagon was smashed and the only thing to do was to walk home.

We sat down in the road and divided the receipts of the day's sales, which amounted to ten dollars and some cents. My friend took his wife and sister and went on while I remained to see that the parts of the wagon were put in a safe place until they could be removed.

It didn't seem to worry the others much; they were sorry it happened, but they went on and left me to get along as best I could.

Finally, I started off for home with Tom. I knew only too well what awaited me when I should tell father what had happened, so I cried all the way home. I put Tom in the stable, went in the house, sat down, laid my head on my arms on the table, and cried myself to sleep.

Father and mother were at church. When they came home they woke me up and asked what was the matter. I told them what had happened. I took father down to the stable and showed him the horse. Well, he was very upset and angry with me!

I said, "Father, the horse's legs will soon get well. Here is money to have the wagon fixed. That is all I can do."

The next day, I didn't go to work but went with father to get the wagon and the other things. We brought the wagon into the blacksmith and found it was not so badly damaged, after all.

Poor little sixteen-year-old boy that I was, I brooded over my trouble all day long.

Chapter 2



The time did arrive, a few years later, when I had a good chance to leave home, and it came about in this way:

I talked to one of my friends, who told me that he and several other fellows were going to leave town that night and expected to beat their way to Harrisburg (Pennsylvania), where they would likely get work in a steel mill. I asked him if I could go along with them, and he said yes.

We all went to a fair in the early part of the evening and had a pretty nice time. Mother was there, and when the time came for us to take the train, which was nine o'clock at night, I told her I was going. She pleaded with me not to go, but my mind was already made up.

We selected the nighttime in order to beat our way without being seen. I don't think there was a dollar in the whole bunch. I was so foolishly independent that I left money that I had received to go to the fair on the table at home. I only had three pennies in my pocket.

My heart almost failed me as I got near the depot, but I would not give up. Soon the train came thundering up to the station, and we crawled in between the baggage cars. There were five of us: Cornelius Wilson, Frank Johnson, George Whitles, Amos Shorts and myself. I was the youngest of them all.

We arrived in Washington about 10:00 o'clock that night. We expected to make a close connection with a Baltimore train. Three intoxicated tramps were going on the same train and one of them fell across the track and narrowly escaped being cut to pieces.

The trainmen then kept strict watch on us after that and we failed to get on.

As this was the last train out on the Pennsylvania Railroad that night, we decided to go over to the B & O Railroad depot and see if there were any more trains out from there that night. Finding the last one had gone, we walked along the railroad tracks. We had made up our minds to walk, but seeing a shed along side the railroad tracks, we stopped for the night with the understanding that we would start at daybreak and walk to Baltimore.

There was a board nailed against the back of the shed that served as a kind of bench, and there we sat, each one with his head on the other's shoulder. Everyone else slept soundly, but I sat gazing through the darkness into a graveyard. In my childish imagination, I could see ghosts jumping around. I never slept a wink all night and was so glad when daylight came that I woke everyone up with the greatest satisfaction!

Then commenced our long journey, which lasted two weeks.

We walked to Baltimore that day, which was 40 miles. Cornelius Wilson, was my supposed, best friend. He was the one that I thought would look after me—for I was 16 and the youngest of them all—but he was the very one who deserted me first. On our way, he said to me, "You go on with the others, I want to stop for a few minutes to tie my shoe."

He went down the bank and I never saw him any more. It was not long, though, before I understood it all. I remembered he had worked somewhere in that neighborhood before in an ore mine. I kept looking back and not seeing him, I finally came to the conclusion that he had given us the slip, although Frank kept telling me he had gone to the ore mine. It was some time before I could believe it. Nevertheless, it was true. It was a pretty hard blow for me because I had always looked up to him as my protector and more so on this occasion.

Frank and George had some words and came near having a row. So, Frank said to me, "We will stick together and let them go on their way."

Frank and I reached Baltimore about sundown. I found my aunt without any trouble, and Frank and I had supper there. We enjoyed it too, after walking all day without anything to eat, except a few crackers I had bought with my three cents and one loaf of bread Frank had bought.

My aunt and uncle tried to get me to return home, but to no purpose.

After supper, my uncle took us to the freight yard and instructed us what to do on our way to Harrisburg. When he had given us all the instructions he could, he went on home.

All at once, we saw someone coming toward us. It was night, and we were not accustomed to traveling around freight yards, so we became frightened. Frank crawled under a water tank, while I ran out of the yards.

As soon as I found out everything was all right, I began to look for Frank, but I could not find him. I looked around and called for him as loud as I could but could not make him hear me.

Well I stood around for an hour and then, not knowing what else to do, tried to find my aunt's house again. I didn't know which way to start, so I finally started off down the street and soon came upon some people coming from a fair or an entertainment of some kind. One of them happened to know near about where she lived. He told me to come along with him, as he was going that way after he had taken his girl home.

So, I marched off with him and finally reached my aunt's house about one o'clock in the morning (I would just like to remind the reader, right here, that I had walked from Washington that same day—think of it!). I went to bed and slept soundly until morning.

I arose about seven o'clock and started out to find my way back to the freight yard. When I reached the place where we had been scared the evening before, I found we need not have been afraid in the least. The people who lived across from the railroad had made a regular pathway through the freight yard. Probably the party that we saw coming toward us last night got scared at the way we were acting and turned back, because I didn't see them come out that way again, though I waited around to see.

I went down through the yard and along the tracks until I got a little piece up the road. There I met some other tramps, if I must term it that way, for I had certainly become a tramp. After the countersign had been passed—which is “where are yer bound?”—we had a long chat.

I laid around on the hillside until about noon and to my great surprise and joy, I spied George and Amos coming up the road.

I told them about my experience the night before, and they had a good laugh.

We sat down and talked about different things to pass the time away, for there were no freights out until late in the afternoon. About three o'clock in the afternoon we began to get hungry, so I was started on a look for something to eat. The other fellows waited on the hillside

for me. They said my chances were better than theirs, for they were both young men.

The people in the neighborhood contributed very liberally in the way of something to eat, and we satisfied our appetites for the time being.

In the evening, when the trains commenced to run out, the two fellows said to me, "You wait here, and we'll go down the road and get on. It won't do for us all to get on at the same time." They had acted all that afternoon, as though they didn't want me to go with them.

I said to them, "If you don't want me to go with you, that will be all right. I left home to tough it, and I can do it by myself, if necessary."

"Oh," they said, "you can go with us."

As I watched them going down the railroad, my attention was drawn off by a passing train. When I looked again, they were gone.

I was like someone wild for a minute. Then it came to me that I had left home to tough it, and I made up my mind to do it, if it cost me my life.

I felt I could not go back home. In fact, I had become reckless. I went back and sat down on the hill, while my eyes filled with tears.

Just then I saw someone coming up the road. I began to dry my eyes and try to brace up. It was a great consolation to me, when the fellow said to me, "Where yer bound?" I said I'm going to Harrisburg. "Well," says he, "it's a pretty tough thing to travel alone. I've been there myself, but there is a fellow just below that's going to the same place. You had better go along with him."

