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DAB KINZER

A STORY OF A GROWING BOY

BY

WILLIAM O. STODDARD

1884

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DAB KINZER

CHAPTER I.

THE KINZER FARM, THE NEW SUIT, AND THE WEDDING.

Between the village and the inlet, and half a mile from the great "bay," lay the Kinzer farm. Beyond the bay was a sandbar, and beyond that the Atlantic Ocean; for all this was on the southerly shore of Long Island.

The Kinzer farm had lain right there—acre for acre, no more, no less—on the day when Hendrik Hudson long ago sailed the good ship "Half Moon" into New-York Bay. But it was not then known to any one as the Kinzer farm. Neither was there then, as now, any bright and growing village crowding up on one side of it, with a railway-station and a post-office. Nor was there, at that time, any great and busy city of New York, only a few hours' ride away, over on the island of Manhattan. The Kinzers themselves

were not there then. But the bay and the inlet, with the fish and the crabs, and the ebbing and flowing tides, were there, very much the same, before Hendrik Hudson and his brave Dutchmen knew any thing whatever about that corner of the world.

The Kinzer farm had always been a reasonably "fat" one, both as to size and quality; and the good people who lived on it had generally been of a somewhat similar description. It was, therefore, every way correct and becoming for Dabney Kinzer's widowed mother and his sisters to be the plump and hearty beings they were, and all the more discouraging to poor Dabney that no amount of regular and faithful eating seemed to make him resemble them at all in that respect.

Mrs. Kinzer excused his thinness, to her neighbors, to be sure, on the ground that he was "such a growing boy;" but, for all that, he caught himself wondering, now and then, if he would never be done with that part of his trials. For rapid growth has its trials.

"The fact is," he said to himself one day, as he leaned over the north fence, "I'm more like Ham Morris's farm than I am like ours. His farm is bigger than ours, all round; but it's too big for its fences, just as I'm too big for my clothes. Ham's house is three times as large as ours, but it looks as if it had grown too fast. It hasn't any paint to speak of, nor any blinds. It looks as if somebody'd just built it there, and then forgot it, and gone oft and left it out of doors."

Dabney's four sisters had all come into the world before him; but he was as tall as any of them, and was frequently taken by strangers for a good two years older than he was. It was sometimes very hard for him, a boy of fifteen, to live up to what was expected of those extra two years.

Mrs. Kinzer still kept him in roundabouts; but they did not seem to hinder his growth at all, if that was her object in so doing.

There was no such thing, however, as keeping the four girls in roundabouts of any kind; and, what between them and their mother, the pleasant and tidy little Kinzer homestead, with its snug parlor and its cosey bits of rooms and chambers, seemed to nestle away, under the shadowy elms and sycamores, smaller and smaller with every year that came.

It was a terribly tight fit for such a family, anyway; and, now that Dabney was growing at such a rate, there was no telling what they would all come to. But Mrs. Kinzer came at last to the rescue; and she summoned her eldest daughter, Miranda, to her aid.

A very notable woman was the widow. When the new railway cut off part of the old farm, she had split up the slice of land between the iron track and the village into "town lots," and had sold them all off by the time the railway company paid her for the "damage" it had done the property.

The whole Kinzer family gained visibly in plumpness that year, except, perhaps, Dabney.

Of course the condition and requirements of Ham Morris and his big farm, just over the north fence, had not escaped such a pair of eyes as those of the widow; and the very size of his great barn of a house finally settled his fate for him.

A large, quiet, unambitious, but well-brought-up and industrious young man was Hamilton Morris, and he had not the least idea of the good in store for him for several months after Mrs. Kinzer decided to marry him to her daughter Miranda; but all was soon settled. Dab, of course, had nothing to do with the wedding arrangements, and Ham's share was somewhat contracted. Not but what he was at the Kinzer house a good deal; nor did any of the other girls tell Miranda how very much he was in the way. He could talk, however; and one morning, about a fortnight before the day appointed, he said to Miranda and her mother,—

"We can't have so very much of a wedding: your house is so small, and you've chocked it so full of furniture. Right down nice furniture it is too; but there's so much of it, I'm afraid the minister'll have to stand out in the front yard."

"The house'll do for this time," replied Mrs. Kinzer. "There'll be room enough for everybody. What puzzles me is Dab."

"What about Dab?" asked Ham.

"Can't find a thing to fit him," said Dab's mother. "Seems as if he were all odd sizes, from head to foot."

"Fit him?" exclaimed Ham. "Oh, you mean ready-made goods! Of course you can't. He'll have to be measured by a tailor, and have his new suit built for him."

"Such extravagance!" emphatically remarked Mrs. Kinzer.

"Not for rich people like you, and for a wedding," replied Ham; "and Dab's a growing boy. Where is he now? I'm going to the village, and I'll take him right along with me."

There seemed to be no help for it; but that was the first point relating to the wedding, concerning which Ham Morris was permitted to have exactly his own way. His success made Dab Kinzer a fast friend of his for life, and that was something. There was also something new and wonderful to Dabney himself, in walking into a tailor's shop, picking out cloth to please himself, and being so carefully measured all over. He stretched and stretched himself in all directions, to make sure nothing should turn out too small. At the end of it all, Ham said to him,—

"Now, Dab, my boy, this suit is to be a present from me to you, on Miranda's account."

Dab colored and hesitated for a moment: but it seemed all right, he thought; and so he came frankly out with,—

"Thank you, Ham. You always was a prime good fellow. I'll do as much for you some day. Tell you what I'll do, then: I'll have another suit made right away, of this other cloth, and have the bill for that one sent to our folks."

"Do it!" exclaimed Ham. "Do it! You've your mother's orders for that. She's nothing to do with my gift."

"Splendid!" almost shouted Dab. "Oh, but don't I hope they'll fit!"

"Vit," said the tailor: "vill zay vit? I dell you zay vit you like a knife. You vait und zee."

Dab failed to get a very clear idea of what the fit would be, but it made him almost hold his breath to think of it.

After the triumphant visit to the tailor, there was still a necessity for a call upon the shoemaker, and that was a matter of no small importance. Dab's feet had always been a mystery and a trial to him. If his memory contained one record darker than another, it was the endless history of his misadventures with boots and shoes. He and leather had been at war from the day he left his creeping-clothes until now. But now he was promised a pair of shoes that would be sure to fit.

So the question of Dab's personal appearance at the wedding was all arranged between him and Ham; and Miranda smiled more sweetly than ever before upon the latter, after she had heard her usually silent brother break out so enthusiastically about him as he did that evening.

It was a good thing for that wedding, that it took place in fine summer weather; for neither kith, kin, nor acquaintances had been slighted in the invitations, and the Kinzers were one of the "oldest families."

To have gathered them all under the roof of that house, without either stretching it out wider or boiling the guests down, would have been out of the question; and so the majority, with Dabney in his new clothes to keep them countenance, stood out in the cool shade of the grand old trees during the ceremony, which was performed near the open door; and were afterwards served with the refreshments in a style which spoke volumes for Mrs. Kinzer's good management, as well as for her hospitality.

The only drawback to Dab's happiness that day was that his acquaintances hardly seemed to know him. He had had almost the same trouble with himself, when he looked in the glass that morning.

Ordinarily, his wrists were several inches through his coat-sleeves, and his ankles made a perpetual show of his stockings. His neck, too, seemed to be holding his head as far as possible from his coat-collar, and his buttons had no favors to ask of his button-holes.

Now, even as the tailor had promised, he had received his "first fit." He seemed to himself, to tell the truth, to be covered up in a prodigal waste of new cloth. Would he ever, ever, grow too big for such a suit of clothes as that? It was a very painful thought, and he did his best to put it away from him.

Still, it was a little hard to have a young lady, whom he had known since before she began to walk, remark to him,—

"Excuse me, sir, but can you tell me if Mr. Dabney Kinzer is here?"

"No, Jenny Walters," sharply responded Dab, "he isn't here."

"Why, Dabney!" exclaimed the pretty Jenny. "Is that you? I declare, you have scared me out of a year's growth!"

"I wish you'd scare me, then," said Dab. "Then my clothes would stay fitted."

Every thing had been so well arranged beforehand, thanks to Mrs. Kinzer, that the wedding had no chance at all except to go off well. Ham Morris was rejoiced to find how entirely he was relieved of every responsibility.

"Don't worry about your house," the widow said to him, the night before the wedding. "We'll go over there, as soon as you and Miranda get away, and it'll be all ready for you by the time you get back."

"All right," said Ham. "I'll be glad to have you take the old place in hand. I've only tried to live in a corner of it. You don't know how much room there is. I don't, I must say."

Dabney had longed to ask her if she meant to have it moved over to the Kinzer side of the north fence, but he had doubts as to the propriety of it; and just then the boy came in from the tailor's with his bundle of new clothes.

CHAPTER II.

DAB'S OLD CLOTHES GET A NEW BOY TO FIT.

Hamilton Morris was a very promising young man, of some thirty summers. He had been an "orphan" for a dozen years; and the wonder was that he should so long have lived alone in the big, square-built house his father left him. At all events, Miranda Kinzer was just the wife for him.

Miranda's mother had seen that at a glance, the moment her mind was settled about the house. As to that and his great, spreading, half-cultivated farm, all either of them needed was ready money and management.

These were blessings Ham was now made reasonably sure of, on his return from his wedding-trip, and he was likely to appreciate them.

As for Dabney Kinzer, he was in no respect overcome by the novelty and excitement of the wedding-day. All the rest of it, after the departure of Ham Morris and the bride, he devoted himself to such duties as were assigned him, with a new and grand idea steadily taking shape in his mind. He felt as if his brains too, like his body, were growing. Some of his mother's older and more intimate friends remained with her all day, probably to comfort her for the loss of Miranda; and two or three of them, Dab knew, would stay to tea, so that his services would be in demand to see them safely home.

All day long, moreover, Samantha and Keziah and Pamela seemed to find themselves wonderfully busy, one way and another, so that they paid even less attention than usual to any of the ins and outs of their brother.

Dabney was therefore able, with little difficulty, to take for himself whatever of odd time he might require for putting his new idea into execution.

Mrs. Kinzer herself noticed the rare good sense with which her son hurried through with his dinner, and slipped away, leaving her in undisturbed possession of the table and her lady guests, and neither she nor either of the girls had a thought of following him.

If they had done so, they might have seen him draw a good-sized bundle out from under the lilac-thicket in the back yard, and hurry down through the garden.

A few moments more, and Dabney had appeared on the fence of the old cross-road leading down to the shore. There he sat, eying one passer-by after another, till he suddenly sprang from his perch, exclaiming,—

"That's just the chap! Why, they'll fit him, and that's more'n they ever did for me."

Dab would probably have had to search along the coast for miles before he could have found a human being better suited to his present charitable purposes than the boy who now came so lazily down the road.

There was no doubt about his color, or that he was all over of about the same shade of black. His old tow trowsers and calico shirt revealed the shining fact in too many places to leave room for a question, and shoes he had none.

"Dick," said Dabney, "was you ever married?"

"Married!" exclaimed Dick, with a peal of very musical laughter, "is I married? No. Is you?"

"No," replied Dabney; "but I was very near it, this morning."

"Dat so?" asked Dick, with another show of his white teeth. "Done ye good, den; nebber seen ye I look so nice afore."

"You'd look nicer'n I do if you were only dressed up," said Dab. "Just you put on these."

"Golly!" exclaimed the black boy. But he seized the bundle Dab threw him, and he had it open in a twinkling.

"Any t'ing in de pockets?" he asked.

