

CHAPTER III. THE CHAIN COLLEGE

THE FAMILY plan was for John to go to college. This idea doubtless originated with his mother. But his father began to mutter about it on the score of expense. Doc Rockefeller felt that a man needed to be smart. In a world where one had to get along by his wits it was well to be shrewd. What could college do for you on this head?

John was now fifteen years old. In a sense he was a man, certainly in practical matters. He had seen and understood a little at least the strange situation which existed in his family, the mysterious comings and goings of his father. He was aware of the secretiveness about the Doctor's business. In later life he said that he owed a great debt to his father. "He trained me in practical ways. *He was engaged in different enterprises* and he used to tell me about these things and he taught me the principles and methods of business."

It is doubtful if Bill told his son of all his different enterprises. He was fond of boasting of his own smartness and how he bested people. The man had practically no moral code. He would descant on his own cunning performances for any one's entertainment and it was undoubtedly due to his wife's incessant caution that he did not talk more freely about his calling, about which he felt no sense of shame. He was what was later called a "slicker" and he was fond of doing what he could to be sure his sons would be "slickers" like himself. "I cheat my boys every chance I get," he told Uncle Joe Webster. "I want to make 'em sharp. I trade with the boys and skin 'em and I just beat 'em every time I can. I want to make 'em sharp."

Young John, however, had his own ideas about the