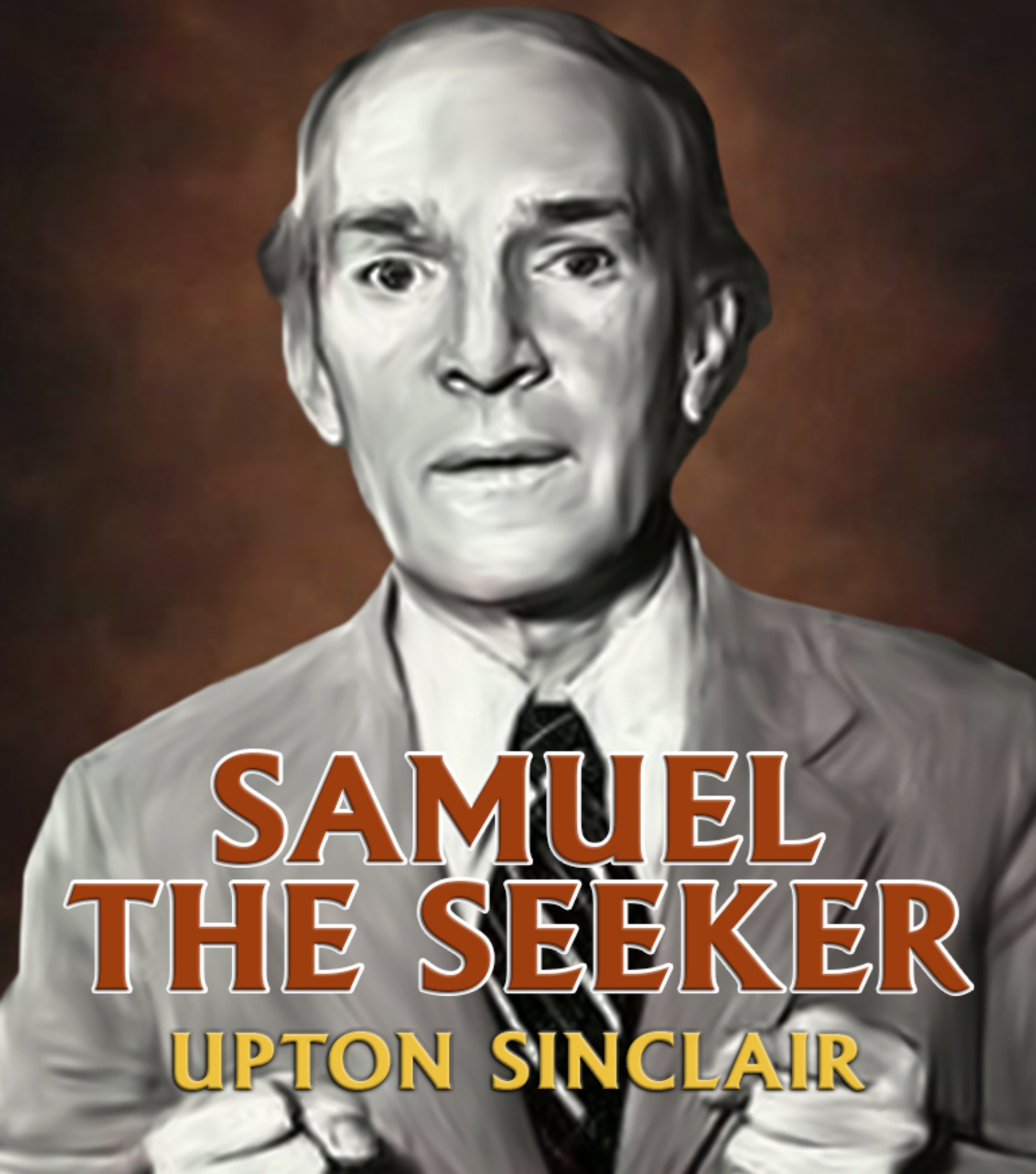
CLASSICS TO GO



SAMUEL THE SEEKER

UPTON SINCLAIR

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Upton Sinclair

CHAPTER I

“Samuel,” said old Ephraim, “Seek, and ye shall find.”