"Guess not," said Dab; "but there's lots of room."

"Say dar was," exclaimed Dick. "But won't dese t'ings be warm?"

It was quite likely; for the day was not a cool one, and Dick never seemed to think of getting off what he had on, before getting into his unexpected present. Coat, vest, and trousers, they were all pulled on with more quickness than Dab had ever seen the young African display before.

"I's much obleeged to ye, Mr. Kinzer," said Dick very proudly, as he strutted across the road. "On'y I dasn't go back fru de village."

"What'll you do, then?" asked Dab.

"S'pose I'd better go a-fishin'," said Dick. "Will de fish bite?"

"Oh! the clothes won't make any odds to them," said Dabney. "I must go back to the house."

And so he did: while Dick, on whom the cast-off garments of his white friend were really a pretty good fit, marched on down the road, feeling grander than he ever had before in all his life.

"That'll be a good thing to tell Ham Morris, when he and Miranda get home again," muttered Dab, as he re-entered the house.

Late that evening, when Dabney returned from his final duties as escort to his mother's guests, she rewarded him with more than he could remember ever receiving of motherly commendation.

"I've been really quite proud of you, Dabney," she said, as she laid her plump hand on the collar of his new coat, and kissed him. "You've behaved like a perfect little gentleman."

"Only, mother," exclaimed Keziah, "he spent too much of his time with that sharp-tongued little Jenny Walters."

"Never mind, Kezi," said Dab: "she didn't know who I was till I told her. I'm going to wear a label with my name on it when I go over to the village to-morrow."

"And then you'll put on your other suit in the morning," said Mrs.
Kinzer. "You must keep this for Sundays and great occasions."

"Any more weddings coming, right away?" said Dab, with a sharp glance around upon what remained of the family; but the girls were all very busy just then, with their books and their sewing, and he did not get any direct reply. Even his mother walked away after something she had left in the dining-room.

When the next morning came, Dabney Kinzer was a more than usually early riser, for he felt that he had waked up to a very important day.

"Dabney," exclaimed his mother, when he came in to breakfast, "did I not tell you to put on your other suit?"

"So I have, mother," replied Dab: this is my other suit."

"That?" exclaimed Mrs. Kinzer.

"So it is!" cried Keziah.

"So it isn't," added Samantha. "Mother, that is not what he had on yesterday."

"He's been trading again," mildly suggested Pamela.

"Dabney," said Mrs. Kinzer, "what does this mean?"

"Mean!" replied Dabney. "Why, these are the clothes you told me to buy. The lot I wore yesterday were a present from Ham Morris. He's a splendid fellow. I'm glad he got the best of the girls."

That was a bad thing for Dabney to say just then, for it was vigorously resented by the remaining three. As soon as quiet was restored, however, Mrs. Kinzer remarked,—

"I think Hamilton should have consulted me about it, but it's too late now. Anyhow, you may go and put on your other clothes."

"My wedding suit?" asked Dab.

"No, indeed! I mean your old ones,—those you took off night before last."

"Dunno where they are," slowly responded Dab.

"Don't know where they are?" responded a chorus of four voices.

"No," said Dab. "Bill Lee's black boy had em on all yesterday afternoon, and I reckon he's gone a-fishing again to-day. They fit him a good sight better 'n they ever did me."

If Dabney had expected a storm to come from his mother's end of the table, he was pleasantly mistaken; and his sisters had it all to themselves for a moment. Then, with an admiring glance at her son, the thoughtful matron remarked,—

"Just like his father, for all the world! It's no use, girls: Dabney's a growing boy in more ways than one. Dabney, I shall want you to go over to the Morris house with me after breakfast. Then you may hitch up the ponies, and we'll do some errands around the village."

Dab Kinzer's sisters looked at one another in blank astonishment, and Samantha would have left the table if she had only finished her breakfast.

Pamela, as being nearest to Dab in age and sympathy, gave a very admiring look at her brother's second "good fit," and said nothing.

Even Keziah finally admitted, in her own mind, that such a change in Dabney's appearance might have its advantages. But Samantha inwardly declared war.

The young hero himself was hardly used to that second suit, as yet, and felt any thing but easy in it.

"I wonder," he said to himself, "what Jenny Walters would say to me now.
Wonder if she'd know me."

Not a doubt of it. But after he had finished his breakfast, and gone out, his mother remarked,—

"It's really all right, girls. I almost fear I have been neglecting
Dabney. He isn't a little boy any more."

"He isn't a man yet," exclaimed Samantha. "And he talks slang dreadfully."

"But then, he does grow so!" remarked Keziah.

"Mother," said Pamela, "couldn't you get Dab to give Dick Lee the slang, along with the old clothes?"

"We'll see about it," replied Mrs. Kinzer.

It was very clear that Dabney's mother had begun to take in a new idea about her son.

It was not the least bit in the world unpleasant to find out that he was "growing in more ways than one," and it was quite likely that she had indeed kept him too long in roundabouts.

At all events, his great idea had been worked out into a triumphant success; and, before the evening was over, Pamela replied to a remark of Samantha's,—

"I don't care. He's taller than I am, and I'd ever so much rather have a frock-coat walk beside me to meeting."

CHAPTER III.

A MEMBER OF ONE OF THE OLDEST FAMILIES MEETS A YOUNG GENTLEMAN FROM THE CITY.

Dick Lee had been more than half right about the village being a dangerous place for him, with such an unusual amount of clothing over his ordinary uniform.

The very dogs, every one of whom was an old acquaintance, barked at him on his way home that night; and, proud as were his ebony father and mother of the improvement in their son's appearance, they yielded to his earnest entreaties, first, that he might wear his present all the next day, and, second, that he might betake himself to the "bay" early in the morning, and so keep out of sight "till he got used to it."

"On'y, you jist mind wot yer about!" said his mother, "and see't you keep dem clo'es from gettin' wet. I jist can't 'foard to hab dem spiled right away."

The fault with Dab Kinzer's old suit, after all, had lain mainly in its size rather than its materials; for Mrs. Kinzer was too good a manager to be really stingy.

Dick succeeded in reaching the boat-landing without falling in with any one who seemed disposed to laugh at him; but there, right on the wharf, was a white boy of about his own age, and he felt a good deal like backing out.

"Nebber seen him afore, either," said Dick to himself. "Den I guess I ain't afeard ob him."

The stranger was a somewhat short and thick-set, but bright and active-looking boy, with a pair of very keen, greenish-gray eyes. But, after all, the first word he spoke to poor Dick was,—

"Hullo, clothes! Where are you going with all that boy?"

"I knowed it, I knowed it!" groaned Dick. But he answered as sharply as he knew how,—

"I's goin' a-fishin'. Any ob youah business?"—

"Where'd you learn how to fish?" the stranger asked, "Down South? Didn't know they had any there."

"Nebbah was down Souf," was the somewhat surly reply.

"Father run away, did he?"

"He nebber was down dar, nudder."

"Nor his father?"

"'Tain't no business ob yourn," said Dick, "but we's allers lived right heah, on dis bay."

"Guess not," said the white boy knowingly. Dick was right, nevertheless; for his people had been slaves among the very earliest Dutch settlers, and had never "lived South" at all. He was now busily getting one of the boats ready to shove off; but his white tormentor went at him again, with,—

"Well, then, if you've lived round here as long as that, you must know everybody."

"Reckon I do."

"Are there any nice fellows around here? Any like me?"

"De nicest young gen'lman round dis bay," replied Dick, "is Mr. Dab

Kinzer. But he ain't like you. Not nuff to hurt him."

"Dab Kinzer," exclaimed the stranger. "Where'd he get his name?"

"In de bay, I 'spect," said Dick, as he shoved his boat off; "caught 'im wid a hook."

"Anyhow," said the strange boy to himself, "that's probably the kind of fellow my father would wish me to associate with. Only it's likely he's very ignorant."

And he walked away towards the village, with the air of a man who had forgotten more than the rest of his race were ever likely to find out.

At all events, Dick Lee had managed to say a good word for his benefactor, little as he could guess what might be the consequences.

Meantime Dab Kinzer, when he went out from breakfast, had strolled away to the north fence, for a good look at the house which was thenceforth to be the home of his favorite sister. He had seen it before, every day since he could remember; but it seemed to have a fresh and almost mournful interest for him just now.

"Hullo!" he exclaimed, as he leaned against the fence. "Putting up ladders? Oh, yes, I see! That's old Tommy McGrew, the house-painter. Well, Ham's house needs a new coat as badly as I did. Sure it'll fit too. Only it ain't used to it, any more'n I am."

"Dabney!"

It was his mother's voice, and Dab felt like "minding" very promptly that morning.

"Dabney, my boy, come here to the gate."

"Ham Morris is having his house painted," he remarked, as he walked towards his mother.

"Is he?" she said. "We'll go and see about it."

The gate between the two "side-yards" had been there from time immemorial, and-they walked right through. As they drew nearer the Morris house, however, Dabney discovered that carpenters as well as painters were plying their trade in and about the old homestead. There were window-sashes piled here, and blinds there; a new door or so, ready for use, a great stack of bundles of shingles, some barrels of lime, and a heap of sand. Whichever way Dab looked, there were visible signs of an approaching renovation.

"Going to fix it all over," he remarked.

"Yes," replied his mother: "it'll be as good as new. It was well built, and will bear mending. I couldn't say that of some of the shackling things they've been putting up around the village."

When they entered the house it became more and more evident that the "shabby" days of the Morris mansion were numbered. There were men at work in almost every room.

Ham's wedding-trip would surely give plenty of time, at that rate, for an immense amount of "mending;" and his house would be, as the widow had promised, "all ready for him on his return."

There was nothing wonderful to Dabney in the idea of his mother going about and inspecting work, and finding fault, and giving directions. He had never seen her do any thing else, and he had the greatest confidence in her knowledge and ability. He noticed too, before they left the place, that the customary farm-work was going ahead with even more regularity and energy than if the owner himself had been present.

"Ham's farm'll look something like ours, one of these days," he said, "if things go on at this rate."

"I mean it shall," replied his mother, a little sharply. "Now go and get out the ponies, and we'll do the rest of our errands."

Dab started for the barn at a half trot; for, if there was one thing he liked better than another, it was to have the reins in his hands and that pair of ponies before him. Time had been when Mrs. Kinzer did her own driving, and only permitted Dab to "hold the horses" while she made her calls, business or otherwise; but that day had been safely put away among Dab's unpleasant memories for a good while.

It was but a few minutes before the neat buggy held the widow and her son, and the ponies were taking them briskly down the road towards the village.

It they had only known it, at that very moment Ham Morris and his blooming bride were setting out for a drive, at the fashionable watering-place where they had made their first stop in their wedding-tour.

"Ham," said Miranda, "it seems to me as if we were a thousand miles from home."

"We shall be a good deal farther before we get any nearer," said Ham.

"But I wonder what they are doing there, this morning,—mother, and the girls, and dear little Dabney."

"Little Dabney!" exclaimed Ham, with a queer sort of laugh on his face.
"Why, Miranda, do you think Dab is a baby yet?"

"No, not a baby, but"—

"Well, he's a boy, that's a fact; but he'll be as tall as I am in three years."

"Will he? Do you think so? But will he ever get fat?"

"Not till after he gets his full length," said Ham. "We must have him at our house a good deal, after we get home, and feed him up. I've taken a liking to Dab."

"Feed him up!" said Miranda. "Do you think we starve him?"

"No, I suppose not; but how many meals a day does he get?"

"Three, of course, like the rest of us; and he never misses one of them."

