

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Molière
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
Kant London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Bunner Shakespeare Chambers Irving
Hale James Hastings Richter Chekhov da Shaw Wodehouse
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Swift Chekhov Newton



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Winning His Way

Charles Carleton Coffin

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER

- I. FIRST YEARS
- II. HARD TIMES
- III. MERRY TIMES
- IV. MUSIC AND PAINTING
- V. THE NIGHT-HAWKS
- VI. PAUL'S FRIENDS
- VII. IN A TRAP
- VIII. KEEPING SCHOOL
- IX. RALLYING ROUND THE FLAG
- X. A SOLDIER
- XI. SCOUTING
- XII. MISSED FROM HOME
- XIII. THE MARCH
- XIV. THE BATTLE
- XV. SHOWING WHAT HE WAS MADE OF
- XVI. HONOR TO THE BRAVE
- XVII. CHICKAMAUGA
- XVIII. HOW HE LIVED IN THE MEMORY OF HIS FRIENDS
- XIX. WHAT BECAME OF A TRAITOR
- XX. DARK DAYS
- XXI. CONSECRATION
- XXII. UNDER THE OLD FLAG
- XXIII. THE JAWS OF DEATH
- XXIV. HOME

[Pg 1]

WINNING HIS WAY

CHAPTER I.

FIRST YEARS.

Many years ago, before railroads were thought of, a company of Connecticut farmers, who had heard marvellous stories of the richness of the land in the West, sold their farms, packed up their goods, bade adieu to their friends, and with their families started for Ohio.

After weeks of travel over dusty roads, they came to a beautiful valley, watered by a winding river. The hills around were fair and sunny. There were groves of oaks, and maples, and lindens. The air was fragrant with honeysuckle and jasmine. There was plenty of game. The swift-footed deer browsed the tender grass upon the hills. Squirrels chattered in the trees and the ringdoves cooed in the depths of the forest. The place was so fertile and [Pg 2] fair, so pleasant and peaceful, that the emigrants made it their home, and called it New Hope.

They built a mill upon the river. They laid out a wide, level street, and a public square, erected a school-house, and then a church. One of their number opened a store. Other settlers came, and, as the years passed by, the village rang with the shouts of children pouring from the school-house for a frolic upon the square. Glorious times they had beneath the oaks and maples.

One of the jolliest of the boys was Paul Parker, only son of Widow Parker, who lived in a little old house, shaded by a great maple, on the outskirts of the village. Her husband died when Paul was in his cradle. Paul's grandfather was still living. The people called him "Old Pensioner Parker," for he fought at Bunker Hill, and received a pension from government. He was hale and hearty, though more than eighty years of age.

The pension was the main support of the family. They kept a cow, a pig, turkeys, and chickens, and, by selling milk and eggs, which Paul carried to their customers, they brought the years round without running in debt. Paul's pantaloons had a patch on each [Pg 3]

knee, but he laughed just as loud and whistled just as cheerily for all that.

In summer he went barefoot. He did not have to turn out at every mud-puddle, and he could plash into the mill-pond and give the frogs a crack over the head without stopping to take off stockings and shoes. Paul did not often have a dinner of roast beef, but he had an abundance of bean porridge, brown bread, and milk.

"Bean porridge is wholesome food, Paul," said his grandfather. "When I was a boy we used to say,—

'Bean porridge hot,
Bean porridge cold,—
Bean porridge best
Nine days old.'

The wood-choppers in winter used to freeze it into cakes and carry it into the woods. Many a time I have made a good dinner on a chunk of frozen porridge."

The Pensioner remembered what took place in his early years, but he lost his reckoning many times a day upon what was going on in the town. He loved to tell stories, and Paul was a willing listener. Pleasant winter-evenings they had in the old kitchen, [Pg 4] the hickory logs blazing on the hearth, the tea-kettle singing through its nose, the clock ticking soberly, the old Pensioner smoking his pipe in the arm-chair, Paul's mother knitting,—Bruno by Paul's side, wagging his tail and watching Muff in the opposite corner rolling her great round yellow eyes. Bruno was always ready to give Muff battle whenever Paul tipped him the wink to pitch in.

The Pensioner's stories were of his boyhood,—how he joined the army, and fought the battles of the Revolution. Thus his story ran.