I thanked him and went down the road to where the other fellow was. He was a stranger to me, but we were soon acquainted.

Soon, another train passed, but we didn't see any empty box cars that we could crawl into, so we let that one go by. Then another one came up. After seeing there were no empty cars on it, we jumped on between the cars. It was a very dangerous way to ride, especially at night, as it was just beginning to get dark.

We had been traveling about two hours, when the train came to a stop, and we jumped off. One of the brakemen saw us standing beside the train and asked, "Did you fellows come up on this train?"

"No," we answered. He said, "They had some of the officials of the road on the train, so don't you fellows get on here. Wait for the next train." My partner said, "All right." Then he turned to me and said, "What do we care about the officials? We want to get to Harrisburg!"

So, when the train started, we hopped on. I was very tired, and though I rubbed my eyes and did everything I could to keep awake, I could not do so, but went to sleep, standing up between the cars.

My new-made friend kept shaking me and saying, "You had better wake up! You will get killed!" Then, I would wake up and redouble my efforts to rub the sleep out of my eyes. Soon I would be reeling and tottering again. The train soon stopped again, and the same brakeman saw us. He said, "Didn't I tell you fellows not to get on this train? Now I don't want you to get on here again!" and he watched to see that we didn't.

It was not many minutes before an express came rolling up to the station, and we leaped up between the baggage cars. It wasn't long before we had passed the freight train, from which we had been put off, which was stopped on a siding.

At the next stop we were detected and put off. We stood gazing at the flying train and listening to the rumble of the freight coming up the road. As soon as it reached us, we were on again and, once more, on our journey.

We came to the place that I had been warned not to ride through. My uncle had told me that we could walk through as fast as the train would run, and we could catch it on the other side of the city.

We jumped off when the train ran into the city (which was Little York, Pennsylvania) and commenced to run, but we couldn't keep up with the train. So we were just about to jump on again, when the same brakeman saw us. He ripped out an oath and said, "Never mind! You fellows come on up here to this station. I'll fix you."

We thought he was giving us the razzle. The truth is we didn't care much what he did, so we went on and the train stopped at the station. We stood behind the train, waiting for it to start. It was one o'clock in the morning.

All at once, some one jumped up between the cars and, before I knew what was going on, a big policeman stood in front of me. In the meantime, my partner had disappeared. I was too scared to run.

The cop seemed a little excited and said to me, "What is the matter with that fellow?" I said to him, "I don't know, Sir." Then he turned and looked at me and said, "Well, where did you come from? I suppose you came up on this train." I was scared and told him we walked there. "Well," he said, "that will do pretty well for you, but I guess I will have to give you lodging tonight."

So, he started off with me. After we had gone about a block, he looked down on me in the pale moonlight and said, "Why don't you fellows go to work and stop prowling around the world." He thought I was some lazy tramp, but I would have only been too happy to get some work.

I told him I had a brother in Harrisburg and was going to work as soon as I got there. So he said to me, "Well, you get out of here as soon as you can and don't let me catch you here again." I thanked him and was soon out of sight. I went around to the railroad. The train was still standing at the station, but, before I got around the curve leading out of the city, I heard the bell ring. Soon she hove in

sight, increasing speed every second. I stood by and waited, and, by the time it reached me, it was running very fast.

I was determined to get out of the city at once. Feeling myself quite lucky in escaping the arrest, I reached out for it but missed it. Then I tried a second time and held on. But it threw me sprawling to the ground. I split my hand and burst my knee.

I got up and caught it again. By this time, it was running twice as fast as it was when I first tried to get on. However, I caught hold of it, and it just snatched me, but it was going so fast that it was a matter of impossibility for me to get on. Still, I held to it, and, as I cast my eyes down, behold, I was being carried over a trestle! Strange to say, I didn't let go when I saw my position. As the pale moonlight shone upon the two great walls on the side of the chasm twenty-five or thirty feet below, it was enough to strike terror to any heart.

It is a little difficult to explain. My feet hit the board, which you'll find on almost all trestles, until I was across. Then, I let go and went back to look, for I was thoroughly scared.

I stood on that bridge, and a thousand different thoughts passed through my mind. I was simply paralyzed for a few minutes. Then, gradually, I came to myself. Many thoughts ran through my head (about) ... how the folks at home must have worried about me. Even at that late hour, mother might be sitting up waiting some word from me.

My hand began to pain me, and my knee was already stiff. I sat down on the railroad track and had a good hard cry. I felt I was lost to the world far away from home and friends and alone. I was miserable.

I got up and looked back toward the city, for I had not forgotten what the policeman told me, and I thought he might have followed me.

As I started down the track, I noticed a red light not far down the road. Thinking that it might be the light on the rear end of the train, I began to run or rather hobble down the track and found it was the same train that had abused me so badly just a few minutes before. I was soon up with it, and, being very tired, sat down along side of it and went fast asleep.

I was awakened by the toot of the whistle and the ringing of the bell, which was the signal to start. Getting up half-asleep, I jumped on and was soon rattled off down the road on the same train that brought me out of Baltimore.

Sitting down between the cars, over the bumpers, and being pretty well played out, I went fast asleep again. Along about daybreak, I was awakened by the same brakeman holding his lantern in my face. I was being rocked like a person sitting up asleep in a wagon running over cobblestones. Well, I just don't remember all that fellow said to me, but I know he threatened to break my neck. He cursed me and talked until he got tired; then he left me.

I felt he had better sense than to kill me, though I didn't care much what he did. When he turned to go, I asked him how far we were from Harrisburg. He said to me very roughly, "You have passed Harrisburg," but I knew better, for I had been instructed about crossing the Susquehanna Bridge and what time we would get there.

So, after the train had run about a half-hour longer, she came to a stop at the Susquehanna River. I got off and walked along by the side of the train.

My uncle had told me the train would back over the bridge into Harrisburg, but, after waiting awhile, I got out to walk. It is six miles from the bridge into the city, and the sun was up good when I got there.

Just outside the city, I saw the two fellows (who I had begun my journey with and) who had slipped away from me the day before. As

soon as they saw me, they began to run, but I made no effort to overtake them.

I went on through the city and inquired my way down to Steelton, the iron mills. Before I reached there, I stopped to look at some people working a tobacco patch. While I was standing there, I looked around and saw the two fellows coming toward me. As they passed, they laughed and asked me how I had got along the night before. I told them all right. They told me there wasn't any use going to Steelton, as they had just come from there, and (people there) ... didn't need any help.

They asked me to go along with them, but I told them I didn't care to go with them, as I could see very plainly they didn't want me. This made them ashamed, and they insisted that I should go with them, so I went along. We went back into Harrisburg and soon everything was all right again.

We were very hungry and the first thing to do was to hunt up something to eat. I had no money, but it didn't take me long to pour out my woes to the cook at some hotel or private house, and soon we had full stomachs. We lay around there all day until about three o'clock in the afternoon.

