GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

TRUMPS


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CHAPTER I. — SCHOOL BEGINS.

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Forty years ago Mr. Savory Gray was a prosperous merchant. No gentleman on ‘Change wore more spotless linen or blacker broadcloth. His ample white cravat had an air of absolute wisdom and honesty. It was so very white that his fellow-merchants could not avoid a vague impression that he had taken the church on his way down town, and had so purified himself for business. Indeed a white cravat is strongly to be recommended as a corrective and sedative of the public mind. Its advantages have long been familiar to the clergy; and even, in some desperate cases, politicians have found a resort to it of signal benefit. There are instructive instances, also, in banks and insurance offices of the comfort and value of spotless linen. Combined with highly-polished shoes, it is of inestimable mercantile advantage.

Mr. Gray prospered in business, and nobody was sorry. He enjoyed his practical joke and his glass of Madeira, which had made at least three voyages round the Cape. His temperament, like his person, was just unctuous enough to enable him to slip comfortably through life.

Happily for his own comfort, he had but a speaking acquaintance with politics. He was not a blue Federalist, and he never d’d the Democrats. With unconscious skill he shot the angry rapids of discussion, and swept, by a sure instinct, toward the quiet water on which he liked to ride. In the counting-room or the meeting of directors, when his neighbors waxed furious upon raking over some outrage of

that old French infidel, Tom Jefferson, as they called him, sending him and his gun-boats where no man or boat wants to go, Mr. Gray rolled his neck in his white cravat, crossed his legs, and shook his black-gaitered shoe, and beamed, and smiled, and blew his nose, and hum'd, and ha'd, and said, "Ah, yes!" "Ah, indeed?" "Quite so!" and held his tongue.

Mr. Savory Gray minded his own business; but his business did not mind him. There came a sudden crash—one of the commercial earthquakes that shake fortunes to their foundations and scatter failure on every side. One day he sat in his office consoling his friend Jowlson, who had been ruined. Mr. Jowlson was terribly agitated—credit gone—fortune wrecked—no prospects—"O wife and children!" he cried, rocking to and fro as he sat.

"My dear Jowlson, you must not give way in this manner. You must control your feelings. Have we not always been taught," said Mr. Gray, as a clerk brought in a letter, the seal of which the merchant broke leisurely, and then skimmed the contents as he continued, "that riches have wings and—my God!" he ejaculated, springing up, "I am a ruined man!"

So he was. Every thing was gone. Those pretty riches that chirped and sang to him as he fed them; they had all spread their bright plumage, like a troop of singing birds—have we not always been taught that they might, Mr. Jowlson?—and had flown away.

To undertake business anew was out of the question. His friends said, "Poor Gray! what shall be done?"

The friendly merchants pondered and pondered. The worthy Jowlson, who had meanwhile engaged as book-

keeper upon a salary of seven hundred dollars a year—one of the rare prizes—was busy enough for his friend, consulting, wondering, planning. Mr. Gray could not preach, nor practice medicine, nor surgery, nor law, because men must be instructed in those professions; and people will not trust a suit of a thousand dollars, or a sore throat, or a broken thumb, in the hands of a man who has not fitted himself carefully for the responsibility. He could not make boots, nor build houses, nor shoe horses, nor lay stone wall, nor bake bread, nor bind books. Men must be educated to be shoemakers, carpenters, blacksmiths, bakers, masons, or book-binders. What *could* be done? Nobody suggested an insurance office, or an agency for diamond mines on Newport beach; for, although it was the era of good feeling, those ingenious infirmaries for commercial invalids were not yet invented.

“I have it!” cried Jowlson, one day, rushing in, out of breath, among several gentlemen who were holding a council about their friend Gray—that is, who had met in a bank parlor, and were talking about his prospects—“I have it! and how dull we all are! What shall he do? Why, keep a school, to be sure!—a school!—a school! Take children, and be a parent to them!”

“How dull we all were!” cried the gentlemen in chorus. “A school is the very thing! A school it shall be!” And a school it was.

Upon the main street of the pleasant village of Delafield Savory Gray, Esq., hired a large house, with an avenue of young lindens in front, a garden on one side, and a spacious play-ground in the rear. The pretty pond was not far away,

with its sloping shores and neat villas, and a distant spire upon the opposite bank—the whole like the vignette of an English pastoral poem. Here the merchant turned from importing pongees to inculcating principles. His old friends sent some of their children to the new school, and persuaded their friends to send others. Some of his former correspondents in other parts of the world, not entirely satisfied with the Asian and East Indian systems of education, shipped their sons to Mr. Gray. The good man was glad to see them. He was not very learned, and therefore could not communicate knowledge. But he did his best, and tried very hard to be respected. The boys did not learn any thing; but they had plenty of good beef, and Mr. Gray played practical jokes upon them; and on Sundays they all went to hear Dr. Peewee preach.

