

***HAMLIN
GARLAND***

***THE EAGLE'S
HEART***

Hamlin Garland

The Eagle's Heart

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CHAPTER I

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HIS YOUTH

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Harold was about ten years of age when his father, the Rev. Mr. Excell, took the pastorate of the First Church in Rock River. Many of the people in his first congregation remarked upon "the handsome lad." The clear brown of his face, his big yellow-brown eyes, his slender hands, and the grace of his movements gave him distinction quite aside from that arising from his connection with the minister.

Rev. John Excell was a personable man himself. He was tall and broad shouldered, with abundant brown hair and beard, and a winning smile. His eyes were dark and introspective, but they could glow like sunlit topaz, or grow dim with tears, as his congregation had opportunity to observe during this first sermon—but they were essentially sad eyes.

Mrs. Excell, a colorless little woman who retained only the dim outline of her girlhood's beauty, sat gracelessly in her pew, but her stepdaughter, Maud, by her side, was carrying to early maturity a dainty grace united with something strong and fine drawn from her father. She had his proud lift of the head.

"What a fine family!" whispered the women from pew to pew under cover of the creaking fans.

In the midst of the first sermon, a boy seated in front of Harold gave a shrill whoop of agony and glared back at the minister's son with distorted face, and only the prompt

action on the part of both mothers prevented a clamorous encounter over the pew. Harold had stuck the head of a pin in the toe of his boot and jabbed his neighbor in the calf of the leg. It was an old trick, but it served well.

The minister did not interrupt his reading, but a deep flush of hot blood arose to his face, and the lids of his eyes dropped to shut out the searching gaze of his parishioners, as well as to close in a red glare of anger. From that moment Harold was known as "that preacher's boy," the intention being to convey by significant inflections and a meaning smile that he filled the usual description of a minister's graceless son.

Harold soon became renowned in his own world. He had no hard-fought battles, though he had scores of quarrels, for he scared his opponents by the suddenness and the intensity of his rage, which was fairly demoniacal in fury.

"You touch me and I'll *kill you*," he said in a low voice to the fat boy whose leg he had jabbed, and his bloodless face and blazing eyes caused the boy to leap frenziedly away. He carried a big knife, his playmates discovered, and no one, not even youths grown to man's stature, cared to attempt violence with him. One lad, struck with a stone from his cunning right hand, was carried home in a carriage. Another, being thrown by one convulsive effort, fell upon his arm, breaking it at the elbow. In less than a week every boy in Rock River knew something of Harry Excell's furious temper, and had learned that it was safer to be friend than enemy to him.

He had his partisans, too, for his was a singularly attractive nature when not enraged. He was a hearty,

buoyant playmate, and a good scholar five days out of six, but he demanded a certain consideration at all times. An accidental harm he bore easily, but an intentional injury—that was flame to powder.

The teachers in the public school each had him in turn, as he ran rapidly up the grades. They all admired him unreservedly, but most of them were afraid of him, so that he received no more decisive check than at home. He was subject to no will but his own.

The principal was a kind and scholarly old man, who could make a boy cry with remorse and shame by his Christlike gentleness, and Harold also wept in his presence, but that did not prevent him from fairly knocking out the brains of the next boy who annoyed him. In his furious, fickle way he often defended his chums or smaller boys, so that it was not easy to condemn him entirely.

There were rumors from the first Monday after Harold's pin-sticking exploit that the minister had "lively sessions" with his boy. The old sexton privately declared that he heard muffled curses and shrieks and the sound of blows rising from the cellar of the parsonage—but this story was hushed on his lips. The boy admittedly needed thrashing, but the deacons of the church would rather not have it known that the minister used the rod himself.

The rumors of the preacher's stern measures softened the judgment of some of the townspeople, who shifted some of the blame of the son to the shoulders of the sire. Harry called his father "the minister," and seemed to have no regard for him beyond a certain respect for his physical strength. When boys came by and raised the swimming sign

he replied, "Wait till I ask 'the minister.'" This was considered "queer" in him.