He had written these words upon the little picture of Samuel's mother, which hung in that corner of the old attic which served as the boy's bedroom; and so Samuel grew up with the knowledge that he, too, was one of the Seekers. Just what he was to seek, and just how he was to seek it, were matters of uncertainty—they were part of the search. Old Ephraim could not tell him very much about it, for the Seekers had moved away to the West before he had come to the farm; and Samuel's mother had died very young, before her husband had a chance to learn more than the rudiments of her faith. So all that Samuel knew was that the Seekers were men and women of fervor, who had broken with the churches because they would not believe what was taught—holding that it was every man's duty to read the Word of God for himself and to follow where it led him.

Thus the boy learned to think of life, not as something settled, but as a place for adventure. One must seek and seek; and in the end the way of truth would be revealed to him. He could see this zeal in his mother's face, beautiful and delicate, even in the crude picture; and Samuel did not know that the picture was crude, and wove his dreams about it. Sometimes at twilight old Ephraim would talk about her, and the tears would steal down his cheeks. The one year that he had known her had sufficed to change the course of his life; and he had been a man past middle life, too, a widower with two children. He had come into the country as the foreman of a lumber camp back on the mountain.

Samuel had always thought of his father as an old man; Ephraim had been hurt by a vicious horse, and had aged rapidly after that. He had given up lumbering; it had not taken long to clear out that part of the mountains. Now the hills were swept bare, and the population had found a new way of living.

Samuel's childhood life had been grim and stern. The winter fell early upon the mountain wilderness; the lake would freeze over, and the roads block up with snow, and after that they would live upon what they had raised in the summer, with what Dan and Adam—Samuel's half-brothers—might bring in from the chase. But now all this was changed and forgotten; for there was a hotel at the end of the lake, and money was free in the country. It was no longer worth while to reap the hay from the mountain meadows; it was better to move the family into the attic, and “take boarders.” Some of the neighbors even turned their old corncribs into sleeping shacks, and advertised in the city papers, and were soon blossoming forth in white paint and new buildings, and were on the way to having “hotels” of their own.

Old Ephraim lacked the cunning for that kind of success. He was lame and slow, tending toward stoutness, and having a film over one eye; and Samuel knew that the boarders made fun of him, even while they devoured his food and took advantage of him. This was the first bitterness of Samuel's life; for he knew that within old Ephraim's bosom was the heart of a king. Once the boy had heard him in the room beneath his attic, talking with one of the boarders, a widow with a little daughter of whom the old man was fond. “I've had a feeling, ma'am,” he was saying, “that somehow you might be in trouble. And I wanted to say that if you can't spare this money, I would rather you kept it; for I don't need it now, and you can send it to me when things are better with you.” That was Ephraim Prescott's

way with his boarders; and so he did not grow in riches as fast as he grew in soul.

Ephraim's wife had taught him to read the Bible. He read it every night, and on Sundays also; and if what he was reading was sublime poetry, and a part of the world's best literature, the old man did not know it. He took it all as having actual relationship to such matters as trading horses and feeding boarders. And he taught Samuel to take it that way also; and as the boy grew up there took root within him a great dismay and perplexity, that these moral truths which he read in the Book seemed to count for so little in the world about him.

Besides the Bible and his mother, Ephraim taught his son one other great thing; that was America. America was Samuel's country, the land where his fathers had died. It was a land set apart from all others, for the working out of a high and wonderful destiny. It was the land of Liberty. For this whole armies of heroic men had poured out their heart's blood; and their dream was embodied in institutions which were almost as sacred as the Book itself. Samuel learned hymns which dealt with these things, and he heard great speeches about them; every Fourth of July that he could remember he had driven out to the courthouse to hear one, and he was never in the least ashamed when the tears came into his eyes.

He had seen tears even in the summer boarders' eyes; once or twice when on a quiet evening it chanced that the old man unlocked the secret chambers of his soul. For Ephraim Prescott had been through the War. He had marched with the Seventeenth Pennsylvania from Bull Run to Cold Harbor, where he had been three times wounded; and his memory was a storehouse of mighty deeds and thrilling images. Heroic figures strode through it; there were marches and weary sieges, prison and sickness and despair; there were moments of horror and of glory, visions of blood

and anguish, of flame and cannon smoke; there were battle flags, torn by shot and shell, and names of precious memory, which stirred the deep places of the soul. These men had given their lives for Freedom; they had lain down to make a pathway before her—they had filled up a bloody chasm so that she might pass upon her way. And that was the heritage they handed to their children, to guard and cherish. That was what it meant to be an American; that one must hold himself in readiness to go forth as they had done, and dare and suffer whatever the fates might send.