I was almost overcome, my lost hope gone, for I expected to get work in Harrisburg, but I still stuck to my determination not to turn back. One of the fellows suggested we go down to Philadelphia and asked me if I wanted to go along. I said, "Yes. I am in for anything," so we started off. We were told not to ride into the depot at a little place called Columbia, but to get off and meet the train on the other side of the depot. When the train began to run into the city, we jumped off and walked around the depot in order to catch the train on the outskirts of the town.

We went along the railroad until we came to a cross street and then turned down that street to a store, which was on the next corner. George had a little change left and went in to get some cheese and crackers. Just as we came out of the store, we heard the train coming

and rushed up to catch it. George and I ran up the street to the railroad and then turned up the railroad (tracks) a piece in order to get on the train unobserved. Amos ran straight up the street and jumped on, two cars ahead of us.

Somehow or other George thought (the train was) ... running into another freight yard and said to me, "Get off." We both jumped and, as the train rolled on, George tried his utmost to see Amos. Then he whistled for him, but Amos couldn't hear him. In a few minutes the train was out of sight, and that was the last we ever saw of Amos.

George looked like he would go crazy for a few minutes. Of course, it didn't concern me but little whether we ever saw Amos any more, knowing how they had treated me

As soon as George found Amos was gone for good, he said to me, "Now, we will stick together." We walked down the railroad until we came to another station. Here we met several other knights of the road and had a long chat with them. It was getting late in the afternoon, and we began to feel like something to eat.

George and I went across the field to one of the cottages that bordered the country road and asked the man in the yard for something to eat. "Well," said he, "I don't mind giving you something to eat, if you are willing to work for it."

"Of course we are," was the reply. He brought a sickle and rake for us to cut the grass while he went for something to eat for us. We worked away for dear life, and I was really glad of the chance to work for something to eat. Very soon he came with two plates piled up with food, and we stopped to eat. After we were through, we began to work again. Soon the man left us to go for something, and George said, "Come on. We are not going to work all day for a mouthful to eat." I said, "George, don't let us do that. It was very kind of the gentleman to give us something to eat." But it was no use, as he was of an ungrateful disposition.

He simply said, "Come on here!" As we were going across the field toward the railroad, the gentleman came back and saw us and yelled out, "Never mind you grand rascals."

When we got back to where we had left the other fellows, we saw two more had joined the party, one being a foreigner whose nationality I couldn't tell. We couldn't understand a word he said, but the fellow who was with him, though an American, understood him perfectly. Through him we learned the foreigner had walked a great many miles, because he did not beat his way on the trains. His feet were so sore he could hardly stand.

In a few minutes the train came along and we all crawled in. George and I separated ourselves from the others and got in the end of a lumber car (a car that is used for wood and such things, with deep sides to it).

We had been warned about a place called Bird in Hand, I think, and they came very near having me in hand. We reached there sometime in the night, and, when we ran up to the station, George kept insisting on my getting out to see how far we were from Philadelphia. I told him that wouldn't get us there any quicker, but of course I had to please him. So, I started to do it, but just as I put my foot on the step to get down, the bell rang, and I got back in the car.

Just then the foreigner came in the car where we were, and George wanted to put him out. I thought there was going to be trouble. Finally, the train pulled out. We hadn't gotten far when the brakeman, whom we had gotten in with when we first got on the train, came along and said, "I don't see how you fellows ever got by that place, as much noise as you were making and detectives walking all around the train." I said I was just about to get out to see how far we were from Philadelphia."Well," he said, "if you had, you wouldn't have got back tonight."

The reason they didn't get us is easily explained. It was because they always looked in the boxcars for bums.

The brakeman told us to get into a boxcar at the next stop, and he would look in on us and let us out when we got to Philadelphia, which he did. If you keep some tobacco or cigars with you, you are sure to get along with the majority of brakemen.

The next morning early, we arrived in Philadelphia, and the brakeman kept his promise. We started off down the railroad. I felt a little uneasy, and, in fact, I was always afraid of not being on the safe side. I said, "George, let us get off the railroad. There is a road or street down there leading into the city, and, besides, I think we are getting near the depot."

"Oh, you are the funniest fellow I ever saw. Come on," said George. I thought, "If he can stand it, I can too."

The very next minute we were face to face with two detectives, who were sitting under a big light, waiting for tramps, I suppose. For as soon as we walked up to them they sprang up. George said, "Gentlemen, will you tell us how far we are from the depot?"

With a nod of their head, they replied, "You are too late now," and they proceeded to show us their badges. They wanted to know how we came there. Of course, we told them we walked there. "Oh, yes. I suppose you did," they said. "How long did it take you to walk from Harrisburg down here?" George went on to tell them. I had just made up my mind to give up. I felt I had been lucky in escaping the officer at York, and now I thought the jig is up for sure.

They asked George how we managed to get by that place, called Bird in Hand, and seemed to be astonished at our escaping arrest, when they had taken in twenty-eight the night we passed there.

"Where do you belong?" was the next question. George answered by saying we were from Washington. They said, "Sit down. We want to talk with you." So, we all sat down. And then I commenced to talk, also, for there appeared to be a little hope. George explained that we had only been away from home a few days looking for work, and that we had on clean clothes.

We commenced to plead in earnest. George became a bit playful with them, a little more than I cared about at that time. One of them had handcuffs in his hand. George asked him, "What are those for?" He quietly undid them, put them around George's wrists, and said, "While they are on, I'd better let them stay on."

While this was going on, I was still pleading. Then the detective took the handcuffs off. George spied his revolver sticking out of his pocket and asked him to let him look at it. The man pulled it out, and George reached for it, but he didn't let it go by any means.

One of them seemed inclined to let us go, while the other didn't want to hear to it. So, finally the joking one said to the other, "What are you going to do, John, about letting these fellows go?"

"Oh," said he, "I don't care what you do. I've said what I had to say about it. Now you can do as you please."

"How long will it take you fellows to get away from here?" ... said (his partner).

"Just let us go and we will show you," was ... (our) reply.

"Well, go!" he said. And we were gone.

Someone yelled out, "They are gone the other way to head you off!" But we never let up until we had gone a good long way from there. I tell you, we could but congratulate ourselves on our escape.

When the sun had risen high in the heavens, we went to a house, ... (looking) for a place to wash our faces, so we would look as clean as possible on going up town. After we washed, we went to another house, and, as the knights of the road call it, bummed something to eat.

We marched up town, where there was a gang working on the street. Finding we couldn't get anything to do, we started down toward the

river. There was a man getting men to go to Atlantic City, but we couldn't go, as we had no clothes and no time to send for them. We wouldn't have known what to do when we got there, anyway, because neither of us knew anything about hotel work at that time.

George was very anxious to find Amos, while, on the other hand, I was anxious to get work of some kind. I knew if George found Amos, they would not have any more use for me. We stood around by the river for awhile, then we begged four cents to pay our fare to Camden. We walked around there for a short time, and, after being told that we would be snatched up there in short order, we bummed another fare back to Philadelphia.