"I was only a little bigger than you are, Paul," he said, "when the red-coats began the war at Lexington. I lived in old Connecticut then; that was a long time before we came out here. The meeting-house bell rung, and the people blew their dinner-horns, till the whole town was alarmed. I ran up to the meeting-house and found

the militia forming. The men had their guns and powder-horns. The women were at work melting their pewter porringers into bullets. I wasn't o'd enough to train, but I could fire a gun and bring down a squirrel from the top of a tree. I wanted to go and help drive the red-coats into the ocean. I asked mother [Pg 5] if I might. I was afraid that she didn't want me to go. 'Why, Paul,' says she, 'you haven't any clothes.' 'Mother,' says I, 'I can shoot a red-coat just as well as any of the men can.' Says she, 'Do you want to go, Paul?' 'Yes, mother.' 'Then you shall go; I'll fix you out,' she said. As I hadn't any coat she took a meal-bag, cut a hole for my head in the bottom, and made holes for my arms in the sides, cut off a pair of her own stocking-legs, and sewed them on for sleeves, and I was rigged. I took the old gun which father carried at Ticonderoga, and the powder-horn, and started. There is the gun and the horn, Paul, hanging up over the fireplace.

"The red-coats had got back to Boston, but we cooped them up. Our company was in Colonel Knowlton's regiment. I carried the flag, which said, *Qui transtulit sustinet*. I don't know anything about Latin, but those who do say it means that God who hath transported us hither will sustain us; and that is true, Paul. He sustained us at Bunker Hill, and we should have held it if our powder had not given out. Our regiment was by a rail-fence on the northeast side of the hill. Stark, [Pg 6] with his New Hampshire boys, was by the river. Prescott was in the redoubt on the top of the hill. Old Put kept walking up and down the lines. This is the way it was, Paul."

The Pensioner laid aside his pipe, bent forward, and traced upon the hearth the positions of the troops.

"There is the redoubt; here is the rail-fence; there is where the red-coats formed their lines. They came up in front of us here. We didn't fire a gun till they got close to us. I'll show you how the fire ran down the line."

He took down the horn, pulled out the stopper, held his finger over the tip, and made a trail of powder.

"There, Paul, that is by the fence. As the red-coats came up, some of us began to be uneasy and wanted to fire; but Old Put kept saying, 'Don't fire yet! Wait till you can see the white of their eyes! Aim at their belts!'"

While the Pensioner was saying this, he took the tongs and picked a live coal from the fire.

"They came up beautifully, Paul,—the tall grenadiers and light-infantry in their scarlet coats, and the sun shining on their gun-barrels and bayonets. They [Pg 7] wer'n't more than ten rods off when a soldier on top of the hill couldn't stand it any longer. Pop! went his gun, and the fire ran down the hill quicker than scat! just like this!"

He touched the coal to the powder. There was a flash, a puff of smoke rising to the ceiling, and filling the room.

"Hooray!" shouted Paul, springing to his feet. Muff went with a jump upon the bureau in the corner of the room, her tail as big as Paul's arm, and her back up. Bruno was after her in a twinkling, bouncing about, barking, and looking round to Paul to see if it was all right.

"There, grandpa, you have made a great smut on the hearth," said Mrs. Parker, who kept her house neat and tidy, though it was a crazy old affair.

"Well, mother, I thought it would please Paul."

"S-s-s-si'c!" Paul made a hiss which Bruno understood, for he went at Muff more fiercely. It was glorious to see Muff spit fire, and hear her growl low and deep like distant thunder. Paul would not have Muff hurt for anything, but he loved to see Bruno show his teeth at her, for she was gritty when waked up.

[Pg 8]

"Be still, Paul, and let Muff alone," said Paul's mother.

"Come, Bruno, she ain't worth minding," said Paul.

"They have got good courage, both of 'em," said the Pensioner; "and courage is one half of the battle, and truth and honor is the other half. Paul, I want you to remember that. It will be worth more than a fortune to you. I don't mean that cats and dogs know much about truth and honor, and I have seen some men who didn't know much more about those qualities of character than Muff and Bruno; but what I have said, Paul, is true for all that. They who win success in life are those who love truth, and who follow what is noble and

good. No matter how brave a man may be, if he hasn't these qualities he won't succeed. He may get rich, but that won't amount to much. Success, Paul, is to have an unblemished character,—to be true to ourselves, to our country, and to God."