"Exactly," said Ham: "I shouldn't suppose he would. I never miss a meal, myself, if I can help it. But don't you think three meals a day is rather short allowance for a boy like Dab?"

Miranda thought a moment, but then she answered positively,—

"No, I don't. Not if he does as well at each one of them as Dabney is sure to."

"Well," said Ham, "that was in his old clothes, that were too tight for him. Now he's got a good loose fit, with plenty of room, you don't know how much more he may need. No, Miranda, I'm going to have an eye on Dab."

"You're a dear good fellow, anyway," said Miranda, with one of her very best smiles, "and I hope mother'll have the house all ready for us when we get back."

"She will," replied Ham, after a moment spent in somewhat thoughtful silence. "Do you know, Miranda, I shall hardly be easy about that till I see what she's done with it? It was in a dreadfully baggy condition."

CHAPTER IV.

TWO BOYS, ONE PIG, AND AN UNFORTUNATE RAILWAY-TRAIN.

"That's him!"

Dab was standing by his ponies, in front of a store in the village. His mother was making some purchases in the store, and Dab was thinking how the Morris house would look when it was finished; and it was at him the old farmer was pointing in answer to a question which had just been asked him.

The questioner was the sharp-eyed boy who had bothered poor Dick Lee that morning, and he was now evidently making a sort of "study" of Dab Kinzer.

At that moment, however, a young lady—quite young—came tripping along the sidewalk, and was stopped by Dabney, with,—

"There, Jenny Walters! If I didn't forget my label!"

"Why, Dabney! Is that you? How you startled me! Forgot your label?"

"Yes," said Dab; "I'm in another new suit today; and I meant to have a label on the collar, with my name on it. You'd have known me then."

"But I know you now," exclaimed Jenny. "Why, I saw you yesterday."

"Yes, and I told you it was me. Can you read, Jenny?"

"Why, what a question!"

"Because, if you can't, it won't do me any good to wear a label."

"Dabney Kinzer!" exclaimed Jenny, "there's an other thing you ought to get."

"What's that?"

"Some good manners," said the little lady snappishly. "Think of your stopping me in the street to tell me I can't read!"

"Then you mustn't forget me so quick," said Dab. "If you meet my old clothes anywhere you must call them Dick Lee. They've had a change of name."

"So he's in them, is he? I don't doubt they look better than they ever did before."

Jenny walked away at once, at the end of that remark, holding her head pretty high, and leaving her old playmate feeling as if he had had a little the worst of it. That was often the way with people who stopped to talk with Jenny Walters, and she was not as much of a favorite as she otherwise might have been.

Dabney looked after her with his mouth puckered into shape for a whistle; but she had hardly disappeared before he found himself confronted by the strange young gentleman.

"Is your name Dabney Kinzer?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Well, I'm Mr. Ford Foster, from New York."

"Come over here to buy goods?" suggested Dabney. "Or to get something to eat?"

Ford Foster was apparently of about Dab's age, but a full head less in height, so that there was more point in the question than there seemed to be; but he treated it as not worthy of notice, and asked,—

"Do you know of a house to let anywhere about here?"

"House to let?" suddenly exclaimed the voice of Mrs. Kinzer, behind him, much to Dab's surprise. "Are you asking about a house? Whom for?"

Ford Foster had been quite ready to "chaff" Dick Lee, and he would not have hesitated about trying a like experiment upon Mr. Dabney Kinzer; but he knew enough to speak respectfully to the portly and business-like lady before him now.

"Yes, madam," he said, with a ceremonious bow: "I wish to report to my father that I have found an acceptable house in this vicinity."

"You do!"

Mrs. Kinzer was reading the young gentleman through and through, as she spoke; but she followed her exclamation with a dozen questions, all of which he answered with a good deal of clearness and intelligence. She wound up at last, with,—

"Go right home, then, and tell your father the only good house to let in this neighborhood will be ready for him next week. I'll show it to him when he comes, but he'd better see me at once. Dabney, jump into the buggy. I'm in a hurry."

The ponies were in motion, up the street, before Ford Foster quite recovered from the shock of being told to "go right home."

"A very remarkable woman," he muttered, as he turned away, "and she did not tell me a word about

the house, after all. I must make some more inquiries. The boy is actually well dressed, for a place like this."

"Mother," said Dabney, as they drove along, "you wouldn't let 'em have Ham's house, would you?"

"No, indeed. But I don't mean to have our own stand empty."

With that reply a great deal of light broke in upon Dab's mind.

"That's it, is it?" he said to himself, as he touched up the ponies. "Well, there'll be room enough for all of us there, and no mistake. But what'll Ham say?"

That was a question which he could safely leave to the very responsible lady beside him; and she found "errands" enough for him, during the remainder of that forenoon, to keep him from worrying his mind about any thing else.

As for Ford Foster, it was not until late on the following day that he completed all his "inquiries" to his satisfaction. He took the afternoon train for the city, almost convinced that, much as he undoubtedly knew before he came, he had actually acquired a good deal more knowledge which might be of some value.

Ford was almost the only passenger in the car he had selected. Trains going towards the city were apt to be thinly peopled at that time of day; but the empty cars had to be taken along all the same, for the benefit of the crowds who would be coming out later in the afternoon and in the evening. The railway-company would have made more money with full loads both ways, but it was well they did not have a full load on that precise train.

Ford had turned over the seat in front of him, and stretched himself out with his feet on it. It was almost like lying down, for a boy of his length; and it was the very best position he could possibly have taken if he had known what was coming.

Known what was coming?

Yes: there was a pig coming.

That was all; but it was quite enough, considering what that pig was about to do. He was going where he chose, just then; and not only had he chosen to walk upon the railroad-track, but he had also made up his mind not to turn out for that locomotive and its train of cars.

He saw it, of course, for he was looking straight at it; and the engineer saw him, but it would have been well for the pig if he had been discovered a few seconds earlier.

"What a whistle!" exclaimed Ford Foster at that moment. "It sounds more like the squeal of an iron pig than any thing else. I"—

But at that instant there came to him a great jolt and a shock; and Ford found himself tumbled all in a heap, on the seat where his feet had been. Then came bounce after bounce, and the sound of breaking glass, and then a crash.

"Off the track," shouted Ford, as he sprang to his feet. "I wouldn't have missed it for any thing. I do hope, though, there hasn't anybody been killed."

In the tremendous excitement of the moment he could hardly have told how he got out of that car; but it did not seem ten seconds before he was standing beside the engineer and conductor of the train, looking at the battered engine, as it lay upon its side in a deep ditch. The baggage-car, just behind it, was broken all to pieces, but the passenger-cars did not seem to have suffered very much; and nobody was badly hurt, as the engineer and fireman had jumped off in time.

There had been very little left of the pig; but the conductor and the rest seemed much disposed to say unkind things about him, and about his owner, and about all the other pigs they could think of.

"This train'll never get in on time," said Ford to the conductor, a little later. "How'll I get to the city?"

The railway man was not in the best of humors; and he answered, a little groutily, "Well, young man, I don't suppose the city could get along without you over night. The junction with the main road is only two miles ahead, and if you're a good walker you may catch a train there."

Some of the other passengers, none of whom were much more than "badly shaken up," or down, had made the same discovery; and in a few minutes more there was a long, straggling procession of

uncomfortable people, marching by the side of the railway-track, in the hot sun. They were nearly all of them making unkind remarks about pigs, and the faculty they had of not getting out of the way.

The conductor was right, however; and nearly all of them managed to walk the two miles to the junction in time to go in on the other train.

Ford Foster was among the first to arrive, and he was likely to reach home in season, in spite of the pig and his outrageous conduct.

As for his danger, he had hardly thought of that; and he again and again declared to himself that he would not have missed so important an adventure for any thing he could think of. It almost sounded once or twice as if he took to himself no small amount of personal credit, not to say glory, for having been in so remarkable an accident, and come out of it so well.

Ford's return, when he should make it, was to take him to a great, pompous, stylish, crowded "up-town boarding-house," in one of the fashionable streets of the great city. There was no wonder at all that wise people should wish to get out of such a place in such hot weather. Still it was the sort of home Ford Foster had been acquainted with all his life; and it was partly owing to that, that he had become so prematurely "knowing."

He knew too much, in fact, and was only too well aware of it. He had filled his head with an unlimited stock of boarding-house information, as well as with a firm persuasion that there was little more to be had,—unless, indeed, it might be scraps of such outside knowledge as he had now been picking up over on Long Island.

In one of the large "parlor-chambers" of the boarding-house, at about eight o'clock that evening, a middle-aged gentleman and lady, with a fair, sweet-faced girl of about nineteen, were sitting near an open window, very much as if they were waiting for somebody. Such a kind, motherly lady! She was one of those whom no one can help liking, after seeing her smile once, or hearing her speak.

Ford Foster himself could not have put in words what he thought about his mother. And yet he had no difficulty whatever in expressing his respect for his father, or his unbounded admiration for his pretty sister Annie.

"O husband!" exclaimed Mrs. Foster, "are you sure none of them were injured?"

"So the telegraphic report said; not a bone broken of anybody, but the pig that got in the way."

"How I wish he would come!" groaned Annie. "Have you any idea, father, how Ford could get to the city?"

"Not clearly, my dear," said her father; "but you can trust Ford not to miss any opportunity. He's just the boy to look out for himself in an emergency."

Ford Foster's father took very strongly after the son in whose presence of mind and ability he expressed so much confidence. He had just such a square, active, bustling sort of body, several sizes larger; with just such keen, penetrating, greenish-gray eyes. Anybody would have picked him out at a glance for a lawyer, and a good one.

That was exactly what he was; and, if anybody had become acquainted with either son or father, there would have been no difficulty afterward in identifying the other.

It required a good deal more than the telegraphic report of the accident, or even her husband's assurances, to relieve the motherly anxiety of good Mrs. Foster, or even to drive away the shadows from the face of Annie.

No doubt, if Ford himself had known the state of affairs in his family circle, they would have been relieved earlier; for, even while they were talking about him, he had reached the end of his adventures, and was already in the house. It had not so much as occurred to him that his mother would hear of the disaster to the pig and the railway-train until he himself should tell her; and so he had made sure of his supper down stairs before reporting his arrival. He might not have done it perhaps; but he had entered the house by the lower way, through the area door, and that of the dining-room had stood temptingly open, with some very eatable things spread out upon the table.

That had been too much for Ford, after his car-ride, and his smash-up, and his long walk.

Now, at last, up he came, three stairs at a time, brimful of new and wonderful experiences, to be more than a little astonished by the manner and enthusiasm of his welcome.

"Why, mother," he exclaimed, when he got a chance for a word, "you and Annie couldn't have said much more if I'd been the pig himself!"

"The pig!" said Annie.

"Yes, the pig that stopped us. He and the engine won't go home to their families to-night."

"Don't make fun of it, Ford," said his mother gently. "It's too serious a matter."

Just then his father broke in, almost impatiently, with,—

"Well, Ford, my boy, have you done your errand? or shall I have to see about it myself? You've been gone two days."

"Thirty-seven hours and a half, father," replied Ford, taking out his watch. "I've kept an exact account of my expenses. We've saved the cost of advertising."

"And spent it on railroading," said his father, with a laugh.

"But, Ford," asked Annie, "did you find a house?—a good one?"

"Yes," added Mrs. Foster: "now I'm sure you're safe, I do want to hear about the house."

"It's all right, mother," said Ford confidently. "The very house you told me to hunt for. Neither too large nor too small. I've only seen the outside of it, but every thing about it is in apple-pie order."

