

**BERNARD
BROOKS'
ADVENTURES**

(ILLUSTRATED)

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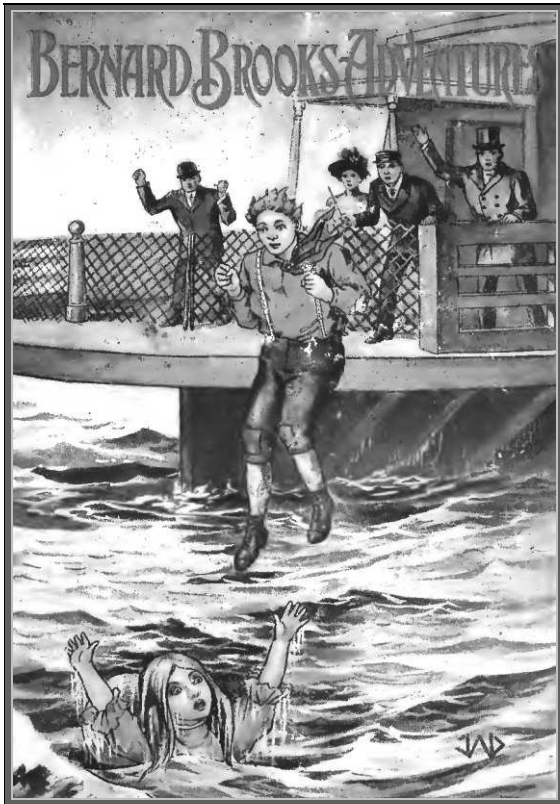
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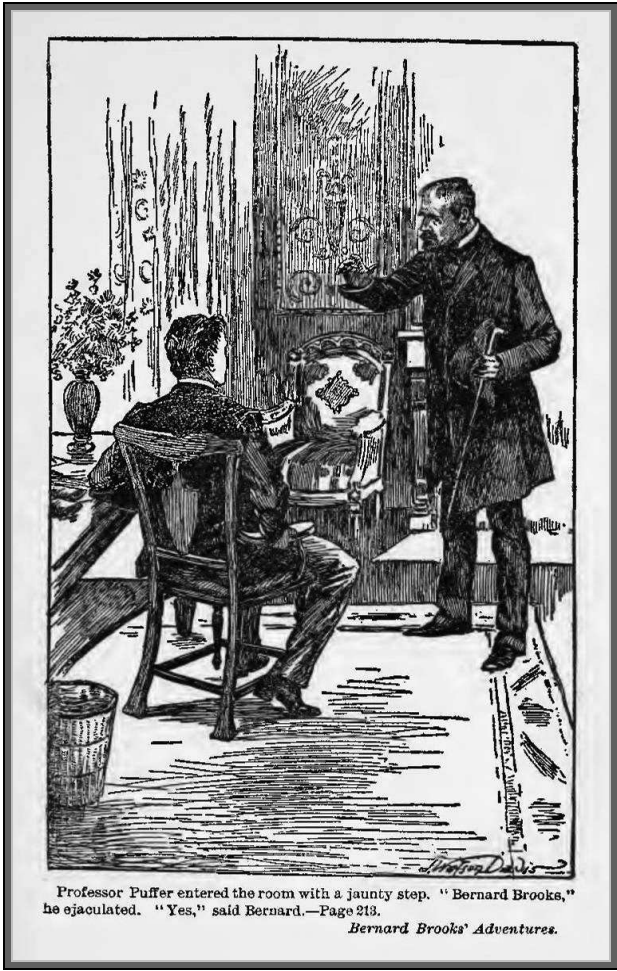
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A NEW EDITION



Chapter I. Bernard Brooks



You're a bad lot, Bernard Brooks. I don't think I ever knew a wuss boy."

"Thank you for the compliment, Mr. Snowdon. Let me suggest, however, that *wuss* is hardly correct English."

The speaker was fifteen years of age, but as tall as most boys of seventeen. He had a bold, aggressive manner, which he only assumed with those he thought were hostile or unfriendly.