He went on with his story, telling how the British troops ran before the fire of the Yankees,—how they re-formed and came on a second time, and were repulsed again,—how General Clinton went [Pg 9] over from Boston with reinforcements,—how Charlestown was set on fire,—how the flames leaped from house to house, and curled round the spire of the church,—how the red-coats advanced a third time beneath the great black clouds of smoke,—how the ammunition of the Yankees gave out, and they were obliged to retreat,—how General Putnam tried to rally them,—how they escaped across Charlestown Neck, where the cannon-balls from the British floating batteries raked the ranks! He made it all so plain, that Paul wished he had been there.

The story completed, Paul climbed the creaking stairway to his narrow chamber, repeated his evening prayer, and scrambled into bed.

"He is a jolly boy," said the Pensioner to Paul's mother, as Paul left the room.

"I don't know what will become of him," she replied, "he is so wild and thoughtless. He leaves the door open, throws his cap into the corner, sets Bruno and Muff to growling, stops to play on his way home from school, sings, whistles, shouts, hurrahs, and tears round like all possessed."

If she could have looked into Paul's desk at school, she would have found whirligigs, tops, pin-boxes, [Pg 10] nails, and no end of strings and dancing dandy-jims.

"Paul is a rogue," said the Pensioner. "You remember how he got on top of the house awhile ago and frightened us out of our wits by shouting 'Fire! fire!' down the chimney; how we ran out to see about it; how I asked him 'Where?' and says he, 'Down there in the fire-place, grandpa.' He is a chip of the old block. I used to do just so. But there is one good thing about him, he don't do mean tricks. He don't bend up pins and put them in the boys' seats, or tuck chest-

nut-burs into the girls' hoods. I never knew him to tell a lie. He will come out all right."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Parker.

Paul could look through the crevices between the shingles, and the cracks in the walls, and behold the stars gleaming from the unfathomable spaces. He wondered how far they were away. He listened to the wind chanting a solemn dirge, filling his soul with longings for he knew not what. He thought over his grandfather's stories, and the words he had spoken about courage, truth, and honor, till a shingle clattering in the wind took up the refrain, and [Pg 11] seemed to say, Truth and honor,—truth and honor,—truth and honor,—so steadily and pleasantly, that while he listened the stars faded from his sight, and he sailed away into dream-land.

Paul was twelve years old, stout, hearty, and healthy,—full of life, and brimming over with fun. Once he set the village in a roar. The people permitted their pigs to run at large. The great maple in front of the Pensioner's house was cool and shady,—a delightful place for the pigs through the hot summer days.

Mr. Chrome, the carriage-painter, lived across the road. He painted a great many wagons for the farmers,—the wheels yellow, the bodies blue, green, or red, with scrolls and flowers on the sides. Paul watched him by the hour, and sometimes made up his mind to be a carriage-painter when he became a man.

"Mr. Chrome," said Paul, "don't you think that those pigs would look better if they were painted?"

"Perhaps so."

"I should like to see how they would look painted as you paint your wagons."

Mr. Chrome laughed at the ludicrous fancy. He [Pg 12] loved fun, and was ready to help carry out the freak.

"Well, just try your hand on improving nature," he said.

Paul went to work. Knowing that pigs like to have their backs scratched, he had no difficulty in keeping them quiet. To one he gave green legs, blue ears, red rings round its eyes, and a red tail. Another had one red leg, one blue, one yellow, one green, with red

and blue stripes and yellow stars on its body. "I will make him a star-spangled pig," Paul shouted to Mr. Chrome. Another had a green head, yellow ears, and a red body. Bruno watched the proceedings, wagging his tail, looking now at Paul and then at the pigs, ready to help on the fun.

"Si'c! — si'c! — si'c!" said Paul. Bruno was upon them with a bound. Away they capered, with him at their heels. As soon as they came into the sunshine the spirits of turpentine in the paint was like fire to their flesh. Faster they ran up the street squealing, with Bruno barking behind. Mr. Chrome laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. All the dogs, great and small, joined Bruno in chase of the strange game. People came out from the stores, [Pg 13] windows were thrown up, and all hands — men, women, and children — ran to see what was the matter, laughing and shouting, while the pigs and dogs ran round the square.

"Paul Parker did that, I'll bet," said Mr. Leatherby, the shoemaker, peeping out from his shop. "It is just like him."