Such were the things out of which Samuel's life was made; besides these he had only the farm, with its daily tasks, and the pageant of Nature in the wilderness—of day and night, and of winter and summer upon the mountains. The books were few. There was one ragged volume which Samuel knew nearly by heart, which told the adventures of a castaway upon a desert island, and how, step by step, he solved his problem; Samuel learned from that to think of life as made by honest labor, and to find a thrill of romance in the making of useful things. And then there was the story of Christian, and of his pilgrimage; the very book for a Seeker—with visions of glory not too definite, leaving danger of premature success.

And then, much later, some one left at the place a volume of the “Farm Rhymes” of James Whitcomb Riley; and before Samuel's eyes there opened a new vision of life. He had been happy; but now suddenly he realized it. He had loved the blue sky above him, and the deep woods and the sparkling lake; but now he had words to tell about them—and the common tasks of his life were transfigured with the glory of song. So one might milk the cow with stirrings of wonder, and mow in the meadows to the rhythm of “Knee-deep in June.”

From which you may divine that Samuel was what is called an Enthusiast. He was disposed to take rosy views of

things, and to believe what he was told—especially if it was something beautiful and appealing. He was given to having ideals and to accepting theories. He would be stirred by some broad new principle; and he would set to work to apply it with fervor. But you are not to conclude from this that Samuel was a fool. On the contrary, when things went wrong he knew it; and according to his religion, he sought the reason, and he sought persistently, and with all his might. If all men would do as much, the world might soon be quite a different place.

CHAPTER II

Such was Samuel's life until he was seventeen, and then a sad experience came to the family.

It was because of the city people. They brought prosperity to the country, everyone said, but old Ephraim regretted their coming, none the less. They broke down the old standards, and put an end to the old ways of life. What was the use of grubbing up stumps in a pasture lot, when one could sell minnows for a penny apiece? So all the men became “guides” and camp servants, and the girls became waitresses. They wore more stylish clothes and were livelier of speech; but they were also more greedy and less independent. They had learned to take tips, for instance; and more than one of the girls went away to the city to nameless and terrible destinies.

These summer boarders all had money. Young and old, it flowed from them in a continuous stream. They did not have to plow and reap—they bought what they wanted; and they spent their time at play—with sailboats and fishing tackle, bicycles and automobiles, and what not. How all this money came to be was a thing difficult to imagine; but it came from the city—from the great Metropolis, to which one's thoughts turned with ever livelier interest.

Then, one August, came a man who opened the gates of knowledge a little. Manning was his name—Percival Manning, junior partner in the firm of Manning & Isaacson, Bankers and Brokers—with an address which had caused the Prescott family to start and stare with awe. It was Wall Street!

Mr. Percival Manning was round and stout, and wore striped shirts, and trousers which were like a knife blade in

front; also, he fairly radiated prosperity. His talk was all of financial wizardry by which fortunes were made overnight. The firm of Manning & Isaacson was one of the oldest and most prosperous in the street, so he said; and its junior partner was in the confidence of some of the greatest powers in the financial affairs of the country. And, alas! for the Prescott family, which did not read the magazines and had never even heard of a “bucket-shop”!

Adam, the oldest brother, took Mr. Manning back to Indian Pond on a fishing trip; and Samuel went along to help with the carries. And all the way the talk was of the wonders of city life. Samuel learned that his home was a God-forsaken place in winter—something which had never been hinted at in any theological book which he had read. Manning wondered that Adam didn't get out to some place where a man had a chance. Then he threw away a half-smoked cigar and talked about the theaters and the music halls; and after that he came back to the inexhaustible topic of Wall Street.

He had had interesting news from the office that day; there was a big deal about to be consummated—the Glass Bottle Trust was ready for launching. For nearly a year old Harry Lockman—“You've heard of him, no doubt—he built up the great glass works at Lockmanville?” said Manning. No, Adam confessed that he had never heard of Lockman, that shrewd and crafty old multi-millionaire who had gone on a still hunt for glass-bottle factories, and now had the country in the grip of the fourteen-million-dollar “Glass Bottle Securities Company.” No one knew it, as yet; but soon the enterprise would be under full sail—“And won't the old cormorant take in the shekels, though!” chuckled Manning.

“That might be a good sort of thing for a man to invest in,” said Adam cautiously.

“Well, I just guess!” laughed the other. “If he's quick about it.”

“Do you suppose you could find out how to get some of that stock?” was the next question.

“Sure,” said Manning—“that's what we're in business for.”