CHAPTER II. — HOPE WAYNE.

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When there was a report that Mr. Savory Gray was coming to Delafield to establish a school for boys, Dr. Peewee, the minister of the village, called to communicate the news to Mr. Christopher Burt, his oldest and richest parishioner, at Pine wood, his country seat. When Mr. Burt heard the news, he foresaw trouble without end; for his orphan grand-daughter, Hope Wayne, who lived with him, was nearly eighteen years old; and it had been his fixed resolution that she should be protected from the wicked world of youth that is always going up and down in the earth seeking whom it may marry. If incessant care, and invention, and management could secure it, she should arrive safely where Grandpa Burt was determined she should arrive ultimately, at the head of her husband's dinner-table, Mrs. Simcoe, ma'am.

Mrs. Simcoe was Mr. Burt's housekeeper. So far as any body could say, Mrs. Burt died at a period of which the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. There were traditions of other housekeepers. But since the death of Hope's mother Mrs. Simcoe was the only incumbent. She had been Mrs. Wayne's nurse in her last moments, and had rocked the little Hope to sleep the night after her mother's burial. She was always tidy, erect, imperturbable. She pervaded the house; and her eye was upon a table-cloth, a pane of glass, or a carpet, almost as soon as the spot which arrested it. Housekeeper *nascitur non fit*. She was so silent and shadowy that the whole house sympathized with her,

until it became extremely uncomfortable to the servants, who constantly went away; and a story that the house was haunted became immensely popular and credible the moment it was told.

There had been no visiting at Pinewood for a long time, because of the want of a mistress and of the unsocial habits of Mr. Burt. But the neighboring ladies were just beginning to call upon Miss Wayne. When she returned the visits Mrs. Simcoe accompanied her in the carriage, and sat there while Miss Wayne performed the parlor ceremony. Then they drove home. Mr. Burt dined at two, and Miss Hope sat opposite her grandfather at table; Hiram waited. Mrs. Simcoe dined alone in her room.

There, too, she sat alone in the long summer afternoons, when the work of the house was over for the day. She held a book by the open window, or gazed for a very long time out upon the landscape. There were pine-trees near her window; but beyond she could see green meadows, and blue hills, and a glittering river, and rounded reaches of woods. She watched the clouds, or, at least, looked at the sky. She heard the birds in spring days, and the dry hot locusts on sultry afternoons; and she looked with the same unchanging eyes upon the opening buds and blooming flowers, as upon the worms that swung themselves on filaments and ate the leaves and ruined the trees, or the autumnal hectic which Death painted upon the leaves that escaped the worms.

Sometimes on these still, warm afternoons her lips parted, as if she were singing. But it was a very grave, quiet performance. There was none of the gush and warmth of song, although the words she uttered were always those of

the hymns of Charles Wesley—those passionate, religious songs of the New Jerusalem. For Mrs. Simcoe was a Methodist, and with Methodist hymns she had sung Hope to sleep in the days when she was a baby; so that the young woman often listened to the music in church with a heart full of vague feelings, and dim, inexplicable memories, not knowing that she was hearing, though with different words, the strains that her nurse had whispered over her crib in the hymns of Wesley.

It is to be presumed that at some period Mrs. Simcoe, whom Mr. Burt always addressed in the same manner as “Mrs. Simcoe, ma’am,” had received a general system of instruction to the effect that “My grand-daughter, Miss Wayne—Mrs. Simcoe, ma’am—will marry a gentleman of wealth and position; and I expect her to be fitted to preside over his household. Yes, Mrs. Simcoe, ma’am.”

What on earth is a girl sent into this world for but to make a proper match, and not disgrace her husband—to keep his house, either directly or by a deputy—to take care of his children, to see that his slippers are warm and his Madeira cold, and his beef not burned to a cinder, Mrs. Simcoe, ma’am? Christopher Burt believed that a man’s wife was a more sacred piece of private property than his sheep-pasture, and when he delivered the deed of any such property he meant that it should be in perfect order.

