

"NED,"

The FARMER BOY

A Possible Result of a Lad's Industry and Foresight.

By GEO. E. FOSTER.

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"It was," replied Mr. Martin. "Five years ago to-day she stepped out of the street for a few moments, and from that time we were able to find a trace of her. I happened into the court this morning as you was giving your story, and when you spoke of the peculiar scar, of course I was all at attention. It was not a scar, however, but a birth mark. I quickly questioned you, and was immediately convinced that the girl was my long lost May, and so it proved. The poor baby is now with her mother, who has no known a well day since May was kidnapped by the gang with whom you found yourself last night."

"Oh, I am so glad for you," said Ned with a happy smile on his face.

"And now my young friend," said Mr. Martin, "you are entitled to the \$1,000 reward. It was offered at the time of her abduction and the offer has been a standing one ever since."

"But I shall not take it," responded Ned.

"Of course you will, my boy," said Mr. Martin, looking very much surprised.

"I did not earn it. I know nothing about it. It was a mere accident. I could not take pay for it under the circumstances. It is pay enough to think that you, the little girl and her mother are happy again," responded Ned.

"But I insist on your having the reward," said Mr. Martin.

"But I will not," said Ned, decidedly. "It would be outright extortion."

"Well, well," replied Mr. Martin, "you are the most remarkable young man I ever heard of. Are you comfortable here?"

"It is a splendid place to stop," said Ned.

"Well, so long as you stop in the city you are my guest. I shall pay all your expenses here," said Mr. Martin.

"But you ought not, Mr. Martin," said Ned. "If I had worked for you it would be different, but all I have helped you was accidental."

"But no one shall take money from you," said Mr. Martin. "What is money beside the restoration of my daughter? While here, young man, remember that your bills are paid."

"Well, if it will make you feel better, I accept the kind hospitality you offer with thanks," said Ned.

"If it is not impertinent, may I inquire the nature of your business in the city?" said Mr. Martin. "As I have long lived here I may be able to assist you."

Ned handed him the two advertisements.

"Have you hoop poles and spoon-hunts for sale?" Mr. Martin asked after reading the advertisements.

"Yes, sir," replied Ned.

"I am interested in the fish keg factory myself, and can easily promise to take as many poles as you have, and at a good price too," replied Mr. Martin.

"But I insist on only taking the usual price. I will not accept a higher price from your firm because of your gratitude. Business is business," said Ned decidedly.

"Well, as you will," responded Mr. Martin. "I like your pluck, and your nice sense of honor. We will go to the keg factory to-morrow. Now in regard to the spoonhunts. Have you a lot of them?"

"An acre or more," responded Ned.

"That is good," replied Mr. Martin. "My brother-in-law has begun manufacturing lawn chairs and there is nothing like laurel or spoonhunts to make them of. He gives a big price, as farmers do not like to bother with them as a usual thing, or they do not have enough to make it pay."

"How lucky I have been to meet you," said Ned.

"The luck is all on my side," responded Mr. Martin. "And now I wish to again insist on your taking the reward."

"No, no, I cannot," said Ned. "Mr. Martin said no more on the subject, but quietly led Ned to talk of himself, his parents, his friends, and ambitions, and before he left he knew the story of Ned's farming career from the beginning of that time."

"To-morrow," he said to Ned at parting, "we will see if we can find a market for your goods. Before he went home that night he saw the purchasing agent of both firms and paved the way for making a market for all the poles and spoonhunts that he could furnish. One other thing he did. He enclosed two \$500 bills in a letter, which he forwarded to Ralph Jackson, Esq., Ned's father, express paid. The letter read as follows:

Portland, Aug. 28, 18--.

Ralph Jackson, Esq.,

Please find herewith \$1,000, the rightful property of your noble son. He foolishly refuses to take the same. I send it to you in trust for him. See that he keeps the same, for in no way will it be received back by me.

Respectfully,

X. Q. Martin.

CHAPTER XVIII.

In Which Ned Sees The City.

The next morning Mr. Martin called for Ned. He came with his team, and proposed to drive him about the city, much to Ned's delight.

Mr. Martin drove him to Manjoy Hill, that from that high elevation Ned might get a delightful view of the waters of Casco Bay, its green islands and the ocean beyond; thence he drove to Bramhall's Hill, from which was an extensive view of farm, forest and mountain scenery. He took Ned to the wharves, where the vessels were at anchor, and passing up to a building, he went with him on board the passenger steamer, where the public

and to the parks. In fact, there was little of interest in the city that day. Toward night, Mr. Martin drove him to the fish barrel factory, and Ned made a good bargain for all the poles that he might send, and the purchasing agent suggested that he might buy more if he could make it pay. They were to be cut at once and immediately forwarded by freight train. Ned also made an unexpectedly good bargain for his spoonhunts. He went through this chair shop with much interest, and was amazed at the uniqueness of the chairs made from this material. The proprietor stated that he had great difficulty in getting all the material he wanted and was anxious for a lot at once, as the winter was the time to manufacture, and the summer the time to sell lawn chairs.

