

CHAPTER I A LITTLE ABOUT ALGERTON

(Opening setting, Saturday Oct. 13, 1894)

Darkness had fallen on this early October evening in Algerton. A drizzling rain was in the air. The street leading north from the village was deserted, except for our hero, Carey Churchill, who was on his way home. Carey and his mother Abigail and his sister Ethel, age 15 and his brother Michael, age 9, had that afternoon buried their father, Thornton Churchill, the former postmaster of the village. A sudden and unexpected illness struck the little family a fatal blow and left them quite unprepared for this unhappy turn of events. Mrs. Churchill, stricken with grief, left all details necessary in settling up the affairs of her husband in the hands of Carey, now the man of the household.

Algerton was situated on the Erie Line. The post office was located near the tracks and between the depot and the village crossroads. Carey's home was just a short distance on the other side of the tracks. The post office had remained closed for the day in memory of Mr. Churchill, and Carey had just left the building. The evening train from the east had just departed having stopped for the purpose of discharging passengers and the transfer of mail and express, and was now heard in the distance hurrying on its way to the terminal in Erie, Pa. Carey, having properly cared for the storage of the evening mail, was about to leave the wooden platform area of the station and turned up his coat collar to protect his clothing from the rain which was dripping from the trees and forming pools along the pathway. A shadowy figure stepped out from the darkness and stopped abruptly in front of Carey which prevented him from proceeding. The person appeared to be a man of forty and was dressed rather carelessly and held a bundle under his arm.

"Can you direct me to the hotel? You do have one here, don't you?" he asked.

"Sorry Sir, We do not." replied Carey.

"Then strangers are not welcome here, I gather."

"On the contrary, we do have a rooming house operated by Mrs. Cam---"

"Campbell?" interrupted the stranger.

"No," continued Carey, "Mrs. Cameron, do you know the Campbells? If they are expecting you ---"

"No," interrupted the stranger again, "They wouldn't be expecting me, just spoke too quickly ---" and with this, the man turned on his heel and vanished into the darkness. Carey tarried no longer for after all it was a nasty night; although he gladly would have given further assistance if needed, the man asked for none and did not seem to appreciate that which he did receive. Carey shrugged his shoulders and was about to pass the incident from his thoughts when he recalled that it was not unusual for visitors or village people to arrive on the evening train during the week, but this was Saturday and this man was not one of the villagers. Once again he bent his steps homeward and quickened his pace and in a

minute, he was home. A home which must be supported, and the responsibility would be his. Carey, age 16, Ethel and Michael attended the public school just south of the village. Carey hoped that in some way it would be possible for him to finish his final year at Algerton High School. But now his first duty was to his mother and her needs. His mother was about forty and very attractive and was a good mother to her children and was well liked by all of the villagers, She was not a good business woman and she knew it and had left all of the family business matters to her husband.

Carey's familiar steps were recognized by Ethel and Michael and they met him at the door greeting him with the same respect they had always given their father.

"How is mother?" asked Carey.

"She is lying down." replied Ethel.

"Have you eaten?"

"No, mother asked us to wait for you."

"Will she eat with us?"

"I don't think so," responded Michael, "she says she is not hungry."

"What is there to eat?" inquired Carey.

"Pete Bates brought over a basket," added Ethel, "But let me help you off with your wet coat! What did you do? stand out in the rain?"

"Thanks Sis, I was detained a bit, now let's see what's in that basket."

"Carey."

"Yes, Sis?"

"What will we do now?"

"You mean about things ---?"

"Yes."

"Well the first thing we will have to do is to stop worrying and trust in the Lord! Now let's raid that basket. Good old Pete Bates, One of the best friends we've got."

"But will you run the post office ---, I mean?"

"Of course I'll run the post office ---, unless ---"

"Unless what?"

"Unless ---," Carey thought seriously for a moment, then smiled and added, "Unless I'm asked to run for Governor and we have to move to Albany. Look! There's an apple pie. Good old Pete!"

"Carey."

"Yes, mother?"

"Will you come here, please?"

"Coming mother, now while you two are setting the table and laying out the food, I'll see if mother won't join us. What is it, mother, how are you feeling tonight?"

"I feel very weak from exhaustion, but I'll be all right as soon as I get my strength back."

"I'll have Ethel fix you some tea, mother." "Ethel." called Carey.

"Carey."

"Yes, mother?"

"Do you think you could handle ---"

"Yes, mother?"

"I mean, -- do you think you could take your father's place ---?"

"Did you call me?" asked Ethel.

"Yes, mother will drink some tea with us." continued Carey, "Now mother, you're

worrying again. Of course I can take father's place. Haven't I minded the office in father's absence, many times?"

"I know, but do you suppose they will permit you --?"

"Why not, who is better qualified?"

"But --" she hesitated.

"But what? Do you mean about Squire Campbell?"

"Yes."

"That --," Carey paused, admitting a reasonable doubt, "is a bridge we shall cross, when we come to it."

"You won't have to quit school?"

"Perhaps not, if I can make arrangements."

"Carey."

"Yes, mother?"

"Our home is not paid for, is it?"

"I don't believe so, mother."

"Does Squire Campbell --?"

"Yes, mother, he holds the mortgage."

"Have you seen him?"

"No, mother, I haven't, not yet."

"Tea is ready!" called Ethel, who appeared in the doorway.

"Now mother, take my arm," said Carey, "and let me escort you to the table."

The Churchill home was comfortable enough but small and compact. There was no wasted space. The house was square in shape and the four rooms were divided almost equally with a kitchen, a dining room with a wide arch leading into the living room, and a bedroom. Upstairs, under the eaves, was divided off into two rooms, one for Ethel and the other was shared by Carey and Michael. Their father had made arrangements to buy the house about eight years ago, when Michael was a baby. He foresaw the need of a larger house for his family and having received the appointment as postmaster, with the aid of his friend, Alfred Jamieson, he felt that with this security, he could afford to borrow money to buy a larger house. Squire Campbell loaned him the sum of a thousand dollars at the legal rate of interest. Mr. Thornton had paid seven hundred dollars in the last seven years. Another payment was almost due, when his death occurred. This left the family unprepared for the emergency.

The Squire had investments in many of the village industries and commercial establishments and loaned money on real estate. Many people were forced to look to him for financial support when they were in need. His advice was never sought but always had to be considered. Most every one having to form an opinion, usually consulted the Squire, because if they did not, they eventually found some of their liberties, freedoms and privileges were taken from them. The Squire occupied the largest and most elegant mansion in the village and had recently added a stable which housed four of the nicest carriage horses that money could buy and had room for two more, should his guests desire to stay overnight. Over the carriage house and stable were accommodations for the servants in his employ.

Mortimer S. Campbell, commonly referred to as Squire by the villagers, was not a native of Algerton. He was thought to have come from New York City in the year of the great panic. The Squire did not inherit his wealth, neither did he earn it by the sweat of his brow, but by his scheming, conniving and the manipulations of his papers and accounts. He invested a few paltry dollars in the local Saw Mill and almost immediately the price of cord wood went up. After gaining control of the Saw Mill, he promoted money to build the Ice House and was soon controlling the price and sales of this product to the villagers. Whenever the Squire made a dollar, some villager felt an equal loss.

In addition to his community interests, the Squire and his son, Mortimer S. Flint Campbell, were seen every Sunday in the local community church. The Squire's wife had been dead now for three years. She had been reluctant to give up her name which she held in very high esteem. When young Mortimer was born, she added her name to his, so that her name might not be forgotten entirely. Young Mortimer and his mother preferred and encouraged the use of Flint rather than Mortimer. Young Mortimer's friends called him Flint at his own insistence. But to his father and for matters of public record, he was forced to honor and recognize the name of Mortimer. He and Carey were of the same age, having been born in the year 1878. They were both students of Algerton High and were in the same grade. This being the one and only place where young Mortimer could not look down upon our hero. Carey was not ashamed of his station in life but had a very happy outlook upon his future, until now, when his hopes and his plans might have to be abandoned or at least altered. On such occasions, the Squire was sure to make an appearance, usually posing as a wolf in sheep's clothing. He schemed continually, how to parlay a dollar into two or more. It is true that he did promote or inspire the villagers to build public buildings for their own use and pleasure; they had recently built a new school which they felt they could not afford and the Squire was appointed the Head of the Board of Education. They built the Library and the Squire selected the Librarian of his choice. They built the village opera house and the Squire became Chairman of the Board of Directors. There was one place where the Squire had not yet gained control, and that was the local post office. Thornton Churchill had run it and answered only to the office of the Postmaster General. Under the present conditions, this barrier of security for the Churchill family had become weakened. They could muster little or no resistance against the Squire.

"Carey, there is someone at the door," said Mrs. Churchill, "If it is the Squire Carey, please don't leave me alone with him, I would be putty in his hands!"

"All right, mother dear," said Carey, just before opening the door.

"Good evening, Squire Campbell."

CHAPTER II AN EVENING AT HOME

"Good evening, my boy; are you one of the Churchill children?" inquired the Squire.

"Yes, I am," replied Carey, "I am Carey and this is my sister Ethel and my brother Michael."

"Good evening, children," responded the Squire, "I believe I have heard my son mention you, my boy."

"Yes," said Carey, "Flint may have mentioned me, as we are classmates and see each other at school."

"Flint?" questioned the Squire, "Could you be referring to my son, Mortimer?"

"Excuse me, Sir," Carey added hastily, "I am sorry, but your son prefers that we address him so."

"I was not aware that my son would tolerate a nickname," said the Squire, "I have never heard anyone use it in my presence before."

"I am sorry Sir," replied Carey, "I did not mean to be disrespectful."

"Very well, my boy," said the Squire, as if accepting an apology, "I must extend my sympathy to you children, you are to be pitied. I should like also, to offer my sympathy to your mother, will you call her, my child?" nodding to Carey.

"If I may be permitted," replied Carey, "I will convey your sympathy to mother; She is not feeling at all well and could you call again at another time, Squire Campbell?"

"Ahem, my child" responded the Squire, "it is raining and I have sent my carriage and driver home with instructions to return in half an hour; Will you announce my presence to your mother, certainly she will not turn me out into the rain."

"Excuse me for being so thoughtless, Squire Campbell," said Carey, "you are welcome to the shelter of our modest home until your carriage returns; Please set down, while I announce your presence to my mother." added Carey, offering a chair.

"Thank you, my child," said the Squire, stiffly.

"Mother," said Carey, as he entered the kitchen and closed the door, "He insists upon seeing you tonight. He says he has sent his carriage home for half an hour."

"He will not talk to you?"

"No, he thinks of me as a child."

"What shall I do, Carey?"

"Perhaps you must make an appearance, but mother, I will speak for you when I can."

"Very well, Carey, my son, I must arrange my hair, I will be out in a moment."

"Mother will see you in a moment," said Carey to the Squire, "May I take your coat and hat?"

"Thank you, my boy," said the Squire, "I must tell my son that I have met one of his playmates."

Carey could have added that Flint had always chosen his company and Carey was seldom included except when forced to extend an invitation to join in group activities; but he remained silent in this respect, instead he added "We have just

had some tea, Squire Campbell, won't you have a cup?"

"Well, it is a nasty night and since it is my birthday, it might add to the festive occasion."

"Congratulations, Squire Campbell," exclaimed Carey, "I hope you have had a pleasant day."

"Well, my son Mortimer and I didn't actually do any celebrating at my age of fifty seven, however Mortimer did extend his greetings to me this morning at the table."

"It was thoughtful of him to remember," replied Carey.

"Well, I must admit, I may have hinted, you see his mother used to remind him, it is a coincidence that he has no mother and now you poor children have no father."

"Yes Sir," responded Carey, "I am sure that Fl-- excuse me, Mortimer has missed his mother very much."

"He needs a mother's care too, and I am sure you children will need-- Good evening Mrs. Churchill, the children have just poured me a cup of tea--"

"Good evening, Squire Campbell, I am sorry to have kept you waiting, but because of the death of my husband--"

"I have come to extend to you and your children, my sympathy and offer to you the benefit of adult advice which I am sure you will feel the need of, now that--"

"My son is handling the situation quite well, thank you, Squire Campbell." replied Mrs. Churchill.

"Your son? Why they are only children, my dear Mrs. Chur--"

"My son Carey has become a man today, Squire Campbell,"

"But you will have no income now; you will be thrown upon the mercy of the townspeople!"

"We are truly thankful for our friends who have responded in this, this -- hour of need." replied Mrs. Churchill.

"What my mother is trying to tell you, Squire Campbell, is that we do not intend to impose upon our good friends--"

"But you are only a boy," cut in the Squire, "Your father--"

"My father was a good father, he confided in me and taught me many things!"

"Are you aware that your father," continued the Squire, "left and unpaid balance of - ahem - several hundred dollars on your mortgaged home and a payment will be due in a few days?"

"The unpaid balance," responded Carey, "is three hundred dollars and the next payment of one hundred dollars is not due until November 15th."

"Is that so?" sneered the Squire, "I don't have my records with me unfortunately, but Mrs. Churchill, since you will have no income, won't it be difficult for you to meet this payment? I was about to offer--"

"I see no reason why we should not be entitled to the income of my father, since I intend to perform the duties of my father." cut in Carey.