When we got back in Philadelphia, about one o'clock, we began to feel quite hungry. I saw some bananas that had been thrown overboard, because they had turned black. In other words, they were rotten, though some of them were perfectly good inside. Matters not what they were, we fished them out and ate them with a relish seldom seen around a hotel breakfast table. We went back up town or down town, I don't know which, and George met some fellow he knew, who took us through the public building and up Broad Street.

We hadn't gone far when George said to me, "There is someone you know." I turned and saw it was one of my old school mates. I spoke to him and he asked me where I was going. I told him I did not know, as I was looking for work. He ran his hand in his pocket and gave me a quarter, saying it was all the change he had. I was very thankful, it being a Godsend at that time.

The fellow that George was with had told him that he might find Amos out at Germantown, a little place outside Philadelphia. I bought a dozen buns and we sat down and ate them. I just had enough left to pay our fares out there. I was so tired, I could hardly stand. We got on the car and in a few minutes I was fast asleep.

They had some trouble getting me awake when we got there. Then we went to a place where George had .. (stayed) when they were

cutting a railroad through there, thinking that he might hear something from Amos. They had not seen him.

Our next move was to push on toward Phoenixville, as Amos had talked so much about the place. George thought he might catch him there. So the only thing for us to do was to walk a long way to catch a train to Phoenixville.

We walked until almost dark, when we came to a small river or stream. There was a ferry there to carry passengers across, which was nothing more than a rowboat. George turned to me and said, "Now, what are we going to do? Swim across?" We decided to ask the young man if he would be kind enough to take us across. George had an old pocketknife, and that was all we had to offer him.

We asked him and he willingly consented to take us over for nothing. We helped him pull the boat over and insisted on him taking the knife, which he did. Just as we jumped out of the boat, it commenced raining, and it seemed as though it was trying to wash us off the bank or to run over the water tank, under which we sat, and drown us.

At all events, we got soaking wet and still it kept on raining. We sat there for an hour, when along came a train of coal hoppers and we hopped in. Then the rain seemed to come down with double force and soon we were standing in water up to our ankles, for those cars are nothing more than large iron coal buckets.

At the next station, the train slackened up and we jumped off. It was then dark. We went to the only store in the village and stood on the porch awhile. Then we went in and told the storekeeper where we were going and asked him if he knew of any barn we could stay in for the night. He said the barns were all filled with hay and we couldn't get in them.

We were afraid to stay around the store, because villagers are always afraid of tramps and take no chance of having them lying around. So we concluded to push on and started up the road. Very

soon we saw the headlight on an engine coming up the road and found it to be a freight train.

It was running very slow when it passed us, so we ran along behind the caboose and commenced pleading with the conductor to let us get in with him. He was a little dilatory about letting us get on, but finally consented. I was so weak, I could hardly get on, ... but once inside, I fell asleep.

We never got a good night's rest for two weeks, and this kept us broke down all the time.

The conductor told us we had about 20 miles to go, and he would wake us when we got there, and that some of the families living in Phoenixville might let us in out of the rain until morning.

When we reached there, he woke us up, and we jumped off.

We went to the first house we saw and knocked. Some one inside said, "Who is that?"

George, who always acted as spokesman, gave the countersign: "One."

"Well, who the hell is 'one?'"

"You don't know me," George said. "The conductor on the train we came up on said you might let us stay here until morning. We wouldn't ask you if it wasn't raining."

"You had better go on away from here now!"

George said, "Won't you please let us lay on the floor until morning? We wouldn't ask you if it wasn't raining."

"Did you hear what I said?" answered the voice. I told George to come on, before that man came out with a shotgun and blew our heads off. "Lets get away from here!" I said. So we marched off down the railroad tracks.

The rain had slackened, but everything was soaking wet. We went on a piece and came to an old mill or barn that had been abandoned. It had a porch in front, with the roof all broken in. So we concluded to stop there until morning, although the floor of the porch was very damp. We lay down and dozed until daylight, then got up and took a good look at the place where we had been handled so roughly the preceding night.

Chapter 3



We started off for Pottstown. We had to cross the country to reach it. On the way we met a German and his family, walking from one place to another. And a very sad-looking set they were. Neither of them seemed to be over thirty. The mother had a baby in her arms and two others swinging on to her apron. The father stopped to ask us where we were going and, also, told us that he had run away from Germany on account of some trouble he had. He was then on his way to Philadelphia.

We went on to Pottstown and caught a train there for Reading. Reached Reading late in the evening and got a train out for Harrisburg that night. The next morning, which was Sunday, we arrived back in Harrisburg.

We wandered around there, looking up some breakfast, and ran into an old acquaintance from home. He took us up to his house, and we had a pretty gay time for a little while. We had dinner with him, then resumed our journey out to the stockyards, where we would catch a train for the west.

Our minds were made up to go to Pittsburgh. We spent the afternoon as best we could, stealing apples from a nearby orchard and telling tales and listening to some terrible yarns of experience on the road that were told by some other knights of the road who had joined us.

As the afternoon wore on, they kept coming. Getting hungry as night came on, we hustled off to town again to bum up something to eat, before starting on our long trip.

When we left Harrisburg that night there were 31 of us in one car, a whole carload. They were all full of fun and commenced singing. I was so tired and sleepy, I could hardly see and, consequently, went to sleep amid all this noise. I don't remember anything that happened, until I was awakened very suddenly by George calling, "Fred. Fred, why don't you come out?"

I was dazed and almost scared to death when I found everybody had left the car except myself. I jumped up and leaped out. George told me the train had been stopped to put us all off, because those fellows had made so much noise and had set fire to one of the large boards of the cars that carry grain.

I found George with four of the other fellows, all the rest having gone in different directions. We had to walk eight miles to a station where we would catch another train going west. I don't know where we were put off, but it was somewhere in the mountains between Harrisburg and Altoona. Nothing unusual happened to mar the pleasure of us bums until we reached Altoona.

We were warned when we got there to be careful or we would get pulled, so we kept on the outskirts. As we were passing an open lot, or commons, we heard someone calling, "Hello, there." We looked up and saw two of the fellows we had been with the night before, that we had left Harrisburg with.

They were with two other fellows, who looked a great deal better than the average tramp. Nevertheless, they were tramping and seemed to have money. They had bought some canned salmon and several loaves of bread, and we were called on to partake. Of course, we didn't refuse, as we were afraid the gentlemen would get insulted. It wasn't long before we were on the outside of a can of salmon and a loaf of bread that was given us.

These two, newly-made friends seemed to be very merry fellows and quite cheeky. They would tackle every policeman that came along and string him sometime until he became quite angry. They also spoke very roughly to some men we passed, working on the street and had me feeling very uncomfortable at the way they acted.

Finally, we got on the west side of the city where we were able to catch a train. We weren't there long before a very long freight train pulled out. It was made up of empty cattle cars, but they all seemed to have been used for tan bark. The fine bark remained on the floors and made it a little comfortable.