He could be a devoted friend, and a loyal subordinate to one who gained his good will. Mr. Snowdon he did not look upon as a friend, though he had been placed in his charge two months before by a cousin of his deceased father.

Ezekiel Snowdon, a man of perhaps sixty, tall and with stooping shoulders, colored with anger at the boy's sarcastic words.

He claimed to have been educated at a small Western college, and on the strength of it had established himself in the country and advertised for private pupils at a low rate.

These were mostly young, and not competent to see his deficiencies, but Bernard was old enough and well enough educated to perceive and comment on them. This greatly annoyed Mr. Snowdon, who felt that the boy did not treat him with proper respect.

"Quit your impudence!" said Snowdon with a vicious look in his greenish lived eyes. "I don't need no criticisms from a whipper snapper like you."

"I intended it for your benefit, Mr. Snowdon," said Bernard demurely. "Besides, you criticise me. You called me a bad lot."

"And so you are. A wuss—a worse boy I never seen."

"Saw would be more correct, Mr. Snowdon."

"Young man, you'd better look out. I won't submit to your aggravating impudence. Besides, you are ignorant of the fact that Chaucer and Spenser use seen for saw. Them are my favorite poets, so it is not strange that I should occasionally make use of their diction."

"Thank you for the information, Mr. Snowdon. I did not know that you had such high authority. I have read a little of Chaucer and Spenser, and I never observed the word you mention."

"Perhaps you have not read the same works as I," said Mr. Snowdon.

"Very likely," remarked Bernard, struggling to suppress a smile.

"It might be well another time to be sure of your ground before you try to criticise your elders."

"Yes, sir," said Bernard, with a meekness which the twinkle in his eye belied.

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing," remarked Mr. Snowdon with dignity.

"I am sure you are a good judge on that point, Mr. Snowdon," said Bernard with demure face, so that his elder did not catch the covert sarcasm.

"I am glad you give me credit for something," rejoined the teacher. "Now you hear what I say. I won't have you goin' round with that Nat Barclay, as you did last evening."

"What's the matter with Nat Barclay?"

"He was once a pupil of mine, and he defied my authority, so I had to discharge him."

"That isn't what he says, Mr. Snowdon."

"What does he say?"

"He says that he found out you didn't know enough to teach him, and got his father to take him away from your school."

"Then the boy lied," said Mr. Snowdon, coloring deeply. "I'd like to thrash him."

"I dare say you would, Mr. Snowdon, but I don't think it would be exactly safe. Nat wouldn't stand it."

"He'd have to stand it, if I took it into my head to chastise him."

"If you had a scrimmage, I'd bet on Nat," said the bold pupil.

"Do you consider *scrimmage* a classical word?" asked Mr. Snowdon with a sneer.

"Well, not exactly. I suppose you know that Dryden uses it," said Bernard with a bold flight of imagination.

Now Mr. Snowdon was not sufficiently versed in English classical writers to know whether this statement was correct or not. So he equivocated to conceal his ignorance.

"Dryden is not always a correct writer," he added. "I never advise my pupils to imitate him. But that is neither here nor there. I have told you that I don't want you to go round with Nat Barclay."

"Why not? I am sure he is of good family."

His father is a clergyman."

"It is from respect to his father that I did not chastise him when he was in my school."

"He says his father does not think much of your scholarship."

"It is because he has poisoned his father's mind against me by false and mendacious charges and statements. I can afford to look upon these with contempt since my alma mater bestowed upon me the honorary degree of P. D. at the last commencement."

"What does P. D. stand for?"

"Doctor of Philosophy," answered Mr. Snowdon in a lofty tone.

"Oh, I thought it might mean something else."

"What?" asked Mr. Snowdon suspiciously.

"Oh, it isn't material. I don't want to display my ignorance," said Bernard meekly.

"I am glad you are becoming sensible."