"Impossible!" responded the Squire.

"Mrs. Churchill, your boy is but a child and I should not be expected to discuss business matters with him. I was about to offer--"

"What is your offer, Squire Campbell," asked Mrs. Churchill.

"Well - ahem - as I said," continued the Squire, "since you will have no income, I naturally would profit by your default when the mortgage payment comes due and I am willing to offer the living quarters over my stable, for you and your family, in exchange for your services as my housekeeper, and--"

"Thank you, Squire Campbell, for your generous offer," responded Carey, "and if we are reduced to the poverty you predict, we shall remember your offer-- now I believe I hear your carriage approaching!" "We bid you good night."

"But Mrs. Churchill," appealed the Squire, "surely you do not expect the village people to endorse-- you are not serious about the ability of this child."

"We shall await an endorsement from the Post Office Department in Washington," replied Carey, "Squire Campbell, I believe your carriage is waiting, here is your hat and coat, Sir, Good night."

"But Madam, I have not been permitted to finish-- You leave me no other alternative, but to--"

"We will consult with you in due time, Good night, Squire Campbell." said Carey.

Carey began closing the door before the Squire had cleared the opening and he had no alternative but to seek the shelter of his waiting carriage. The Squire was overcome with a feeling of defeat, a feeling he had not experienced for some time. Usually, in dealing with adults, his offers were accepted as final and no one had ever questioned the fairness of his proposals and now a mere child which he had attempted to ignore, presents himself as an obstacle which he had not planned on. The Squire had made no defense against this sort of an obstacle. To him a child was a child. To be seen and not heard. A child was not to be reckoned with. In his opinion, it was the responsibility of all parents to keep their children under control and educate them that the Squire was to be feared and obeyed. This policy, generally was enforced. To the children of Algerton, the Squire and his effect upon the village was as well known as penny candy. The gaiety of groups of children in the streets was always reduced to a minimum upon the approach of the Squire and upon passing, the expressions upon their faces, although registering respect upon the surface, usually a bit of 'have to' tolerated respect showed through. After a safe distance had been covered, a familiar ditty could usually be heard which was meant to be complimentary and disrespectful. Such as: Squire! Squire! A man they say we should admire; To be like him, they do require! He tripped and fell into the mire, and spoiled the looks of his attire! As the distance between them widened, their volume increased with a variety of endings such as: "Fell in the fire" and "Then became a funeral pyre!"

The participation in such a highly entertaining pastime was usually ended after the intended victim was out of sight.

After Carey had succeeded in closing the door after the departure of the Squire, he quickly collected his thoughts as to how best he could console and comfort his mother and help her to rebuild the hopes of the future which had just been destroyed by the Squire.

"Now mother, I know the Squire has disturbed and upset you; It is possible that he may gain control of the post office, and now it is also probable, since I have defied his offer which is impossible, ridiculous and an insult. But he shall never profit from our poverty by taking us as his servants!"

"You handled the situation well, my son, I could never have faced the Squire with the courage and defiance of your words."

"We need not build our future plans on what the Squire has to offer, mother. We shall continue to trust in the Lord!"

During the visit of the Squire, Ethel and Michael, remained silent with fright and frozen to their chairs. They had never before been subjected to such a conference where their future was being foretold. Their hearts had been thumping. Their tongues had become thickened and now they were slowly returning to normal. The evening was yet young, but it had been a sad and trying day. They tried a bit of family small talk which was intended to divert their thoughts from the unpredictable future to a more light and happy atmosphere. But such depressing thoughts cannot easily be discarded; So after a few preparations for the day to come, it was decided that only through the medium of peaceful sleep could they rid themselves and clear their minds of the unhappy thoughts. To continue a custom established by his father, Carey picked up the family bible, selected a section at random and read to his little group, a complete chapter. Then bidding their mother, good night and pleasant dreams, the children lit two small lamps and climbed the stairs to their rooms. The patter of rain on the roof over their heads was distinctly heard as they blew out their lamps and climbed into bed.

The Squire was not destined to have such a peaceful night, for he had problems, which he himself attempted to solve and one solution depended upon the outcome of another. The major obstacle now was the courageous young Carey who was now in his way. To bring the little family to their knees, into submission, was his current problem. Little did he realize that the little family was already on their knees and asking for guidance.

A light was on when the Squire arrived at home and young Mortimer was anxiously awaiting his father at the door.

"There is a man in the drawing room, waiting to see you, father." said young Mortimer.

(to be continued next month)

CHAPTER III THE SQUIRE HAS A VISITOR

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"A man to see me?" questioned the Squire of his son, Mortimer.

"Yes, father, he is a stranger to me; he wouldn't give his name."

"How long has he been here?" the Squire asked, nervously.

"About half an hour, he insisted on being allowed to wait."

"Very well, my son," said the Squire as he slowly and quietly drew open the sliding doors to the drawing-room, "You may go to your room, and see that we are not disturbed."

The Squire stepped through the opening and quietly closed the doors behind him. He stood silently while his searching eyes surveyed the room and discovered the man standing in front of the fireplace with his back turned to the Squire and seemed to be looking into the fire. He could not place the man, either in present or the past. He had tried desperately to forget the past, but he had not been successful. occasionally vivid memories visited him and tormented him. The stranger seemed to be enjoying the warmth and cheerfulness of the fire on this wet fall evening and seemed to intentionally permit the Squire to fret and ponder upon the reason for his being there. The Squire wiped his beaded brow, cleared his throat as a warning of his presence and was the first to speak.

"You have the advantage of me, sir. I cannot place you. Are you sure you wish to speak with me?"

The stranger appeared to be at ease and seemed reluctant to turn from the fire. He spoke with the confidence of having the situation well in hand.

"You are Squire Campbell?"

"Yes sir."

"I am not Marley's ghost, but I am from your past."

"Then who are you sir?"

"My name would mean nothing to you. I am here because Jack sent me."

"Jack? Who is Jack? Is this your only introduction to my past?"

"I could add more if you really care to go into it, but perhaps it will not be necessary -- you had a nickname which specifically identifies you with a certain group --"

"And this nickname is--?"

"Skin."

The Squire flinched. The awful truth had been definitely established. This man had some connection with his past. It would be useless to ignore it further.

"And you sir, are--?"

"You may call me Dirk."

"Dirk? Dirk what?"

"Dirk Bledsoe is as good as any name."

"Where is Jack?"

"That must remain a secret, between Jack and me."

The Squire well remembered, at their final and hasty parting, it was decided that for their individual security, it would be best to separate with their destination unannounced.

"What does Jack want?"

"He wants nothing. It is I who asks a favor."

"How did you find me?"

"Jack was the brains of your former partnership, remember?"

"Why should I be expected to grant you a favor?"

"I was a silent partner and took orders only from Jack." "Jack could not help me. He learned of your whereabouts and sent me here."

"How was it that he learned of me?"

"You are a celebrity, Squire."

"You believe that I can help you?"

"Yes."

"How."

"Take me in as a partner."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then I will sing!"

Beads of perspiration were again forming upon the Squire's brow and it was quite evident that Dirk had made his point sufficiently enough that the Squire would submit to his request, unreasonable as it was.

"Is this blackmail?" asked the Squire.

"I have heard of such a thing. If the shoe fits, put it on. All I want is to be taken care of, as I was promised."

"You expect me to settle Jack's debts?"

"Perhaps I am playing both ends."

"Nothing is ever settled by blackmail, there is usually no end--"

"If you are thinking of a cash settlement, Skin--"

"Don't say that!"

"What else do you answer to besides Squire?"

"What's the matter with Squire?"

"Oh, come on! Do you expect me to bow too?"

"If you expect me to be useful to you, you cannot afford to arouse suspicion."

"I see. When in Rome, do as the Romans do."

"How long would you last here? If you were to expose me."

"I suppose we would go down together."

"Now I believe that we understand each other, Dirk."

"I believe we do, Squire. Now as I was about to say-- I'll want more than a cash settlement, Squire. I'll want to be set up as a junior partner, or by myself, where I can take it easy."

"You will have to give me a little time to think."

"Take all the time you want. That is if you want to support me. I'll be on your expense account in the meantime."

"Where are you going to stay?"

"Here."

"Here?"

"Why not? Are we not old friends, Squire? Must we be separated?"

"But how can I account for your sudden and unexpected appearance?"

"Must you account to someone? I thought you were in control here."

"Well, we don't want to arouse undue suspicion."

"Should people be suspicious of old friends, Squire?"

"Would you be willing to stay in a rooming house?"

"Look, Squire -- I need help, remember? Will you be footing the bill?"

"All right! But you should be able to do something to satisfy curious inquiries. What can you do, temporarily?"

"Do I have to work?"

"Perhaps you would like to replace the president of our bank, Monday morning?"

"All right! Set me up in anything you have open. I'll work a little."

There was an awkward silence. The Squire was pondering upon some difficult thought. He smoothed down his mustache with thumb and forefinger which terminated at the corners of his mouth. He pressed his lower lip together and opened his mouth.

"Well, Squire?"

"Do you know anything about the post office, Dirk?"

"Do I know anything about the Post office? Washington can answer that one for you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that they know me in Washington. I was relieved of duty some time ago."

"Then you are familiar with its operation?"

"I am. Are you trying to tell me that there is an opening here?"

"Yes, there is an opening here."

Dirk whistled, with a look of surprise.

"That would be a natural! Of course I would have to change my name. Remember, they know me in Washington. Let's see, How about Carl Harris?"

"It won't be quite that easy, Dirk."

"Why not? Don't you have the power to recommend me?"

"Perhaps, but if I went against public sentiment--"

"Excuse me, I thought you were in control here."

"I have no control whatever, over the post office."

"What seems to be the obstacle?"

"Right now, public sentiment and a boy."

"A boy?"

"Yes. In time, I believe I could have maneuvered in. Right now, public sentiment is strong for the defense of the boy."

"We had better strike while the iron is hot. Send in my recommendation, now. We can hire the boy to do the work."

"You may be right, Dirk."

"Better start calling me Carl, remember? Carl Harris."

"I suppose so--Carl."

"One thing though--"

"What is that, Carl?"

"If I get the nod; You are not to try and cut in."

"Why?"

"It wouldn't look nice. The authorities wouldn't like it."

"So I've been told."

"Then you will get a letter off right away?"

"Yes."

"Remember, until then, I'll be on your expense account."

"I'll remember."

"One thing more, strangers probably are expected to pay in advance at the rooming house, Squire."

"Here is twenty dollars. Keep out of sight until I get in touch with you."

"All right, Squire, good night!"

The Squire sat down at his desk and tried to compose thoughts for a letter of recommendation. He could not cast aside the thoughts of the change of events. He might have to step down, or aside, to make room for another. It began to look that way. It was conceivable that he would lose control entirely, as long as the threat of the revelation of his past, hung over his head. He must be more cautious than ever. He must plan defenses. But how? The answer would not come. Wearied and despondent over his loss of power, he decided one thing. He must pay the piper and the first payment was now due--a letter of recommendation for a stranger who was forcing his approval. He forcefully picked up his pen and began to write. Several attempts were rejected, wadded and discarded. He just could not bring himself to bow to the demands put upon him. Each of his attempts were weak and feeble. He was not using the aggressive approach. He arose and opened a wall cabinet. He selected a decanter labeled 'Nerve Tonic' and took two doses. He moved to the fireplace and gazed into the fire. He paced the floor. He examined the drawn drapes. He peeked out--Rain. He sighed and his tenseness withered. His clenched fists relaxed. His hands fell beside him, palms open. Resigned, steady and determined, he retraced his steps to his desk and began to write.

Gentlemen:

In order that we might fill the vacancy created by the death of our beloved citizen, Thornton Churchill, Postmaster of Algerton, New York in an efficient and business-like manner, it is my honor and privilege to represent the good people of our Village in recommending to you for this vacancy, a loyal citizen second only to the departed himself and one who has proven himself capable, the best man available here, Carl Harris.

Respectfully submitted,

Mortimer S. Campbell, Esq.

The Squire affixed his seal, addressed an envelope, inserted the letter, sealed it and put on a stamp. He tossed it upon his desk, retired to an easy chair and sank into it with the palms of his hands supporting his head.

(to be continued next month)

The rain ended with the coming of dawn. The Sunday morning sunrise was bright and clear. The recent rain had revived and freshened the grass to a beautiful green. The roads were pocked with pools of water. The morning air was still and peaceful and somewhat exhilarating. It was however, slowly coming to life with the twittering of the birds; The call of the cows to the area farm folk. The barking of dogs; The neigh and whinney of the horses and the crowing of the cocks. It was in general a pleasant and refreshing morning. Smoke began to curl from the chimneys of the Algerton homes as fires were started in the kitchen ranges in preparation for a leisure Sunday morning breakfast. It was so in the Churchill home as Carey, our hero, assumed command of the household and laid the fire in the kitchen stove. Ethel was the next to appear, since she felt that she also must assist by accepting new responsibilities.

"Good morning, Sis, did you sleep well?"

"Yes, I finally went to sleep, and do you know, Carey, I have a feeling that everything is going to be all right."

"Of course it is. Look at that sunrise. Isn't that a good omen of better things to come?"