The train was so long, it took three engines to pull it around the horseshoe bend and up the steep grade. We were a long way from the engine, and, as the train circled around the long curve, we could look across the wide valley and see the rear end moving along. It really seemed to be another train going in the opposite direction. Then, as we turned the hill and headed west again, we soon came to the tunnel, just around the curve after you leave the horseshoe bend.

The train came to a stop at the mouth of the tunnel to do some shifting, and another engine came up behind and bumped very hard against the train. The conductor had got in the car where we were and was talking to these strange fellows we were with.

Just then, the train started and the conductor went to the door to get out. All at once, he snatched off his hat, gave several frantic waves to the engineer, and then leaped out. The expression on his face had plainly told us that something was wrong, so we all rushed to the door to see what had happened. There we could see cars lying in all directions along the road, commencing from the next car, to the one we were in, and running back 14 cars. The engine that came up behind us when it struck so hard had thrown all the rest of the cars off the track.

Strange to say, when the train first stopped, a fellow got out of the car in back of us and had come in where we were. He was telling us of his experience at a place between Harrisburg and Philadelphia,

how they had run him about a mile and (had) ... caught him. He had served his time out (ten days) and was now on his way west. The car he had come from was turned upside down.

The trucks of the cars were thrown almost on the other track. There being a train due, the conductor sent a brakeman off to flag the eastbound train. He had hardly started before the heavy-laden freight came thundering through the tunnel.

What was to be done? If it could only pass. But it was doubtful, because one truck was so near the track that it was hardly possible for it to pass without striking.

The conductor yelled for everybody to look out and then commenced to run to a safe distance. Of course, we followed.

On came the heavy train, though the engineer had shut it off and was still swinging back on the throttle. The poor fireman seemed too frightened to jump and just hugged the engineer around the neck, as if he had made up his mind to die with him.

The next moment it crashed into the truck and smashed the cylinder all to pieces. Iron flew in every direction, but we were at a safe distance. Fortunately, no one was hurt, not even the poor scared fireman. The conductor raised his hat above his head and brought it down against his side and said, "If that truck had been a half foot further on the track, there would have been a terrible wreck!"

We lay around there for a half an hour, or so, and then a wreck train came up. In two hours, they had all those cars on their trucks again and left them on a side track.

We proceeded on our way, and nothing unusual happened to mar the pleasure of our trip from there to Pittsburgh.

We reached the east end of Pittsburgh early Wednesday morning. We walked into the city and, after having our appetites satisfied, started for the Black Diamond Steel Works. A great many people were

working there from my home, and we went to see them, thinking we might get work. After being told they were not taking on any hands at that time, we walked around to see the sights.

We walked from one works to another until noon. Then we went downtown to see what was there. I had heard so much about Pittsburgh, I was anxious to take in all there was to be seen. Reaching downtown, we saw crowds of people going to Alleghany, a city on the north side of Pittsburgh, and learned that a circus was over there.

So, we started over but found it would cost us one cent across the bridge, which amount we did not have, so we started to bum the two cents. It didn't take us long to do that and we went over to the circus. We tried to get on with the circus but couldn't. So, we decided to go to Youngstown, Ohio, where we heard they were laying a railroad, to try and get work.

We started off for that city, which we never reached, for when we got to where we should have changed for Youngstown, we were in such good company (of other bums), we kept on going. The next morning we found ourselves in a place called Newburg, on the outskirts of Cleveland.

There were only three of us together now, the others having jumped off at another station. We had both doors wide open, and every time we saw any one on the sidewalk, we would rush to the other side to keep from being seen. In this way, we managed to keep out of sight for some time. All at once, someone sprang in the door, and, while he was scrambling to get up—for he was on his stomach—all three of us made one desperate rush for the other door and tumbled out on top of one another.

I expected the cop to pounce down upon us and hold all three of us, which I don't think would have been a hard matter the way we were piled up. But I guess it was just as hard for him to screw himself in that door, as it was for us to get out. However, we got up and didn't lose any time getting off.

We discovered there was another man after us, but he was on the other side of the train. That gave us a little start on him while he was crossing the train. He was one of the railroad employees, I think, for he had on citizens' clothes.

He ran us over a mile. The other fellow changed his course, but this man, whoever he was, kept on after George and I. We tired him out, and he was lost in a bend in the road. Then we stopped and had a good rest.

It was well on in the afternoon, and we had begun to feel hungry. The run seemed to have sharpened our appetites. The people out that way are very good about giving the poor travelers something to eat. After we had filled up, we proceeded on to Cleveland.

We walked around there for awhile, and it was almost night when we got up in the main part of the city. We were talking to some fellows we met about getting work. They told us work was very scarce, and some said that was a poor town for tramps. So, we commenced to look for the depot.

We concluded to go back to Pittsburgh. We found the depot and learned that the freight yard was a few blocks down. We knocked around until we finally came across a man sitting down by himself. George asked him about the freight trains, how they left and what time. He didn't seem to know, but he went on to talk about what a bad wreck had happened down the road that day, all the time looking first one way and then another. He kept on talking and George started off. I was so innocently polite, I continued to talk to him.

George yelled at me, "Why don't you come on here!" I told him I didn't like to run off and leave the man talking. "Why," said he, "didn't you see his badge and how he kept looking around? He acted as though he was afraid to tackle us by himself and was waiting for someone to come up."

We went on down the road. After we found no train going out until morning, we tried to find some place to sleep, for we were completely broken down.

It was about nine or 10 o'clock, and, although quite dark, we could see a barn that set back in a field a little off from the railroad. To that we went.

We had to jump over a four-foot wall before we got there. We didn't know what we were going to meet before we got there, because a house stood less than a hundred yards away. It looked like we were taking desperate chances, but on we went.

We couldn't get in, though we went so far as to try and pull a board off, so we walked back to the road and mounted the wall. As soon as we got on the top, we spied a man standing on the railroad. Quite naturally, he spied us at the same time, for he was looking for us. As soon as he saw us, he commenced to look first one way and then the other, the same as the other fellow had done.

We asked him about the trains leaving there, and he began giving us the same game the other fellow had by keeping us in conversation, but it didn't work. We marched on down the road with the belief that they had both been afraid to tackle us. After leaving that station, we had a long way to walk to a station where we could catch a train. We stopped on the road somewhere for a little rest, and I leaned back against the bank in the cut and went fast to sleep. I was awakened by the light of an engine in my face. Although out of harms way, I was frightened out of my wits.

Again, we started on our long journey and walked until we could walk no farther. We broke down a rail fence and laid a dozen rails on the middle rail at another part of the fence. We lay under them until morning. Then, we resumed our journey. We stopped at a farmhouse at sun up and enjoyed some bread and milk.

We reached the long-looked-for station about nine o'clock and caught a freight from there to Alliance, Ohio, arriving there about 12

o'clock. We had nearly walked ourselves barefooted, and I had completely walked the soles off my shoes.

George and I started out to beg something to eat (and George left me for awhile) When George got back, he had three pairs of shoes. He put on the best pair and told me to take a pair, but neither pair would fit me. So, I started out to see if I could get a pair. George sold the good pair to a shoemaker and threw the other (pairs) away. I managed to get a very good pair of old shoes in my travels that afternoon.