And then, as luck would have it, a city man bought the old Wyckman farm, and the trustees of the estate came to visit Ephraim in solemn state and paid down three crisp one-thousand-dollar bills and carried off the canceled mortgage. And the old man sat a-tremble holding in his hands the savings of his whole lifetime, and facing the eager onslaught of his two eldest sons.

“But, Adam!” he protested. “It's gambling!”

“It's nothing of the kind,” cried the other. “It's no more gambling than if I was to buy a horse because I knowed that horses would be scarce next spring. It's just business.”

“But those factories make beer bottles and whisky bottles!” exclaimed the old man. “Does it seem right to you to get our money that way?”

“They make all kinds of bottles,” said Adam; “how can they help what they're used for?”

“And besides,” put in Dan, with a master-stroke of diplomacy, “it will raise the prices on 'em, and make 'em harder to git.”

“There's been fortunes lost in Wall Street,” said the father. “How can we tell?”

“We've got a chance to get in on the inside,” said Adam. “Such chances don't happen twice in a lifetime.”

“Just read this here circular!” added Dan. “If we let a chance like this go we'll deserve to break our backs hoeing corn the rest of our days.”

That was the argument. Old Ephraim had never thought of a broken back in connection with the hoeing of corn. There were four acres in the field, and every spring he had plowed and harrowed it and planted it and replanted what the crows

had pulled up; and all summer long he had hoed and tended it, and in the fall he had cut it, stalk by stalk, and stacked it; and then through October, sitting on the bare bleak hillside, he had husked it, ear by ear, and gathered it in baskets—if the season was good, perhaps a hundred dollars' worth of grain. That was the way one worked to create a hundred dollars' worth of Value; and Manning had paid as much for the fancy-mounted shotgun which stood in the corner of his room! And here was the great fourteen-million-dollar Glass Bottle Trust, with properties said to be worth twenty-five million, and the control of one of the great industries of the country—and stock which might easily go to a hundred and fifty in a single week!

“Boys,” said the old man, sadly, “it won't be me that will spend this money. And I don't want to stand in your way. If you're bent on doing it—”

“We are!” cried Adam.

“What do you say, Samuel?” asked the father.

“I don't know what to say,” said Samuel. “It seems to me that three thousand dollars is a lot of money. And I don't see why we need any more.”

“Do you want to stand in the way?” demanded Adam.

“No, I don't want to stand in the way,” said Samuel.

And so the decision was made. When they came to give the order they found themselves confronted with a strange proposition; they did not have to buy the whole stock, it seemed—they might buy only the increase in its value. And the effect of this marvelous device would be that they would make ten times as much as they had expected to make! So, needless to say, they bought that way.

And they took a daily paper and watched breathlessly, while “Glass Bottle Securities” crept up from sixty-three and an eighth to sixty-four and a quarter. And then, late one evening, old Hiram Johns, the storekeeper, drove up with a

telegram from Manning and Isaacson, telling them that they must put up more “margin”—“Glass Bottle Securities” was at fifty-six and five eighths. They sat up all night debating what this could mean and trying to lay the specters of horror. The next day Adam set out to go to the city and see about it; but he met the mail on the way and came home again with a letter from the brokers, regretfully informing them that it had been necessary to sell the stock, which was now below fifty. In the news columns of the paper they found the explanation of the calamity—old Henry Lockman had dropped dead of apoplexy at the climax of his career, and the bears had played havoc with “Glass Bottle Securities.”

Their three thousand dollars was gone. It took them three days to realize it—it was so utterly beyond belief, that they had to write to the brokers and receive another letter in which it was stated in black and white and beyond all misunderstanding that there was not a dollar of their money left. Adam raged and swore like a madman, and Dan vowed savagely that he would go down to the city and kill Manning. As for the father, he wrote a letter of agonized reproach, to which Mr. Manning replied with patient courtesy, explaining that he had had nothing to do with the matter; that he was a broker and had bought as ordered, and that he had been powerless to foresee the death of Lockman. “You will remember,” he said, “that I warned you of the uncertainties of the market, and of the chances that you took.” Ephraim did not remember anything of the sort, but he realized that there was nothing to be gained by saying so.

Samuel did not care much about the loss of his share of the money; but he did care about the grief of his father, which was terrible to see. The blow really killed him; he looked ten years older after that week and he failed all through the winter. And then late in the spring he caught a cold, and took to his bed; and it turned to pneumonia, and

almost before anyone had had time to realize it, he was gone.