There were plenty of questions to answer now, but

Ford was every way equal to the occasion. Some of his answers might have made Mrs. Kinzer herself open her eyes, for the material for them had been obtained from her own neighbors.

Ford's report, in fact, compelled his father to look at him with an expression of face which very plainly meant,—

"That's my boy. He resembles me. I was just like him, at his age. He'll be just like me, at mine."

There was excellent reason, beyond question, to approve of the manner in which the young gentleman had performed his errand in the country; and Mr. Foster promptly decided to go over in a day or two, and see what sort of an arrangement could be made with Mrs. Kinzer.

CHAPTER V.

NEW NEIGHBORS, AND GETTING SETTLED.

The week which followed the wedding-day was an important one.

The improvements on the Morris house were pushed along in a way that astonished everybody. Every day that passed, and with every dollar's worth of work that was done, the good points of the long-neglected old mansion came out stronger and stronger.

The plans of Mrs. Kinzer had been a good while in getting ready, and she knew exactly what was best to be done at every hole and corner.

Within a few days after Ford's trip of investigation, he and his father came over from the city; and Mr. Foster speedily came to a perfect understanding with Dabney's mother.

"A very business-like, common-sense sort of a woman," the lawyer remarked to his son. "But what a great, dangling, overgrown piece of a boy that is! Still, he seems intelligent, and you may find him good company."

"No doubt of it," said Ford. "I may be useful to him too. He looks as if he could learn if he only had a fair chance."

"I should say so," responded Mr. Foster. "We must not expect too much of fellows brought up away out here, as he has been."

Ford gravely assented, and they went back to report their success to Mrs. Foster and Annie.

There was a great surprise in store, consequently, for the people of the village. Early in the following week it was rumored from house to house,—

"The Kinzers are all a-movin' over to Ham Morris's."

And then, before the public mind had become sufficiently settled to inquire into the matter, the rumor changed itself into a piece of positive news:—

"The widder Kinzer's moved over into Ham's house, bag and baggage."

So it was; although the carpenters and painters and glaziers were still at work, and the piles of Kinzer furniture had to be stored around as best could be. Some part of them had even to be locked up over night in one of the barns.

The Kinzers, for generations, had been a trifle weak about furniture; and that was one of the reasons why there had been so little room for human beings in their house. The little parlor, indeed, had been filled until it put one in mind of a small furniture-store, with not room enough to show the stock on hand; and some of the other parts of the house required knowledge and care to walk about in them. It was bad for a small house, truly, but not so much so when the same articles were given a fair chance to spread themselves.

It was a treat to Dab to watch while the new carpets were put down, and see how much more at home and comfortable all that furniture looked, after it was moved into its new quarters. He remarked to Keziah,—

"It won't be of any use for anybody to try to sit on that sofa and play the piano. They'll have to get up and come over."

Mrs. Kinzer took good care that the house she left should speak well of her to the eyes of Mrs. Foster, when that lady came to superintend the arrival of her own household goods.

The character of these, by the way, at once convinced the village gossips that "lawyer Foster must be a good deal forehanded in money matters." And so he was, even more so than his furniture indicated.

Ford had a wonderful deal to do with the settlement of his family in their new home; and it was not until nearly the close of the week that he found time for more than an occasional glance over the north fence, although he and Dab had several times exchanged a word or two when they met each other on the road.

"Take the two farms together," his father had said to him, "and they make a really fine estate. I learn, too, that the Kinzers have other property. Your young acquaintance is likely to have a very good start in the world."

Ford had found out very nearly as much as that on his own account; but he had long since learned the uselessness of trying to teach his father any thing, however well he might succeed with ordinary people, and so he said nothing.

"Dabney," said Mrs. Kinzer, that Friday evening, "you've been a great help all the week. Suppose you take the ponies to-morrow morning, and ask young Foster out for a drive."

"Mother," exclaimed Samantha, "I shall want the ponies myself. I've some calls to make, and some shopping. Dabney will have to drive."

"No, Sam," said Dabney: "if you go out with the ponies to-morrow, you'll have my old clothes to drive you. I'll go and speak to them about it."

"What do you mean?" asked Samantha.

"I mean, with Dick Lee in them."

"That would be just as well," said Mrs. Kinzer. "The ponies are gentle enough, and Dick drives well. He'll be glad enough to go."

"Dick Lee, indeed!" began Samantha.

"A fine boy," interrupted Dab. "And he's beginning to dress well. His new clothes fit him beautifully. All he really needs is a shirt, and I'll give him one. Mine are getting too small."

Samantha's fingers fidgeted a little with the tidy they were holding; but Mrs. Kinzer said composedly,—

"Well, Dabney, I've been thinking about it. You ought not to be tied down all the while. Suppose you take next week pretty much to yourself: Samantha won't want the ponies every day. The other horses have all got to work, or I'd let you have one of them."

Dabney got up, for want of a better answer, and walked over to where his mother was sitting, and gave the thoughtful matron a good sounding kiss.

At the same time he could not help thinking,—

"This comes of Ham Morris and my new rig."

"There, Dabney, that'll do," said his mother; "but how'll you spend Saturday?"

"Guess I'll take Ford Foster out in the bay, a-crabbing, if he'll go," replied Dabney. "I'll run over and ask him."

It was not too late, and he was out of the house before there was any chance for further remarks from the girls.

"Now," he muttered, as he walked along, "I'll have to see old lawyer Foster, and Mrs. Foster, and I don't know who all besides. I don't like that."

Just as he came to the north fence, however, he was hailed by a clear, wide-awake voice,—

"Dab Kinzer, is that you?"

"Guess so," said Dab: "is that you, Ford?"

"I was just going over to your house," said Ford.

"Well, so was I just coming over to see you. I've been too busy all the week, but they've let up on me at last."

"I've got our family nearly settled," replied Ford; "and I thought I'd ask if you wouldn't like to go out on the bay with me to-morrow. Teach you to catch crabs."

Dabney drew a long, astonished sort of whistle; but he finished it with,—

"That's about what I was thinking of. There's plenty of crabs, and I've got a tip-top boat. We won't want a heavy one for just us two."

"All right, then. We'll begin on crabs, but some other day we'll go for bigger fish. What are you going to do next week?"

"Got it all to myself," said Dab. "We can have all sorts of a good time. We can have the ponies, too, when we want them."

"That's about as good as it knows how to be," responded the young gentleman from the city. "I'd like to explore the country. You're going to have a nice place of it, over there, before you get through. Only, if I'd had the planning of that house, I'd have set it back farther. Too much room all round it. Not enough trees either."

Dab came stoutly to the defence of not only that house, but of Long-Island architecture generally, and was fairly overwhelmed, for the first time in his life, by a flood of big words from a boy of his own age.

He could have eaten up Ford Foster, if properly cooked. He felt sure of that. But he was no match for him on the building question. On his way back to his new home, however, after the discussion had lasted long enough, he found himself inquiring,—

"That's all very nice, but what can he teach me about crabs? We'll see about that to-morrow."

Beyond a doubt, the crab question was of special importance; but one of far greater consequence to Dab Kinzer's future was undergoing discussion, at that very hour, hundreds of miles away.

Quite a little knot of people there was, in a hotel parlor; and while the blooming Miranda, now Mrs. Morris, was taking her share of talk very well with the ladies, Ham was every bit as busy with a couple of elderly gentlemen.

"It's just as I say, Mr. Morris," said one of the latter, with a superfluous show of energy: "there's no better institution of its kind in the country than Grantley Academy. I send my own boys there; and I've just written about it to my brother-in-law, Foster, the New-York lawyer. He'll have his boy there this fall. No better place in the country, sir."

"But how about the expenses, Mr. Hart?" asked Ham.

"Fees are just what I told you, sir, a mere nothing. As for board, all I pay for my boys is three dollars a week. All they want to eat, sir, and good accommodations. Happy as larks, sir, all the time. Cheap, sir, cheap."

If Ham Morris had the slightest idea of going to school at a New-England academy, Miranda's place in the improved house was likely to wait for her; for he had a look on his face of being very nearly convinced.

She did not seem at all disturbed, however; and probably she knew that her husband was not taking up the school question on his own account.

Nevertheless, that was the reason why it might have been interesting for Dab Kinzer, and even for his knowing neighbor, to have added themselves to the company Ham and Miranda had fallen in with on their wedding-tour.

Both of the boys had a different kind of thinking on hand; and that night Dab dreamed that a gigantic crab was trying to pull Ford Foster out of the boat, while the latter calmly remarked to him,—

"There, my young friend, did you ever see anything just like that before?"

CHAPTER VI.

CRABS, BOYS, AND A BOAT-WRECK.

That Saturday morning was a sad one for poor Dick Lee.

His mother, the previous night, carefully locked up his elegant apparel, the gift of Mr. Dabney Kinzer. It was done after Dick was in bed; and, when daylight came again, he found only his old clothes by the bedside.

It was a hard thing to bear, no doubt; but Dick had been a bad boy on Friday. He had sold his fish instead of bringing them home, and then had gone and squandered the money on a brilliant new red necktie.

"Dat's good 'nuff for me to wear to meetin'," said Mrs. Lee, when her eyes fell upon the gorgeous bit of cheap silk. "Reckon it won't be wasted on any good-for-nuffin boy. I'll show ye wot to do wid yer fish. You' a-gettin' too mighty fine, anyhow."

Dick was disconsolate for a while; but his humility took the form of a determination to go for crabs that day, mainly because his mother had long since set her face against that tribe of animals.

"Dey's a wasteful, 'stravagant sort ob fish," remarked Mrs. Lee, in frequent explanation of her dislike. "Dey's all clo'es and no body, like some w'ite folks I know on. I don't mean de Kinzers. Dey's all got body nuff."

And yet that inlet had a name and reputation of its own for crabs. There was a wide reach of shallow water, inside the southerly point at the mouth, where, over several hundred acres of muddy flats, the depth varied from three and a half to eight feet, with the ebb and flow of the tides. That was a sort of perpetual crab-pasture; and there it was that Dick Lee determined to expend his energies that Saturday.

Very likely there would be other crabbers on the flats; but Dick was not the boy to object to that, provided none of them should notice the change in his raiment. At an early hour, therefore, Dab and Ford were preceded by their young colored friend, they themselves waiting for later breakfasts than Mrs. Lee was in the habit of preparing.

Dick's ill fortune did not leave him when he got out of sight of his mother. It followed him down to the shore of the inlet, and compelled him to give up, for that day, all idea of borrowing a respectable boat.

There were several, belonging to the neighbors, from among which Dick was accustomed to take his pick, in return for errands run and other services rendered to their owners; but on this particular morning not one of them all was available. Some were fastened with ugly chains and padlocks. Two were hauled away above even high-water mark, and so Dick could not have got either of them into the water even if he had dared to try; and as for the rest, as Dick said,—

"Guess dar owners must hab come and borrered 'em."

The consequence was, that the dark-skinned young fisherman was for once compelled to put up with his own boat, or rather his father's.

The three wise men of Gotham were not much worse off when they went to sea in a bowl than was Dick Lee in that rickety little old flat-bottomed punt.

Did it leak?

Well, not so very much, with no heavier weight than Dick's; but there was reason in his remark that,—

"Dis yer's a mean boat to frow down a fish in, when you cotch 'im. He's done suah to git drownded."

Yes, and the crabs would get their feet wet, and so would Dick; but he resigned himself to his circumstances, and pushed away. To tell the truth, he had not been able to free himself from a lingering fear lest his mother might come after him, before he could get afloat, with orders for some duty or other on shore; and that would have been worse than going to sea in the little old scow, a good deal.