Mr. Snowdon did not press the question, as he conjectured that P. D., as understood by Bernard, would stand for something far from complimentary.

"I am going to the post-office, Mr. Snowdon. Can I do anything for you?"

"You may inquire if there are any letters for me."

"All right, sir."

Bernard was about to leave the room, when he turned as if struck by a sudden thought.

"May I inquire, Mr. Snowdon," he asked, "what authority you have for calling me 'a bad lot'?"

"I have the authority of Cornelius McCracken, your guardian."

"Does he say I am a bad lot?" asked Bernard, his brow contracting.

"Yes, he did."

"When did he say it?"

"In a letter I received last week."

"May I see the letter, Mr. Snowdon?"

"Yes," answered the teacher, "if it will give you any satisfaction." "It will give me satisfaction to know exactly how he expresses himself in speaking of me."

Ezekiel Snowdon opened his desk, and took out a letter postmarked New York.

"There is the letter," he said, handing it to Bernard with a malicious smile. "Out of regard for your feelings I had not intended to show it to you, but since you desire it, I feel that I shall not be responsible for any wound your pride may receive." Bernard did not answer this speech, but taking the letter tendered him, opened and hastily read it. This was the letter:

"Ezekiel Snowdon, Esq.:

"Dear Sir—I am in receipt of your letter, complaining of my ward, Bernard Brooks. You say you find him disrespectful and insubordinate, and upon this ground you ask me to increase the price I pay for his education. I am quite aware that he is a bad lot. You will do me the justice to remember that in placing him under your charge I did not seek to extenuate the boy's faults. I told you that he was obstinate, independent, and headstrong. You told me that you had had great success in managing refractory boys, and were willing to undertake him. Under these circumstances I cannot feel that I am called upon to increase the remuneration agreed upon between us in the first place.

Should you find him impudent, I shall not object to your inflicting upon him such punishment—even castigation—as in your opinion he may require. More money, however, I cannot pay you, as it draws heavily upon my resources to pay the amount already agreed upon.

"Yours respectfully,

"Cornelius McCracken."

"Now I hope you are satisfied," said Mr. Snowdon, as he received the letter back.

"I am satisfied that you have not misrepresented Mr. McCracken."

"You see he gives me complete authority over you."

"I see he does," returned Bernard in a peculiar tone.

"May I ask, Mr. Snowdon," he added, after a thoughtful pause, "whether my guardian ever told you about how I was situated?"

"In what way?"

"As to money matters. Did he tell you whether or not I had any fortune?"

"He said you had not."

"Did he tell you that I was wholly dependent upon his charity?"

"He gave me that impression. You ought to feel very grateful to him for his great-hearted liberality in thus defraying the expenses of a destitute orphan."

"Probably I am as grateful as the occasion requires," rejoined Bernard gravely. "I will inquire for letters for you."

As the boy went out Mr. Snowdon looked after him thoughtfully.

"I hate that boy!" he murmured to himself. "It would do me good to flog him. His guardian has given me leave, and I think that I will soon find an opportunity to avail myself of it."

Chapter II. Bernard's Boldness



On his way to the post-office Bernard met Nat Barclay.

"Where are you bound, Bernard?" he asked.

"To the post-office."

"How are you getting on with Ezekiel?"

"There is no love lost between us. He says I am a bad lot. In fact, he says he never knew a wuss boy."

Both boys laughed.

"What bad things do you do?"

"Associate with you, for one thing."

"Has Ezekiel forbidden it?"

"Yes."

"Then perhaps I had better leave you?"

"By no means. I don't propose to obey Mr. Snowdon in that."

"Thank you, but I don't want you to get into trouble."

"What trouble can I get into?"

"He may undertake to flog you."

"Let him try it," said Bernard in a significant tone. "What do you think I would be doing? Did he ever undertake to chastise you?"

"No. He knew my father would not permit it."

"If he would whip his own son it might do him good. Septimus is a young imp."