Then we went back to the depot, or a little off from the depot, to wait the next train out. When that train ... (arrived), George and I walked along and counted all the tramps we saw before the train started. There were thirty-two. Most of them were sitting in the doors with their feet hanging out. When the train started, we jumped inside and got back where we could not be seen.

Soon a brakeman came along making them all get off. The train was beginning to run very fast, and there was another fellow in with us. He and George jumped out. When I went to jump, I slid and my shoe slipped in the run that the door slides on (and got stuck).

My head was going under the cars. When I realized my position, I gave my foot one desperate wrench and broke the shoe from one side of the sole to the other. I fell flat on my face. Had it not been for that (effort), my head would undoubtedly have gone under the cars, and I would have been ground to pieces.

Well, we waited for the next train and the next morning landed in Allegheny City, without a penny, wondering how we were going to cross the bridge. Someone told us that we could ride over in a wagon, and it wouldn't cost us one cent or the team any more either. So, we just worked that very nicely and arrived safe and sound in Pittsburgh, Saturday evening, twelve days after leaving home.

George said to me, as we went uptown, "I am going to Lucy's. Where are you going?" Lucy kept a boarding house and most of her boarders

were from home. I thought that was a funny question for him to ask me, as Lucy was from home also, but I had lost none of my independence. I said to him, "You go on to Lucy's. I'll find somewhere to go."

I realized the fact that I was quite small, and, of course, I knew none of the people from home wanted to bother with me. So, I made up my mind to sleep out on the outskirts of the city that night. George went on to Lucy's.

Along in the afternoon, it commenced to rain, and it just came down in torrents. Poor me, I did not know what to do. If I could only have seen a shed or anything that I could have stood under. I would have felt satisfied, but it seemed that luck was against me, the first time since I left home. I finally went under one of the Black Diamond Steel Works wagons, but that was no protection from the rain, so I became drenched.

It rained for an hour or so, then it stopped. I was in a pretty predicament, for the ground was wet and I couldn't think of lying on the damp ground. I passed a stable where a man was cleaning off his horses. I asked him if he would only let me sleep in his stable for the night. But he didn't know me, didn't know whether I was a thief or what I might be.

All at once it struck me that a friend who I'd gone to school with, had told me to come around where he roomed, which was also with a lady from home, for Pittsburgh is full of Alexandrians.

I had not paid any attention to him at the time, more than to say all right, for, as I've stated before, I knew the people didn't want to bother with me though they were from the same place I was. Nevertheless, it was the only thing left for me to do, so I started off.

To my great surprise and good fortune, I met this friend on his way to market. I told him that I had been in all that rain and was on my way to see if he couldn't get the madam to let me stay there that

night. He told me he would make it all right with her and took me up street with him. He then took me to the house.

He told her who I was and asked her if I could stay there for awhile. She said, "Yes, I guess so. But little chaps like you ought to stay at home with their mothers and fathers." That did hurt me to the quick, so much so that I would have left the house, but the ground was too wet. Each man in the house brought his own food, and the madam cooked it for them. My friend always let me eat of his share.

Sunday morning, I got up and brought in wood and coal for the madam and washed the dishes after breakfast. It seemed quite a relief to me. I didn't have to watch for the trainmen now or have to be dodging the cops. No stealing from freight yards.

Still I was not satisfied. I wanted to be at work.

Chapter 4



Monday morning I started out and, first, went by the Black Diamond Steel Works. They took on several men that morning but didn't notice me. I then went up to town and met a fellow I knew from home. He told me to go around to the Monongahela House, and I might get on as a bell boy. I tried there, but they didn't need any help at that time. I stood around thinking I might get a satchel to carry, but I didn't get one that day.

I would always go by the Steel Works first, then go up town. I soon found I was too small for the Works, and that was the reason they never took me on. They took on one or two every morning, but I was left out, although I went by there every day. I would then go up town and go from one store to another. George had got work at the Steel Works, and I felt very much hurt, because I couldn't get any.

Anyhow, I kept on trying, though it sorely tried my patience.

One morning a porter came out of the hotel and asked me who I was and where I lived. He said he had seen me around there for some time. I told him I was from Alexandria, Virginia, and was looking for work. He told me to fix up myself a little and come back. He might get me on bells.

I thanked him very kindly and told him I would be back there in a few days, as I had to send home for some clothes. In a few days they arrived, and with them came one dollar.

Well, I was the happiest boy alive. I rigged myself up and went down to the hotel. I saw my newly-made friend, who took me in, but they told me they didn't need anyone just then. My feathers fell, but I kept on. I told my friend, if they should need me, to let me know, as I would be around every day.

The next day, I put on my old clothes and went up town. I stood around the hotel until the afternoon, and then I started for my home, for I had learned to call it home already.

On going up the street, I stopped to look at some fellows putting away some things. One of them had to stop for some reason or other, and the gentleman who seemed to be superintending the work asked me how much I would charge him for an hour's work. I told him twenty cents, and he said, "Go to work."

I pitched in and worked like a Turk for about half an hour. Then we were through. It was carrying some things of a fishing party that had just returned from fishing. The other fellow working with me gave me a scolding, because I didn't charge the man fifty cents. I told him I didn't know anything about the charges of Pittsburgh.

When we got through, the gentleman took us in a saloon to get some money changed. He asked the other fellow how much he owed him. He said, "Two dollars and a half, Sir." The gentleman said, "Two dollars and a half for two hours work?" Then, he turned and gave me a half a dollar and gave him a dollar and a half.

Of course, I had nothing to do with the other fellow and out the door I went, leaving the other fellow fussing about his money. I went home happy, for it was the first money I'd made since I struck the town.

The next day I had new ideas in my head. After going by the Steel Works and then by the hotel, I thought I would try my luck in Allegheny. I remembered our little trick on coming back to Pittsburgh, so I just asked a driver to let me ride across the bridge. When I got over I jumped off and commenced to ask in every store, if they had anything for me to do. I thought best not to get off the main street for fear of being lost.

I hadn't gone far when I went into a grocery store and, after the grocer eyed me earnestly—for I suppose he wasn't accustomed to having visitors like myself—he said, "Yes. I'll give you a job. Take this broom and go up on Arch Street."

"Hold on," said I. "I'm a stranger in your city and don't know one street from the other."

"Well," said he, "come outside and I'll show you where to go," and he commenced giving me directions to his home. "My house is on the north side of the alley. Go in the yard, and you'll find the cellar key hanging just inside the gate. Go down in the cellar and get the hose. You'll find a hatchet there also. I want you to clean the cement off the pavement. Then come back here, and I'll pay you.

"It's a pretty tough job, I guess," says he. I told him I guessed I'd get away with it.

I went up there and did as he told me, found the things, and went to work. After working about an hour, I noticed wagons hauling coal across the street. I also noticed a lady kept coming to the door, as though looking for someone. It struck me that she wanted something done, so I began watching her. Then she called me and told me a man had promised to come and put the coal back in the cellar. She said she promised to give the man a dollar and a half.