"It's always the darkest before the dawn. Did you notice, there was no moon last night."

"Of course not. The rain clouds have just been swept away."

"I'll start breakfast for mother. What did father usually do on Sunday morning, Carey?"

"Well, he spent quite a bit of time, just trying to get you up---"

Because of this remark, Carey got a broom tossed at him as he retreated toward the door. Now having possession of the broom, he was reminded of another responsibility which he should assume and he proceeded to sweep the wet leaves from the paths and wooden walks. His attention was attracted upward and he discovered a beautiful rainbow. He called to Ethel.

"Isn't that beautiful, Sis? I wish mother and Michael could see it."

Ethel viewed the glorious sight in the west from the back stoop and said, "Mother says it is a promise of some kind."

"Yes, but not the kind of promise that you would make to your beau--"

"Oh, fiddle faddle!"

Carey was a fun loving boy and seldom let an opportunity go by when he could tease his sister. Ethel returned to her kitchen duties and Carey called through the doorway that he was going to check on things at the post office. Although there was no work performed on Sunday, it was routine duty to see that things were as they should be.

Michael was the next to appear. On week-day mornings it was necessary to drag him from his bed; But this morning, perhaps due to circumstances, he was quite aware that he must assume some responsibility, and perform certain tasks about the house willingly and cheerfully. His appearance in the kitchen was unexpected and greeted his sister in quite unlike the usual manner. The expression on his determined face was as understandable as an open book. Ethel knew without asking, what he was thinking. Which was: "Now you don't have to ask me, I know what I can do to help." In Algerton homes, such as the Churchill's were able to afford, most toilet preparations were made in the kitchen, such as freshening up each morning. After Michael had made such preparations, he carried their water-supply bucket to the well-pump in the yard and brought in a fresh supply of water; Then brought in more wood for the kitchen stove, and proceeded to polish his shoes as well as the shoes for the rest of the family. Carey soon returned and all sat down to a tempting breakfast which consisted of Tea, sweet milk, oven-toasted bread with butter and crab-apple jelly, oatmeal and boiled eggs.

Just about everyone was in church this Sunday morning. Even the Squire and his son Mortimer were there. Although Mortimer's presence was insisted upon, he did take advantage of the occasion by overdressing, to reveal to all concerned that no one was quite his equal in style and quality. He especially wanted to impress one young lady of near his own age, Patience Jamieson and perhaps the most eligible for his attentions since she was the daughter of the village lawyer, Alfred Jamieson and second in importance only to his father, the Squire. For this reason, Mortimer readily consented to attend the Sunday morning worship services. Otherwise he preferred to be seen promenading about town.

After the service, Carey found Patience outside and invited her to spend the afternoon with him and some friends who were going on a color-tour hike in the country. Flint also had designs upon her attentions and ignored Carey by turning his back to him as he addressed his remarks to Patience but loud enough for all to hear.

"Miss Patience, I'm taking my father's carriage on a color-tour this afternoon and I want you to accompany me."

"Thank you Flint, but I have just accepted an invitation to join Carey and some friends, this afternoon."

"I didn't know Carey or his friends had a carriage. What will you use, a dray-wagon?" asked Flint, turning to Carey.

"No," said Carey, "We are going on a hike. Won't you join us?"

Now Flint would like to be invited, just to be in the presence of Patience, but not under these circumstances. He bit his lip, spurned Carey's invitation and turned back to Patience.

"But hiking is so tiring. Who wants to walk, when they can ride?"

"Hiking can also be such great fun." returned Patience, "Then you won't join us, Flint?"

"Never mind, I have some other friends who will be quite anxious to ride with me."

"I'm sorry, Flint, please ask me another time."

This was a humiliating rejection to Mortimer, especially since Carey would profit by it. He was not gentleman enough to accept the fact that previous commitments should be honored. The plans of others were unimportant and of no concern to him. Without due respect of wishing them a pleasant afternoon, he turned on his heel as if someone was demanding his attention and walked away, joining another group, yet uninvited. After plans for the hike were completed, Carey escorted his family homeward. As they walked along the boardwalk, Carey's eyes became focused upon various initials chalked on the walk, poles and buildings. He had noticed these many times without concern, but since he suspected that he could identify some of them, they seemed to deserve a comment.

"Can anyone tell me whose initials those are." motioning toward a building.

"Which initials do you mean, Carey." asked Ethel.

"These." and he pointed out a certain pair which read, MC & BL.

Michael's face reddened but no comment was forthcoming. He slowed his pace and intentionally hung back, choosing to remain silent and not take part in the current conversation. Ethel sensed the means of adding to Michael's embarrassment and she gave voice to her thoughts.

"I do believe our own little brother is trying to attract someone's attention by way of the billboards!"

Michael suddenly spurted ahead until he was out of earshot. He did not want to be drawn into the discussion.

"Children, don't tease." said Mrs. Churchill, lowering her voice, "I suppose those are meant for Michael and Linda Lacey." she said smiling.

"That's my guess," said Ethel, "Of course the B is for Belinda. Most every one calls her Linda, though."

"Well don't tease your little brother, We are all in a very difficult readjustment period you know." said their mother.

"Just trying to be helpful, mother." said Carey, "Our thoughts unconsciously dwell on the past, you know."

Carey offered his hand to Michael and Michael took it, showing his delight.

"Who is that man across the street by the post office, Carey?" asked Mrs. Churchill, "Anyone we know?"

"I believe he is the man I met last night. He inquired for a hotel, and he seemed to know of the Campbell's. He is a stranger to me. Perhaps he is here and waiting for the hunting season which begins tomorrow morning."

We know that Dirk Bledsoe, alias Carl Harris was not in Algerton for the purpose of hunting, although the idea had occurred to him. He decided that if the Squire could furnish him with a gun, he might as well engage in the sport.

After the Churchill's had finished their Sunday dinner, Ethel and Carey cleaned up the kitchen and put things away. Pete Bates who lived just a short distance away arrived and anxious to start. Ethel and Carey joined him and they set out to pick up Patience who lived a short distance south of the school and diagonally across from Squire Campbell's stately mansion.

"Pete, I want to thank you for bringing us that basket last night. We all appreciate it very much." said Carey.

"You're welcome. Of course mother prepared the basket. It was her idea. I just carried it over, that's all. I'm glad you enjoyed it."

"He certainly did!" said Ethel, "There's nothing wrong with his appetite. Except his eyes are bigger than his stomach. Michael and I did manage to gather a few crumbs."

"Well I'm a growing boy and don't need to watch my waistline." Carey responded.

Ethel gave no answer, thinking it best to let the matter drop. They were passing the Campbell's home and tethered on the drive at the carriage entrance was a fine young horse adorned in the finest of harness and showed evidence that he had been freshly groomed and the carriage was sparkling and free of grime from the night before. Of course the Squire kept a man to care for the stable. He also kept another man busy as caretaker of the house and grounds. A widow who lived on the opposite side of the village acted as housekeeper and cook for the Squire and his son. The south side of the village was more or less restricted to those who could afford a better than average standard of living. It had often been referred to as the cultured section.

Carey noticed the waiting carriage and remarked, "My Kingdom for a horse!"

"We know you are a scholar in Shakespearean verse." said Ethel, "I believe you envy Flint and his father!"

"No I don't," said Carey, "Flint has just about everything, but he doesn't have a sister---like I do."

"Well, this is a switch," said Ethel, "From digs to compliments. Thank you kind Sir!"

Although the Jamieson residence was on the cultured side of the village, it was not of equal quality to that of the Campbell mansion. Mr. Jamieson did not have a stable and when transportation was required in his profession, he rented a horse and carriage from the local livery. Patience joined the group, having changed from her Sunday finery to garments more suitable for hiking.

"Now which way shall we go? Who is the leader of this expedition?" asked Patience.

"I nominate Pete Bates!" stated Carey.

"Agreed!" chimed in Ethel and Patience.

"I accept!" said Pete, "Come on, lets go."

Pete led them south along the road which was unoccupied except for themselves. The landscape was glittering with stately trees whose foliage was tinted with a riot of fall colors. This fresh beauty as compared with the past monotony of summer greens was refreshing, inspiring and generated in them an eagerness to release and express their jubilant spirits.

"Anyone care to recite a bit of poetry?" asked Pete, hopefully.

"Or burst out into song?" added Ethel.

"Would you mind, Carey, if we gave voice to our thoughts of gayety?" inquired Patience, cautiously.

"It will be all right," said Carey, nodding, "if we use good judgement in our choice."

"How about - 'Hand Me Down My Walking Cane' - as a prelude to our medley." suggested Patience.

Pete voiced his approval by leading off with the others joining in and much to their delight, the harmony of their combined voices kindled a desire to continue. Several tunes were aired and each was interspersed with exuberant palaver in selecting only those which were familiar and agreeable to all which included an occasional hymn and patriotic songs. Allowing the girls to catch their breath, the boys alternated with quotations from famous orations and familiar lines of poetry. One song which they all seemed to enjoy, was - Oh, Dem Golden Slippers - a tune popular among the young people.

They had now reached a bridge over the stream which flowed into the mill pond. Parallel to the stream, a country road extended into the village of Algerton.

"Let's follow the stream from here," suggested Pete, leading them down the bank to the edge of the stream, "until we come to the mill pond, then we will return to the road." They were standing at the edge of the stream in the shadow of the bridge when they heard a vehicle approaching. It thundered across the bridge without stopping. The loose planks of the bridge trembled and sifted down dirt upon those below the bridge.

"That's Flint, of course, obviously trying to impress us with his dashing steed." said Pete.

"The Squire should see this." said Ethel, "He never works his favorite mare faster than a gentle trot."

"Anyone care to change horses in the middle of the stream?" quipped Carey.

No one seemed eager to hail a ride with Flint, so they proceeded along their own chosen route. Flint, having located them and determined their direction of travel, now proceeded to patrol up and down the parallel road.

"We are being watched." advised Pete.

"And not only from the road," added Carey, "See that vulture gliding above us?"

The sight of the big bird made the girls

uneasy and they edged closer to the boys. "What do you suppose he is after?" inquired Pete.

"Something is in trouble, or perhaps dead, and he is waiting for us to leave." answered Carey. "He won't attack us." said Carey, speaking to the girls.

"Flint is running that mare half to death," added Ethel, "Perhaps the old buzzard is waiting for the horse to drop!"

"Well," stated Pete, "We are forced to retreat to the road here, unless we climb Squire Campbell's fence which encloses the mill pond."

"It's posted with 'No Trespassing' signs." stated Carey.

"And Flint is patrolling besides." added Ethel.

"We should respect his orders and stay out." added Carey.

"Carey!" shouted Pete, "Look out there in the pond!"

Carey turned, and instantly said, "That is what the vulture has been watching and waiting for!"

"What is it?" asked Pete.

"Don't know yet." answered Carey, "But whatever it is, it's in trouble." as he climbed the high rail fence.

"Carey!" screamed Patience, "What are you going to do?"

"I'm not sure." responded Carey, as he landed on the other side of the fence.

"I say there!" came Flint's voice from the road, "Stop! You are trespassing!"

Carey did not stop. He quickly removed his sweater, shirt, shoes and stockings, then turned to Pete at his side.

"Better stay here, Pete, if I get in trouble, I'll call you." Then Carey dived into the water.

"I say there!" shouted Flint, who was now racing toward the fence. "Come back, I say!"

The sound of a shot was heard and it appeared to come from Flint's direction. It attracted the attention of all. Even Carey in the water, looked back, then he turned and continued on his way. The girls and Pete looked at Flint, but Flint also looked behind him. Then another shot was heard. This time it appeared to come from the other side of the road.

As Carey neared the disturbance in the water, he discovered that it was a dog who was trying desperately to tread water and to keep his head above water. Carey could hear him whimper as he neared the exhausted animal. Carey decided at once that the dog was trapped or ensnared in some manner.

"Steady, boy!" encouraged Carey, "I'm here to help you!"

The frightened dog looked grateful enough, but continued to whine and thrash about. Carey found at once that the dog was wearing a collar, which he examined as best he could, without exciting the dog, and found that a leash was attached and the leash was caught on some object.

Several people had been attracted to the scene by the shots and shouting and the abandoned horse and rig on the road. The horse had been driven hard and was quite willing to stop and rest.

Carey pulled on the leash, hoping to release it, but it would not budge. He examined the collar with his fingers and discovered that he could unhook the leash. Instantly the dog realized that he had been freed, and weak as he was, he made good progress toward the nearest shore, with Carey swimming at his side.

A shout of applause was heard from the people on shore when they realized that the dog had been freed and would be saved. Carey watched over the dog anxiously, expecting any minute that he would have to give assistance. Carey himself, was becoming fatigued from the exciting adventure. The water had been deep, but they had now reached shallow water and the dog pulled himself up on land with wobbly legs and fell, overcome with fatigue. Carey himself, was exhausted and willingly sank beside the dog.

"Stay where you are!" ordered Pete, for the cheering crowd was about to swarm over the fence.

"I wonder whose dog it is?" inquired a voice in the crowd.

"What happened, Carey?" asked another.

"I am responsible for the dog." volunteered a voice with the unexpected answer.