"There he is now! I wonder what he is up to." Septimus Snowdon was an ill-favored boy of fifteen with red hair and freckles seeming like extensive patches upon a face in which even the most partial eyes could not have seen a redeeming feature.

He was standing a little distance ahead, looking up into the branches of a tree in which a terrified kitten had taken refuge. Standing beside him was a young boy of twelve who seemed to be concerned for the safety of the kitten.

Septimus raised a large stone, and taking aim, sent it through the air, aiming at the cat. It came very near hitting her.

"Don't stone my kitty," remonstrated Frank Fisk, the young boy.

"Stop your noise!" said Septimus roughly. "I shall stone her all I want to."

As he spoke he threw another stone, which just grazed the kitten's face and elicited a terrified cry.

"There, you bad boy, you hit my kitty."

"Who calls me a bad boy?" demanded Septimus, with an ugly look on his face.

"I did, and you are one, or you wouldn't throw stones at my kitten."

"I'll throw stones at you if you like it any better."

"You wouldn't dare to. I'd tell my father, and he'd——"

"What would he do?"

"He'd stop you."

"We'll see if he will."

Septimus took a strong cord from his pocket, and seizing the boy's hands, prepared to tie them together in spite of his cries.

"What are you going to do?" asked Frank in a tone of apprehension.

"I am going to give you a lesson," answered Septimus coolly.

Frank struggled to free himself, but Septimus was too strong for him.

Nat Barclay turned to Bernard.

"Shall we let him hurt little Frank?" he asked.

"Not much."

As Bernard spoke he strode towards Septimus, who thus far had not observed him.

"Stop that, you young brute!" he said in an imperious tone. "Do you hear me?"

Septimus turned quickly, and his scowl became deeper when he saw who had spoken to him; for if there was any boy he hated it was Bernard, who had interfered with him more than once.

"Yes," he said. "I hear and I won't do it."

"You won't, eh?"

"No, I won't, and you'd better be careful what you say or do, or I'll tell pa, and then——"

"And then what?"

"You'll get a flogging."

"That doesn't frighten me much. Are you going to stop?"

"No, I'm not." and Septimus gave an extra twist that made Frank cry out.

Bernard concluded that the time for remonstrance was past. He sprang forward, and seizing Septimus in his powerful grasp, tore him from his young victim.

"I'll pay you up for this!" shrieked Septimus, as he flung himself upon Bernard.

Bernard laid him on his back in less than a minute.

"Do you want any more?" he asked, rather contemptuously.

Just at this moment the kitten saw a favorable opportunity to escape, and ran down the trunk of the tree. As she was running away Septimus caught sight of her, and his cruel instincts were aroused. He seized a rock and flung it at her. Had it struck the kitten she would have been seriously hurt.

Bernard was fond of pets, and his soul revolted at cruelty in any form.

"I see you can't be trusted, Septimus," he said composedly. "Nat, come here and help secure him."

"What shall I do?" asked Nat.

"Hold his hands."

Nat Barclay complied with his request, and Bernard taking the cord which Septimus had used on Frank, quickly and securely tied the hands of the young tyrant.

Septimus struggled and threatened, but without effect. In less than a minute he was securely bound.

"There," said Bernard, "you are safe for a short time."

"Untie my hands, or I'll get my father to flog you!" screamed Septimus.

"Perhaps you'd better," said Nat Barclay in a low voice. He was afraid his friend would get into trouble.

"No, I won't. Septimus needs the lesson. You needn't worry about me. Now we'll go to the post-office."

The two boys kept on their way, and Septimus, his hands tied, with wrath in his heart, started for home.

Mr. Snowdon was just coming out of the front door, when to his astonished gaze was revealed his son and heir walking towards the house, with his hands close together, like a prisoner in handcuffs.

"What does all this mean?" he asked in surprise. "What have you been tying your hands for?"

"I didn't tie my hands," said Septimus sullenly. "Do you think I am a fool?"

"Septimus, you should not speak to your father like this. If you did not tie your hands, who did?"