My eyes sparkled like balls of fire. I told her I would be glad to do it, after I got through what I was doing.

“Well,” she said, “I would like to have someone as soon as possible, because the hole is almost choked up.”

I went to work at my pavement with new vigor. Then, I thought the man who had promised to come might get there before I got there, so I just laid the things inside the gate and went over to work at that coal.

I worked until 12 o'clock. Then, I was called upstairs and given some water to wash myself and told to sit down to dinner. Behold, I was seated at the table with the family. After dinner, I told the lady I hadn't finished my work across the street, and I was told I would have time to finish it before the wagons came. So, I went over and finished the job and came back to my coal again. I worked until about four o'clock that afternoon. Then the wagons stopped hauling for the day.

The madam told me to make a big hole in the pile, so that they would have room to put the rest of the coal in, and that I needn't come back in the morning.

After receiving the dollar and a half, I went by and locked up the cellar, took the broom, and went back to the store.

The gentleman gave me a quarter, which made a dollar and seventy-five cents in all, more money than I had seen for a long time. Again, I went home happy. After working my little bridge trick, I caught one of the wagons from the Black Diamond Steel Works and rode home.

Every morning I would catch one of the wagons going up town and in the evening catch one of them back. If not one of them, I would catch some other wagon. In that way, I saved carfare and also about a twenty-six to thirty block walk every day.

I gave the money to my landlady, Mrs. Blakely, to keep for me. Every morning I would eat breakfast at home and take five or 10 cents with me to buy my lunch. Before leaving home in the mornings, I would bring coal and run errands for Mrs. Blakely. Saturday evenings, I

used to come home early and clean up the great big yard for the madam and wash my clothes. Of course, I had to have my top shirts done up at the laundry.

I abandoned (going to) the hotel, then, and went to Allegheny. The very next day I went over and pulled bask coal at another place for which I received 50 cents and engaged myself next door for the day.

Sometimes the coal would get me up against the ceiling and almost smother me, but I fought it out like an old warrior and came out victorious every time, though often ... looking like the coal itself.

After I had finished at the next place, I was then engaged next door. Then the first one I worked for had some wood for me to cut, then the next two the same thing. Then, the first lady whose coal I had put away asked me if I could white wash her cellar. I told her I hadn't had much experience at white washing but thought I would be able to do it for her. So, she brought me a brush and some lime, and I did the work for her.

I went from place to place and kept myself busy for five weeks. All the time, I was inquiring for work, for I was very anxious to get steady work.

One day, on asking a driver of a team, I was told that a lady living next door to where he worked had asked him to look out for a boy for her. She would be in from the country the next day to see about getting the house in shape for their return home.

I went to see her and she engaged me but said that they wouldn't be home for 10 days. I kept on putting away coal and doing the other odd jobs. When the time came to go to her place, I had something like 20 dollars saved up. I paid Mrs. Blakely what she charged and bought myself a small trunk.

After Mrs. Blakely found out where I was going to work, she told me her sister-in-law lived in that neighborhood, and I might get a room from her. I went over to see her and made everything all right and

moved my trunk over there. Soon, I was settled down to work, scrubbing and cleaning and a little of everything—something I had never done before. It was some time before I caught on.

One day, a young man came to the door and asked if Mrs. Suydam was in. I told him, “No.” He went away and came back an hour later, and, again, she was out. A notion struck me she was trying to hire someone in my place, for it seemed I could never please her.

The fellow came back in the afternoon, and the madam had just returned. I told her there was a young man at the door to see her and that this was the third time he had been there.

“Oh,” she said, “I wonder what he wants?” I said to her just as politely as possible, “Mrs. Suydam, I know you are trying to hire someone in my place, but it’s all right. You can do so when you like.”

“Well, Smith,” said she, “if you will try and do better, I will try you another week.” I told her I would, for I didn’t feel like getting out of work so soon. Independent to the last. Toward the last of the week she said, “I see you are improving.”

I said, “Is that so? I’m glad of it.” I had tried so hard, but it didn’t seem to me that I was doing any better. I got along first rate after that, though at times I got a scolding. Once the boss threatened to kick me out in the snow one cold morning, because the house was not warmed up as early as it should have been. The trouble was I couldn’t get the fire in the furnace to burn.

I had never been talked to that way before, and my feelings were very much hurt. But after going off and having a good cry over it, I was all right again. I had begun to realize what straying away from home really meant, and I tried to reconcile myself to my fate. I worked there all winter for three dollars per week, out of which one dollar went to pay for lodging.

During the six months I worked there, I sent home twenty-five dollars and bought myself a suit of clothes.

One day in the spring, I heard of another place at a boarding house that paid 18 dollars a month and room in. I went down and hired myself out and went to work the next day. At that place, I think I worked harder than I ever worked before or since. From five o'clock in the morning until 11 or 12 at night, I was on a dead run.

When I first went there, there was another man to help me, but he left, and I had all the work to do myself. I stuck to it for 10 weeks, then I had to stop. It was simply killing me. So one day, I told her to get someone else, as I was going to leave. I drew up stakes and went home, which place I hadn't seen in 10 months.

Somehow, I didn't feel at home when I got there. I knocked around for three weeks, and then I was gone again back to Pittsburgh.

I went back to room at my old place. I walked around about a week and used to look at the advertisements in the paper every morning. One morning, I came across a place that wanted six, first-class waiters. I had never seen a bill of fare in my life, but I applied.

When I got there, I found a dozen fellows there. Some of them got tired of waiting and left. I was glad to see them go, for it made my chances of getting on better.

I was one of those picked, when the time came. The head waiter asked me where I had waited before, and I told him I had never worked in a restaurant before, only in a private house.

"This is not like a boarding house," he said. "Here we have from frogs' legs up to wild duck and turkey. In a boarding house, you can put the food on the table, and they eat what they want and get up, and then you are through.

"Here, you have to bring the people just what they ask for and nothing else. As fast as one gets up, another may sit down, and you may be going that way all day. However, I'll try you and see how you get along."

I found out afterwards this head waiter was only there temporarily, on account of the regular head waiter being sick. I went to work that night. The night watch did all the cleaning. I worked very faithfully that night, for I had learned to clean silver and such things as good as anybody.

When I first went in the dining room, I stood back for awhile, being a little timid about taking orders. One gentleman came in, his order was taken. Another came in. His order was taken. The third came in and I thought I might as well go ahead and do the best I could, so I pushed on and took the order.

I went out in the kitchen and gave the order to the cook, and there I struck luck. The cook said to me, "Young man, I see you are green about this business. When you take an order, remember what the people tell you they want. Tell me just like they tell you, and you'll see that you get along all right." I thanked him very kindly. I worked there about six months.

When I received my envelope the first week with six dollars in it, I thought I was a waiter sure enough. I was only hired extra for Grand Army Day, but one of the regular men left, and they took me on in his place.