"Reckon it's all right," said Dick as he shoved off. "It'd be an awful risk to trus' dem nice clo'es in de ole boat, suah."

Nice clothes, nice boats, a good many other nice things, were as yet beyond the reach of Dick Lee; but he was quite likely to catch as many crabs as his more aristocratic neighbors.

As for Dabney Kinzer and his friend from the city, they were on their way to the water-side, after all, at an hour which indicated either smaller appetites than usual or greater speed at the breakfast-table.

"Plenty of boats, I should say," remarked Ford, as he surveyed the little "landing" and its vicinity with the air of a man who had a few fleets of his own. "All sorts. Any of 'em fast?"

"Not many," said Dab. "The row-boats, big and little, have to be built so they will stand pretty rough water."

"How are the sail-boats?"

"Same thing. There's Ham Morris's yacht."

"That? Why, she's as big as any in the lot."

"Bigger; but she don't show it."

"Can't we take a cruise in her?" asked Ford.

"Any time. Ham lets me use her whenever I like. She's fast enough, but she's built so she'll stand 'most any thing. Safe as a house if she's handled right."

"Handled!"

Ford Foster's expression of face would have done honor to the Secretary of the Navy, or the Chairman of the Naval Affairs Committee in Congress, or any other perfect seaman, Noah included. It seemed to say,—

"As if any boat could be otherwise than well sailed, with me on board!"

Dabney, however, even while he was talking, had been hauling in from its "float and grapnel," about

ten yards out at low water, the very stanch-looking little yawl-boat that called him owner. She was just such a boat as Mrs. Kinzer would naturally have provided for her boy,—stout, well-made, and sensible,—without any bad habits of upsetting or the like. Not too large for Dabney to manage all alone, "The Jenny," as he called her, and as her name was painted on the stern, was all the better for having two on board, and had room in her then for more.

"The inlet's pretty narrow for a long reach through the marsh," said Dabney, "and as crooked as a ram's horn. I'll steer, and you pull, till we're out o' that, and then I'll take the oars."

"I might as well row out to the crab-grounds," said Ford, as he pitched his coat forward, and took his seat at the oars. "All ready?"

"Ready," said Dab; and "The Jenny" glided gracefully away from the landing with the starting-push he gave her.

Ford Foster had had oars in his hands before, but his experience had been limited to a class of vessels different in some respects from the one he was in now.

He was short of something, at all events. It may have been skill, or it may have been legs or discretion; but, whatever was lacking, at the third or fourth stroke the oar-blades went a little too deeply below the smooth surface of the water. There was a vain tug, a little out of "time;" and then there was a boy on the bottom of the boat, and a pair of well-polished shoes lifted high in the air.

"You've got it," shouted Dabney.

"Got what?" exclaimed an all-but angry voice from down there between the seats.

"Caught the first 'crab,'" replied Dabney: "that's what we call it. Can you steer? Guess I'd better row."

"No, you won't," was the very resolute reply, as Ford regained his seat and his oars. "I sha'n't catch any more crabs of that sort. I'm a little out of practice, that's all."

"I should say you were, a little. Well, it won't hurt you. 'Tisn't much of a pull."

Ford would have pulled it now if he had blistered all the skin off his hands in doing so; and he did very creditable work for some minutes, among the turns and windings of the narrow inlet.

"Here we are," shouted Dabney at last. "We are in the inlet yet, but it widens out into the bay."

"That's the bay, out yonder?"

"Yes; and the island between that and the ocean's no better'n a mere bar of sand."

"How d'you get past it?"

"Right across there, almost in a straight line. We'll run it next week in Ham's yacht. Splendid weak-fishing right in the mouth of that inlet, on the ocean side."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Ford, "I'm in for that. Is the bay deep?"

"Not very," replied Dabney; "but it gets pretty rough sometimes."

Ford was getting pretty red in the face just then, with his unaccustomed exercise; and his friend added,—

"You needn't pull so hard: we're almost there. Hullo! if there isn't Dick Lee, in his dry-goods box. That boat'll drown him some day, and his dad too. But just see him pull in crabs!"

Ford came near "catching" one more as he tried to turn around for the look proposed, exclaiming,—

"Dab, let's get to work as quick as we can. They might go away."

"Might fly?"

"No; but don't they go and come?"

"Well, you go and drop the grapnel over the bows, and we'll see 'em come in pretty quick."

The grapnel, or little anchor, was thrown over quickly enough; and the two boys were in such an eager haste that they had hardly a word to say to Dick, though he was now but a few rods away.

Now, it happened that when Ford and Dab came down to the water that morning, each of them had

brought a load. The former had only a neat little japanned tin box, about as big as his head; and the latter, besides his oars, carried a seemingly pretty heavy basket.

"Lots of lunch, I should say," had been Ford's mental comment; but he had not thought it wise to ask questions.

"Plenty of lunch in that box," thought Dab at the same moment, but only as a matter of course.

And they were both wrong. Lunch was the one thing they had both forgotten.

But the box and the basket.

Ford Foster came out, of his own accord, with the secret of the box; for he now took a little key out of his pocket, and unlocked it with an air of—

"Look at this, will you?"

Dab Kinzer looked, and was very sure he had never before seen quite such an assortment of brand-new fish-hooks, of many sorts and sizes, and of fish-lines which looked as if they had thus far spent their lives on dry land.

"Tip-top," he remarked. "I see a lot of things we can use one of these days, but there isn't time to go over 'em now. Let's go for the crabs. What made you bring your box along?"

"Oh!" replied Ford, "I left my rods at home, both of 'em. You don't s'pose I'd go for crabs with a rod, do you? But you can take your pick of hooks and lines."

"Crabs? Hooks and lines?"

"Why, yes. You don't mean to scoop 'em up in that landing-net, do you?"

Dab looked at his friend for a moment in blank amazement, and then the truth broke upon him for the first time.

"Oh, I see! You never caught any crabs. Well, just you lock up your jewellery-box, and I'll show you."

It was not easy for Dab to keep from laughing in Ford Foster's face; but his mother had not given him so many lessons in good-breeding for nothing, and Ford was permitted to close his ambitious "casket" without any worse annoyance than his own wounded pride gave him.

But now came out the secret of the basket.

The cover was jerked off; and nothing was revealed but a varied assortment of clams, large and small, but mostly of good size,—tough old customers, that no amount of roasting or boiling would ever have prepared for human eating.

"What are they for,—bait?"

"Yes, bait, weight, and all."

"How's that?"

Dabney's reply was to draw from his pocket a couple of long, strong cords, bits of old fishing-lines. He cracked a couple of clams one against the other; tied the fleshy part of one to each of the cords; tied bits of shell on, a foot or so from the ends, for sinkers; handed one cord to Ford, took the other himself, and laid the long-handled scoop-net he had brought with him down between them, saying,—

"Now we're ready. Drop your clam down to the bottom, and it won't be half a minute before you feel something pull on it. Then you draw it up gently,—steady as you know how. You mustn't jerk the crab loose. You'll get the knack of it in five minutes. It's all knack. There isn't any thing else so stupid as a crab."

Ford watched carefully, and obeyed in silence the directions he had received.

In a minute or so more the operation of the scoop-net was called for, and the fun began.

"You got him!" exclaimed Ford in a loud whisper, as he saw Dab quickly plunge the net into the water, and then shake out of it into the bottom of the boat a great sprawling "blue-legged" crab. "He's a whopper!"

"He'll do for one."

"There's one on mine! I declare, he's let go!"

"You jerked the clam away from him. Sink it again. He's mad about it.
He'll take right hold again."

"He's pulling now, or it's another one."

"Let him pull. Lift him easy. Long as he thinks he's stealing something, he'll hold on. There he comes,—see him?"

Ford saw the white flesh of the clam coming slowly up through the water, and he held his breath; for just behind and below it was a sprawling shadowy something that was tugging with all its might at that tough shell-fish.

"It's an awful big one!"

"Shall I scoop him?"

"No, indeed: I want to scoop him myself. I saw how you did it."

Splash went the net, as the prize came nearer the surface; and Ford began, somewhat excitedly, to shake it all over the bottom of the boat.

"Why, where's that crab? You don't mean to say he was quick enough to dodge away?"

"Quick? well, no, that isn't just the trouble. I forgot to tell you to scoop way under him. You hit him, square, and knocked him ever so far. The water deceives your eyes. Drive the net under him quick, and then lift. I've got one—now just you see how I scoop."

Ford felt dreadfully disappointed over the loss of his first crab, but the rapidity with which he caught the "knack of it" after that was a great credit to him. He did not miss the next one he pulled up.

It was great fun; but it had its slack moments, and in one of these Dab suddenly exclaimed,—

"The young black rascal! If he hasn't gone and got a sheep's-head!"

"A sheep's-head?"

They were both staring at the old punt, where Dick Lee was apparently enjoying the most extraordinary good fortune.

"Yes, that's it. That's why he beats us so badly. They're a sight better'n clams, only you can't always get one. I wonder where he picked up that one."

"But how he does pull 'em in!"

"We're doing well enough," began Dabney, when suddenly there came a shrill cry of pain from the black boy's punt.

"He's barefooted," shouted Dab, with, it must be confessed, something like a grin; "and one of the little pirates has pinned him with his nippers."

That was the difficulty exactly, and there need not have been any very serious result of such an expression of a crab's bad temper. But Dick Lee was more than ordinarily averse to any thing like physical pain, and the crab which now had him by the toe was a very muscular and vicious specimen of his quarrelsome race.

The first consequence of that vigorous nip was a momentary dance up and down in the punt, accompanied by exclamatory howls from Dick, but not by a word of any sort from the crab.

The next consequence was, that the crab let go; but so at the same instant, did the rotten board in the boat-bottom, upon which Dick Lee had so rashly danced.

It let go of the rest of the boat so suddenly that poor Dick had only time for one tremendous yell, as it let him right down through to his armpits.

The water was perfectly smooth; but the boat was full in an instant, and nearly a bushel of freshly-caught and ill-tempered crabs were manoeuvring in all directions around the woolly head, which was all their late captor could now keep in sight.

"Up with the grapnel, Ford," shouted Dab. "Take an oar: we'll both row.

He can swim like a duck, but he might split his throat."

"Or get scared to death."

"Or those crabs might go for him, and eat him up."

"How he does yell!"

CHAPTER VII.

A VERY ACCIDENTAL CALL.

At the very moment when the angry crab closed his nippers on the bare big toe of Dick Lee, and his shrill note of discomfort rang across the inlet, the shriller whistle of the engine announced the arrival of the morning train from the city, at the little station in the village.

A moment or so later, a very pretty young lady was standing beside a trunk on the platform, trying to get some information from the flagman.

"Can you tell me where Mr. Foster lives?"

"That's the gimlet-eyed lawyer from New Yark?"

"Yes, he's from New York," said the young lady, smiling in his face.
"Where does he live?"

"He's got the sassiest boy, thin. Is it him as took the Kinzer house?"

"I think likely it is. Can you tell me how to get there?"

"Thim Kinzers is foine people. The widdy married one of the gurrels to
Misther Morris."

"But how can I get to the house?"

"Is it there ye're afther goin'?—Hey, Michael, me boy, bring up yer owld rattlethrap, and take the leddy's thrunk. She'll be goin' to the Kinzer place. Sharp, now."

"I should say it was," muttered the young lady, as the remains of what had been a carryall were pulled up beside the platform by the skinny skeleton of what might once have been a horse. "It's a rattletrap."