He remarked that he was much disappointed in the small quantity offered as a result of his advertisement. He explained to Ned how it was to be cut and that the more crooked it was the more valuable it became for his purpose, and as it was crooked and small, when trimmed and ready for shipment it must be packed to its best advantage in box cars. For a well packed long car full he would give \$20 himself paying the freight. "I can furnish at least two car loads, and perhaps three," said Ned.

"Well and good!" I wish you had a dozen of them," replied the purchaser. "I might get you some besides," continued Ned.

"Do so if you can," continued the chairman. "If you can buy so as to make something for your trouble, I shall be glad. I am in haste for the materials, so you better hurry up on your return. You can get choppers, I suppose."

"I think I can get enough," replied Ned.

Ned having finished his business, turned away, and Mr. Martin took him in his carriage again, and this time drove directly to his residence. Ned was surprised at the elegance of the house and surroundings, he had never seen anything like it before, and he at once saw that his patron must be a very wealthy man.

A servant took the horses as they drove up to the door, and Mr. Martin admitted himself and Ned by means of a latch key.

He had no sooner introduced Ned to Mrs. Martin than the little girl whom he had befriended at his first lodging place and who had afterward assisted him, bounded into the room.

"Oh, I wish to thank you so much, for giving me my mamma and papa again," she said, as she grabbed Ned by the hand. "Oh, I am so happy now!"

"Well, all I thank you," said Mrs. Martin. "For five years I have not had a nappy hour until yesterday, when my lost darling was returned to me. I feel as if I could be well again."

Ned looked at the picture hanging on the wall of a robust looking woman beside the portrait of Mr. Martin. He recognized there the features of Mrs. Martin, but wondered at the change sorrow had wrought in the once beautiful face of his hostess.

"It was all accidental, Mrs. Martin, I really did nothing in the matter, but I am really glad that I came to Portland and fell into the hands of sharpers as it has turned out. It has made me sharper. It has knocked some of the conceit out of me, and has made three persons very happy. I see," Ned as he looked at the reunited family.

Ned wondered also at the change he saw in the little girl. There was the birthmark, and the general form and feature, but the frightened and careworn expression were gone, and her sad looking eyes were now sparkling with delight. Her ragged and soiled clothes had been replaced by new ones, rich and elegant. It seemed hardly possible that such a change could be wrought in so short a time.

Ned stayed to tea, and such a table he never sat down to before, he had never seen so many silver dishes, so much cut glass, or partook of such a sumptuous feast.

"How long will you remain in the city?" asked Mrs. Martin, after they had returned to the parlor.

"I go home to-morrow," said Ned.

"I thought you were to stop here a week," said Mr. Martin.

"So I expected when I came," but you have helped me to dispose of my goods, and have shown me the whole city in your turn, so my work is done, and the dealers are anxious for the hoop poles and spoonhunts," responded Ned.

"Do not let him go to-morrow," said Mrs. Martin. "Let us all go down the Bay, and let him see what the salt water is like."

"That we will," said Mr. Martin, "will you stay another day?"

"Do stay," said the little girl. "Now I must thank you, little girl, for your thoughtful gift in saving me," said Ned. "You really did something. If it had not been for your letter let down by that string, I should have been a victim of sharpers. Did they mistreat you?"

"I do not know," said the girl, "they found you were gone about midnight; there was quite an excitement in the house; they did not take the trouble to come up into the garret to get me, but thinking you would inform the police of the character of the house, they made themselves scarce and had not come back to release me, before my father and the police came."

"They have not been seen," replied Mr. Martin, and he then probably never been seen here again. As near as I can make out they took the child hoping for a great reward. When I offered \$1,000 they evidently thought some time to get more, as they knew me to be very wealthy. They had never been able to safely return the child, and get even that reward. It seems that the child has been away from the city until recently, in charge of that woman, who is intimately connected with your clergyman friend, who is a notorious thief and confidence man, as you already know. I think they were intending to get the reward very soon, as they brought the child back to the city."

"I should have thought they would have taken the child with them after they found I was gone," said Ned.

"They fastened the door leading to the garret. They evidently thought it best not to take her out, until they saw the result of your escape. They or some one in their employ, without

doubt kept watch of the movements of the police," replied Mr. Martin.

Ned returned to the hotel for the night and next day with his new friends, took a delightful trip down the bay in a steam yacht, which belonged to Mr. Martin. To Ned it was a day of unalloyed pleasure. On their return, as they passed the hotel, Ned bade his friends good-bye, as he declared his intention of returning home on the morrow, by an early train.

"God bless you, my boy," said Mr. Martin. "I shall never lose sight of you and of your prosperity."