He ignored his stepmother completely, but tormented his sister Maud in a thousand impish ways. He disarranged her neatly combed hair. He threw mud on her dress and put carriage grease on her white stockings on picnic day. He called her "chiny-thing," in allusion to her pretty round cheeks and clear complexion, and yet he loved her and would instantly fight for her, and no one else dared tease her or utter a word to annoy her. She was fourteen years of age when Mr. Excell came to town, and at sixteen considered herself a young lady. As suitors began to gather about her, they each had a vigorous trial to undergo with Harold; it was indeed equivalent to running the gantlet. Maud was always in terror of him on the evenings when she had callers.

One day he threw a handful of small garter snakes into the parlor where his sister sat with young Mr. Norton. Maud sprang to a chair screaming wildly, while her suitor caught the snakes and threw them from the window just as the minister's tall form darkened the doorway.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

Maud, eager to shield Harry, said: "Oh, nothing much, papa—only one of Harry's jokes."

"Tell me," said the minister to the young man, who, with a painful smile on his face, stammeringly replied:

"Harry thought he'd scare me, that's all. It didn't amount to much."

"I insist on knowing the truth, Mr. Norton," the minister sternly insisted.

As Norton described the boy's action, Mr. Excell's face paled and his lips set close. His eyes became terrible to meet, and the beaded sweat of his furious anger stood thick on his face. "Thank you," he said with ominous calmness, and turning without another word, went to his study.

His wife, stealing up, found the door locked and her husband walking the floor like a roused tiger. White and shaking with a sort of awe, Mrs. Excell ran down to the kitchen where Harold crouched and said:

"Harold, dear, you'd better go out to Mr. Burns' right away."

Harold understood perfectly what she meant and fled. For hours neither Mrs. Excell nor Maud spoke above a whisper. When the minister came down to tea he made no comment on Harry's absence. He had worn out his white-hot rage, but was not yet in full control of himself.

He remained silent, and kept his eyes on his plate during the meal.

The last time he had punished Harold the scene narrowly escaped a tragic ending. When the struggle ended Harold lay on the floor, choked into insensibility.

When he had become calm and Harold was sleeping naturally in his own bed, the father knelt at his wife's knee and prayed God for grace to bear his burden, and said:

"Mary, keep us apart when we are angry. He is like me: he has my fiendish temper. No matter what I say or do, keep us apart till I am calm. By God's grace I will never touch his flesh again in anger."

Nevertheless he dared not trust himself to refer to the battles which shamed them all. The boy was deeply

repentant, but uttered no word of it. And so they grew ever more silent and vengeful in their intercourse.

Harold early developed remarkable skill with horses, and once rode in the races at the County Fair, to the scandal of the First Church. He not only won the race, but was at once offered a great deal of money to go with the victor to other races. To his plea the father, with deep-laid diplomacy, replied:

"Very well; study hard this year and next year you may go." But the boy was just at the age to take on weight rapidly, and by the end of the year was too heavy, and the owner of the horse refused to repeat his offer. Harold did not fail to remark how he had been cheated, but said nothing more of his wish to be a jockey.

He was also fond of firearms, and during his boyhood his father tried in every way to keep weapons from him, and a box in his study contained a contraband collection of his son's weapons. There was a certain pathos in this little arsenal, for it gave evidence of considerable labor on the boy's part, and expressed much of buoyant hope and restless energy.

There were a half-dozen Fourth of July pistols, as many cannons for crackers, and three attempts at real guns intended to explode powder and throw a bullet. Some of them were "toggled up" with twine, and one or two had handles rudely carved out of wood. Two of them were genuine revolvers which he had managed to earn by working in the harvest field on the Burns' farm.

From his fifteenth year he was never without a shotgun and revolver. The shotgun was allowed, but the revolver was

still contraband and kept carefully concealed. On Fourth of July he always helped to fire the anvil and fireworks, for he was deft and sure and quite at home with explosives. He had acquired great skill with both gun and pistol as early as his thirteenth year, and his feats of marksmanship came now and then to the ears of his father.

The father and son were in open warfare. Harold submitted to every command outwardly, but inwardly vowed to break all restraint which he considered useless or unjust.