The inquiries, Carey ignored, as he was still lying prostrate on the ground and breathing hard, but he searched with his eyes, without moving, for the person who claimed responsibility for the dog. Carey's sweeping glance at the faces in the crowd - some familiar - some not, met with an unfamiliar face which was nodding a confirmation of the remarks. Carey did not know the man. The man, with only a smile, was able to show and register his gratefulness and appreciation, but kept his position with the others, waiting for permission from Pete who was standing guard, to attend his dog. Pete observed the nodding stranger and bade him come, to his dog. The man instantly hurdled the fence and sank beside his dog, showing much affection.

"Feel like talking now, my friend?" asked the stranger, addressing Carey.

Carey nodded and said weakly, "I think so. At least I will try."

"I already know who you are. The people here, have told me." said the stranger, "I am Judge John B. Dixon of Albany; I am here for the pheasant season and I am staying with my friend, farmer Brown, across the road. Do you know him?"

Carey nodded.

"The dog's name is Susie. Farmer Brown trusted me with her so that we might get acquainted before the season opens tomorrow. Susie is a pointer and a very valuable bird dog. You have done farmer Brown and myself a great service in rescuing her. Quite by accident, I lost my grip on her leash and since I was not

familiar to her, she would not obey my command to come back to me.

"I heard shots, didn't I?" asked Carey.

"Yes, I returned to the farmhouse and notified farmer Brown who said that she would return upon hearing shots. Then he fired two shots and we heard shouting over here and saw the rig standing in the road and I came over to investigate and discovered what had happened. Susie must have waded up the stream and through the opening in the fence. She perhaps was attracted by some low flying bird. Just what did you find out there?" asked the judge, pointing to the center of the pond.

"Her leash had become snagged on some submerged object. I could not release it, but was able to unfasten the leash from her collar. The rest, you probably know. I'm sorry, I guess the leash is lost forever."

"Never mind the leash. That's a trifling matter, my boy! You have performed an heroic act and a proven friend, indeed. But for this unfortunate incident, I might never have known you. Money alone is not sufficient reward; I want you to always consider me a very close friend..."

"You people and your dog had better be vacating our property! You not only have trespassed, but now you are loitering!" said Flint, with a voice of authority.

"And who are you, my little man?" asked the Judge, looking up into the eyes of Flint. The Judge had been talking quietly with Carey and Pete and the Judge's identity had not been revealed to Flint, stationed on the opposite side of the fence.

"I am Mortimer Campbell, the son of Squire Mortimer Campbell of Algerton and this is our property and legally posted. You will find out that my father and I are not so 'little' as you might think. You had better report to my father in the morning, before we prefer charges against all three of you!"

"Young man, you have the law on your side, but I do not believe that there is a court of justice in our great land who would uphold your rights--under the circumstances. You may tell your father, if he wishes to prefer charges, he will find me at farmer Brown's home, and tell him that if there are any damages to his land, his pond or his fence, I shall willingly pay any reasonable claim against myself or either of these young men. Do you wish to take our names?"

"I recognize these two minors. They probably will get probation and remanded to the custody of a parent, but I didn't get your name, mister?"

"You may tell your father that you were conversing with Judge John B. Dixon, representing the state of New York and my court is in Albany. Here is my card."

Flint gave no indication of recognition that the Judge might be on a level or above that of his father in importance. However, he left, even before the restricted land had been vacated. The crowd began to disperse and of course this turn of events caused an abrupt ending of an otherwise delightfully planned color tour.

The Monday dawn came bright and clear, and before the sun had cast a single shadow, Carey had eaten a simple breakfast at home and travelled the short distance to the post office, and after making a quick investigation of the premises, he unlocked the door. The accumulation of mail since Friday night was not large but would require an extra effort in sorting in order to be ready before the first patron of the day made an appearance

Carey's plans for the day would limit his stay at the post office until 8:30 at which time he would resume his school studies until 3:15 and then reopen the post office again until 6:00 P.M.

Carey surveyed the situation while slipping into a blue denim apron, black sleeve protectors and white canvas gloves to protect his hands and clothing from the grime of the mail pouches and sacks which must be opened and dumped. Then there was the accumulation of letters in the drop box to be postmarked, bundled and placed in the outgoing mail pouch in readiness for the early morning mail train. This task was not usually completed, however, until the actual whistle of the mail train was heard, which allows late mailers to make last minute connections. The incoming bundles and packages which were few were lined up on a work table and arranged in alphabetical order. The bundles of letters were placed upon the ledge of a large cabinet which was divided into about 200 compartments. Each separation was labeled with a family name and arranged in alphabetical order. Carey completed his sorting about 7:15 and unlocked the covering of the general delivery window and noted that he already had a few patrons waiting.

Since Carey was acquainted with most everyone in the area, it was not necessary for him to ask their names, but recognized them on sight and had their mail waiting for them as they approached the window. It was customary, however, to pass the time of day which occasionally became too lengthy, much to the disgust of the patron next in line. This morning, however, was unique, since Carey was in charge and which prompted sympathetic remarks and well wishes. Let us listen in:

"Good morning, Carey, needless to say that I am sorry to hear about your father."

"Thank you, Mr. Lyle."

"Will you continue in your father's place?" he inquired.

"Until I am relieved," said Carey.

"What would your mother do then? I think you should be allowed to stay."

"Thank you, Mr. Lyle, I should be glad to be allowed to stay. Next please."

"Good morning, young man, will you look and see if there is any mail for Miss Fisher, please."

"Good morning, Miss Fisher, I am sorry, but there is nothing for you."

"Young man, you haven't looked; How can you be sure that there is nothing for me?"

"Because I have just completed sorting the mail and I remember that there was nothing for you at all, Miss Fisher."

"Well!" she replied with a gasp, "You might at least look! Perhaps you have been careless. Let me see all the mail in the 'F' separations."

"I cannot," replied Carey, "I—"

"Well, I never!" she gasped, "Public servants, refusing to cooperate. I will—"

"Miss Fisher, allow me to continue, I have no mail in the 'F' separations, therefore, there is none to show you."

"Then perhaps you have misplaced it. I always get a letter on Monday morning."

"Perhaps you will, when the morning mail comes in at 8:00 o'clock, Miss Fisher."

"Then I shall wait."

"Please be seated, while you are waiting Miss Fisher. Next!"

"Good morning, Carey, please convey to your mother, our sympathy and our concern for your future."

"Thank you, Mr. Baxter, we appreciate your thoughtfulness. Next please."

"Good morning, Carey, I expected to see the Squire or his agent in your place this morning. Has the Squire taken over yet?"

"No, Mr. Hall, the Squire shall not take over, unless I am relieved by Washington."

"Well, I don't hold much hope for you, boy. No man is allowed to block the Squire's steam roller tactics."

"Thank you for your concern. Next!"

A steady stream of patrons with mixed hopes, views and opinions kept Carey busy until he heard the whistle of the mail train. He closed the general delivery window, gathered up the outgoing mail, placed it in a mail pouch and hurried out to meet the mail car which had just stopped. He received a small pouch in return and hurried back. He sorted the mail for delivery before opening the window again. Miss Fisher was first in line.

"Well, young man, have you found my letter yet?" she inquired.

"Yes, Miss Fisher, it has just arrived."

"I don't believe father ever opened the window before the morning mail arrived. I am forced to open earlier, because I must close at 8:30 and go to school. Next!"

"Good morning, Carey, Patience has told me of your heroic performance of yesterday and I congratulate you for your quick thinking."

"Thank you for your kind words, Mr. Jamieson, I am sure that anyone would have done the same. Don't you think so?"

"I am afraid that many of us do not have what it takes to volunteer on such short notice. I am sure that your heroic deed will not go unrewarded."

"I have already been sufficiently thanked and I wish no further reward. Please excuse me, I must hurry along."

"Oh yes, you must be going to school, and when will you open again?"

"I hope to open again at 3:30, right after school. Next please."

"Good morning, son, so the office will be closed most all day, will it? How long will we have to put up with this?"

"I am sorry if the limited hours will inconvenience you, Mr. Simpson. Perhaps some arrangement can be worked out if necessity demands it."

"Well, just let me have my mail. I wouldn't have been here this early if I could have received my mail on Saturday."

"There is no mail for you, Mr. Simpson, I am sorry about Saturday, but out of respect to my father----"

"I have heard tell, that the mail must go through, but I guess that only applies to responsible adults, maybe."

"I shall try to serve you to the best of my ability, Mr. Simpson. Next please."

"Good morning, Carey, please convey our best wishes and sympathy to your mother."

"Thank you, Mr. Adams, for your sincere concern, and I am sure that we all appreciate the many kind words expressed in our behalf."

"I am sure that we can all tolerate limited hours under the circumstances and I hope that you will be able to work out some kind of system which will be suitable to the people and the postal authorities."

"Thank you again, Mr. Adams. Next!"

Carey was able to serve all who were present and had a few minutes to spare, before it was necessary to leave for school, so he prepared a small sign which read as follows: CLOSED - OPEN AGAIN AT 3:30 P.M. which he placed in the window of the front entrance, locked up and hurried off to school.

Carey arrived at school shortly before the bell and a small reception of his classmates were waiting for him with words of congratulations for his rescue of the dog, the day before. Carey felt ill at ease and was literally saved by the bell, except that he was forcefully transported into the building upon the shoulders of his friends. Flint, who lived just across the street, anticipated such an action and deliberately waited until this demonstration broke up. Then he followed slowly and awkwardly behind them.

In each morning class, a moment of recognition, honoring Carey and his heroic performance was given by the teacher. The students were invited to stand in unison to honor Carey. Only a few did not do so. These few looked to Flint for approval and in as much as Flint did not arise, they also remained seated, but only because of their obligated loyalty to Flint. When the morning classes were completed, the Principal asked Carey to step into his office.

"Carey, I want to commend you for your act of bravery and extend my sympathy to you and your mother."

"Thank you very much, and I shall convey your sympathy to my mother."

"I also wish to acknowledge that as you now have an added burden and new responsibilities, I shall make allowances for your absences if necessary and will help you in any way that I can, Carey."

"Thank you again, and I hope it will not be necessary to grant me special privileges, Mr. Borden."

As Carey left the building, Flint was waiting with a small group of his

obligated friends. Flint stepped out and appeared to prevent Carey's escape, which he had no intention of doing.

"So you are now a hero! I hope that you have not forgotten that you are also a trespasser. Have you reported to my father yet?" sneered Flint.

"No, but your father must have heard the report by this time. You may offer my apologies for disregarding his rights under the circumstances----"

"I have no intention of pleading your case. Your failure to report will only point up your negligence and lack of responsibility." said Flint, as he looked to his friends for support and approval of his chosen words. His friends having no choice, voiced their support.

"Very well then, Flint, if your father prefers to press charges, I shall not deny my guilt. I am obligated to keep the post office open as much as I can----"

"Perhaps you will be relieved of your obligation soon. It seems that your future depends upon the will of my father."

"Correction, Flint, my future depends upon the will of our Father." said Carey, reverently.

Flint had no answer for this remark and stepped aside in submission and permitted Carey to pass without further comment.

At the afternoon classes, Carey again was honored with a standing ovation by most of his classmates. At the end of the afternoon period, Carey left his friends, who were lingering on the school grounds, so that he might reopen the post office. He reopened on schedule as promised and only a few were waiting. Again, the feelings toward limited hours were mixed with approval and disapproval. Pete Bates stopped in on his way home from the school grounds about 4:30 and appeared to be out of breath with excitement.

"Carey, have you seen the sign posted out in front? They are all over town!"

"No Pete, I haven't. What do they say?"

"The Squire is calling a meeting tonight to select a new postmaster!"

"Well," responded Carey, calmly, "I suppose he has a right to do that."

"Will you attend this meeting, Carey?"

"I should like to, that is, if I am permitted to do so."

"Here comes Judge Dixon." said Pete, "Yes, he is coming in. Hello Judge Dixon."

"Hello boys, and you, Carey, I see you have recovered from your dangerous adventure of yesterday."

"Oh yes, but in spite of my exhaustion, I must say that Susie put up a better fight for survival than I. How is she?"

"Well, due to her exhaustion and exposure, we confined her to quarters today. I was invited to hunt with a neighbor of Mr. Brown, who also has a dog."

"Carey, added the Judge, I have had time today, to learn more of your personal problems and perhaps I can help."

"Have you seen the signs posted around town?" asked Pete.

"About the meeting called for tonight?"

"Yes."

"Yes, and I have heard some comments, I plan to attend this meeting and I want to hear your story, Carey."

CHAPTER VII THE SQUIRE CALLS A MEETING

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

At this point, the reader has learned very little of the past life of Squire Campbell. In the first chapter, it was revealed that he might be from New York City about the time of the Wall Street Panic in 1884. Since his arrival in Algerton, the villagers have learned nothing and only because of the arrival of Dirk Bledsoe, alias Carl Harris, has the Squire been disturbed. The reader knows that because of Dirk's connection with his past, the Squire has been forced to yield to his demands or be exposed; This revelation to the reader has not yet been made public in Algerton. The Squire has offered the title of Postmaster to Dirk in payment for his silence regarding his past.