“Hope may marry a foreign minister, Mrs. Simcoe, ma’am. Who knows? She may marry a large merchant in town or a large planter at the South, who will be obliged to entertain a great deal, and from all parts of the world. I

intend that she shall be fit for the situation, that she shall preside at her husband’s table in a superior manner.”

So Hope, as a child, had played with little girls, who were invited to Pinewood—select little girls, who came in the prettiest frocks and behaved in the prettiest way, superintended by nurses and ladies’ maids. They tended their dolls peaceably in the nursery; they played clean little games upon the lawn. Not too noisy, Ellen! Mary, gently, gently, dear! Julia, carefully! you are tumbling your frock. They were not chattery French nurses who presided over these solemnities; they were grave, housekeeping, Mrs. Simcoe-kind of people. Julia and Mary were exhorted to behave themselves like little ladies, and the frolic ended by their all taking books from the library shelves and sitting properly in a large chair, or on the sofa, or even upon the piazza, if it had been nicely dusted and inspected, until the setting sun sent them away with the calmest kisses at parting.

As Hope grew older she had teachers at home—recluse old scholars, decayed clergymen in shiny black coats, who taught her Latin, and looked at her through round spectacles, and, as they looked, remembered that they were once young. She had teachers of history, of grammar, of arithmetic—of all English studies. Some of these Mentors were weak-eyed fathers of ten children, who spoke so softly that their wives must have had loud voices. Others were young college graduates, with low collars and long hair, who read with Miss Wayne in English literature, while Mrs. Simcoe sat knitting in the next chair. Then there had been the Italian music-masters, and the French teachers, very

devoted, never missing a lesson, but also never missing Mrs. Simcoe, who presided over all instruction which was imparted by any Mentor under sixty.

But when Hope grew older still and found Byron upon the shelves of the Library, his romantic sadness responded to the vague longing of her heart. Instinctively she avoided all that repels a woman in his verses, as she would have avoided the unsound parts of a fruit. But the solitary, secluded girl lived unconsciously and inevitably in a dream world, for she had no knowledge of any other, nor contact with it. Proud and shy, her heart was restless, her imagination morbid, and she believed in heroes.

When Dr. Peewee had told Mr. Burt all that he knew about the project of the school, Mr. Burt rang the bell violently.

“Send Miss Hope to me.”

The servant disappeared, and in a few moments Hope Wayne entered the room. To Dr. Peewee’s eyes she seemed wrapped only in a cloud of delicate muslin, and the wind had evidently been playing with her golden hair, for she had been lying upon the lawn reading Byron.

“Did you want me, grandfather?”

“Yes, my dear. Mr. Gray, a respectable person, is coming here to set up a school. There will be a great many young men and boys. I shall never ask them to the house. I hate boys. I expect you to hate them too.”

“Yes—yes, my dear,” said Dr. Peewee; “hate the boys? Yes; we must hate the boys.”

Hope Wayne looked at the two old gentlemen, and answered,

“I don’t think you need have warned me, grandfather; I’m not so apt to fall in love with boys.”

“No, no, Hope; I know. Ever since you have lived with me—how long is it, my dear, since your mother died?”

“I don’t know, grandfather; I never saw her,” replied Hope, gravely.

“Yes, yes; well, ever since then you have been a good, quiet little girl with grandpapa. Here, Cossy, come and give grandpa a kiss. And mind the boys! No speaking, no looking—we are never to know them. You understand? Now go, dear.”

As she closed the door, Dr. Peewee also rose to take leave.

“Doctor,” said Mr. Burt, as the other pushed back his chair, “it is a very warm day. Let me advise you to guard against any sudden debility or effect of the heat by a little cordial.”

As he spoke he led the way into the dining-room, and fumbled slowly over a bunch of keys which he drew from his pocket. Finding the proper key, he put it into the door of the side-board. “In this side-board, Dr. Peewee, I keep a bottle of old Jamaica, which was sent me by a former correspondent in the West Indies.” As Dr. Peewee had heard the same remark at least fifty times before, the kindly glistening of his nose must be attributed to some other cause than excitement at this intelligence.

“I like to preserve my friendly relations with my old commercial friends,” continued Mr. Burt, speaking very pompously, and slowly pouring from a half-empty decanter into a tumbler. “I rarely drink any thing myself—”

“H’m, ha!” grunted the Doctor.

“—except a glass of port at dinner. Yet, not to be impolite, Doctor, not to be impolite, I could not refuse to drink to your very good health and safe return to the bosom of your family.”