An old white horse, belonging to Mr. Smith, also sought the shade of the maple before the Pensioner's house. Bruno barked at him by the hour, but the old horse would not move for anything short of a club or stone.

"I'll see if I can't get rid of him," said Paul to himself.

He went into the barn, found a piece of rope, tied up a little bundle of hay, got a stick five or six feet long, and some old harness-straps. In the evening, when it was so dark that people could not see what he was up to, he caught the old horse, laid the stick between his ears and strapped it to his neck, and tied the hay to the end of the stick, in such a way that it hung a few inches beyond old Whitey's nose. The old horse took a step ahead to nibble the hay, — another, — another, — another! "Don't you wish [Pg 14] you may get it?" said Paul. Tramp, — tramp, — tramp. Old Whitey went down the road. Paul heard him go across the bridge by the mill, and up the hill the other side of the brook.

"Go it, old fellow!" he shouted, then listened again. It was a calm night, and he could just hear old Whitey's feet, — tramp, — tramp, — tramp.

The next morning the good people of Fairview, ten miles from New Hope, laughed to see an old white horse, with a bundle of hay a few inches beyond his nose, passing through the place.

Mr. Smith, after breakfast, started out to hunt up old Whitey. He often found him under the maple in front of the Pensioner's house. Paul was swinging on the gate. "Have you seen my horse?" Mr. Smith asked.

"Yes, sir, I saw him going down towards the bridge last evening," Paul replied, chuckling to himself.

Mr. Smith went down to the mill and inquired. The miller heard a horse go over the bridge. The farmer on the other side heard a horse go up the hill. Mr. Smith looked at the tracks. They were old Whitey's, who had a broken shoe on his left hind foot. He followed on. "I never knew him to go [Pg 15] away before," he said to himself, as he walked hour after hour, seeing the tracks all the way to Fairview.

"Have you seen a white horse about here?" he asked of one of the villagers.

"Yes, sir; there was one here this morning trying to overtake a bundle of hay," the man replied, laughing. "There he is now!" he added.

Mr. Smith looked up and saw old Whitey, who had turned about, and was reaching forward to get a nibble of the hay. Mr. Smith felt like being angry, but the old horse was walking so soberly and earnestly that he couldn't help laughing.

"That is some of Paul's doings, I know. I'll give him a blessing when I get back."

It was noon before Mr. Smith reached New Hope. Paul and Bruno were sitting beneath the maple.

"Where did you find old Whitey?" Paul asked.

"You was the one who did it, you little rascal!"

"Did what?"

"You know what. You have made me walk clear to Fairview. I have a mind to horsewhip you."

Paul laughed to think that the old horse had tramped so far, though he was sorry that Mr. Smith had been obliged to walk that distance.

[Pg 16]

"I didn't mean any harm, Mr. Smith; but old Whitey has made our dooryard his stamping-place all summer, and I thought I would see if I could get rid of him."

"Well, sir, if you do it again I'll trounce you!" said Mr. Smith as he rode away, his anger coming up.

"Wouldn't it be better for you to put him in a pasture, Mr. Smith? Then he wouldn't trouble us," said Paul, who knew that Mr. Smith had no right to let old Whitey run at large. Paul was not easily frightened when he had right on his side. The people in the stores and at the tavern had a hearty laugh when they heard how old Whitey went to Fairview.

Mr. Cipher taught the village school. He was tall, slim, thin-faced, with black eyes deeply set in his head, and a long, hooked nose like an eagle's bill. He wore a loose swallow-tailed coat with bright brass buttons, and pants which were several inches too short. The Committee employed him, not because he was a superior teacher, but they could get him for twelve dollars a month, while Mr. Rudiment, who had been through college, and who was known to be an excellent instructor, asked sixteen.

[Pg 17]

There was a crowd of roistering boys and rosy-cheeked girls, who made the old school-house hum like a beehive. Very pleasant to the passers-by was the music of their voices. At recess and at noon they had leap-frog and tag. Paul was in a class with Philip Funk, Hans Middlekauf, and Michael Murphy. There were other boys and girls of all nationalities. Paul's ancestors were from Connecticut, while Philip's father was a Virginian. Hans was born in Germany, and Michael in Ireland. Philip's father kept a grocery, and sold sugar, molasses, tobacco, and whiskey. He was rich, and Philip wore good clothes and calf-skin boots. Paul could get his lessons very quick whenever he set about them in earnest, but he spent half his time in inventing fly-traps, making whirligigs, or drawing pictures on his

slate. He had an accurate eye, and could draw admirably. Philip could get his lessons also if he chose to apply himself, but it was a great deal easier to have some one work out the problems in arithmetic than to do them himself.