The Squire had made arrangements for the use of the opera house to hold the meeting in which a new postmaster would be nominated. The Squire having already sent in Dirk's name, is obligated to use his influence upon the good people of Algerton and cause them to select a stranger to them as their choice and agreeable to all the residents of Algerton.

The residents of the village and of the rural areas began to gather in front of the opera house at an early hour. Darkness had fallen and the evening was warm; The early-comers formed two groups in the fringe of light furnished by the illuminated entranceway. The two groups were isolated from each other because of their different viewpoints and according to their degree of allegiance to the Squire. One such group could be identified as being obligated and indebted to the Squire and dared not question his commands. The other group although obligated to some degree, dared to demand justice which set them apart and identified them as a group to be reckoned with.

As the hour of the meeting approached, the two groups broke up and moved inside. The Squire had not yet arrived, which was his custom since he had learned that early arrivals meant advanced opinions and requests for favoritism from his puppets and only with the protection provided with an assemblage of people did he feel secure from such solicitation. Actually, the Squire was detained at home by the arrival of Dirk Bledsoe under the cover of darkness. The Squire and Dirk were in conference as Dirk wished last minute assurance and instruction as to what was expected of him. The Squire assured him that he had a plan of action and requested only that Dirk be present at the meeting, but remain silent until he was introduced and called upon to speak. The Squire then urged Dirk to proceed to the meeting place alone that no one might suspect in advance as to the connection between them. Dirk then left with this last minute word of warning, "I'll see you, Skin."

The auditorium of the opera house was of sufficient size to seat over 300 people. Most seats were already taken.

Several people were standing in the aisles and looking for empty seats. Outside, the crowd had been orderly and had spoken softly and in a serious vein but due to the atmosphere of gayety in the decorations of the auditorium, their conversation quickly changed to a 'devil-may-care' mood. The walls resounded with a mumble of voices, yet no single word was distinct and understandable. Carey, our hero came in with Judge Dixon and they had found seats near the center aisle. Several people had stopped to pay their respects to Carey and to acknowledge the dignified gentleman who sat beside him.

The stage had been cleared of unnecessary props and advertising back-drops and was furnished only with a speaker's table and two chairs. The stage was well lighted from the foot-lights but the auditorium was in a soft semi-darkness. The Squire came on stage from the wings following his co-chairman and manager of the opera house, Miss Fisher, who was introduced in the last chapter. Miss Fisher seated herself and the Squire stood before the speaker's table and rapped for order. The room became silent and orderly. The Squire clears his throat, surveys the room with a glance, smiles and begins to speak.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends and loyal Citizens of our fair village, we are here tonight for one purpose and that is to select a replacement for the office of postmaster which is vacated because of the untimely death of our beloved and honored citizen of Algerton, Mr. Thornton Churchill who was a faithful servant to the good people of our community and he shall surely be missed by one and all as well as his widow and little children who are now dependent upon our mercy and care. Naturally, you good people will see to it that they receive adequate food and shelter." There was a murmur of voices heard which might have generated into remarks of objection from the audience, if the Squire had not rapped for silence. The Squire continued, "I know that you will brand me as a heartless person who would ask a destitute person to share with us, their crust of bread, but we have a job to do and we should not let our hearts over-rule our heads in this matter. I will now turn the gavel of authority over to Miss Fisher who will ask for nominations. I reserve the right to speak and be heard. Ladies and Gentlemen, your co-chairman, Miss Fisher."

The Squire bowed to Miss Fisher and handed her the gavel. Miss Fisher took the gavel with the agility of one who held in her hand, a deadly weapon and dared anyone to speak out of turn. She stepped to the table and laid the gavel down softly but kept her hand within easy reach, just in case she needed it in a hurry.

"I shall act as my own parliamentarian," she began, "and a two-thirds majority vote will be necessary to elect the man of your choice, only men of legal age may vote of course, and I shall have no voice nor vote."

"I now declare the nominations open for the office of postmaster. Supporting nominations and remarks will be permitted but will not be mandatory."

"Madam Chairman, I nominate——"

"State your name and be recognized," interrupted Miss Fisher.

"Simpson, Jacob Simpson——"

"The Chair recognizes Jacob Simpson."

"Madam Chairman, it is my pleasure to nominate Algerton's leading citizen, Mortimer S. Campbell, Senior and Esquire!"

"The Chair recognizes the nomination of Mortimer S. Campbell, Senior. Do you wish to accept the nomination? Squire Campbell."

"Speech! Speech!"

The Squire beamed his approval and was about to rise, but was interrupted.

"Madam Chairman, may I address the Chair?"

"You are out of order; The Squire is about to make a statement."

"But I wish to support the nomination!" State your name and be recognized."

"Hall, Stephen Hall——"

"The Chair recognizes Stephen Hall for the purpose of supporting the nomination."

"Madam Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to support the nomination of our leading citizen. A born leader, and a man who came to us in a year when most of us did not know which way to turn. He shared with us, his knowledge of economics, he pulled us out of the mire, freed us from our difficulties and set us on our feet. Madam Chairman, I support the nomination of my good friend and yours, Squire Campbell!" After sitting down, there was an awkward silence, the Squire seemed to be waiting for a response or further support. Mr. Hall was also embarrassed with the silence and hearing no request to address the Chair, he sheepishly supplied the necessary cue of faintly clapping his hands to arouse the Campbell supporters into action. The cue was followed by a tremendous ovation and as the tumult died down, the Squire arose from his chair, proudly stepped to the table, bowed to Miss Fisher, who then sat down. The Squire took a sip of water and with an approving smile, began to speak.

"It is an honor indeed to be your first named choice for the office of postmaster, It makes me very happy to be the recipient of such a tremendous ovation. It confirms my belief, that I have made many friends. Although I am receptive to become your chosen servant as postmaster, and I hold you all in high esteem, I feel assured that any one of you are deserving of the honor and I sincerely hope that you too, will be nominated. There is no one that I would rather step aside for, than you. Madam Chairman, please do not allow the nominations to be closed until my friends have been given a chance to become nominated. Thank you."

There was another tremendous ovation, and Miss Fisher allowed the tumult to continue until it showed signs of weakening, then quickly rapped for order.

"Do I hear any further nominations?, Are there any further nominations?"

"Madam Chairman, I wish to make a nomination."

"State your name and be recognized."

"Alfred Jamieson."

"The Chair recognizes Alfred Jamieson for the purpose of making a nomination."

"Now that we have honored Squire Campbell with the first nomination as our choice for postmaster, which of course was expected of us, to register our respect for our leading citizen——"

The Squire looked at Miss Fisher and the slightest turning of his head in her direction, was cue enough for her to interrupt the remarks of Mr. Jamieson.

"Are you going to make a speech? Mr. Jamieson, or do you wish to make a nomination?"

"I assure you that I intend to make a nomination, but I prefer to make it in my own way. Now if I may be allowed to continue——"

The Squire had anticipated attempts to deflate the degree of his importance to the Villagers and had requested Miss Fisher to stop any such attempts. Miss Fisher, although being obligated to the Squire, was unsure of her ability to prevent Mr. Jamieson from speaking in the face of his experience in the practice of law. She registered evidence of her uncertainty as she spoke.

"Very well, Mr. Jamieson, proceed."

"I think," continued Mr. Jamieson, "that we should also honor the person who is most capable of serving us as postmaster and perhaps the least capable of providing food and shelter for——"

Mr. Jamieson's remarks were interrupted by a spontaneous ovation, equally as large as the Squire had received at its peak. The ovation grew in magnitude as it extended in length far beyond the ovation for the Squire. The Squire again turned his head toward Miss Fisher. Miss Fisher rapped the table with her gavel.

"Order! Order!" She commanded in a pleading voice which showed evidence of having lost control of the situation. The tumult finally receded and Mr. Jamieson continued, "I am not overlooking the financial condition of any of you, for these have been and are trying times for most of us including the family of our former postmaster who was a credit to our community and is deserving of our consideration. Many of you may secretly covet the title and additional income from this opening, yet you would step aside for one who needs the additional income the least of any of us and provide charity for the most deserving. Not one of you would prefer charity to making your own livelihood. Each of us could use more compensation in order that we might live more comfortably. Who among you would be more comfortable with the increased income, knowing that you have contributed not to the welfare, but to the discomfort of the rightful heirs to the title of Postmaster. Madam Chairman, I place in nomination, the name of one who is deserving of the office, our own and capable Carey Churchill!"

Once more the ovation got out of control as Mr. Jamieson reached the climax in his delivery on the nomination of our hero, Carey Churchill. Miss Fisher, in her highly nervous state of mind, had a bad case of the jitters and would intermittently rap her gavel several times and then look appealingly at the Squire, for instruction and assistance. The Squire sensed her inability to control the situation and rose to his feet without moving away from his chair and raised both arms into the air above his head. This action was an accepted practice at all village meetings to halt excessive ovations in fairness to the opposition and there was a marked evidence of its effectiveness. The Squire had spoken not a word and not until the last murmur from the auditorium died away, did he turn and bow to Miss Fisher who had given up and had sat down.

"Madam Chairman," began the Squire, "I would like to speak on the---"

Miss Fisher quickly resumed her rightful position as chairman and too hastily anticipated the Squire's remarks. She rapped for order and spoke with renewed confidence. "The Chair recognizes Squire Campbell for the purpose of supporting the nom---did you say supporting, Squire Campbell?" she said, suspecting an error.

"No, I only wish to speak on the nomination, Madam Chairman."

"Very well, the Chair recognizes Squire Campbell," continued Miss Fisher, a bit flustered, "He wishes to speak."

"This is indeed most embarrassing," began the Squire, "That I should be asked to compete with a minor. Certainly you are not serious, Mr. Jamieson? Not only is he a mere child, but he has not yet learned a sense of responsibility, only yesterday, I am told by my son Mortimer, that he willfully violated my personal rights by trespassing upon my private property and the act of aggression was committed even after a warning from my son, whose direct order he refused to obey. This violation might have gone unreported, had it not been for the loyalty of my son who was present---"

The Squire was interrupted by Miss Fisher, who was forced to arise and rap for order since at least a dozen men were on their feet, wishing to be heard.

"You are all out of order," stated Miss Fisher, "The Squire, has the floor and is entitled to be heard."

All but two of the men sat down again, at least they had gained their objective of stopping the Squire's uncomplimentary remarks. Miss Fisher recognized Mr. Jamieson as one of the two still standing and she continued her plea for order.

"Mr. Jamieson---and you Sir, you are out of order. Will you please sit down?"

Mr. Jamieson held the floor, but waited respectfully until the other gentleman had sat down, then he began.

"Madam Chairman, I was questioned by the Squire, he questioned my sincerity in nominating a minor. I ask that the Squire yeild the floor for my answer as I do not wish the charges to go unchallenged."

Miss Fisher turned to the Squire for instruction. The Squire had remained standing and had intended to continue, but sat down and in doing so, acknowledged his own parliamentary breach of etiquette.

"The Squire yeilds the floor to Mr. Jamieson," stated Miss Fisher.

"Gentlemen, had I permitted this question to go unanswered, it would have been an admission of my insincerity. Now I know that Carey Churchill is a minor in the eyes of legal proceedings, yet you and I as law abiding citizens expect some degree of responsibility from them and when such responsibility is accepted, then morally we should accept them as adults. I might ask the same question of the Squire, 'Certainly you are not serious' in accepting the nomination when there are cases of distress and poverty in our midst? But I won't. I withdraw the question, for I believe that you are sincere in your desire to control another of our village functions. Squire Campbell, you have implied that the nomination of Carey Churchill is a bit ridiculous from a legal standpoint. I hereby charge that although your nomination is legally acceptable, morally, your nomination is not justified."

Although Mr. Jamieson had not intended to conclude his remarks, the resulting ovation convinced him that he had made his point and so he sat down and immediately went into conference with Judge Dixon.

Miss Fisher was rapping for order and again showed evidence of having lost control and appealed to the Squire for assistance. The Squire rose to his feet again and soon the tumult subsided, except that a man had just arose and was waiting to be heard.

"You are out of order Sir, will you please be seated," asked Miss Fisher.

"Madam Chairman, charges regarding the character of Carey Churchill have been made. Will you permit him to speak in his own defense?"

"Carey Churchill, who has been identified as a minor is not entitled to a voice at this meeting," stated Miss Fisher.

"Then I request the right to defend him as his legal counsel and morally, a friend, and I wish to speak in his behalf at this time."

"I do not recognize you, Sir. You are not from our community."

"My residence is of no concern. My client has free choice of counsel."

"Please state your name, Sir."

"My name is Judge John B. Dixon, representing the State of New York. My residence and my chambers are in Albany."

"Judge John B. Dixon?" she gasped.

Miss Fisher looked to the Squire for instruction, since she was taken by surprise by the importance of the man to whom she had been speaking. The Squire himself was unprepared for the occasion and only after an awkward silence from the platform, did he collect his thoughts and was able to nod a cue of permission to Miss Fisher.

"The Chair recognizes Judge John B. Dixon, who wishes to speak in the defense of his client, Carey Churchill."