And Mr. Burt drained the glass, quite unobservant of the fact that the Rev. Dr. Peewee was standing beside him without glass or old Jamaica. In truth Mr. Burt had previously been alarmed about the effect of the bottle of port—which he metaphorically called a glass—that he had drunk at dinner, and to guard against evil results he had already, that very afternoon, as he was accustomed to say with an excellent humor, been to the West Indies for his health.

“Bless my soul, Doctor, you haven’t filled your glass! Permit me.”

And the old gentleman poured into the one glass and then into the other.

“And now, Sir,” he added, “now, Sir, let us drink to the health of Mr. Gray, but not of the boys—ha! ha!”

“No, no, not of the boys? No, not of the boys. Thank you, Sir—thank you. That is a pleasant liquor, Mr. Burt. H’m, ha! a very pleasant liquor. Good-afternoon, Mr. Burt; a very good day, Sir. H’m, ha!”

As Hope left her grandfather, Mrs. Simcoe was sitting at her window, which looked over the lawn in front of the house upon which Hope presently appeared. It was already toward sunset, and the tender golden light streamed upon the landscape like a visible benediction. A few rosy clouds lay in long, tranquil lines across the west, and the great trees bathed in the sweet air with conscious pleasure.

As Hope stood with folded hands looking toward the sunset, she began unconsciously to repeat some of the lines that always lay in her mind like invisible writing, waiting only for the warmth of a strong emotion to bring them legibly out:

“Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave;
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To pain, it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me;
They may crush, but they shall not contemn;
They may torture, but shall not subdue me;
‘Tis of thee that I think, not of them.”

At the same moment Mrs. Simcoe was closing her window high over Hope’s head. Her face was turned toward the sunset with the usual calm impassive look, and as she gazed at the darkening landscape she was singing, in her murmuring way,

“I rest upon thy word;
Thy promise is for me:
My succor and salvation, Lord,
Shall surely come from thee.
But let me still abide,
Nor from my hope remove,
Till thou my patient spirit guide
Into thy perfect love.”

CHAPTER III. — AVE MARIA!

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Mr. Gray’s boys sat in several pews, which he could command with his eye from his own seat in the broad aisle. Every Sunday morning at the first stroke of the bell the boys began to stroll toward the church. But after they were seated, and the congregation had assembled, and Dr. Peewee had gone up into the pulpit, the wheels of a carriage were heard outside—steps were let down—there was an opening of doors, a slight scuffing and treading, and old Christopher Burt entered. His head was powdered, and he wore a queue. His coat collar was slightly whitened with-powder, and he carried a gold-headed cane.

The boys looked in admiration upon so much respectability, powder, age, and gold cane united in one person.

But all the boys were in love with the golden-haired grand-daughter. They went home to talk about her. They went to bed to dream of her. They read Mary Lamb’s stories from Shakespeare, and Hope Wayne was Ophelia, and Desdemona, and Imogen—above all others, she was Juliet. They read the “Arabian Nights,” and she was all the Arabian Princesses with unpronounceable names. They read Miss Edgeworth—“Helen,” “Belinda.”—“Oh, thunder!” they cried, and dropped the book to think of Hope.

Hope Wayne was not unconscious of the adoration she excited. If a swarm of school-boys can not enter a country church without turning all their eyes toward one pew, is it not possible that, when a girl comes in and seats herself in

that pew, the very focus of those burning glances, even Dr. Peewee may not entirely distract her mind, however he may rivet her eyes? As she takes her last glance at the Sunday toilet in her sunny dressing-room at home, and half turns to be sure that the collar is smooth, and that the golden curl nestles precisely as it should under the moss rose-bud that blushes modestly by the side of a lovelier bloom—is it not just supposable that she thinks, for a wayward instant, of other eyes that will presently scan that figure and face, and feels, with a half-flush, that they will not be shocked nor disappointed?

There was not a boy in Mr. Gray's school who would have dared to dream that Hope Wayne ever had such a thought. When she appeared behind Grandfather Burt and the gold-headed cane she had no more antecedents in their imaginations than a rose or a rainbow. They no more thought of little human weaknesses and mundane influences in regard to her than they thought of cold vapor when they looked at sunset clouds.