"Here, Paul, just help me; that is a good fellow," he said, coaxingly.

It was at recess.

[Pg 18]

"No; Cipher has forbid it. Each one must do his own work," said Paul.

"If you will do it, I will give you a handful of raisins," said Philip, who usually had his pockets full of raisins, candy, or nuts.

"It wouldn't be right."

"Come, just do this one; Cipher never will know it."

"No!" Paul said it resolutely.

"You are a mean, sneaking fellow," said Philip.

Philip was a year older than Paul. He had sandy hair, white eyelashes, and a freckled face. He carried a watch, and always had money in his pocket. Paul, on the other hand, hardly ever had a cent which he could call his own. His clothes were worn till they were almost past mending.

"Rag-tag has got a hole in his trousers," said Philip to the other boys.

Paul's face flushed. He wanted to knock Phillip's teeth down his throat. He knew that his mother had hard work to clothe him, and felt the insult keenly. He went into the school-house, choked his anger down, and tried to forget all about it by drawing a picture of the master. It was an excellent likeness,—his spindle legs, [Pg 19] great feet, short pants, loose coat, sunken eyes, hooked nose, thin face, and long bony fingers.

Philip sat behind Paul. Instead of studying his lesson, he was planning how to get Paul into trouble. He saw the picture. Now was his time. He giggled aloud. Mr. Cipher looked up in astonishment.

"What are you laughing at, Master Funk?"

"At what Paul is doing."

Paul hustled his slate into his desk.

"Let me see what you have here," said Cipher, walking up to Paul, who spat on his fingers, and ran his hand into the desk, to rub out the drawing; but he felt that it would be better to meet his punishment boldly than to have the school think he was a sneak. He laid the slate before the master without a line effaced.

"Giving your attention to drawing, are you, Master Paul?" said Cipher. His eyes flashed. He knit his brows. The blood rushed to his cheeks. There was a popping up of heads all over the school-room to get a sight of the picture.

The boys laughed aloud, and there was a tittering among the girls, which made Cipher very angry. [Pg 20] "Silence!" he roared, and stamped upon the floor so savagely that the windows rattled. "Come out here, sir. I'll give you a drawing-lesson of another sort." He seized Paul by the collar, and threw him into the space in front of his own desk. "Hold out your hand."

Paul felt that he was about to receive a tremendous thrashing; but he determined that he would not flinch. He held out his right hand, and received the blow from a heavy ferule. His hand felt as if he had been struck by a piece of hot iron.

"The other, sir."

Whack! it fell, a blow which made the flesh purple. There was an Oh! upon his tongue; but he set his teeth together, and bit his lips till they bled, and so smothered it. Another blow,—another,—another. They were hard to bear; but his teeth were set like a vice. There was a twitching of the muscles round his lips; he was pale. When the blows fell, he held his breath, but did not snivel.

"I'll see if I can't bring you to your feeling, you good-for-nothing scapegrace," said the master, mad with passion, and surprised that Paul made no outcry. He gave another round, bringing the ferule down with [Pg 21] great force. Blood began to ooze from the pores. The last blow spattered the drops around the room. Cipher came to his senses. He stopped.

"Are you sorry, sir?"

"I don't know whether I am or not. I didn't mean any harm. I suppose I ought not to have drawn it in school; but I didn't do it to make fun. I drew you just as you are," said Paul,—his voice trembling a little in spite of his efforts to control it.

The master could not deny that it was a perfect likeness. He was surprised at Paul's cleverness at drawing, and for the first time in his life saw that he cut a ridiculous figure wearing that long, loose, swallow-tailed coat, with great, flaming brass buttons, and resolved upon the spot that his next coat should be a frock, and that he would get a longer pair of pants.

"You may take your seat, sir!" he said, puzzled to know whether to punish Paul still more, and compel him to say that he was sorry, or whether to accept the explanations, and apologize for whipping him so severely.