He went to join Samuel's mother. He had whispered this as he clutched the boy's hand; and Samuel knew that it was true, and that therefore there was no occasion for grief. So he was ashamed for the awful waves of loneliness and terror which swept over him; and he gulped back his feelings and forced himself to wear a cheerful demeanor—much too cheerful for the taste of Adam and Dan, who were more concerned with what their neighbors would think than they were with the subtleties of Samuel's faith.

The boy had been doing a great deal of thinking that winter; and after the funeral he called a council of the family.

“Brothers,” he said, “this farm is too small for three men. Dan wants to marry already; and we can't live here always. It's just as Manning said—”

“I don't want to hear what that skunk said!” growled Adam.

“Well, he was right that time. People stay on the land and they divide it up and get poorer and poorer. So I've made up my mind to break away. I'm going to the city and get a start.”

“What can you do in the city?” asked Dan.

“I don't know,” said Samuel. “I'll do my best. I don't expect to go to Wall Street and make my fortune.”

“You needn't be smart!” growled Dan.

But the other was quite innocent of sarcasm. “What I mean is that I'll have to work,” said he. “I'm young and strong, and I'm not afraid to try. I'll find somebody to give me a chance; and then I'll work hard and learn and I'll get promoted. I've read of boys that have done that.”

“It's not a bad idea,” commented Adam.

“Go ahead,” said Dan.

“The only thing is,” began Samuel, hesitatingly, “I shall have to have a little money for a start.”

“Humph!” said Adam. “Money's a scarce thing here.”

“How much'll ye want?” asked the other.

“Well,” said the boy, “I want enough to feel safe. For if I go, I promise you I shall stay till I succeed. I shan't play the baby.”

“How do you expect to raise it?” was the next question.

“I thought,” replied Samuel, “that we might make some kind of a deal—let me sell out my share in the farm.”

“You can't sell your share,” said Adam, sharply. “You ain't of age.”

“Maybe I'm not,” was the answer; “but all the same you know me. And if I was to make a bargain I'd keep it. You may be sure I'll never come back and bother you.”

“Yes, I suppose not,” said Adam, doubtfully. “But you can't tell—”

“How much do you expect to git?” asked Dan warily.

“Well, I thought maybe I could get a hundred dollars,” said the other and then he stopped, hesitating.

Adam and Dan exchanged a quick glance.

“Money's mighty scarce hereabouts,” said Adam.

“Still,” said Dan, “I don't know, I'll go to the village tomorrow and see what I can do.”

So Dan drove away and came back in the evening and there was another council; he produced eight new ten-dollar bills.

“It was the best I could do,” he said. “I'm sorry if it ain't enough”—and then he stopped.

“I'll make that do,” said Samuel.

And so his brother produced a long and imposing-looking document; Samuel was too polite to read it but signed at once, and so the bargain was closed. And that night Samuel packed his few belongings in a neat newspaper bundle and before sunrise the next morning he set out upon his search.

CHAPTER III

He had his bundle slung over his back and his eighty dollars pinned tightly in an inside pocket. Underneath it his heart beat fast and high; he was young and he was free—the open road stretched out before him, and perpetual adventure beckoned to him. Every pilgrimage that he had ever read of helped to make up the thrill that stirred him, as he stood on the ridge and gazed at the old farmhouse, and waved his hand, and turned and began his journey.

The horse was needed for the plowing, and so Samuel walked the six miles to the village, and from there the mail stage took him out to the solitary railroad station. He had three hours to wait here for the train, and so he decided that he would save fifteen cents by walking on to the next station. Distance was nothing to Samuel just then.

Halfway to his destination there was a fire in a little clearing by the track, and a young man sat toasting some bread on a stick.

“Hello!” he said. “You're hittin' her lively.”

“Yes,” said Samuel. The stranger was not much older than he, but his clothing was dirty and he had a dissipated, leering face.

“You're new at this game, aren't you?” said he.

“What game?” asked Samuel.

The other laughed. “Where ye goin'?”

“To New York.”

“Goin' to hoof it all the way?”

“No!” gasped the boy. “I'm just walking to the next station.”

“Oh, I see! What's the fare?”

“Six thirty-seven, I think.”

“Humph! Got the price, hey!”

“Yes—I've got the price.” Samuel said this without pride.

“Well, you won't have it long if you live at that rate,” commented the stranger. “Why don't you beat your way?”