There was no choice, however; for that was the only public conveyance at the station, and the trunk was already whisked in behind the dashboard, and the driver was waiting for her.

He could afford to wait, as it would be some hours before another train would be in.

There was no door to open in that "carriage." It was all door except the top and bottom, and the pretty passenger was neither helped nor hindered in finding her place on the back seat.

If the flagman was more disposed to ask questions than to answer them, Michael said few words of any kind except to his horse. To him, indeed, he kept up a constant stream of encouraging remarks, the greatest part of which would have been difficult for an ordinary hearer to understand.

Very likely the horse knew what they meant; for he came very near breaking from a limp into a trot several times, under the stimulus of all that clucking and "G'lang, now!"

The distance was by no means great, and Michael seemed to know the way perfectly. At least he answered, "Yes'm, indade," to several inquiries from his passenger, and she was compelled to be satisfied with that.

"What a big house it is! And painters at work on it too," she exclaimed, just as Michael added a

vigorous jerk of the reins to the "Whoa!" with which he stopped his nag in front of an open gate.

"Are you sure this is the place?"

"Yes'm; fifty cints, mum."

By the time the trunk was out of the carriage and swung inside of the gate, the young lady had followed; but for some reason Michael at once sprang back to his place, and whipped up his limping steed. It may have been from the fear of being asked to take that trunk into the house, for it was not a small one. The young lady stood for a moment irresolute, and then left it where it was, and walked on up to the house.

No bell; no knocker. The workmen had not reached that part of their improvements yet. But the door was open; and a very neatly furnished parlor at the left of the hall seemed to say, "Come right in, please;" and in she went.

Such an arrival could not possibly have escaped the notice of the inmates of the house; and, as the young lady from the railway came in at the front, another and a very different-looking lady marched through to the parlor from the rear.

Each one would have been a puzzle to the other, if the elder of the two had not been Mrs. Kinzer, and the widow had never been very much puzzled in all her life. At all events, she put out her hand, with a cordial smile, saying,—

"Miss Foster, is it not? I am Mrs. Kinzer. How could he have made such a mistake?"

"Yes, Miss Annie Foster. But do please explain Where am I? and how do you know me?"

The widow laughed cheerily.

"How do I know you, my dear? Why, you resemble your mother almost as much as your brother Ford resembles his father. You are only one door from home here, and I'll have your trunk taken right over to the house. Please sit down a moment. Ah! my daughter Samantha, Miss Foster. Excuse me a moment, while I call one of the men."

By the time their mother was fairly out of the room, however, Keziah and Pamela were also in it; and Annie thought she had rarely seen three girls whose appearance testified so strongly to the healthiness of the place they lived in.

The flagman's questions and Annie's answers were related quickly enough, and the cause of Michael's blunder was plain at once.

The parlor rang again with peals of laughter; for Dab Kinzer's sisters were ready at any time to look at the funny side of things, and their accidental guest saw no reason for not joining them.

"Your brother Ford is on the bay, crabbing with our Dabney," remarked Samantha, as the widow returned. But Annie's eyes had been furtively watching her baggage through the window, and saw it swinging upon a broad, red-shirted pair of shoulders, just then; and, before she could bring her mind to bear upon the crab question, Keziah Kinzer exclaimed,—

"If there isn't Mrs. Foster, coming through the garden gate!"

"My mother!" and Annie was up and out of the parlor in a twinkling, followed by all the ladies of the Kinzer family. It was really quite a procession.

Now, if Mrs. Foster was in any degree surprised by her daughter's sudden appearance, or by her getting to the Kinzer house first instead of to her own, it was a curious fact that she did not say so by a word or a look.

Not a breath of it. But, for all the thorough-bred self-control of the city lady, Mrs. Kinzer knew perfectly well there was something odd and unexpected about it all. If Samantha had noticed this fact, there might have been some questions asked possibly; but one of the widow's most rigid rules in life was to "mind her own business."

The girls, indeed, were quite jubilant over an occurrence which made them at once so well acquainted with their very attractive new neighbor; and they might have followed her even beyond the gate in the north fence, if it had not been for their mother. All they were allowed to do was to go back to their own parlor, and hold "a council of war," in the course of which Annie Foster was discussed, from her bonnet to her shoes.

Mrs. Foster had been abundantly affectionate in greeting her daughter; but, when once they were alone in the wee sitting-room of the old Kinzer homestead, she put her arms around her, saying,—

"Now, my darling, tell me what it all means."

"Why, mother, it was partly my mistake, and partly the flagman's and the driver's; and I'm sure Mrs. Kinzer was kind. She knew me before I said a word, by my resemblance to you."

"Oh, I don't mean that! How is it you are here so soon? I thought you meant to make a long visit at your uncle Hart's."

"So I would, mother, if it had not been for those boys."

"Your cousins, Annie?"

"Cousins, mother! You never saw such young bears in all your life. They tormented me from morning till night."

"But, Annie, I hope you have not offended"—

"Offended, mother? Aunt Maria thinks they're perfect, and so does uncle Joe. They'd let them pull the house down over their heads, you'd think."

"But, Annie, what did they do? and what did you say?"

"Do, mother? I couldn't tell you in all day; but when they poured ink over my cuffs and collars, I said I would come home. I had just one pair left white to wear home, and I travelled all night."

Poor Mrs. Foster! A cold shudder went over her at the idea of that ink among the spotless contents of her own collar-box.

"What boys they must be! but, Annie, what did your aunt say?"

"Uncle Joe laughed till he cried; and Aunt Maria said, 'Boys will be boys;' and I half believe they were sorry; but that was only a sort of a winding-up, I wouldn't stay there another day."

Annie had other things to tell; and, long before she had finished her story, there was no further fault to be found with her for losing her temper. Still her mother said mildly,—

"I must write to Maria at once, for it won't do to let those boys make trouble between us."

Annie looked at her with an expression of face which very plainly said,—

"Nobody in the wide world could have the heart to quarrel with you."

CHAPTER VIII.

A RESCUE, AND A GRAND GOOD TIME.

Dab Kinzer and his friend were prompt enough coming to the rescue of their unfortunate fellow-lubber; but to get him out of the queer wreck he had made of that punt looked like a tough task to both of them, and they said as much.

"I isn't drownin'," exclaimed Dick heroically, as the other boat was pulled alongside of him. "Jest you take your scoop-net, and save dem crabs."

"They won't drown," said Ford.

"But they'll get away," said Dab, as he snatched up the scoop. "Dick's head is perfectly level on that point."

The side-boards of the old punt were under water half the time, but the crabs were pretty well penned in. Even a couple of them, that had mistaken Dick's wool for another sheep's-head, were

secured without difficulty, in spite of the firmness with which they clung to their prize.

"What luck he'd been having!" said Ford.

"He always does," said Dab. "I say, Dick, how'll I scoop you in?"

"Has you done got all de crabs?"

"Every pinner of 'em."

"Den you jest wait a minute."

Waiting was all that was left them to do, for the shining black face and woolly head disappeared almost instantly.

"He's sunk," exclaimed Ford.

"There he comes," replied Dab: "he'd swum ashore from here, and not half try. Why, I could swim twice as far as that myself, and he can beat me."

"Could you? I couldn't."

That was the first time Dab had heard his city acquaintance make a confession of inability, and he could see a more than usually thoughtful expression on his face. The coolness and skill of Dick Lee, in his hour of disaster, had not been thrown away upon him.

"If I had my clothes off," said Ford, "I believe I'd try that on."

"Dab Kinzer, you's de bes' feller dar is. But wot'll we do wid de old boat?" burst out Dick, on coming to the surface.

"Let the tide carry her in while we're crabbing. She isn't worth mending, but we'll tow her home."

"All right," said Dick, as he grasped the gunwale of Dab's boat, and began to climb over.

"Hold on, Dick."

"I is a-holdin' on."

"I mean, wait a bit. Ain't you wet?"

"Of course I's wet."

"Well, then, you stay in there till you get dry It's well you didn't have your new clothes on."

"Ain't I glad 'bout dem!" enthusiastically ex-claimed the young African. "Nebber mind dese clo'es. De water on 'em's all good, dry water, like de res' ob de bay."

And, so saying, Dick tumbled over in, with a spatter which made Ford Foster tread on two of three crabs in getting away from it. It was not the first time, by many, that Dick Lee had found himself bathing in that bay without any time given him to undress.

And now it was discovered that the shipwrecked crabber had never for one instant lost his hold of the line, to the other end of which was fastened his precious sheep's-head.

They made a regular crabbing crew now,—two to pull up, and one to scoop in; and never had the sprawling game been more plentiful on that pasture, or more apparently in a greedy hurry to be captured.

"What on earth shall we do with them all?" asked Ford.

"Soon's we've got enough for a mess for both our folks," said Dab, "we'll quit this, and go for some fish. The clams are good bait, and we can try some of your tackle."

Ford's face brightened a good deal at that suggestion, for he had more than once cast a crest fallen look at his pretentious box. But he replied,—

"A mess! How many crabs can one man eat?"

"I don't know," said Dab. "It depends a good deal on who he is. Then, if he eats the shells, he can't take in so many."

"Eat de shells? Yah, yah, yah! Dat beats my mudder! She's allers a-sayin' wot a waste de shells make," laughed Dick. "I jest wish we might ketch some fish. I dasn't kerry home no crabs."

"It does look as if we'd got as many as we'll know what to do with," remarked Dab, as he looked down on the sprawling multitude in the bottom of the boat. "We'll turn the clams out of the basket, and fill that; but we mustn't put any crabs in the fish-car. We'll stow 'em all forward."

The basket held more than half a bushel, but there was still a "heap" of what Ford Foster called "the crusties" to pen up in the bow of the boat.

That duty attended to, the grapnel was pulled up, and Dick was set at the oars, while Dab selected from Ford's box just the hooks and lines their owner had made least account of.

"What'll we catch, Dab?"

"'Most anything. Nobody knows till he's done it. Perch, porgies, cunners, black-fish, weak-fish, maybe a bass or a sheep's-head, but more cunners than any thing else, unless we strike some flounders at the turn of the tide."

"That's a big enough assortment to set up a fish-market on."

"If we catch 'em. We've got a good enough day, anyhow, and the tide'll be about right by the time we get to work."

"Why not try here?"

"'Cause there's no fish to speak of, and because the crabs'll clean your hook for you as fast as you can put the bait on. We must go out to deeper water and better bottom. Dick knows just where to go. You might hang your line out all day and not get a bite, if you didn't strike the right spot."

Ford made no answer, but looked on very seriously while Dab skilfully slit up a tough old Dutch clam into bait. It was beginning to dawn upon him that he could teach the "'long-shore boys," whether black or white, very little about fishing. He even allowed Dab to pick out a line for him, and to put on the hook and sinker; and Dick Lee showed him how to fix his bait, "so de fust cunner dat rubs agin it won't knock it off. Dem's awful mean fish. Good for nuffin but 'teal bait."

A merry party they were; and the salt water was rapidly drying from the garments of the colored oars-man, as he pulled strongly and skilfully out into the bay, and around toward a deep cove at the north of the inlet mouth.

Then, indeed, for the first time in his life, Ford Foster learned what it was to catch fish.

Not but what he had spent many an hour, and even day, on and about other waters, with a rod or a line in his hand; but he had never before had two such born fishermen at his elbow to take him to the right place precisely, and at the right time, and then to show him what to do when he got there.

It was fun enough; for the fish bit remarkably well, and some of those which came into the boat were of a very encouraging size and weight.

There was one curious thing about those heavier fish.