"Who did? That young loafer Bernard Brooks. I want you to flog him within an inch of his life."

"Bernard Brooks tied your hands?"

"Didn't I say so?"

"But why did you let him do it?"

"How could I help it, when he had Nat Barclay with him?"

"So Nat Barclay was with him?"

"Yes, he was."

"I forbade him to associate with that Barclay."

"Much he cares for your orders. When I told him you would flog him, he laughed!"

"Oh, he laughed, did he?" said Mr. Snowdon, much incensed.

"Yes, he doesn't care for you," said Septimus, craftily fanning his father's wrath.

"I'll learn him," said Mr. Snowdon, shaking his head vigorously. "He'll see that I am not to be trifled with. But what did he tie your hands for?"

"Just cut the cord and I'll tell you. It hurts like all possessed."

Mr. Snowdon drew a jack knife from his pocket and severed the cord. Septimus breathed a sigh of relief.

"See how very red my wrists are?" he said. "Pa, do me a favor."

"Well, what is it?"

"Keep this cord, and let me tie Bernard's hands with it."

"A good idea, Septimus. Now tell me what he tied your hands for \"

"For just nothing at all."

"There must have been something."

"Well, you see Frank Fisk's kitten was up in a tree, and I was shying stones at it. Frank made such a fuss that I took out a cord and thought I would tie his hands just to give him a lesson. Just then those two loafers came along, and had the impudence to tell me to stop, just as if they had any authority over me. Of course I told them it was none of their business, and defied them."

"Very proper, Septimus. You are only responsible for your conduct to me."

"Then Bernard Brooks made a savage attack upon me, and getting Nat Barclay to hold my hands, he tied them. What do you say to that, pa?"

"What do I say? That it was a high-handed and outrageous proceeding."

"Bully for you, pa! You express my sentiments. Now what are you goin' to do about it?"

"I shall call the Brooks boy to account. He forgets that he is under my charge."

"He seems to think I am under his charge. Say, pa, you won't allow your son to be insulted and trod upon, will you?"

"No, I won't, Septimus. For some time I have been thinking that it would be necessary to flog Bernard Brooks, and now I have made up my mind to do it."

"Good, pa! You'll let me see you tackle him, won't you?"

"Yes, Septimus, I will. I can understand the gratification it will give you."

"If you do that will pay me for what he did to me."

"But perhaps he won't come back," said Mr. Snowdon in an apprehensive tone. "In that case I shall lose the quarterly sum his guardian pays me."

"You don't think he'll run away?" asked Septimus.

Half an hour later this question was answered. Bernard was seen approaching the house, his manner cool and composed, while he looked neither troubled nor flurried.

Chapter III. Brought to Bay



When Bernard saw Septimus Snowdon and his father standing in front of the house he understood at once, from the expression of their faces, that trouble was in store for him.

"Well, sir," said Mr. Snowdon curtly, "so you have come home at last?"

"Yes, sir. There was no letter for you."

"Ahem! I shall have to write a letter to your guardian."

Bernard shrugged his shoulders, but did not think it necessary to say anything, rather to the disappointment of Ezekiel, who wished to draw him out, "I find," he said, "that you have made an outrageous assault on my innocent boy. What have you to say in extenuation of your conduct?"

"Only that your innocent boy was stoning a kitten, and bullying a young boy."

"Even if he were, what business was it of yours?"

"It will always be my business to protect children and animals from being abused," said Bernard warmly.

"You are a very impudent boy! Are you aware that the boy you assaulted is my son?"

"I ought to be aware of it. There isn't another boy in town who would be guilty of such brutal conduct."

"Are you goin' to stand that, pa?" asked Septimus, anxious to precipitate a conflict between Bernard and his father.

"No, I am not," said Mr. Snowdon, compressing his lips. "Get me the horsewhip."