"Good-bye all," said Ned.

As Ned went up to his room that night, the clerk handed him a paper. It was a receipted bill for board, paid by Mr. Martin.

CHAPTER XIX.

In Which Ned's Parents are Puzzled.

"I have just received an express package from someone, on which the value \$1,000 is marked," said Mr. Jackson to his wife, one afternoon as he came in from the village.

"The value is a joke, of course," said his wife, "were you expecting anything?"

"Nothing that I know of," said Mr. Jackson.

"Who do you suppose it is from?" continued his wife.

"I do not know," responded Mr. Jackson, "as he began to scrutinize the package closely. 'Here is Portland express office marked on it,' he exclaimed, after looking at a partly covered stamp."

"Then it must be from Ned," said Mrs. Jackson.

"It is not his writing," responded his father.

"And he could not send \$1,000 either," said his mother.

"Nor is he one to joke his parents," said his father, as he looked at the words on the corner of the package. "Why don't you open it and see?" said Mrs. Jackson, with her womanly curiosity fully aroused.

"That will settle the matter," said Mr. Jackson, reaching for the scissors with which to cut the end of the great envelope.

He then pulled out the paper within and as he opened it two new \$500 bills slid into his lap.

"What can this mean?" exclaimed both Mr. and Mrs. Jackson at once.

"There is a letter there, read it quick!" said Mrs. Jackson, and he read.

Portland, Aug. 18.

Ralph Jackson, Esq.

Please find herewith \$1,000, the rightful property of your noble son. He foolishly refuses to take the same. I send it to you in trust for him. See that he keeps the same, for in no way will it be received back by me.

Respectfully,

X. Q. MARTIN

"What can this mean?" said Mrs. Jackson.

"I can't guess," responded her husband.

"Is the money genuine?" asked Mrs. Jackson, as she remembered an article she had just been reading of methods used in getting country people to circulate counterfeit money.

"The money looks all right," said Mr. Jackson.

"Have you any idea what Ned went to Portland for anyway, asked Mrs. Jackson.

"No, I have been greatly puzzled over the matter, he never asked to go away before, but there must always be a first time," replied Ned's father.

"It is not possible that this money is poor and that Ned's ambition has led him to answer in person one of those delusive advertisements of confidence men and sharpers," said Mrs. Jackson anxiously.

"Shaw," said Mr. Jackson, "Ned is honest bright in all he does, and would not be fooled into wrong doing, besides this letter is from some one else, and speaks of Ned's refusing what belonged to him."

"But," said his mother, "how could this belong to him? He has not \$500 in the bank yet."

"I can't guess what it means," said his father. "There is the savings bank treasurer now! I will call him in."

"That official name as called," said Mr. Jackson, when his guest was seated.

"As good as gold," responded the treasurer.

"You are sure of the genuineness?" pressed Mr. Jackson.

"Certainly, I will receive them on deposit at the bank," replied the treasurer.

"Has Ned drawn any of his money from the bank of late?" queried his father.

"He has never drawn a cent since he began his deposit," replied the bank officer, and he then added, "That is a remarkable fine boy of yours. I understand he took a business trip to Portland last week."

"We are much puzzled over an express package received this morning," replied Mr. Jackson. "I wish your opinion of the matter. Ned left on Monday, and we have received a letter saying he was well and stopping at a hotel. He made no mention of anything unusual, and to-day I get this package by express and this letter, read it."

The treasurer did so.

"Well Ned is a lucky boy," said the treasurer.

"Do you think it is all right?" said Ned's father anxiously.

"Think, why I know it is all right!" exclaimed the bank official.

"How do you know?" said the mother with a relieved look.

"I know it by the familiar signature of X. Q. Martin."

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"He is one of the most wealthy citizens and bank officials in Portland, and is known almost everywhere for his philanthropy, honesty and intelligence. It is worth a small fortune for a boy to be a friend of his."

"How do you account for his sending us this money for Ned, asked his mother, still in doubt over the right of such an unusual proceeding.

"I do not know, I could not guess," responded the bank treasurer. "It is all right, however, if Mr. Martin has anything to do with it, and there is no doubt about his signature, I know it as well as my own."

"It beats anything I ever heard of," continued Mr. Jackson.

"I believe I see through the matter," said the bank official, after a few minutes' thought, and then he began to chuckle to himself. "Ned is a lucky fellow. I remember that five years ago, Mr. Martin had a daughter abducted, and offered \$1,000 reward. I guess Ned has in some way discovered his long lost daughter, and the little man that he is, every inch of him, refused to take the reward, and Mr. Martin has taken this way to discharge a debt of gratitude. It is just like Ned, and just like Mr. Martin."

While they were talking about the matter, who should enter but Ned himself.

"Why, Ned!" exclaimed his parents. "You did not stay as long as you expected."

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