His great ambition was to acquire a "mustang pony," for all the adventurous spirits of the dime novels he had known carried revolvers and rode mustangs. He did not read much, but when he did it was always some tale of fighting. He was too restless and active to continue at a book of his own accord for any length of time, but he listened delightedly to any one who consented to read for him. When his sister Maud wished to do him a great favor and to enjoy his company (for she loved him dearly) she read Daredevil Dan, or some similar story, while he lay out on his stomach in the grass under the trees, with restless feet swinging like pendulums. At such times his face was beautiful with longing, and his eyes became dark and dreamy. "I'm going there, Beauty," he would say as Maud rolled out the word *Colorado* or *Brazos*. "I'm going there. I won't stay here and rot. I'll go, you'll see, and I'll have a big herd of cattle, too."

His gentlest moments were those spent with his sister in the fields or under the trees. As he grew older he became curiously tender and watchful of her. It pleased him to go ahead of her through the woods, to pilot the way, and to

help her over ditches or fences. He loved to lead her into dense thickets and to look around and say: "There, isn't this wild, though? You couldn't find your way out if it wasn't for me, could you?" And she, to carry out the spirit of the story, always shuddered and said, "Don't leave me to perish here."

Once, as he lay with his head in the grass, he suddenly said: "Can't you hear the Colorado roar?"

The wind was sweeping over the trees, and Maud, eager to keep him in this gentle mood, cried: "I hear it; it is a wonderful river, isn't it?"

He did not speak again for a moment.

"Oh, I want to be where there is nobody west of me," he said, a look of singular beauty on his face. "Don't you?"

"N—no, I don't," answered Maud. "But, then, I'm a girl, you know; we're afraid of wild things, most of us."

"Dot Burland isn't."

"Oh, she only pretends; she wants you to think she's brave."

"That's a lie." He said it so savagely that Maud hastened to apologize.

CHAPTER II

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HIS LOVE AFFAIRS

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Naturally a lad of this temper had his loves. He made no secret of them, and all the young people in the town knew his sweethearts and the precise time when his passion changed its course. If a girl pleased him he courted her with the utmost directness, but he was by no interpretation a love-sick youth. His likings were more in the nature of proprietary comradeship, and were expressed without caresses or ordinary words of endearment.

His courtship amounted to service. He waited about to meet and help his love, he hastened to defend her and to guide her; and if the favored one knew her rôle she humored his fancies, permitting him to aid her in finding her way across a weedy pasture lot or over a tiny little brook which he was pleased to call a torrent. A smile of derision was fatal. He would not submit to ridicule or joking. At the first jocular word his hands clinched and his eyes flamed with anger. His was not a face of laughter; for the most part it was serious in expression, and his eyes were rapt with dreams of great deeds.

He had one mate to whom he talked freely, and him he chose often to be his companion in the woods or on the prairies. This was John Burns, son of a farmer who lived near the town. Harry spent nearly every Saturday and Sunday during the summer months on the Burns farm. He helped Jack during haying and harvest, and when their tasks were

done the two boys wandered away to the bank of the river and there, under some great basswood tree on delicious sward, they lay and talked of wild animals and Indians and the West. At this time the great chieftains of the Sioux, Sitting Bull and Gall, were becoming famous to the world, and the first reports of the findings of gold in the Black Hills were being made. A commission appointed by President Grant had made a treaty with the Sioux wherein Sitting Bull was told, "If you go to this new reservation and leave Dakota to the settlers, you shall be unmolested so long as grass grows and water runs."

But the very guard sent in to protect this commission reported "gold in the grass roots," and the insatiate greed of the white man broke all bounds—the treaty was ignored, and Sitting Bull, the last chieftain of the Sioux, calling his people together, withdrew deeper into the wilderness of Wyoming. The soldiers were sent on the trail, and the press teemed for months with news of battles and speeches and campaigns.

All these exciting events Harry and his friend Jack read and discussed hotly. Jack was eager to own a mine. "I'd like to pick up a nugget," he said, but Harold was not interested. "I don't care to mine; I'd like to be with General Custer. I'd like to be one of the scouts. I'd like to have a coat like that." He pointed at one of the pictures wherein two or three men in fringed buckskin shirts and wide hats were galloping across a rocky plain.

Many times as the two boys met to talk over these alluring matters the little town and the dusty lanes became exceedingly tame and commonplace.

Harold's eyes glowed with passion as he talked to his sweetheart of these wild scenes, and she listened because he was so alluring as he lay at her feet, pouring out a vivid recital of his plans.