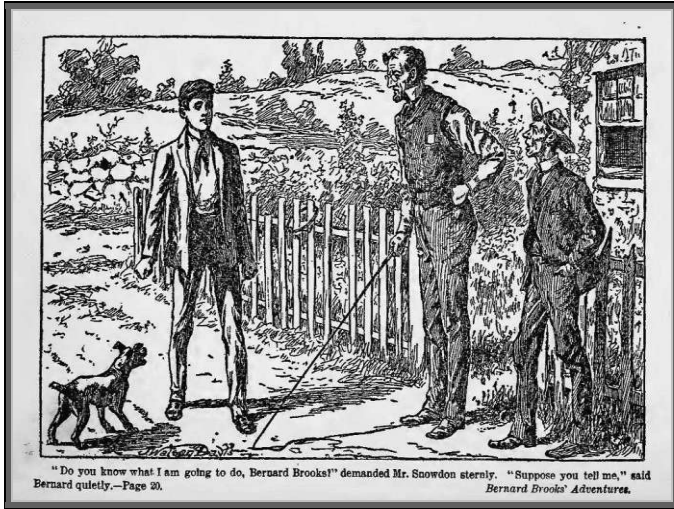
No command could have been more pleasant to Septimus. He ran into the house, and soon reappeared with an ordinary horsewhip with which his father was in the habit of punishing the pupils under his charge.

He handed it to his father with a malicious smile.

"There it is, pa!" he said. "Lay it on heavy."

Mr. Snowdon did not immediately proceed to make use of the whip. Considering Bernard to be in his power, he was disposed to play with him as a cat plays with a mouse of whom it is preparing to make a victim.

"Do you know what I am going to do, Bernard Brooks?" he demanded sternly.



"Suppose you tell me," said Bernard quietly.

"I am going to flog you."

"What for?"

"For assaulting my boy."

"Why don't you let him do it?"

"Septimus, do you wish to chastise Bernard with this whip, and so punish him for his attack upon you?"

There was nothing that Septimus would have liked better, but there was something in Bernard's steady look that made him think it would not be prudent.

"I guess you'd better flog him, pa," he said, after a pause.

"Very well, my son, I will."

Whip in hand, Ezekiel Snowdon advanced upon his refractory pupil. Bernard did not wait meekly to receive the punishment, neither did he care to get into a fight with the teacher. He turned and ran through the back yard and down a lane leading to a tract of marsh which belonged to the Snowdon farm. "He'll get away, pa!" said Septimus.

"Try to head him off, my son!"

Septimus, who was in the path, tried to do so, but a swinging blow from Bernard nearly prostrated him, and the fugitive kept on. Mr. Snowdon's blood was up. Brandishing the whip in his long and sinewy arms, he kept his thin legs in motion, and pursued Bernard with as great speed as he was capable of.

But Bernard had several rods the start, and he was a good runner. He kept on, occasionally looking back to see what progress his pursuer was making.

"What does the boy mean by running to the marsh?" thought Mr. Snowdon. "He is a fool. I shall catch him there to a certainty."

Bernard probably had views of his own. Indeed, it is quite certain that he had a plan by which he hoped to bring discomfiture upon his dignified preceptor. He made straight for the marsh, till he found his progress barred by a wide ditch about half full of slimy water.

"Aha! the ditch will stop him," reflected Mr. Snowdon.

But no! Bernard poised himself for an instant on the brink, and then lightly leaped over, landing in safety on the opposite side. Close behind him was Mr. Snowdon. That gentleman felt impelled by the impetus acquired in running to follow Bernard's example. But the ditch was quite six feet across, and Mr. Snowdon, though not overburdened with flesh, was stiffer in his joints than he had been twenty years before, and this operated against him. Besides, it was slippery where he started to jump, and the result was that he landed in the middle of the ditch where he floundered in the miry water in a woeful condition.

Septimus came up directly, for he was third in the race.

"Where are you, pa?" he asked.

"Don't you see where I am?" demanded Mr. Snowdon sharply. "Help me out of this quagmire!" Rather reluctantly Septimus extended his hand, for his father's hand as well as his clothes were bedabbled with mire, and Mr. Snowdon nearly pulled him in, in his efforts to extricate himself from the ditch.