“How do you mean?” asked Samuel.

“Nobody but a duffer pays fare,” said the other. “There'll be a freight along pretty soon, and she stops at the water tank just below here. Why don't you jump her?”

Samuel hesitated. “I wouldn't like to do that,” he said.

“Come,” said the other, “sit down.”

And he held out a piece of his toast, which Samuel accepted for politeness' sake. This young fellow had run away from school at the age of thirteen; and he had traveled all over the United States, following the seasons, and living off the country. He was on his way now from a winter's holiday in Mexico. And as Samuel listened to the tale of his adventures, he could not keep the thought from troubling him, how large a part of eighty dollars was six thirty-seven. And all in a single day.

“Come,” said the young fellow; and they started down the track. The freight was whistling for brakes, far up the grade. And Samuel's heart thumped with excitement.

They crouched in the bushes, not far beyond the tank. But the train did not stop for water; it only slowed down for a curve, and it thundered by at what seemed to Samuel an appalling rate of speed. “Jump!” shouted the other, and started to run by the track. He made a leap, and caught, and was whirled on, half visible in a cloud of dust.

Samuel's nerve failed him. He waited, while car after car went by. But then he caught hold of himself. If anyone could do it, so could he. For shame.

He started to run. There came a box-car, empty, with the door open, and he leaped and clutched the edge of the door. He was whirled from his feet, his arms were nearly jerked out of him. He was half blinded by the dust, but he hung on desperately, and pulled himself up. A minute more and he lay gasping and trembling upon the floor of the car. He was on his way to the city.

After a while, Samuel began to think; and then scruples troubled him. He was riding free; but was he not really stealing? And would his father have approved of his doing it? He had begun his career by yielding to temptation! And this at the suggestion of a young fellow who boasted of drinking and thieving! Simply to start such questions was enough, with Samuel; and he made up his mind that when he reached the city the first thing he would do would be to visit the office of the railroad, and explain what he had done, and pay his fare.

Perhaps an hour later the train came to a stop, and he heard some one walking by the track. He hid in a corner, ashamed of being there. Some one stopped before the car, and the door was rolled shut. Then the footsteps went on. There came clankings and jarrings, as of cars being shifted, and then these ceased and silence fell.

Samuel waited for perhaps an hour. Then, becoming restless, he got up and tried the door. It was fast.

The boy was startled and rather dazed. He sat down to think it out. “I suppose I'm locked in till we reach New York,” he reflected. But then, why didn't they go?

“Perhaps we're on a siding, waiting for the passenger train to pass,” was his next thought; and he realized regretfully that he would have been on that train. But then, as hour after hour passed, and they did not go on, a terrible possibility dawned upon him. He was left behind—on a siding.

Two or three trains went by, and each time he waited anxiously. But they did not stop. Silence came again, and he sat in the darkness and waited and wondered and feared.

He had no means of telling the time; and doubtless an hour seemed an age in such a plight. He would get up and pace back and forth, like a caged animal; and then he would lie down by the door, straining his ears for a sound—thinking that some one might pass, unnoticed through the thick wall of the car.

By and by he became hungry and he ate the scanty meal he had in his bundle. Then he became thirsty—and he had no water.

The realization of this made his heart thump. It was no joking matter to be shut in, at one could not tell what lonely place, to suffer from thirst. He sprang up and began to pound and kick upon the door in a frenzy.

But he soon tired of that and crouched on the floor again listening and shivering, half with fear and half with cold. It was becoming chillier, so he judged it must be night; up here in the mountains there was still frost at night.

There came another train, a freight, he knew by the heavy pounding and the time it took to pass. He kicked on the door and shouted, but he soon realized that it was of no use to shout in that uproar.

The craving for water was becoming an obsession. He tried not to think about it, but that only made him think about it the more; he would think about not thinking about it and about not thinking about that—and all the time he was growing thirstier. He wondered how long one could live without water; and as the torment grew worse he began to wonder if he was dying. He was hungry, too, and he wondered which was worse, of which one would die the sooner. He had heard that dying men remembered all their past, and so he began to remember his—with extraordinary

vividness, and with bursts of strange and entirely new emotions. He remembered particularly all the evil things that he had ever done; including the theft of a ride, for which he was paying the penalty. And meantime, with another part of his mind, he was plotting and seeking. He must not die here like a rat in a hole. There must be some way.