During the service Hope sat stately in the pew, with her eyes fixed upon Dr. Peewee. She knew the boys were there. From time to time she observed that new boys had arrived, and that older ones had left. But how she discovered it, who could say? There was never one of Mr. Gray's boys who could honestly declare that he had seen Hope Wayne looking at either of the pews in which they sat. Perhaps she did not hear what Dr. Peewee said, although she looked at him so steadily. Perhaps her heart did not look out of her eyes, but was busy with a hundred sweet fancies in which some one of those fascinated boys had a larger share than

he knew. Perhaps, when she covered her eyes in an attitude of devotion, she did not thereby exclude all thoughts of the outer and lower world. Perhaps the Being for whose worship they were assembled was no more displeased with the innocent reveries and fancies which floated through that young heart than with the soft air and sweet song of birds that played through the open windows of the church on some warm June Sunday morning.

But when the shrill-voiced leader of the choir sounded the key-note of the hymn-tune through his nose, and the growling bass-viol joined in unison, while the congregation rose, and Dr. Peewee surveyed his people to mark who had staid away from service, then Hope Wayne looked at the choir as if her whole soul were singing; and young Gabriel Bennet, younger than Hope, had a choking feeling as he gazed at her—an involuntary sense of unworthiness and shame before such purity and grace. He counted every line of the hymn grudgingly, and loved the tunes that went back and repeated and prolonged—the tunes endlessly *da capo*—and the hymns that he heard as he looked at her he never forgot.

But there were other eyes than Gabriel Bennet's that watched Hope Wayne, and for many months had watched her—the flashing black eyes of Abel Newt. Handsome, strong, graceful, he was one of the oldest boys, and a leader at Mr. Gray's school. Like every handsome, bold boy or young man, for he was fully eighteen, and seemed much older, Abel Newt had plenty of allies at school—they could hardly be called friends. There was many a boy who thought with the one nicknamed Little Malacca, although, more

prudently than he, he might not say it: “Abe gives me gingerbread; but I guess I don’t like him!” If a boy interfered with Abe he was always punished. The laugh was turned on him; there was ceaseless ridicule and taunting. Then if it grew insupportable, and came to fighting, Abel Newt was strong in muscle and furious in wrath, and the recusant was generally pommeled.

Reposing upon his easy, conscious superiority, Abel had long worshiped Hope Wayne. They were nearly of the same age—she a few months the younger. But as the regulations of the school confined every boy, without especial permission of absence, to the school grounds, and as Abel had no acquaintance with Mr. Burt and no excuse for calling, his worship had been silent and distant. He was the more satisfied that it should be so, because it had never occurred to him that any of the other boys could be a serious rival for her regard. He was also obliged to be the more satisfied with his silent devotion, because never, by a glance, did she betray any consciousness of his particular observation, or afford him the least opportunity for saying or doing any thing that would betray it. If he hastened to the front door of the church he could only stand upon the steps, and as she passed out she nodded to her few friends, and immediately followed her grandfather into the carriage.

When Gabriel Bennet came to Mr. Gray’s, Abel did not like him. He laughed at him. He made the other boys laugh at him whenever he could. He bullied him in the play-ground. He proposed to introduce fagging at Mr. Gray’s. He praised it as a splendid institution of the British schools, simply because he wanted Gabriel as his fag. He wanted to

fling his boots at Gabriel's head that he might black them. He wanted to send him down stairs in his shirt on winter nights. He wanted to have Gabriel get up in the cold mornings and bring him his breakfast in bed. He wanted to chain Gabriel to the car of his triumphal progress through school-life. He wanted to debase and degrade him altogether.

"What is it," Abel exclaimed one day to the large boys assembled in solemn conclave in the school-room, "that takes all the boorishness and brutishness out of the English character? What is it that prevents the Britishers from being servile and obsequious—traits, I tell you, boys, unknown in England—but this splendid system of fagging? Did you ever hear of an insolent Englishman, a despotic Englishman, a surly Englishman, a selfish Englishman, an obstinate Englishman, a domineering Englishman, a dogmatic Englishman? Never, boys, never. These things are all taken out of them by fagging. It stands to reason they should be. If I shy my boots at a fellow's head, is he likely to domineer? If I kick a small boy who contradicts me, is he likely to be opinionated and dogmatic? If I eat up my fag's plum-cake just sent by his mamma, hot, as it were, from the maternal heart, and moist with a mother's tears, is that fag likely to be selfish? Not at all. The boots, and the kicking, and the general walloping make him manly. It teaches him to govern his temper and hold his tongue. I swear I should like to have a fag!" perorated Abel, meaning that he should like to be the holy office, and to have Gabriel Bennet immediately delivered up to him for discipline.