"I'm not going to stay here much longer," he said; "it's too dull. I can't stand much more school. If it wasn't for you I'd run away right now."

Dot only smiled back at him and laid her hand on his hair. She was his latest sweetheart. He loved her for her vivid color, her abundant and beautiful hair, and also because she was a sympathetic listener. She, on her part, enjoyed the sound of his eager voice and the glow of his deep brown eyes. They were both pupils in the little seminary in the town, and he saw her every day walking to and from the recitation halls. He often carried her books for her, and in many other little ways insisted on serving her.

Almost without definable reason the "Wild West" came to be a land of wonder, lit as by some magical light. Its cañons, *arroyos*, and mesquite, its bronchos, cowboys, Indians, and scouts filled the boy's mind with thoughts of daring, not much unlike the fancies of a boy in the days of knight errantry.

Of the Indians he held mixed opinions. At times he thought of them as a noble race, at others—when he dreamed of fame—he wished to kill a great many of them and be very famous. Most of the books he read were based upon the slaughter of the "redskins," and yet at heart he wished to be one of them and to taste the wild joy of their poetic life, filled with hunting and warfare. Sitting Bull, Chief Gall, Rain-in-the-Face, Spotted Tail, Star-in-the-Brow, and

Black Buffalo became wonder-working names in his mind. Every line in the newspapers which related to the life of the cowboys or Indians he read and remembered, for his plan was to become a part of it as soon as he had money enough to start.

There were those who would have contributed five dollars each to send him, for he was considered a dangerous influence among the village boys. If a window were broken by hoodlums at night it was counted against the minister's son. If a melon patch were raided and the fruit scattered and broken, Harold was considered the ringleader. Of the judgments of their elders the rough lads were well aware, and they took pains that no word of theirs should shift blame from Harold's shoulders to their own. By hints and sly remarks they fixed unalterably in the minds of their fathers and mothers the conception that Harold was a desperately bad and reckless boy. In his strength, skill, and courage they really believed, and being afraid of him, they told stories of his exploits, even among themselves, which bordered on the marvelous.

In reality he was not a leader of these raids. His temperament was not of that kind. He did not care to assume direction of an expedition because it carried too much trouble and some responsibility. His mind was wayward and liable to shift to some other thing at any moment; besides, mischief for its own sake did not appeal to him. The real leaders were the two sons of the village shoemaker. They were under-sized, weazened, shrewd, sly little scamps, and appeared not to have the resolution of chickadees, but had a singular genius for getting others into

trouble. They knew how to handle spirits like Harold. They dared him to do evil deeds, taunted him (as openly as they felt it safe to do) with cowardice, and so spurred him to attempt some trifling depredation merely as a piece of adventure. Almost invariably when they touched him on this nerve Harold responded with a rush, and when discovery came was nearly always among the culprits taken and branded, for his pride would not permit him to sneak and run. So it fell out that time after time he was found among the grape stealers or the melon raiders, and escaped prosecution only because the men of the town laid it to "boyish deviltry" and not to any deliberate intent to commit a crime.

After his daughter married Mr. Excell made another effort to win the love of his son and failed. Harold cared nothing for his father's scholarship or oratorical powers, and never went to church after he was sixteen, but he sometimes boasted of his father among the boys.

"If father wasn't a minister, he'd be one of the strongest men in this town," he said once to Jack. "Look at his shoulders. His arms are hard, too. Of course he can't show his muscle, but I tell you he can box and swing dumb-bells."

If the father had known it, in the direction of athletics lay the road to the son's heart, but the members of the First Church were not sufficiently advanced to approve of a muscular minister, and so Mr. Excell kept silent on such subjects, and swung his dumb-bells in private. As a matter of fact, he had been a good hunter in his youth in Michigan, and might have won his son's love by tales of the wood, but he did not.

For the most part, Harold ignored his father's occasional moments of tenderness, and spent the larger part of his time with his sister or at the Burns' farm.

Mr. and Mrs. Burns saw all that was manly and good in the boy, and they stoutly defended him on all occasions.

"The boy is put upon," Mrs. Burns always argued. "A quieter, more peaceabler boy I never knew, except my own Jack. They're good, helpful boys, both of 'em, and I don't care what anybody says."