He tried every inch of the car—of the floor and ceiling and walls. But there was not a loose plank nor a crack—the car was new. And that suggested another idea—that he might suffocate before he starved. He was beginning to feel weak and dizzy.

If only he had a knife. He could have cut a hole for air and then perhaps enlarged it and broken out a board. He found a spike on the floor and began tapping round the walls for a place that sounded thin; but they all sounded thick—how thick he had no idea. He began picking splinters away at the juncture of two planks.

Meantime hunger and thirst continued to gnaw at him. At long intervals he would pause while a train roared by, or because he fancied he had heard a sound. Then he would pound and call until he was hoarse, and then go on picking at the splinters.

And so on, for an unknown number of hours, but certainly for days and nights. And Samuel was famished and wild and weak and gasping; when at last it dawned upon his senses that a passing train had begun to make less noise—that the thumping was growing slower. The train was stopping.

He leaped up and began to pound. Then he realized that he must control himself—he must save his strength until the train had stopped. But suppose it went on without delay? He began to pound again and to shout like a madman.

The train stopped and there was silence; then came sounds of cars being coupled—and meantime Samuel was

kicking and beating upon the wall. He was almost exhausted and in despair—when suddenly from outside came a muffled call—“Hello!”

For a moment he could not speak. Then “Help! Help!” he shrieked.

“What's the matter?” asked the voice.

“I'm locked in,” he called. .

“How'd you get in?”

“They locked me in by accident. I'm nearly dead.”

“Who are you?”

“I was riding in the car.”

“A tramp, hey? Serves ye right! Better stay there!”

“No! No!” screamed the boy, in terror. “I'm starving—I've been here for days. For heaven's sake let me out—I'll never do it again.”

“If I let you out,” said the voice, “it's my business to arrest you.”

“All right,” cried Samuel. “Anything—but don't leave me here.”

There was a moment's silence. “Have you got any money?” asked the voice.

“Yes. Yes—I've got money.”

“Don't yell so loud. How much?”

“Why—what?”

“How much?”

“I've got eighty dollars.”

“All right. Give it to me and I'll let you out.”

Frantic as he was, this staggered Samuel. “I can't give you all my money,” he cried.

“All right then,” said the other. “Stay there.”

“No, no!” he protested. “Wait! Leave me just a little.”

“I'll leave you five dollars,” said the voice. “Speak up! Quick!”

“All right,” said Samuel faintly. “I'll give it to you.”

“Mind! No nonsense now!”

“No. Let me out!”

“I'll bat you over the head if you try it,” growled the voice; and the boy stood trembling while the hasp was unfastened and the door was pushed back a little. The light of a lantern flashed in through the crack, blinding him.

“Now hand out the money,” said the stranger, standing at one side for safety.

“Yes,” said Samuel, fumbling with the pin in his waistcoat. “But I can't see to count it.”

“Be quick! I'll count it!”

And so he shoved out the wad. Fingers seized it; and then the light vanished, and he heard the sound of footsteps running.

For a moment he did not understand. Then, “Give me my five dollars!” he yelled, and rolled back the door and leaped out. He was just in time to see the figure with the lantern vanish among the cars up the track.

He started to run up the track and tripped over a tie and fell headlong into a ditch. When he scrambled to his feet again the long train was beginning to move, and the light of the lantern was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER IV

Samuel's money was gone, but he was suffering too keenly from hunger and thirst to worry about it for more than a minute. Then the thought came to him—he was here in a lonely place at night, and the train was going! If he were left he might still starve.

He ran over and caught the iron ladder of one of the freight cars and drew himself up and clung there. Later on he climbed on top of the car; but the wind was too cold—he could not stand it, and had to climb down again. And then he realized that he had left the bundle of his belongings in the empty car.

Fortunately for him the train began to slow up at the end of an hour or so, and peering out Samuel saw lights ahead. Also there were lights here and there in the landscape, and he realized that he had come to a large town. The east was just beginning to turn gray, and faint shadows of buildings were visible.

Samuel got off and walked up the track very carefully, for he was stiff as well as weak. There was a light in one of the offices at the depot, and he looked in at the window and saw a man seated at a desk writing busily. He knocked at the door.

“Come in,” said a voice, and he entered.

“Please, may I have a drink of water?” he asked.

“Over there in the corner,” said the man, scarcely looking up from his papers.

There was a bucket and dipper, and Samuel drank. The taste of the water was a kind of ecstasy to him—he drank until he could drink no more.