Once Gabriel overheard this kind of conversation in the play-ground, as Abel Newt and some of the other boys were resting after a game at ball. There were no personal allusions in what Abel had said, but Gabriel took him up a little curtly:

“Pooh! Abel, how would you like to have Gyles Blanding shy his boots at your head?”

Abel looked at him a moment, sarcastically. Then he replied:

“My young friend, I should like to see him try it. But fagging concerns small boys, not large ones.”

“Yes!” retorted Gabriel, his eyes flashing, as he kept tossing the ball nervously, and catching it; “yes, that’s the meanness of it: the little boy can’t help himself.”

“By golly, I’d kick!” put in Little Malacca.

“Then you’d be licked till you dropped, my small Sir,” said Abel, sneeringly.

“Yes, Abel,” replied Gabriel, “but it’s a mean thing for an American boy to want fagging.”

“Not at all,” he answered; “there are some young American gentlemen I know who would be greatly benefited by being well fagged; yes, made to lie down in the dirt and lick a little of it, and fetch and carry. And to be kicked out of bed every morning and into bed every night would be the very best thing that could happen to ‘em. By George, I should like to have the kicking and licking begin now!”

Gabriel had the same dislike of Abel which the latter felt for him, but they had never had any open quarrel. Even thus far in the present conversation there had been nothing

personal said. It was only a warm general discussion. Gabriel merely asked, when the other stopped,

“What good does the fagging do the fellow that flings the boots and bullies the little one?”

“Good?” answered Abel—“what good does it do? Why, he has been through it all himself, and he’s just paying it off.”

Abel smiled grimly as he looked round upon the boys, who did not seem at all enthusiastic for his suggestion.

“Well,” said he, “I’m afraid I shall have to postpone my millennium of fagging. But I don’t know what else will make men of you. And mark you, my merry men, there’s more than one kind of fagging;” and he looked in a droll way—a droll way that was not in the least funny, but made the boys all wonder what Abel Newt was up to now.

CHAPTER IV. — NIGHT.

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It was already dusk, but the summer evening is the best time for play. The sport in the play-ground at Mr. Gray's was at its height, and the hot, eager, panting boys were shouting and scampering in every direction, when a man ran in from the road and cried out, breathless,

"Where's Mr. Gray?"

"In his study," answered twenty voices at once. The man darted toward the house and went in; the next moment he reappeared with Mr. Gray, both of them running.

"Get out the boat!" cried Mr. Gray, "and call the big boys. There's a man drowning in the pond!"

The game was over at once, and each young heart thrilled with vague horror. Abel Newt, Muddock, Blanding, Tom Gait, Jim Greenidge, and the rest of the older boys, came rushing out of the school-room, and ran toward the barn, in which the boat was kept upon a truck. In a moment the door was open, the truck run out, and all the boys took hold of the rope. Mr. Gray and the stranger led the way. The throng swept out of the gate, and as they hastened silently along, the axles of the truck kindled with the friction and began to smoke.

"Carefully! steadily!" cried the boys all together.

They slackened speed a little, but, happily, the pond was but a short distance from the school. It was a circular sheet of water, perhaps a mile in width.

“Boys, he is nearly on the other side,” said Mr. Gray, as the crowd reached the shore.

In an instant the boat was afloat. Mr. Gray, the stranger, and the six stoutest boys in the school, stepped into it. The boys lifted their oars. “Let fall! give way!” cried Mr. Gray, and the boat moved off, glimmering away into the darkness.

The younger boys remained hushed and awe-stricken upon the shore. The stars were just coming out, the wind had fallen, and the smooth, black pond lay silent at their feet. They could see the vague, dark outline of the opposite shore, but none of the pretty villas that stood in graceful groves upon the banks—none of the little lawns that sloped, with a feeling of human sympathy, to the water. The treachery of that glassy surface was all they thought of. They shuddered to remember that they had so often bathed in the pond, and recoiled as if they had been friends of a murderer. None of them spoke. They clustered closely together, listening intently. Nothing was audible but the hum of the evening insects and the regular muffled beat of the oars over the water. The boys strained their ears and held their breath as the sound suddenly stopped. But they listened in vain. The lazy tree-toads sang, the monotonous hum of the night went on.

Gabriel Bennet held the hand of Little Malacca—a dark-eyed boy, who was supposed in the school to have had no father or mother, and who had instinctively attached himself to Gabriel from the moment they met.