Jack, being slower of thought and limb, worshiped his chum, whose alertness and resource humbled him, though he was much the better scholar in all routine work. He read more than Harold, but Harold seized upon the facts and transmitted them instantly into something vivid and dramatic. He assumed all leadership in the hunting, and upon Jack fell all the drudgery. He always did the reading, also, while Harold listened and dreamed with eyes that seemed to look across miles of peaks. His was the eagle's heart; wild reaches allured him. Minute beauties of garden or flower were not for him. The groves along the river had long since lost their charm because he knew their limits—they no longer appealed to his imagination.

A hundred times he said: "Come, let's go West and kill buffalo. To-morrow we will see the snow on Pike's Peak." The wild country was so near, its pressure day by day molded his mind. He had no care or thought of cities or the East. He dreamed of the plains and horses and herds of buffalo and troops of Indians filing down the distant slopes. Every poem of the range, every word which carried flavor of the wild country, every picture of a hunter remained in his mind.

The feel of a gun in his hands gave him the keenest delight, and to stalk geese in a pond or crows in the cornfield enabled him to imagine the joy of hunting the bear and the buffalo. He had the hunter's patience, and was capable of creeping on his knees in the mud for hours in the attempt to kill a duck. He could imitate almost all the birds and animals he knew. His whistle would call the mother grouse to him. He could stop the whooping of cranes in their steady flight, and his honking deceived the wary geese. When complimented for his skill in hunting he scornfully said:

"Oh, that's nothing. Anyone can kill small game; but buffaloes and grizzlies—they are the boys."

During the winter of his sixteenth year a brother of Mr. Burns returned from Kansas, which was then a strange and far-off land, and from him Harold drew vast streams of talk. The boy was insatiate when the plains were under discussion. From this veritable cattleman he secured many new words. With great joy he listened while Mr. Burns spoke of *cinches*, ropes, corrals, *buttes*, *arroyos* and other Spanish-Mexican words which the boys had observed in their dime novels, but which they had never before heard anyone use in common speech. Mr. Burns alluded to an *aparejo* or an *arroyo* as casually as Jack would say "singletree" or "furrow," and his stories brought the distant plains country very near.

Harold sought opportunity to say: "Mr. Burns, take me back with you; I wish you would."

The cattleman looked at him. "Can you ride a horse?"

Jack spoke up: "You bet he can, Uncle. He rode in the races."

Burns smiled as a king might upon a young knight seeking an errant.

"Well, if your folks don't object, when you get done with school, and Jack's mother says *he* can come, you make a break for Abilene; we'll see what I can do with you on the 'long trail.'"

Harold took this offer very seriously, much more so than Mr. Burns intended he should do, although he was pleased with the boy.

Harold well knew that his father and mother would not consent, and very naturally said nothing to them about his plan, but thereafter he laid by every cent of money he could earn, until his thrift became a source of comment. To Jack he talked for hours of the journey they were to make. Jack, unimaginative and engrossed with his studies at the seminary, took the whole matter very calmly. It seemed a long way off at best, and his studies were pleasant and needed his whole mind. Harold was thrown back upon the company of his sweetheart, who was the only one else to whom he could talk freely.

Dot, indolent, smiling creature of cozy corners that she was, listened without emotion, while Harold, with eyes ablaze, with visions of the great, splendid plains, said: "I'm going West sure. I'm tired of school; I'm going to Kansas, and I'm going to be a great cattle king in a few years, Dot, and then I'll come back and get you, and we'll go live on the banks of a big river, and we'll have plenty of horses, and go riding and hunting antelope every day. How will you like that?"

Her unresponsiveness hurt him, and he said: "You don't seem to care whether I go or not."

She turned and looked at him vacantly, still smiling, and he saw that she had not heard a single word of his passionate speech. He sprang up, hot with anger and pain.

"If you don't care to listen to me you needn't," he said, speaking through his clinched teeth.

She smiled, showing her little white teeth prettily. "Now, don't get mad, Harry; I was thinking of something else. Please tell me again."

"I won't. I'm done with you." A big lump arose in his throat and he turned away to hide tears of mortified pride. He could not have put it into words, but he perceived the painful truth. Dot had considered him a boy all along, and had only half listened to his stories and plans in the past, deceiving him for some purpose of her own. She was a smiling, careless hypocrite.