The judge was aware of the fact that since he was a stranger to the community, all eyes would be upon him and all ears tuned to what he would have to say. Squire Campbell had not been informed of the presence of any strangers in the auditorium and it made him a bit uneasy. The judge paused gracefully, allowing all in the auditorium to observe his calmness and only after a well-timed silence, did he begin to speak.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I have not asked for the privilege of speaking to you to influence you in your choice of a postmaster. My only interest is that justice might be served. It is true that my young client has been mentioned as a choice, but he has also been mentioned in a most disrespectful way. He has been charged with a lack of responsibility and it is only because of this charge that I will attempt to defend him. Carey Churchill, in the eyes of the laws of this State, is a minor chronologically, since he is only sixteen years of age, yet he has had adulthood forced upon him as you know, by the death of his father. He did not seek this responsibility, neither did he wish it to come about in the manner in which it did. But he has willingly accepted the responsibility of adulthood and has volunteered the next few years to provide for the welfare of his family and its financial burdens at a time when he might be continuing his education. Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is tragic I say, for the responsibilities of adulthood to be placed upon anyone who is unprepared for it, yet I say that my client has made this transition with a courageous determination in a very short period of time and with such evidence as was shown yesterday afternoon when it became his duty to make a very important decision, one which meant the saving of a life or respecting the civil rights of a property owner---

The people present in the auditorium knew that the judge was referring to Carey's heroic act of saving the life of a dog which belonged to farmer Brown who had loaned the dog to Judge Dixon and the people could not withhold the enthusiasm contained within them any longer for the decision which Carey made, his heroic attempt and the successful results. The judge allowed a courteous acknowledgment of applause and then quickly succeeded in restoring order and silence.

"It seems, Squire Campbell, that you have not been properly advised by your son as to just what took place yesterday. It is true that Carey did not come to you directly and confess the violation of trespassing upon your private property,

however, I accepted the responsibility of his violation and so advised your son. Squire Campbell, if you wish a full and true account of the violation and the events taking place which led to it, I shall be glad to make a public statement here and now."

The Squire was uncomfortable and welcomed the opportunity of a choice between public and private debate. He mopped his brow and with a sweep of his hand he indicated a choice of a private debate.

"Then in conclusion," continued the judge, "And in further defense of Carey, he does not seem to be the flag-waving type of hero, who in reporting his minor infraction of the law, would care to call attention to his heroic efforts. His quick decision to commit a violation in order to lend assistance which was urgently needed, showed great judicial qualities in spite of his seemingly irresponsible action and was unquestionably justified. Thank you Madam Chairman."

Before the judge could sit down, another ovation was begun. Miss Fisher was on her feet and the judge rose again and soon was able to restore order and courteously nodded to the people and then to Miss Fisher.

"Are there any further nominations?" asked Miss Fisher, "Are there any further nominations?"

"Madam Chairman."

"State your name and be recognized."

"Name's Domer, John Domer's my name."

"The Chair recognizes John Domer for the purpose of--, did you wish to make a nomination, Mr. Domer?"

"I'd like ta, if somebody'd take it. I reckon you could call me John Doe 's fur 's 'at goes, 'cause what I'm goin' t'say I reckon ary one of us 'd say if'n we had the chanc't. I cal'late we'd all like t'serve as a public servant in some capacity 'n get paid a leetle extry at the same time, but we just ain't got the time t' do two things t' once. I wouldn't be gainin' a thing t' quit what I'm a doin' 'a go t' post office'n, 'nother thing, I read in the paper recently 't our president 's callin' 'pon us t' s'port our gove'ment, 'stead of the gove'ment s'portin' us---

"What Paper was that, John?"

"Why that new Paper, there in Buffalo, 't just j'ined together. The Star-Enquirer, I think 't was, 'course these remarks 'twas' made long afor Coxey's march t' Washin'ton, but the President keeps 'mindin' us of 't ever' once't 'n a while. Now I c'd use the extry money awright, but I c'dn't spare the time--- If anybody who needs the money an's got the time to devote to't, then let'um volunteer an' I'll secon' the motion."

"Now John, I'm not volunteering, but I just want to say---doesn't our Congressman have something to say about this vacancy?" asked an unidentified voice.

"If yer askin' me, there Jim," answered Mr. Domer, "I read in the paper that he is galavantin' off down 'n Cuba, tryin' t' get the facts 'bout what's goin' on down there. Don't matter tho' reckon the Squire 'll know what to do."

The Squire took the opportunity to rise of the office--and the compensation which goes with it--with our young Postmaster, Carey Churchill, who--"

"May I? he inquired.

"Squire Campbell is recognized and has the floor," stated Miss Fisher.

"Knowing what to do, Mr. Domer, and taking the proper steps can easily be worked out. The issue of course is, whom shall we choose? I too, think we should have at least one more nomination for a fair representation of our choice--"

"That is the majority to elect, Squire?" said an unidentified voice.

The Squire looked at Miss Fisher and asked, "Two thirds?"

Miss Fisher nodded in the affirmative.

"The customary two thirds majority will elect," responded the Squire. "Now I was going to say that since none of our villagers are going to volunteer, there is a man present here tonight who is not a villager, yet he is desirous of making this his home and he needs employment, and the best part of it is, that he has had previous postal experience--"

A murmur of voices began to grow. Miss Fisher rose to her feet and began wielding her gavel. It was by the choice of the stranger himself, that he had seated himself in front of our hero Carey, Mr. Jamieson and the Judge. The people in the auditorium by the process of elimination were directing their attention to the only unidentified person in their midst, Dirk Bledsoe, alias Carl Harris.

"Madam Chairman," asked the Squire, will you kindly ask for Carl Harris to stand and be recognized, please?"

"Will Carl Harris please stand and be recognized?" she asked.

Carl rose, realizing that he was now on exhibition and that his fate would be decided according to the impression he made upon them at this time. The hall was quiet and Carl knew that a favorable impression could not be made on appearance alone; He knew that he was expected to speak out in his own defense. He knew that the remarks of the Squire were not quite enough to sway the opinions of those present. It was well that he was expected and being permitted to speak, for he had a suspicion that the Squire would say no more in his defense and that it would be up to him to convince the people of his ability to serve them. The silence was enchanting but needed to be garnished with choice words which would show his humility, ability, and a willingness to cooperate and an acknowledgement of the needs of others.

"Madam Chairman, Squire Campbell, Judge Dixon, Ladies and Gentlemen, I fully realize that not only am I a stranger to you, a non-resident, and a non-patron, but also a dark horse; however with my past experience, I am able to offer my services, at least in accepting the responsibility, and as Judge Dixon has so aptly put it, 'in order that justice might be served', I shall share the duties

These remarks were acceptable to a majority of the people and were pleasing to their ears, however Carl's remarks were interrupted with the jubilant voices of listeners who could no longer withhold their pleasure. Many were on their feet, calling, WE WANT HARRIS! WE WANT HARRIS! The outburst was acceptable of course to the Squire, who now felt assured that he had delivered the people into the hands of Carl Harris and at the same time had bought his silence on the subject of his past. Carl also was pleased with the outburst, since it gave evidence of his approval. He desired however, to make one more statement which he felt necessary to settle the matter. Miss Fisher was rapping for order and the Squire, desiring to share his emotions in the victory that was now being won, turned to Miss Fisher, who misinterpreted his glance as a cue to end the demonstration and she rapped her gavel even more forcefully than ever and pleaded with the people to restore order. The Squire, realizing that he had been misunderstood, shook his head at Miss Fisher and joined in the applause. Miss Fisher, now completely frustrated, sat down in confusion. Carl however, feeling that the demonstration had gone far enough, raised both hands, indicating that he had not finished and had more to say. He knew that he was about to gain his objective, only the voting, a mere detail to make it official, remained on the agenda. Carl beamed his good pleasure and continued to speak,

"Thank you, good people, I have but a few short remarks to make and then I will sit down. I was about to say that perhaps no one deserves the compensation of the office more than our young postmaster, Carey Churchill, and I am without a doubt, the least deserving in our midst, however, with your approval and the assistance of Carey, which I shall require to the extent of a necessity, I seek your favor, your tolerance and your support that Carey and I might serve you in the manner in which you have been accustomed during the tenure of your former postmaster, Carey's father, Thornton Churchill. Thank you."

A tumult far exceeding any previous demonstration, shook the walls. Carey, being the center of attraction at the moment, remained frozen in his seat. He could feel the blood racing rapidly in his body. The Squire beamed approvingly, but with a selfish motive, for he was concerned only with the retaining of the secret of his past, and least of all, with the future of our hero, Carey. Miss Fisher wore a blank stare, for she did not know what to think. She had felt that it was her duty to use her influence to promote the interests of the Squire, and secretly, she coveted a personal desire to do so, for he was now eligible for remarriage and she made every effort to please him in order that she might gain his attentions.

"I am sorry," said Miss Fisher to the Squire, "for this turn of events. I must have lost control--"

"It is quite all right, Miss Fisher, I am confident that the better man will win out in the end. Let me add that I shall try to be a gallant loser and try not to reveal my disappointment openly."

"Is he married?" inquired Miss Fisher.

The Squire sensed that a revelation of too much information regarding the past of Carl Harris would be dangerous to his own security and he made a feeble attempt to divert any further interest in his direction.

"I believe that he is, Miss Fisher, why do you ask? Shall I ask him for you?"

"Oh, good heavens, no!" replied Miss Fisher, turning her head to conceal a blush.

There had been no attempt to restore order from the Chair and the people in the auditorium were calling for the vote to be taken. Miss Fisher, under the circumstances, was glad of the opportunity to change the subject.

"Are there any further nominations?" asked Miss Fisher. "Are there any further nominations?"

"No!" called an unidentified voice from the auditorium. "Let us vote!"

"Hearing no further nominations, I declare the nominations closed," said Miss Fisher. "We shall now have the vote, and the candidates shall be called in the order of their nominations."

"All in favor of Squire Campbell for postmaster, say aye!"

There was a small token response from those who felt that it was their obligated duty to record their loyalty to the Squire.

"All in favor of little Carey Churchill for postmaster, say aye!"

There was a much larger token vote from those who wished to record their loyalty to our young hero, Carey.

"All in favor of--of--what's his name?" she inquired of the Squire, somewhat embarrassed.

The Squire attempted to advise her in a whisper, but a response from a hundred voices from the auditorium called out, "HARRIS! CARL HARRIS!"

"All in favor of Carl Harris," she repeated, a bit flustered, "please say aye!"

The response was terrific. If anyone remained seated, it was not in evidence and if anyone were opposed, they stood up to conceal their embarrassment. Many voices were calling, "SPEECH! SPEECH!"

Miss Fisher rapped for order and surprisingly, she got it as the people were anxious to terminate the meeting with a concluding speech.

"Is there any question regarding the outcome of the vote?" she asked.

"SPEECH! SPEECH!"

"Does anyone wish to contest the result of the voting?" she asked.

"SPEECH! SPEECH!"

"Then I declare ah-- Carl Harris chosen as your choice to succeed Thornton Churchill as postmaster of Algerton. Is

there any further business or requests?"

"SPEECH! SPEECH!"

"Mr. Harris," said Miss Fisher, "You are being called upon to make an acceptance speech. Do you have anything to say?"

"Not much, Madam Chairman," said Carl, "It has been a long meeting and these people are weary and want to get home, I am sure. I do want to say that I accept the honor which you have bestowed upon me and I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Now I want to relinquish the rest of my time, in order that our young postmaster might be allowed to express his personal views in the matter at hand. Carey, will you favor us with a few words?"

"SPEECH! SPEECH!"

Carey rose to his feet unprepared, however. The tingling sensation of the blood surging through his body was now replaced with a lump in his throat and a pounding heart.

"I have never before in my entire life, been called upon to make a speech. It is quite an honor, however unfortunately I must disappoint you, since the largest group that I have ever addressed is my class in school and I am sure that you have all heard Lincoln's Gettysburg address before. I am glad to be able to continue to serve you to some extent. I assure you that I do not seek your charity. I hope to be able to earn every penny that it takes to support my mother and my brother and sister. If I were the worrying kind, perhaps I would worry about finding enough work to do. However, I trust in the Lord---I am sure that he will provide for me in his own way. I shall acknowledge the authority of Mr. Harris as my superior and you can depend upon my loyalty and cooperation to the best of my ability. Thank you, one and all."

This concluded the agenda and the orderly routine of the meeting was adjourned. There was a large rush to be the first to shake the hand of our young hero and meet the newly chosen postmaster and to acknowledge the presence of such a celebrity and dignitary as was Judge Dixon. The platform, except for Miss Fisher and the Squire, was deserted. Not even any of the Squire's obligated supporters came to renew their pledge of loyalty in the light of this turn of events. This, the Squire resented most of all. It was true that he had seemingly rejected their attempts of loyalty and had confused them with appeals to support another, yet in spite of this, he expected and even demanded their continued support and loyalty. The Squire and Miss Fisher left the platform and the building, by a rear exit.

Those in the auditorium had gathered around Carey and his supporters, however, Carl Harris and Judge Dixon had managed to escape from the group and were conversing quietly together in the rear of the hall. Since they seemed to prefer to be left alone, it would be unethical to listen in or even record what was being discussed. However, it is presumed that the Judge is making it clear to Carl Harris that he intends to continue to concern himself with the welfare of Carey and his family. The Judge's face registered emphatic concern.