"You're all over mud, pa!" said Septimus, surveying the sorry plight of his sire.

Just across the ditch stood Bernard, he had come to a halt, and calmly eyed his would-be captor.

"It's your fault, you young scoundrel!" cried Mr. Snowdon in a fury, his wrath increased by the knowledge that Bernard was as neat and clean as when he started. "If it hadn't been for you I shouldn't have been in this plight."

"I don't see how I could help it, sir. You shouldn't have tried to jump over the ditch."

"Why did you do it?"

"I wanted to get away from you."

"Jump back at once!"

A smile stole over Bernard's face.

"I shouldn't dare to," he answered. "I might fall in as you have."

"And serve you right! I order you to jump."

"Suppose I do, and get safe over?"

"I will flog you within an inch of your life," said Mr. Snowdon rather imprudently.

"That isn't inducement enough," said Bernard. "I guess I had better stay where I am."

"You needn't think you will escape the whipping. You may put it off, but you'll have to take it sooner or later."

Evidently Mr. Snowdon thought it best to put off punishing Bernard for the present. He was so bespattered with mud that it was necessary to go home and change his clothing. Septimus was very sorry for this decision, as he had been looking forward with pleasant anticipation to seeing Bernard flogged.

"You ain't goin' to let him off, pa, are you?" he asked.

"No," answered Mr. Snowdon, with a vengeful look. "The longer it's put off, the harder I'll lay it on when the time comes."

Satisfied with this assurance Septimus followed his father home. As from time to time he glanced at the figure of his parent he could not help reflecting that Mr. Snowdon was not a father to be proud of. He never looked attractive, but under present circumstances he looked more unsavory than usual.

Left alone Bernard did not leap back across the ditch, but taking a course to the right emerged into the main road about half a mile from Mr. Snowdon's house.

He took a short cut to the home of his friend Nat Barclay, whom he made acquainted with the catastrophe that had befallen Mr. Snowdon.

Nat laughed—he could hardly help it—as he pictured to himself the miry and bedraggled condition of his old teacher.

"I am afraid he'll try to get even with you, Bernard," he said apprehensively.

"No doubt he would if he got a chance."

"But he can't help having plenty of chances as you live in his house."

"But I am not going to live there any longer, Nat."

"What do you mean?"

"I shall run away."

"You won't do that, will you, Bernard? What will your guardian say? You have no one else to depend upon."

"I don't know."

"But this is serious, Bernard."

"I have myself."

"But what can a boy of fifteen do?"

"He can support himself. At any rate, he can try. The fact is, Nat, I don't think Mr. McCracken a friend of mine. I may go to him, and ask if he will make any other arrangements for me. If he won't, I will make them for myself."

"What will you do to-night, Bernard?"

"I will go back to Mr. Snowdon's—creep up to my room, if I have a chance, get out a bundle of clothes, and sleep in the barn. In the morning I can start early, and——"

"Where will you go?"

"I don't know yet."

Mr. Snowdon was in the habit of retiring early, and so were his family. Generally at nine o'clock they were in bed. When nine o'clock came he told Septimus to lock the door.

"But suppose Bernard comes back?"

"He can sleep out of doors for one night. It will teach him a lesson."

He didn't know that Bernard had already visited the house, made up a bundle of clothing, and withdrawn to the barn, where he had found a comfortable resting place on one of the lofts of hay.

It was Bernard's intention to get up early in the morning and make his escape before Mr. Snowdon or any of his family were astir.

But a healthy boy, who is a good sleeper, cannot always fix the time of awaking. For some reason Bernard slept on till half-past seven o'clock. Septimus had occasion to go to the barn, and discovered him still asleep. He ran into the house in great excitement.

"Pa," he said, "Bernard is asleep in the barn. I seed him." Occasionally Septimus, though the son of a teacher, made grammatical mistakes.