Ford would have given half the hooks and lines in his box, if he could have caught from Dick or Dab the mysterious "knack" they seemed to have of coaxing the biggest of the finny folk to their bait, and then over the side of the boat.

"There's some kind of favoritism about it," he remarked.

"Never mind, Ford," replied Dab. "Dick and I are better acquainted with them. They're always a little shy with strangers, at first. They don't really mean to be impolite."

Favoritism it was, nevertheless; and there was now no danger but what Dick would be able to appease the mind of his mother without making any mention of the crabs.

At last, almost suddenly, and as if by common consent, the fish stopped biting, and the two "'long shore boys" began to put away their lines.

"Going to quit?" asked Ford.

"Time's up, and the tide's turned," replied Dab.

"Not another bite, most likely, till late this evening. We might as well pull up, and start for home."

"That's a curious kind of a habit for fish to have."

"They've all got it though, 'round this bay."

"Mus' look out for wot's lef' ob de ole scow, on de way home," remarked Dick a little solemnly. "I's boun' to ketch it for dat good-for-noting ole board."

"We'll find it, and tow it in," said Dab; "and perhaps we can get it mended. Anyhow, you can go with us next week. We're going to make a cruise in Ham Morris's yacht. Will you go?"

"Will I go? Yoop!" almost yelled the excited boy. "Dat's jest de one t'ing I'd like to jine. Won't we hab fun! She's jest de bes' boat on dis hull bay. You ain't foolin' me, is yer?"

He was strongly assured that his young white associates were in sober earnest about both their purpose and their promise; and, after that, he insisted on rowing all the distance home.

On the way the old punt was taken in tow; but the tide had already swept it so far inside the mouth of the inlet, that there was less trouble in pulling it the rest of the way. It was hardly worth the labor, but Dab knew what a tempest the loss of it might bring around the ears of poor Dick.

When they reached the landing, and began to over-haul their very brilliant "catch," Dabney said,—

"Now, Dick, take your string home, leave that basket of crabs at Mr. Foster's, and then come back with the basket, and carry the rest of 'em to our house. Ford and I'll see to the rest of the fish."

"I haven't caught half as many as you have, either of you," said Ford, when he saw with what even-handed justice the fish were divided in three piles, as they were scooped out of the fish-car.

"What of that?" replied Dab. "We follow fishermen's rules, down this way. Share and share alike, you know. All the luck is outside the boat, they say. Once the fish are landed, your luck's as good as mine."

"Do they always follow that rule?"

"The man that broke it wouldn't find company very easily, hereabouts, next time he wanted to go a-fishing. No, nor for any thing else. Nobody'd boat with him."

"Well, if it's the regular thing," said Ford hesitatingly. "But I'll tell who really caught 'em."

"Oh, some of yours are right good ones! Your string'd look big enough, some days, just as you caught 'em."

"Would it?"

"Yes, it would. Don't you imagine we can pull 'em in every time like we did this morning,—crabs nor fish."

"No, I s'pose not. Anyhow, I've learned some things."

"I guess likely. We'll go for some more next week. Now for a tug."

"Ain't they heavy, though!"

The boat had already been made fast; and the two boys picked up their strings of fish, two for each, after Dick Lee had started for home; and heavy things they were to carry under that hot sun.

"Come and show the whole lot to my mother," said Ford, "before you take yours into the house. I'd like to have her see them all."

"All right," replied Dab, but he little dreamed what was coming; for, when he and Ford marched proudly into the sitting-room with their finny prizes, Dabney found himself face to face with, not good, sweet-voiced Mrs. Foster, but, as he thought, the most beautiful young lady he had ever seen.

Ford Foster shouted, "Annie! You here? Well, I never!"

But Dab Kinzer wished all those fish safely back again swimming in the bay.

CHAPTER IX.

THERE ARE DIFFERENT KINDS OF BOYS.

Ham Morris was a thoughtful and kind-hearted fellow, beyond a doubt; and he was likely to be a valuable friend for a growing boy like Dab Kinzer. It is not everybody's brother-in-law who would find time during his wedding-trip to hunt up even so pretty a New-England village as Grantley, and inquire into questions of board and lodging and schooling.

That was precisely what Ham did, however; and Miranda went with him of course.

Mrs. Myers, to the hospitalities of whose cool and roomy-looking house he had been commended by Mr. Hart, was so "crowded full with summer boarders," liberally advertised for in the great city, that she had hardly a corner left in which to stow away Ham and his bride, for even one night. She was glad enough, however, that she had made the effort, and found one, after she discovered the nature of the stranger's errand in Grantley, and that it included "winter board" for a whole boy.

There was a look of undisguised astonishment on the faces of the regular guests when they gathered for the next meal. It happened to be supper, but they all looked at the table and then at one another. It was a pity Ham and Miranda did not understand the meaning of those glances, or else that they did not make a longer stay with Mrs. Myers. They might have learned more about her and her boarding-house, if not about the academy. As it was, they only gathered a very high opinion of her cookery and hospitality, as well as an increase of respect for the "institution of learning," and for that excellent gentleman Mr. Hart; with a dim hope that Dabney Kinzer might be permitted to enjoy the inestimable advantages offered by Grantley and Mrs. Myers, and the society of Mr. Hart's two wonderful boys.

Miranda was inclined to stand up for her brother somewhat, but finally agreed with Ham, that,—

"What Dabney needs is schooling and polish, my dear. It'll be good for him to board in the same house with two such complete young gentlemen as the Hart boys."

"Of course, Ham. And then, too, we'll feel sure of his having plenty to eat. There was almost too much on the table."

"Not if the boarders had all been boys of Dab's age, and with his appetite. Mrs. Myers is evidently accustomed to provide for them, I should say."

So she was; and Ham and Miranda left Grantley next morning, after a very early breakfast; and, when the regular boarders came to theirs, they might have guessed at once that the "transient guests" had gone. They even guessed it out loud at dinner and at supper.

Mrs. Myers had given Ham and his bride a world of interesting information about Grantley, and the things and people in it; but there was one thing she had forgotten or neglected to mention. She had failed to tell them that the house she lived in, and the outlying farm belonging to it, and nearly all the house-hold effects it contained, were the property of Mr. Joseph Hart, having cost that gentleman very little more than a sharp lawsuit. Neither did she say a word about how long a time he had given her to pay him his price for it. All that was her own private affair, and none of Ham's business, or Miranda's. Still, it might have had its importance in their minds, if they had been informed of it.

Perhaps, too, some of their rosy impressions might have been a little modified if they could have been at the breakfast-table of the Hart homestead the morning after Annie Foster's sudden departure.

The table, truly, was there, as usual, with the breakfast-things on it, and there were husband and wife at either end; but the two side seats were vacant.

"Where are Joe and Foster, Maria?" asked Mr. Hart.

"I'm sure they're up, father. I heard them come down stairs an hour ago."

"I can't wait for them"—

"You came home late last night, and they haven't seen you since Annie went away." There had been a suppressed sound of whispers in the entry, and the door had been held open about half an inch by some hand on the other side. It is possible, therefore, that Mr. Hart's reply was heard outside.

"Oh, I see! it's about Annie. Look here, Maria: they may have gone a little too far, but if Annie can't take a joke"—

"So I tried to say to her," began his wife; but at that instant the whispers in the entry swelled suddenly to loud voices, and two boys came noisily in, and filled the side chairs at the table.

"Sit down, my dears," said Mrs. Hart, with an admiring glance from one to the other. "I have told your father about the sad trick you played upon your cousin."

"Yes, you young rogues," added Mr. Hart, with affected sternness: "you have driven her out of the house."

"Joe," said the boy on the left, to his brother across the table, "ain't you glad she's gone?"

"You bet I am. She's too stiff and steep for me. Spoiled all the fun we had."

"And so you spoiled her cuffs and collars for her. It was too bad altogether. I'm afraid there won't be much comfort for anybody in this house till you two get back to Grantley."

"Fuz," said Joe, "do you hear that? They're going to give us another term at Grantley."

"I don't care how soon we go, so we haven't got to board at old mother
Myers's."

"I can't say about that," said Mr. Hart. "I half made her a promise"—

"That we'd board there?" exclaimed Fuz rebelliously.

"Now, boys," said their mother, in a gentle voice, that sounded a little like good Mrs. Foster's; but Joe sustained his brother with,—

"Prison-fare, and not half enough of it. I just won't stand it another winter!"

"I'm not so sure it will be necessary, after all," said their father, who seemed to have dismissed Annie's grievance from his mind for the present. "Your cousin Ford is sure to go; and I'm almost certain of another boy, besides the missionary's son. If she gets a few others herself, her house'll be full enough, and you can board somewhere else."

"Hurrah for that!" shouted Fuz. "And, if the new house doesn't feed us well, we'll tear it down."

"If you don't tear ours down before you go, I'll be satisfied. Maria, you must write to your sister, and smooth the matter over. Boys will be boys, and I wouldn't like to have any coolness spring up. Mr. Foster'll understand it."

That was very nearly all that was said about it, and the two boys evidently had had no need for any hesitation in coming in to breakfast.

They were not so bad-looking a pair, as boys go; although it may be few other people would have seen so much to admire in them as their mother did.

Joe, the elder, was a loud, hoarse-voiced, black-eyed boy, of seventeen or thereabouts, with a perpetual grin on his face, as if he had discovered in this world nothing but a long procession of things to be laughed at. Foster, so named after his lawyer relative, was a year and a half younger, but nearly as tall as Joe. He was paler, but with hair and eyes as dark, and he wore a sort of habitual side-look, as if his mind were all the while inquiring if anybody within sight happened to have any thing he wanted.

They both bore a strong likeness to their father, only they missed something bluff and hearty in his accustomed manner; and they each had also a little suggestion of their mother, that did not, however go so far as to put anybody in mind of their aunt Foster.

Nobody need have failed to see, at all events, after watching one or two of their glances at each other, that they were the very boys to play the meanest kind of practical jokes when they could do it safely. There is really no accounting for boys; and Joe and Fuz, therefore, might fairly be set down among the "unaccountables."

There was no sort of wonder that their easy-going mother and their joke-admiring father should be quite willing to have them spend three-quarters of the year at boarding-school, and as much as possible of the remainder somewhere else than "at home."

After Mr. Hart went out to his business that morning, and Mrs. Hart set herself about her usual duties, Joe and Fuz took with them into the street the whole Grantley question.

"We'll have to go, Fuz."

"Of course. But we must have more to eat, and more fun, than we had last time."

"Ford's coming, is he? The little prig! We'll roast him."

"So we will that young missionary."

"Look out about him, Joe, while he's at our house. He's coming right here, you know."

"Don't you be afraid. His folks are old friends of mother's. We'll let up on him till we get him safe to Grantley."

"Then we'll fix him."

They had plots and plans enough to talk about; but neither they, nor any of the boys they named, nor any of the other boys they did not name, had the least idea of what the future really had in store for them. Dab Kinzer and Ford Foster, in particular, had no idea that the world contained such a place as Grantley, or such a landlady as Mrs. Myers.

They had as little suspicion of them as they had had of finding Annie Foster in the sitting-room that day, when they walked in with their famous strings of fish.

Ford kissed his sister, but that operation hardly checked him for an instant in his voluble narrative of the stirring events of his first morning on the bay. There was really little for anybody else to do but to listen, and it was worth hearing.

There was no sort of interruption on the part of the audience; but the moment Ford paused for breath his mother said,—

"Are you sure the black boy was not hurt, Ford?"