CHAPTER X THE POSTOFFICE UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

It is Monday morning, October 22, 1894, and a week has passed since the meeting which decided who would be the new postmaster of Algerton. The Squire having submitted the name of Carl Harris to the Postal Officials in Washington, received an acknowledgement and approval of his request. He was instructed to prepare for the arrival by train on Saturday afternoon of a representative of the Department. He was advised that President Cleveland, Postmaster General Bissell and other department officials including the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General, who usually attended to such matters, were attending a political rally in Buffalo, the President's home town, due to the coming State elections on November 6th, and that George Cortelyou, private secretary to the Fourth Assistant PMG had been assigned to administer the oath of office.

Carl took the oath of office as given by this department official in the presence of the Squire, Mr. Jamieson and our hero Carey. Carl had previously told the Squire that he was known in Washington, but if he was recognized, there was no evidence of it, however, Mr. Cortelyou had only been on his present assignment for a little over a year. Carl instructed Carey to attend to the security and preparation of the mail as he had done previously. Carl was to handle all sales and be accountable for all money and stamps. Carl came in just as Carey was preparing to open the service window for the distribution of mail to the waiting patrons. Carl opened the stamp window and they were ready for business. After the morning rush was over, Judge Dixon appeared. Although he was courteous to Carl, he seemed to Carey to be a bit reserved and turned his attention to Carey.

"I will be leaving Algerton on the next train going east and before leaving I did want to assure you again that I wish to be considered a friend on whom you may call when necessary. Quite naturally I hope that it will never be necessary because of your finances, for I hope that you will prosper; but there may be times when you will need advise or counsel."

Although his remarks were meant for Carey, he made no attempt to conceal his words from Carl. Carey thought he detected a quick glance in Carl's direction while he was talking.

"Thank you Judge Dixon," said Carey, "I have a wealth of friends, but I hope it will never be necessary to use them. I hope that I shall be able to take my father's place in providing for my family. At least I shall welcome the chance."

"Good bye then and remember, if you are ever in Albany, I shall want you to call upon me."

"Good bye, I will promise that."

After Judge Dixon departed, Mr. Jamieson

entered and greeted Carl and Carey very cordially, but Carey again detected a reserved atmosphere when speaking in the presence of Carl. Perhaps it was only because Carl was new and his sincerity must be tried before being trusted. He tried to speak confidentially and with a low voice.

"Carey, I wish to see your mother when convenient. Would it be possible to see her this morning?"

"Yes, I am sure that she will be glad to see you. Ethel and Michael will soon be on their way to school and then she will be able to talk with you."

"You knew Carey, that your father left most of his legal affairs in my care, didn't you?"

"Yes, I have heard him mention it. I have not pressed you for information for I knew that you would consult with us when the proper time came."

"Your father's life insurance will only take care of his burial expenses. It was designed to do this and nothing more."

"Father was very considerate to provide for us in this manner. I am thankful for a thoughtful father."

"But you have an unpaid mortgage on your home?" he inquired.

"Yes, I know."

"The Squire holds the mortgage?"

"Yes."

"I shall want to see it. I shall try and obtain it and the title of your property from the Squire today."

"The Squire offered to provide us with the shelter of his roof when we default in payment."

"How kind!" he remarked, "When is the next payment due?"

"On November fifteenth."

"How much is due?"

"One hundred dollars plus the interest."

"Do you have any savings to meet this payment?"

"Father was allowed to compensate himself from the sales of stamps every three months and he laid aside twenty five dollars each time for this purpose."

"Then you have the necessary amount to meet the next payment?"

"Not enough. The expense of the doctor, medicine and a new outfit for him was paid from this fund."

"I see, and with your earnings cut here, it will be difficult, won't it?"

"It will be difficult, but I am hopeful that a way will be provided for us."

"With your courage I am sure that your family need not worry. Well, I will visit your mother now," he said as he departed.

Linda Lacey was the next person to enter.

"Well, good morning, Linda, what can I do for you?" asked Carey.

"Mother sent me to buy some stamps," she said as she laid a knotted handkerchief upon the window ledge.

"And I suppose your money is tied up in this handkerchief," said Carey as he

opened the knots.

"Yes, mother was afraid that I would lose it."

"Well, it's a good idea; It would be much easier to find a handkerchief with coins wrapped up inside, than find the loose coins, wouldn't it?" asked Carey.

"I guess so, I never thought of it that way before," said Linda.

"You have twelve cents here, Linda, what kind of stamps do you want?"

"I want six one-cent stamps and three two-cent stamps please," she replied.

"Do you want the pretty ones or the plain ones, Linda?"

"I don't know, mother didn't say."

"Then I'll give you the pretty ones, they have pictures of Columbus discovering America, you know."

"Oh."

Carey turned the money over to Carl in exchange for the necessary stamps and tied them loosely in Linda's handkerchief.

"Carey?"

"Yes, Linda?"

"Would there be a letter for me?"

"Why? Are you expecting a letter today?" said Carey, teasing her.

"It's my birthday today," she replied, blushing a little.

"Your birthday? How old are you today, Linda?"

"Nine."

"Congratulations Linda, I'll see if anyone has written to you. Yes, here is a letter addressed to you and postmarked from Algerton and I think I recognize the handwriting. Do you recognize it Linda?"

"I think it's from Michael," she said, blushing again.

"That's what I think too. Well, happy birthday Linda. Now you had better hurry back home or you will be late for school."

"Thank you," she said as she left, proudly displaying the letter which had her own name upon it.

With Carl present, Carey no longer had to close the office when school-time came as Carl took charge. Although his earnings would be reduced, he would be able to continue at school at least for the present. Carey was among the last to enter the school building but Flint had also timed his arrival to meet up with Carey when he came.

"Well," said Flint, "Have you swept out the office and dusted off all the mail, already this morning?"

"The labourer is worthy of his hire," said Carey, deciding that the question did not deserve a direct answer.

"Then come over to my house this evening and I will hire you to do some labouring for me," sneered Flint.

"Thank you," said Carey, biting his lip, "Perhaps I could help you with your manners."

The school day was routine, even to the sneering remarks of Flint, but seasoned with kind words from his many friends. With the school day over and the office closed for the night, Carey spent a little while at the wood-pile in the early

darkness of the evening before his home study period.

"Well mother, did Mr. Jamieson call on you today?"

"Yes, Carey, he said he had talked with you. I am thankful that you are familiar with such matters."

"But Mr. Jamieson has promised to counsel us. Did he mention the mortgage and a way to meet the payment?"

"Yes, and he says that his wife could use some help around the house especially with her sewing. He says she can hardly thread a needle, and as long as my eyes hold out, sewing is something I enjoy doing."

"But mother, I dread the thought of you having to do extra work to provide for us."

"It will be for only three hours each afternoon during school days. It will help to pass the time especially now that your father is gone."

"Then is it all settled? Are you determined to do this?"

"Yes, it is all settled. I am to receive five dollars a week."

"How much will you receive, Carey?" asked Ethel who had been listening.

"Carl has not discussed this with me yet, however, I am sure that he will be fair, as he promised at the election to share our earnings."

"Have you no idea?" asked Ethel curiously.

"It will depend upon the sales of stamps. In the last year, stamp sales were above normal because of the Columbus stamps. People are buying them to save. Father's compensation amounted to about two hundred and fifty dollars for each quarter of a year, or almost twenty dollars for each week and Mr. Harris will no doubt share this amount equally with me."

"Then our income has been reduced by about twenty five percent," said Michael, looking up from his studies.

"That is right, Michael," said Carey, "You are very good in numbers."

"We are learning about percentages in our numbers class now," said Michael.

"By the way Michael, Belinda Lacey was in the post office this morning. It's her birthday today," said Carey.

"Is it?" said Michael, blushing and lowering his head to hide his embarrassment.

"Yes, and she is the same age as you, only a few weeks younger." Said Ethel, desiring to add to the teasing.

"Carey?" asked Michael, trying to change the subject

"Yes, Michael?"

"How did Algerton get it's name?"

"Better ask your sister. She's the history scholar around here."

"Do you know, Ethel?" asked her mother who was as interested as her son.

"I think I do. I didn't read it in any history book, but there is a story being told that a man named Alger settled here along the creek which was necessary for his cattle and other live stock." said Ethel proudly.

"Where was he from?" asked Carey who was getting interested.

CHAPTER XI FLINT UNDER SUSPICION

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"From the East somewhere, perhaps Massachusetts," she replied.

"Did he come over on the Mayflower and land on Plymouth Rock?" asked Michael.

"Perhaps not, more than likely he was born here. I don't suppose he has been dead more than twenty or thirty years."

"That reminds me," interrupted Carey, "there is a cornerstone in the foundation of the ice house, and on the flat exposed surface, the chiseled inscription ALGER - 1832 can be easily read."

"They say," added Ethel, "that the ice house rests upon a part of the foundation of Alger's first log cabin home."

"I can believe that," replied Carey, "for that stone alone must weigh about five hundred pounds."

"And that is only part of it," continued Ethel, "they say that the flat surface is where the stone was split, and the rest of the stone has never been located."

"What became of the log cabin?" asked Michael.

"It was torn down when they built the ice house," answered Ethel.

"Did he live there all his life then?" inquired Michael.

"No," replied Ethel, "he eventually bartered and sold land to other settlers and built a better home for himself."

"Where is that house?" asked Michael.

"If you can find the other half of the cornerstone, then you may have found his second home," replied Ethel.

"Did he have still others then?" asked Michael.

"Well, he built the Squire's house, you know," she replied, "but he died before he could move into it."

"Was he rich then?" asked Michael.

"He was believed to be, however, after he died, his new house remained empty for many years. The village finally became the legal owner, and later sold it to the Squire; for he was the only one who could afford such a nice house," she replied.

"Did the village become the legal owner of all his money too?" inquired Michael.

"I guess he didn't believe in banks," said Ethel, "they say that he converted all of his bank deposits into silver dollars just before the Civil War and buried them; and that was about the time that he was building the Squire's house."

"Then perhaps the Squire has discovered the buried money," suggested Michael.

"Well, I for one, am going to bury my head in my pillow," remarked Carey.

"Yes, son;" remarked Mrs. Churchill, "with your added responsibilities at the post office, you need more rest."

"I wish I could help," added Ethel.

"At the post office?" asked Carey.

"Yes; I think it would be fun."

"Just because you have fun playing post office, is no reason--"

"Oh, fiddle faddle!"

At sunrise the next morning, Carey left the house and hurried to the post office. From force of habit, he tried the door and was surprised to find it unlocked. With a gasp, he flung open the door and

discovered Carl sitting at his desk.

"Good morning, Mr. Harris, what brings you out so early in the morning?"

"Good morning, Carey. Well, you see I couldn't balance my cash and verify my inventory of stamps last night, so I came early before today's business begins, to try and balance my books."

"Have you discovered your error?"

"No."

"Perhaps it was my error, before you took over, Mr. Harris."

"No, the books were in perfect balance when I took over the sales of stamps."

"Then it must have happened yesterday."

"Yes, I am sure of that."

"How much is the difference?"

"I am two dollars short."

"Do you suspect me, Mr. Harris?"

"I have no reason to suspect you, Carey."

"A two dollar shortage is equivalent to one full sheet of two-cent stamps. Did you sell any full sheets yesterday?"

"Yes, I did, now that you mention it, I remember of selling a sheet of two-cent stamps to young Campbell--what is it you call him?"

"Do you mean Flint?"

"Yes, it was Flint."

"Could two sheets have stuck together, Mr. Harris?"

"Yes, it's possible."

"Shall you ask him about it?"

"Will it be necessary? Perhaps he will report it; if that is what happened."

"Yes, perhaps he will," said Carey, "I suppose he purchased them for his father?"

"Yes, at least he asked to have them charged to his father's account. Has it been customary for the Squire to buy on credit?"

"No, sir; No one has credit here," said Carey, "then if you charged them--"

"But I didn't; reluctantly, he paid for them with two silver dollars."

"Two silver dollars?"

"Yes; why do you ask?"

"Well, oddly enough, last night at home, we were discussing the possibility of a hoard of silver dollars being hidden somewhere around Algerton."

"I see; then do you suppose that the Squire has another hoard of money beside what he has in the local bank?"

"Not to my knowledge, Mr. Harris, I didn't mean to imply that the Squire had a hidden hoard of money, but that he or Flint may have found one."

"Well," said Carl, willing to change the subject, "we shall let the matter drop for the time and I shall make up the shortage from my allowance, if necessary."

"Mr. Harris."

"Yes, Carey."

"Have you decided how we shall share the stamp sales allowance?"

"I am sure that we can split the allowance evenly--that is if I don't lose any more stamps, as I seem to have done."

Carey had been processing the mail for delivery and several people had arrived and were waiting for the windows to open.

Carey could see that of all people to be present, Flint was lingering in the rear of the lobby. Flint finally took his place at the end of the line of people who were waiting for their mail.

"You may give me our mail, Mister postmaster," said Flint, in a demanding tone.

"Do you have a note from your father, Flint?" asked Carey, seriously.