Paul sat down. His hands ached terribly; but what troubled him most was the thought that he had been whipped before the whole school. All the girls [Pg 22] had witnessed his humiliation. There was one among them,—Azalia Adams,—who stood at the head of Paul's class, the best reader and speller in school. She had ruby lips, and cheeks like roses; the golden sunlight falling upon her chestnut hair crowned her with glory; deep, thoughtful, and earnest was the liquid light of her hazel eyes; she was as lovely and beautiful as the flower whose name she bore. Paul had drawn her picture many times,—sometimes bending over her task, sometimes as she sat, unmindful of the hum of voices around her, looking far away into a dim and distant dream-land. He never wearied of tracing the features of one so fair and good as she. Her laugh was as musical as a mountain-brook; and in the church on Sunday, when he heard her voice sweetly and melodiously mingling with the choir, he thought of the angels,—of her as in heaven and he on earth.

"Run home, sonny, and tell your marm that you got a licking," said Philip when school was out.

Paul's face became livid. He would have doubled his fist and given Philip a blow in the face, but his palms were like puff-balls. There was an ugly feeling inside, but just then a pair of bright hazel

eyes, [Pg 23] almost swimming with tears, looked into his own. "Don't mind it, Paul!" said Azalia.

The pain was not half so hard to bear after that. He wanted to say, "I thank you," but did not know how. Till then his lips had hardly quivered, and he had not shed a tear; now his eyes became moist; one great drop rolled down his cheek, but he wiped it off with his coat-sleeve, and turned away, for fear that Azalia would think him a baby.

On his way home the thought uppermost in his mind was, "What will mother say?" Why tell her? Would it not be better to keep the matter to himself? But then he remembered that she had said, "Paul, I shall expect you to tell me truthfully all that happens to you at school." He loved his mother. She was one of the best mothers that ever lived, working for him day and night. How could he abuse such confidence as she had given him? He would not violate it. He would not be a sneak.

His mother and the Pensioner were sitting before the fire as he entered the house. She welcomed him with a smile,—a beautiful smile it was, for she was a noble woman, and Paul was her darling, her pride, the light, joy, and comfort of her life.

[Pg 24]

"Well, Paul, how do you get on at school?" his grandfather asked.

"I got a whipping to-day." It was spoken boldly and manfully.

"What! My son got a whipping!" his mother exclaimed.

"Yes, mother."

"I am astonished. Come here, and tell me all about it."

Paul stood by her side and told the story,—how Philip Funk tried to bribe him, how he called him names,—how, having got his lessons, he made a picture of the master. "Here it is, mother." He took his slate from his little green bag. The picture had not been effaced. His mother looked at it and laughed, notwithstanding her efforts to keep sober, for it was such a perfect likeness. She had an exquisite sense of the ludicrous, and Paul was like her. She was surprised to find that he could draw so well.

"We will talk about the matter after supper," she said. She had told Paul many times, that, if he was justly punished at school, he must expect a second punishment at home; but she wanted to think awhile before deciding what to do. She was pleased to [Pg 25] know that her boy could not be bribed to do what his conscience told him he ought not to do, and that he was manly and truthful. She would rather follow him to the church-yard and lay him in his grave beneath the bending elms, than to have him untruthful or wicked.

The evening passed away. Paul sat before the fire, looking steadily into the coals. He was sober and thoughtful, wondering what his mother would say at last. The clock struck nine. It was his bedtime. He went and stood by her side once more. "You are not angry with me, mother, are you?"

"No, my son. I do not think that you deserved so severe a punishment. I am rejoiced to know that you are truthful, and that you despise a mean act. Be always as you have been to-night in telling the truth, and I never shall be angry with you."

He threw his arms around her neck, and gave way to tears, such as CIPHER could not extort by his pounding. She gave him a good-night kiss, — so sweet that it seemed to lie upon his lips all through the night.

"God bless you, Paul," said the Pensioner.

Paul climbed the creaking stairs, and knelt with an [Pg 26] overflowing heart to say his evening prayer. He spoke the words earnestly when he asked God to take care of his mother and grandfather. He was very happy. He looked out through the crevices in the walls, and saw the stars and the moon flooding the landscape with silver light. There was sweet music in the air, — the merry melody of the water murmuring by the mill, the cheerful chirping of the crickets, and the lullaby of the winds, near at hand and far away, putting him in mind of the choirs on earth and the choirs in heaven. "Don't mind it, Paul!" were the words they sung, so sweetly and tenderly that for many days they rang in his ears.

[Pg 27]