"You've lied to me," he said, turning and speaking with the bluntness of a boy without subtlety of speech. "I never'll speak to you again; good-by."

Dot kept swinging her foot. "Good-by," she said in her sweet, soft-breathing voice.

He walked away slowly, but his heart was hot with rage and wounded pride, and every time he thought of the tone in which she said "Good-by," his flesh quivered. He was seventeen, and considered himself a man; she was eighteen, and thought him only a boy. She had never listened to him, that he now understood. Maud had been right. Dot had only pretended, and now for some reason she ceased to pretend.

There was just one comfort in all this: it made it easier for him to go to the sunset country, and his wounded heart healed a little at the thought of riding a horse behind a roaring herd of buffaloes.



CHAPTER III

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THE YOUNG EAGLE STRIKES

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A farming village like Rock River is one of the quietest, most humdrum communities in the world till some sudden upheaval of primitive passion reveals the tiger, the ram, and the wolf which decent and orderly procedure has hidden. Cases of murder arise from the dead level of everyday village routine like volcanic mountain peaks in the midst of a flowering plain.

The citizens of Rock River were amazed and horrified one Monday morning to learn that Dot Burland had eloped with the clerk in the principal bank in the town, a married man and the leader of the choir in the First Church. Some of the people when they heard of it, said: "I do not believe it," and when they were convinced, the tears came to their eyes. "She was such a pretty girl, and think of Mrs. Willard—and then Sam—who would have supposed Sam Willard could do such a thing."

To most of the citizens it was drama; it broke the tedious monotony of everyday life; it was more productive of interesting conversation than a case of embezzlement or the burning of the county courthouse. There were those who smiled while they said: "Too bad, too bad! Any p'ticlars?"

Some of the women recalled their dislike of the lazy, pink-and-white creature whom they had often seen loitering on the streets or lying day after day in a hammock reading "domestic novels." The young girls drew together and

conveyed the news in whispers. It seemed to overturn the whole social world so far as they knew it, and some of them hastened to disclaim any friendship with "the dreadful thing."

Of course the related persons came into the talk. "Poor Mrs. Willard and Harry Excell!" Yes, there was Harry; for a moment, for the first time, he was regarded with pity. "What will he do? He must take it very hard."

At about eleven o'clock, just as the discussion had reached this secondary stage, where new particulars were necessary, a youth, pale and breathless, with his right hand convulsively clasping his bloody shoulder, rushed into the central drug store and fell to the floor with inarticulate cries of fear and pain. Out of his mouth at last came an astonishing charge of murderous assault on the part of Harold Excell. His wounds were dressed and the authorities notified to arrest his assailant.

When the officers found Harold he was pacing up and down the narrow alley where the encounter had taken place. He was white as the dead, and his eyes were ablaze under his knitted brows.

"Well, what do you want of me?" he demanded, as the officer rushed up and laid hands upon him.

"You've killed Clint Slocum," replied the constable, drawing a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"Oh, drop those things!" replied Harold; "I'm not going to run; you never knew me to run."

Half ashamed, the constable replaced the irons in his pocket and seized his prisoner by the arm. Harold walked along quietly, but his face was terrible to see, especially in

one so young. In every street excited men, women, and children were running to see him pass. He had suddenly become alien and far separated from them all. He perceived them as if through a lurid smoke cloud.

On most of these faces lay a smile, a ghastly, excited, pleased grin, which enraged him more than any curse would have done. He had suddenly become their dramatic entertainment. The constable gripped him tighter and the sheriff, running up, seized his other arm.

Harold shook himself free. "Let me alone! I'm going along all right."

The officers only held him the closer, and his rage broke bounds. He struggled till his captors swayed about on the walk, and the little boys screamed with laughter to see the slender youth shake the big men.

In the midst of this struggle a tall man, without hat or coat and wearing slippers, came running down the walk with great strides. His voice rang deep and clear:

"Let the boy alone!"

It was the minister. With one sweep of his right hand he tore the hands of the sheriff from the boy's arms; the gesture was bearlike in power. "What's the meaning of all this, Mr. Sawyer?" he said, addressing the sheriff.

"Your boy has killed a man."

"You lie!"