Flint turned red with rage as he spoke,

"I'm as old as you are! How old do I have to be, to be recognized as an individual? You had better learn to respect my demands. If it wasn't for my father, neither one of you two would be here. Do I have to report you again for refusing to obey my commands?" shouted Flint.

Carey looked at Carl, wondering what was meant by the remark 'if it wasn't for my father' and he could see that Carl too, was a bit embarrassed.

"Flint," said Carey, "you know as well as I, that you are not to receive your father's mail without consent."

"All right," said Flint, now willing to change the subject, "you may give me a full sheet of two-cent stamps."

"The stamp window is the next window, Flint," advised Carey.

"What's the matter, doesn't he trust you with money?" asked Flint.

"Stamps are no longer in my department," said Carey, coloring a little.

"Then you may sell me a full sheet of two-cent stamps, my good man," said Flint, addressing Carl.

Carl selected a full sheet, and inspected them carefully, then passed them over to Flint in exchange for two silver dollars which he dropped into the till.

Flint also carefully inspected the sheet as he turned his back, then he hesitated and turned back to the window.

"I wanted the new Columbus stamps. I am saving them."

"Certainly, sir," said Carl, making the exchange after a thorough examination.

Flint grasped the sheet of stamps with searching eyes. Once more after turning his back, he inspected them more closely. He hesitated, but walked out, folding the stamps and stuffing them into his pocket.

"Do you suspect him now, Mr. Harris?" asked Carey.

"It's too early yet to form an opinion, but it certainly seemed as though he was hopeful of receiving two sheets with the expectancy of a gambler. Since it happened once, it might happen again."

"Do you suppose he really intends to save them?" asked Carey.

"The Columbus stamps, yes. The common stamps purchased yesterday were supposed to be for his father."

"What would he do with one hundred common stamps?"

"He might use them, sell them, or try to return them."

"Should we accept the return of them?"

"No, all sales are final; except for a reasonable excuse."

"What would be a reasonable excuse?"

"Unusable, through no fault of his own; there is one other thing he might do with them."

"What is that, Mr. Harris?"

"Give them away."

"Give them away?"

"Yes; a deliberate premeditated plant. You may find them in your possession soon, Carey; if so, you will understand what I mean."

"But why would he do that? What could he possibly gain?"

"You would be accused of theft, and he would gain your defamation."

"But nothing has been reported stolen or missing."

"He will wait for the right opportunity. He may even set the stage himself."

"But why do you tell me all of this? How can you know that this may happen?"

"I do not know that it will happen, but it may happen, and I tell you so you will be on your guard. Let me say that I am older than you, and have had more experience; and have been taught to outwit the other fellow."

"But Squire Campbell is a friend of yours. Would you accuse and prosecute the son of a friend?"

"I can truthfully say that I had never met the Squire until the night when I came to town. Schools have the right of discipline. Parents have the right of respect, while the rest of us have only the recourse of law——"

At this moment, Mr. Jamieson came in and interrupted the conversation.

"Good morning, Mr. Harris, and you, Carey. Is there any mail for me?"

"Yes," said Carey, after greeting him in unison with Carl, "here you are."

"If you are on your way to school now, Carey, I should like to walk along with you, for I must speak with you."

"Yes, Mr. Jamieson, I should be leaving now. I'll be back right after school, Mr. Harris," said Carey, as he left.

"Now, Carey," said Mr. Jamieson, as they left the building, "I was unable to see any papers in the Squire's possession yesterday. I am afraid that it will be up to us to prove your equity. Do you think you might have any receipts to show in evidence of previous payments?"

"I am reasonably sure that such items can be found, for my father was a very careful and business-like man."

"But remember that your father was dealing with a master, and you know that the Squire loves a dollar more than his own son."

"But he admits that we have an equity, by threatening to take ownership when we default in the payments."

"Admissions and promises are worthless without honor. Written agreements are none too good when dealing with men like the Squire, Carey."

"But the Squire goes to our church! He couldn't——"

"Remember the Scripture? Remember what Judas did for thirty pieces of silver? Our actions are always better proof of our intentions than mere words and promises, my boy."

"Then I guess the policy adopted by Mr. Harris, may be right."

"How is that, Carey?"

"Mr. Harris says that he has been taught to outwit the other fellow, if necessary."

CHAPTER XII CARL IS QUESTIONED

BY FORREST CAMPBELL

"Now why would Mr. Harris find it necessary to make a statement like that to you Carey?" asked Mr. Jamieson.

"Well," hesitated Carey, "perhaps his reason should be kept confidential and I shouldn't have quoted him Mr. Jamieson."

"I wouldn't want you to betray a confidence Carey, if you think it best not to divulge his remarks," replied Mr. Jamieson, "but remember Carey, that I am an attorney and a client's statement is confidential testimony--"

"I know that I can trust you Mr. Jamieson, it's just that--well, I might upset Mr. Harris' plans if I reveal them."

"Now look, Carey, none of us has known Mr. Harris for very long. We accepted him into our community affairs purely on the recommendation of the Squire, you know that! He has yet to prove himself worthy of our trust; if you know anything that would discredit his character, it is your duty to reveal it to me with the assurance of confidential information."

"Do you suspect him of being dishonest?" Mr. Jamieson.

"I suspect nothing of the sort. In fact I would be disappointed to hear such a report. Carey, am I involved?--is that the reason you hesitate--?"

"Oh no, Mr. Jamieson, your name has not been mentioned. Please, Mr. Jamieson, you are making it very difficult for me. I cannot bring myself to quote Mr. Harris any more than I have already. Perhaps if you talked with Mr. Harris, he would volunteer to tell you personally, that which I prefer not to reveal."

"A good suggestion, Carey, then it is something that he could reveal to me if he chooses to do so?"

"I would think that he would have no objections in confiding in you, especially as an attorney," said Carey, pausing, for he was now at the entrance of the school grounds.

"Then I shall go back at once and have a talk with Mr. Harris, and Carey, I respect very much, your decision to hold the trust of another person."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Jamieson," said Carey, "and here comes Flint from across the street. He always likes to escort me into school. Good bye, Mr. Jamieson."

"Good bye, Carey," said Mr. Jamieson, turning, and at the same time, touching his hat in recognition of Flint, who was approaching.

"Look here, Churchill," said Flint, "I see you still have to have an adult to escort you to school. Are you afraid the big boys will torment you?"

"No, Flint," said Carey, holding his temper, "we were discussing some business."

"What were you talking about?" asked Flint, impudently.

"That is an impertinent question, Flint, do you suspect that we were discussing you?" replied Carey.

"Perhaps," said Flint, coloring, and evading the question by quickly changing the subject, "perhaps you need a lawyer

to keep you out of the poorhouse."

"That is an excellent suggestion, Flint, I would like that much better. I shall ask Mr. Jamieson to reverse his plans and try and keep me out instead of trying to get me in," said Carey, smiling.

Flint had chosen words which he thought would irritate Carey and cause him to become enraged, but he was disappointed in his show of good nature. He had planned to so humiliate Carey, that he would be compelled to defend his honor by fighting. Flint was adept with jabs in the form of words designed to deliver a smarting blow where it would be felt the most, but Carey's good-natured reply, although expected, left him unprepared for a return blow, for Carey had so worded his statement that Flint wondered if he had actually aided, rather than enraging him. It is very difficult to fight with a battle of words when the opponent will not raise his voice in defence of his honor and protect his pride.

"Well," faltered Flint, trying hard to think of something mean to say, "you can always resort to begging, and my father could use a stable boy to keep the stables clean."

"Thank you, Flint, for your concern about me, with Mr. Jamieson and you to look after my welfare, I certainly have nothing to worry about. Shall we go in?" invited Carey, holding the entrance door open and waiting for Flint to enter.

Upon entering the school, a transformation came over Flint. He became quiet, courteous and attentive. He had learned from previous experiences that his instructor's orders were to be obeyed and not to be trifled with. After a short assembly period, Carey's class including Flint proceeded to the algebra class in a separate recitation room. Carey was signaled by the instructor to come to his desk.

"Good morning, Mr. Weeks," greeted Carey, advancing to a position in front of the desk which was identified with the name of Charles Alvin Weeks indented in a highly polished piece of walnut.

"Carey, I have not yet taken the occasion to acknowledge the burden of responsibility which has been placed upon you, and since you are very proficient in your recitations, I could excuse you from class, should an emergency arise, because I know that you could catch up on your missed classes very easily."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Weeks, I hope it will not be necessary."

"Carey, did I ever tell you that my father, Charles E. Weeks; was the postmaster at Jamestown?"

"No, but I believe that I have heard my father mention him; he was appointed in 1886 when Jamestown became a city, was he not?"

"Yes, that is right. The Postal facilities at Ellicott were inadequate and poorly located to serve the new city, however, the Ellicott postoffice was retained."

"Jamestown residents now have their mail delivered to their homes," continued Mr. Weeks, "and the Ellicott office may now be closed."

"Yes," said Carey, "I am sure that the area is now served by Jamestown, however, rural areas are also asking for home deliveries."

"Yes, I have heard of the appeals for this type of extension of the postal service, and I am hopeful that the request will be approved."

A signal bell was heard, Carey was dismissed and allowed to take his seat. When the students quieted down, Mr. Weeks made the following announcement.

"Class, we will have a mid-semester review on Friday. Although there has been very little absenteeism, there is as much difference in your proficiency as there is between daylight and darkness. This not only is uncomplimentary to my ability as an instructor, but is harmful to those of you who are lagging behind in this class. I must warn you that I cannot allow such a wide range of proficiency in my graduating class. I urge you to work harder or you may be disappointed at the end of this school year. You may have a five minute study period before we start the recitation period."

When Mr. Jamieson returned to the post-office, he found Mr. Harris seated in a swivel chair with his feet supported on the edge of his desk and he was peacefully smoking his pipe, the aroma being savourous to Carl, but nauseating to Mr. Jamieson, who did not smoke.

"Mr. Harris, I have come back to talk with you. Will you let me in?"

"Well, it's against the rules," said Carl, stealing a glancing look at Mr. Jamieson.

"But this kind of conversation with bars between us is too much like a prisoner and jailor combination!"

"Very well, I guess I can admit you as a courtesy to the village attorney," said Carl, admitting him and offering him a chair.

"As you may remember," Mr. Jamieson began, cautiously, "I have been talking with Carey and I was prompted to return—may I have a few minutes of your time?"

"Business is slow this morning."

"Mr. Harris, I think the time has come for you and I to get better acquainted."

"There isn't much that I can tell."

"You seem to be so mysterious, if you won't mind my blunt appraisal."

"I always wanted to be a detective."

"Tell me, did you know the Squire before you came here?"

"I had heard of him."

"But he recommended you?"

"I have thanked him for that."

Mr. Jamieson felt defeated in his attempt to win the confidence of Mr. Harris and he decided to make one final attempt.

"I had a long conversation with Judge Dixon while he was here last week. He has retained me to represent him in his affairs here in Algerton."

"The Judge is an accomplished conversationalist. Was my name mentioned?"

"No, I am to see that Carey's family is provided with sufficient weekly funds to meet their living expenses."

"That was real nice of the Judge."

"Of course he feels obligated, because of Carey's act of heroism, and sincerely wants to help financially, but doesn't want any publicity."

"Carey is a very fine young man."

"The Judge has instructed me to hire Mrs. Churchill so the the financial aid will not be considered a charity."

"I don't believe Carey would accept charity," said Carl.

"Carey has principles, too!"

"I have learned as much," added Carl.

"I have been reminded again this morning that he will not knowingly betray a confidence."

"How is that?"

"It concerns you."

"It does?" inquired Carl.

"Yes, he has refused to quote you."

"Then you were asking?"

"Yes, but to no avail."

"I have told Carey nothing in confidence that I could not tell you in the same confidence. I do not knowingly or intentionally start or carry rumors."

"Now we are getting better acquainted, We have broken down the first barrier between us," said Mr. Jamieson, beaming.

"Now we are getting somewhere," added Mr. Jamieson, as an after thought.

"What is it you want to know?" asked Carl, cautiously. "What is the nature of the subject which he refused to reveal to you?"

"It's a delicate subject."

"I have been cajoled by experts."

"Then I'll be blunt."

"Be my guest."

"Carey says that you have been taught to outwit the other fellow!"

"Oh, that," said Carl, smiling.

"Tell me, what does it mean?"

"It is from my remarks to Carey, when I was explaining my personal philosophy, or out-look on life. I was telling him that I try to prepare myself for any action which my opponents or enemies might take and use against me. It was merely an object-lesson. I was hoping that he might profit from it."

"Is there any reason for an object-lesson of this sort at this time?"

"Indirectly, but it's a long story."

"I can spare the time," replied Mr. Jamieson, eagerly.

"Some stamps are missing," said Carl.

"What? Do you suspect Carey?"

"No, in fact, Carey has suggested a theory which may prove to be correct, at least it sounds reasonable."

"What is his theory?"

"That young Flint may have received a full sheet of stamps due to my own carelessness, and has failed to report it."

"But how would this involve Carey?"

"Flint may accuse Carey in some way."

The conversation was interrupted at this point by the arrival of Squire Campbell who entered the lobby of the post office and discovered Carl and Mr. Jamieson in conference in the seclusion of the inner office.