When the regular head waiter came back, he looked at me hard but said nothing. After he found I was willing to do anything, he used to keep me doing the dirty work all the time. I never kicked and, finally, I worked myself in his favor.

Chapter 5



I don't think my story would be complete without relating my witnessing the killing of a policeman and then being a witness at the trial, while working at (the restaurant)

One morning, early, as I was coming out of the door with the step ladder to clean windows, I saw one man knock another down and then rush up on him to strike him. the same time an officer rushed up and grabbed the aggressor by the shoulder.

The fellow (a Mr. Coffey) ... jerked away from him, whipped out a revolver, and said, " You can't arrest me, damn you! I'll kill you!"

The officer threw up both hands and said, "Don't! Don't!" In the meantime, he had backed out into the street. Then he seemed to come to himself and put his hand in his pocket to pull his own weapon, but his hand seemed to have stuck fast in his pocket. I thought he would never get it out, but he finally did. Then, I thought sure he was going to shoot the man on the spot.

But, instead of shooting him at once, he just leveled his gun at him and followed him as the fellow kept backing towards an alley.

The fellow said to him again, "You can't arrest me, you _____! I'll kill you!"

The officer kept following, and the fellow shot him in the abdomen. The policeman fell upon his knees. I was paralyzed and really think that if the ball had missed its mark, it would have hit me.

Another officer had got there and was standing by his (wounded partner's) side. When ... (his fellow officer) was shot, he started to pull his gun, but the fellow, who was a desperado, said, "If you attempt it, I'll blow your brains out." Then he shot (and missed), turned, and rushed into the alley. The other officer pursued him, but the fellow immediately turned after getting in the alley and fired (again). The officer just poked his head into the alley. Another officer across the street yelled to him to look out, and he jerked his head back just in time, for the bullet came along and tore the corner of the brick where his head had just left.

The fellow then ran through the alley and jumped in a stable, through the stable yard and in the kitchen of the hotel adjoining. He then jumped through the kitchen window into another alley leading out on the same street where the shooting occurred, thence up the street to the corner, then upstairs in a photograph gallery. By this time, a crowd had collected and gave chase.

One of the policemen went up the steps, and the fellow said he would give up. He came down the stairs flourishing his revolver, and the crowd gave way. Then he ran down along side the river. Someone in the crowd threw a stone at him. He just put his hand behind him, as he ran, fired, and hit another man in the pants leg. They ran him about two squares, caught him, and beat him up fearfully.

He said, "I would not have stopped shooting, only my bullets gave out."

While all this was going on, the porter and I had picked up the wounded officer and carried him back in one of the little sitting rooms.

As I said before, when the officer was shot, he fell on his knees. He had his hands across his stomach, as though trying to stop the pain of the bullet where it had torn its way through the intestines and embedded itself in the backbone.

He cried out, "I'm a goner! I'm gone, Boys!"

Someone came and took his gun from his hand, and then I ran around to the kitchen out of breath. The cook said I didn't say a word for some time but stood beckoning him to come quick. Then I got an arm chair, and we put him in it and carried him back to the room. There he cried for water. I had often heard that the first thing a person wanted after being shot was a glass of water. Then the police that had arrested the man came in, one after another.

One of them said to him, "John, I got a little of it too," and the blood was streaming down his hand. Another came in with his hand all swollen, where he had beat the fellow when they caught him. Then another came in with the pistol that had done the deadly work. The wounded officer took it in his hand and turned it from side to side. Then he said, "My God! How can I live?" It was a forty-four calibre, British Bulldog, and a deadly-looking thing it was. Someone brought a stretcher, and, after putting him on it, they took him home. The next day he died.

We all liked him, because he always had a pleasant word for everyone. He used to always come around to see us every night about 12 o'clock. We would always know when he was coming by the presence of his little black dog that would rush ahead of him.

I was told that, after he was shot that morning, the dog was seen rushing up and down the street, as if crazy, looking for his master.

I thought I'd keep as mum as possible and keep out of things, but it was not to be. That afternoon, a detective came around and asked me to tell him all about it. He said that he had seen old Fritz, the porter, and Fritz had told him that I had seen the whole thing. Of course, I told him all I knew, and he asked me to show him how and where the policeman fell and how they were both standing when the shot was fired.

Then came the inquest. The prisoner was brought in with his head all bound up. The paper spoke very particular the next day of how he eyed each witness as they came on the stand, as much as to say he would fix them if he ever got out.

In a few days the detective came around again and, with him, came the man that was to take the map of the place and the positions of the two men and so on. I had to go out and show them again.

In the next few days, two detectives came and took me around to have my picture taken. They told me they were afraid I would be persuaded ... (to leave), and they wanted my picture so they would not have so much trouble finding me.

They also told me they only wanted one of the pictures, and I could have the rest. While at the gallery, they took a note of my name, age, height, weight, complexion, eyes, nose, and so on. They told me to be careful and not allow myself to be persuaded away by an offer of money. If anyone asked me to go away, I should come and let them know. Also, if I quit my job, I should come and let them know.

One day, my partner came to me after he had finished waiting on a gentleman. He told me he had been told by this someone to bring me to a place, as this person wanted to see me.

I asked him what he wanted to see me for, and he said he didn't know. I told him I had better stay away from there, because I knew it must have been one of the murderer's friends. The next day the head waiter came to me and told me that someone had told him they

would make up a purse of money, if I would run away. I told him it was too late, as (the police) ... had me spotted.

The trial was set for a certain date and then came a postponement. Five months (time) elapsed, during which time Coffey's uncle came to see me. My boss sent me back in his office and told me there was a gentleman who wanted to have a little talk with me. I went back, and he told me he was Coffey's uncle and was also a magistrate.

He asked me to tell him just how it happened. When I finished, he said he didn't mean to bribe me but asked me not to make it any harder than I could possibly help. I told him I wouldn't, but I had made up my mind I was going to tell just what I saw, nothing more, nothing less.

Just before the trial, an assistant district attorney was brought up and introduced to me, and I was told to show him how everything had happened. I did so, as near as I could.

Finally the trial came up in earnest. They had quite a time getting a jury

He was convicted of murder in the first degree, after a four-day trial. He was put back in jail for some time before he was sentenced.

His friends tried to get him a new trial. Then they tried to have his sentence commuted. He was a mason, and they said it would kill his mother, if he were hung, because she was so old. Thus they fumbled for two years, in that way.

At last, they turned the tables on him, and the court said he must hang. Two minutes after the news was broken to him by his attorney, he cut his throat with a pen knife that had been smuggled to him.

So ended the life of Mr. Coffey.

Epilogue

I had now learned to wait pretty well, after working in hotels and restaurants of all descriptions, and life seemed to get on a little easier.

I had been away from home about five years altogether, though I visited home about once a year.

I kept up correspondence with the girl I left behind me, and today I am married and the father of a happy little family.

Now, when I look back on my adventures and travels, I feel glad that I've been through the mill. The experience was worth all the hardships I had. I feel sure it has helped me a great deal, as I journey through life.

So, I never succeeded in getting the education I so much craved.