"It's true—anyhow, he has stabbed Clint Slocum. He ain't dead, but he's hurt bad."

"Is that true, Harold?"

Harold did not lift his sullen glance. "He struck me with a whip."

There was a silence, during which the minister choked with emotion and his lips moved as if in silent prayer. Then he turned. "Free the boy's arm. I'll guarantee he will not try to escape. No son of mine will run to escape punishment—leave him to me."

The constable, being a member of the minister's congregation and a profound admirer of his pastor, fell back. The sheriff took a place by his side, and the father and son walked on toward the jail. After a few moments the minister began to speak in a low voice:

"My son, you have reached a momentous point in your life's history. Much depends on the words you use. I will not tell you to conceal the truth, but you need not incriminate yourself—that is the law"—his voice was almost inaudible, but Harold heard it. "If Slocum dies—oh, my God! My God!"

His voice failed him utterly, but he walked erect and martial, the sun blazing on his white forehead, his hands clinched at his sides. There were many of his parishioners in the streets, and several of the women broke into bitter weeping as he passed, and many of the men imprecated the boy who was bringing white lines of sorrow into his father's hair. "This is the logical end of his lawless bringing up," said one.

The father went on: "Tell me, my boy—tell me the truth—did you strike to kill? Was murder in your heart?"

Harold did not reply. The minister laid a broad, gentle hand on his son's shoulder. "Tell me, Harold."

"No; I struck to hurt him. He was striking me; I struck back," the boy sullenly answered.

The father sighed with relief. "I believe you, Harold. He is older and stronger, too: that will count in your favor."

They reached the jail yard gate, and there, in the face of a crowd of curious people, the minister bowed his proud head and put his arm about his son and kissed his hair. Then, with tears upon his face, he addressed the sheriff:

"Mr. Sheriff, I resign my boy to your care. Remember, he is but a lad, and he is my only son. Deal gently with him.—Harold, submit to the law and all will end well. I will bring mother and Maud to see you at once."

As the gate closed on his son the minister drew a deep breath, and a cry of bitter agony broke from his clinched lips: "O God, O God! My son is lost!"

The story of the encounter, even as it dribbled forth from Slocum, developed extenuating circumstances. Slocum was man grown, a big, muscular fellow, rather given to bullying. A heavy carriage whip was found lying in the alley, and this also supported Harold's story to his father. As told by Slocum, the struggle took place just where the alley from behind the parsonage came out upon the cross street.

"I was leading a horse," said Slocum, "and I met Harry, and we got to talking, and something I said made him mad, and he jerked out his knife and jumped at me. The horse got scared and yanked me around, and just then Harry got his knife into me. I saw he was in for my life and I threw down the whip and run, the blood a-spurting out o' me, hot as b'ilin' water. I was scared, I admit that. I thought he'd opened a big artery in me, and I guess he did."

When this story, amplified and made dramatic, reached the ears of the minister, he said: "That is Clinton's side of

the case. My son must have been provoked beyond his control. Wait till we hear his story."

But the shadow of the prison was on Harold's face, and he sullenly refused to make any statement, even to his sister, who had more influence over him than Mrs. Excell.

A singular and sinister change came over him as the days passed. He became silent and secretive and suspicious, and the sheriff spoke to Mr. Excell about it. "I don't understand that boy of yours. He seems to be in training for a contest of some kind. He's quiet enough in daytime, or when I'm around, but when he thinks he's alone, he races up and down like a lynx, and jumps and turns handsprings, and all sorts of things. The only person he asks to see is young Burns. I can't fathom him."

The father lowered his eyes. He knew well that Harry did not ask for him.

"If it wasn't for these suspicious actions, doctor, I'd let him have the full run of the jail yard, but I dassent let him have any liberties. Why, he can go up the side of the cells like a squirrel! He'd go over our wall like a cat—no doubt of it."

The minister spoke with some effort. "I think you misread my son. He is not one to flee from punishment. He has some other idea in his mind."

To Jack Burns alone, plain, plodding, and slow, Harold showed a smiling face. He met him with a boyish word—"Hello, Jack! how goes it?"—and was eager to talk. He reached out and touched him with his hands wistfully. "I'm glad you've come. You're the only friend I've got now, Jack." This was one of the morbid fancies jail life had developed;