"Hurt, mother? Why, he seems to be a kind of black-fish. The rest all know him, and they went right past my hook to his, all the while."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Foster: "I forgot. Annie, this is Ford's friend Dabney Kinzer, our neighbor."

"Won't you shake hands with me, Mr. Kinzer?" said Annie, with a malicious twinkle of fun in her merry blue eyes.

Poor Dabney! He had been in quite a "state of mind" for at least three minutes; but he would hardly have been his own mother's son if he had let himself be entirely "posed." Up rose his long right arm, with the heavy string of fish at the end of it; and Annie's fun broke out into a musical laugh, just as her brother exclaimed,—

"There now, I'd like to see the other boy of your size can do that. Look here, Dab, where'd you get your training?"

"I mustn't drop the fish, you see," began Dab; but Ford interrupted him with,—

'No, indeed! You've given me half I've got, as it is. Annie, have you looked at the crabs? You ought to have seen Dick Lee, with a lot of 'em gripping in his hair."

"In his hair?"

"When he was down through the bottom of his boat. They'd have eaten him up if they'd had a chance. You see, he's no shell on him."

"Exactly," said Annie, as Dab lowered his fish. "Well, Dabney, I wish you would thank your mother for me, for sending my trunk over. Your sisters too. I've no doubt we shall be very neighborly."

It was wonderfully pleasant to be called by his first name by so very pretty a young lady, and yet it seemed to bring up something curious into Dabney Kinzer's throat.

"She considers me a mere boy, and she means I'd better take my fish right home," was the next thought that came to him; and he was right, to a fraction. So the great lump in his throat took a very wayward and boyish form, and came out as a reply, accompanied by a low bow,—

"I will, thank you. Good-afternoon, Mrs. Foster. I'll see you to-night,
Ford, about Monday and the yacht. Good-afternoon, Annie."

And then he marched out with his fish.

"Mother, did you hear him call me 'Annie'?"

"Yes; and I heard you call him 'Dabney.'"

"But he's only a boy "—

"I don't care," exclaimed Ford. "He's an odd fellow, but he's a good one. Did you see how wonderfully strong he is in his arms? I couldn't lift these fish at arm's-length, to save my life."

He knew, for he had been trying his best with his own.

It was quite likely that Dab Kinzer's rowing, and all that sort of thing, had developed in him greater strength of muscle than even he himself was aware of; but for all that he went home with his very ears tingling.

"Could she have thought me ill-bred or impertinent?" he muttered to himself.

Thought? About him?

Poor Dab Kinzer! Annie Foster had so much else to think of just then; for she was compelled to go over, for Ford's benefit, the whole story of her tribulations at her uncle's, and the many rudenesses of Joe Hart and his brother Fuz.

"They ought to be drowned," said Ford indignantly.

"In ink," added Annie. "Just as they drowned my poor cuffs and collars."

CHAPTER X

A CRUISE IN "THE SWALLOW."

"Look at Dabney Kinzer," said Jenny Walters to her mother, in church, the next morning. "Did you ever see anybody's hair as smooth as that?"

Smooth it was, certainly; and he looked, all over, as if he had given all the care in the world to his personal appearance. How was Annie Foster to guess that he had gotten himself up so unusually on her account? She did not guess it; but when she met him at the church-door, after service, she was careful to address him as "Mr. Kinzer," and that made poor Dabney blush to his very eyes.

"There!" he exclaimed: "I know it."

"Know what?" asked Annie.

"Know what you're thinking."

"Do you, indeed?"

"Yes: you think I'm like the crabs."

"What *do* you mean?"

"You think I was green enough till you spoke to me, and now I'm boiled red in the face."

Annie could not help laughing,—a little, quiet, Sunday-morning sort of a laugh; but she was beginning to think her brother's friend was not a bad specimen of a Long Island "country boy."

She briskly turned away the small remains of that conversation from crabs and their color; but she told her mother, on their way home, she was sure Dabney would be a capital associate for Ford.

That young gentleman was tremendously of the same opinion. He had come home, the previous evening, from a long conference with Dab, brimful of the proposed yachting cruise; and his father had freely given his consent, much against the inclinations of Mrs. Foster.

"My dear," said the lawyer, "I feel sure a woman of Mrs. Kinzer's unusual good sense would not permit her son to go out in that way if she did not feel safe about him. He has been brought up to it, you know; and so has the colored boy who is to go with them."

"Yes, mother," argued Ford: "there isn't half the danger there is in driving around New York in a carriage."

"There might be a storm," she timidly suggested.

"The horses might run away."

"Or you might get upset."

"So might a carriage."

The end of it all was, however, that Ford was to go, and Annie was more than half sorry she could not go with them. In fact, she said so to Dabney himself, as soon as her little laugh was ended, that Sunday morning.

"Some time or other I'd be glad to have you," replied Dab very politely, "but not this trip."

"Why not?"

"We mean to go right across the bay, and try some fishing."

"Couldn't I fish?"

"Well, no, I don't think you could."

"Why couldn't I?"

"Because,—well, because, most likely, you'd be too sea-sick by the time we got there."

Just then a low, clear voice, behind Dabney, quietly remarked, "How smooth his hair is!"

Dab's face turned red again.

Annie Foster had heard it as distinctly as he had; and she walked right away with her mother, for fear she should laugh again.

"It's my own hair, Jenny Walters," said Dab almost savagely, as he turned around.

"I should hope it was."

"I should like to know what you go to church for, anyhow."

"To hear people talk about sailing and fishing. How much do you s'pose a young lady like Miss Foster cares about small boys?"

"Or little girls, either? Not much; but Annie and I mean to have a good sail before long."

"Annie and I!"

Jenny's pert little nose seemed to turn up more than ever, as she walked away, for she had not beaten her old playfellow quite as badly as usual. There were several sharp things on the very tip or her tongue, but she was too much put out and vexed to try to say them just then.

Dab made the rest of his way home without any further haps or mishaps. A sail on the bay was nothing so new or wonderful for him to look forward to, and so that Sunday went by a good deal like all his other Sundays.

As for Ford Foster, on the contrary, his mind was in a stew and turmoil all day. In fact, just after tea that evening, his father asked him,—

"What book is that you are reading, Ford?"

"Captain Cook's Voyages."

"And the other, in your lap?"

"Robinson Crusoe."

"Well, you might have worse books than they are, that's a fact, even for

Sunday, though you ought to have better; but which of them do you and Dabney Kinzer mean to imitate to-morrow?"

"Crusoe!" promptly responded Ford.

"I see. And so you've got Dick Lee to go along as your man Friday."

"He's Dab's man, not mine."

"Oh! and you mean to be Crusoe number two? Well, don't get cast away on any desolate island, that's all."

Ford slipped into the library, and put the books away. It had been Samantha Kinzer's room, and had plenty of book-shelves, in addition to the elegant "cases" Mr. Foster had brought from the city with him; for Samantha was inclined to be of a literary turn of mind. All the cases and shelves were full too; but not on any one of them was Ford Foster able to discover a volume he cared to take out with him in place of "Cook" or "Crusoe."

The next morning, within half an hour after breakfast, every member of the two families was down at the landing, to see their young sailors make their start; and they were all compelled to admit that Dab and Dick seemed to know precisely what they were about.

As for Ford, that young gentleman was wise enough, with all those eyes watching him, not to try any thing that he was not sure of; though he carefully explained to Annie, "Dab is captain, you know. I'm under his orders to-day."

Dick Lee was hardly the wisest fellow in the world, for he added encouragingly,—

"And you's doin' tip-top, for a green hand, you is."

The wind was blowing right off shore, and did not seem to promise any thing more than a smart breeze. It was easy enough to handle the little craft in the inlet; and in a marvellously short time she was dancing out upon the blue waves of the spreading "bay." It was a good deal more like a land-locked "sound" than any sort of a bay, with that long, low, narrow sand-island cutting it off from the ocean.

"I don't wonder Ham Morris called her the 'Swallow,'" said Ford. "How she skims! Can you get in under the deck, there, forward? That's the cabin."

"Yes, that's the cabin," replied Dab. "But Ham had the door put in with a slide, water-tight. It's fitted with rubber. We can put our things in there, but it's too small for any thing else."

"What's it made so tight for?"

"Oh! Ham says he's made his yacht a life-boat. Those places at the sides and under the seats are all water-tight. She might capsize, but she'd never sink. Don't you see?"

"I see. How it blows!"

"It's a little fresh, now we are getting away from under the land. How'd you like to be wrecked?"

"Good fun," said Ford. "I got wrecked on the cars the first time I came over here."

"On the cars?"

"Why, yes. I forgot to tell you about that."

Then followed a very vivid and graphic account of the sad fate of the pig and the locomotive. The wonder was, how Ford should have failed to give Dab that story before. No such failure would have been possible if his head and tongue had not been so wonderfully busy about so many other things, ever since his arrival.

"I'm glad it was I instead of Annie," he said at length.

"Of course. Didn't you tell me she came through all alone?"

"Yes; and she didn't like it much, either. Travelled all night. She ran away from those cousins of mine. Oh, but won't I pay them off when I get to Grantley!"

"Where's that? What did they do?"

"The Swallow" was flying along nicely now, with Dab at the tiller, and Dick Lee tending sail; and Dab

could listen with all his ears to Ford's account of his sister's tribulations, and the merciless "practical jokes" of the Hart boys.

"Ain't they older and bigger than you?" asked Dabney, as Ford closed his recital. "What can you do with two of them?"

"They can't box worth a cent, and I can. Anyhow, I mean to teach them better manners."

"You can box?"

"Had a splendid teacher. Put me up to all sorts of things."

"Will you show me how, when we get back?"

"We can practise all we choose. I've two pair of gloves."

"Hurrah for that! Ease her, Dick. It's blowing pretty fresh. We'll have a tough time tacking home against such a breeze as this. Maybe it'll change before night."

"Capt'in Dab," calmly remarked Dick, "we's on'y a mile to run."

"Well, what of it?"

"Is you goin' fo' de inlet?"

"Of course. What else can we do? That's what we started for."

"Looks kind o' dirty, dat's all."

So far as Ford could see, both the sky and the water looked clean enough; but Dick was entirely right about the weather. In fact, if Captain Dabney Kinzer had been a more experienced and prudent seaman, he would have kept "The Swallow" inside the bar that day, at any risk of Ford Foster's good opinion. As it was, even Dick Lee's keen eyes hardly comprehended how threatening was the foggy haze that was lying low on the water, miles and miles away to seaward.

It was magnificently exciting fun, at all events; and "The Swallow" fully merited all that had been said in her favor. The "mile to run" was a very short one, and it seemed to Ford Foster that the end of it would bring them up high and dry on the sandy beach of the island.

The narrow "strait" of the inlet between the bay and the ocean was hardly visible at any considerable distance. It opened to view, however, as they drew near; and Dab Kinzer rose higher than ever in his friend's good opinion, as the swift little vessel he was steering shot unerringly into the contracted channel.

"Ain't we pretty near where you said we were to try for some fish?" he asked.

"Just outside there. Get the grapnel ready, Dick. Sharp, now!"

Sharp it was, and Ford himself lent a hand; and, in another moment, the white sails went down, jib and main; "The Swallow" was drifting along under bare poles, and Dick Lee and Ford were waiting the captain's orders to let go the neat little anchor.

"Heave!"

Over went the iron, the hawser followed briskly.

"That'll do, Dick: hold her!"

Dick gave the rope a skilful turn around its "pin," and Dab shouted,—

"Now for some weak-fish! It's about three fathoms, and the tide's near the turn."

Alas for the uncertainty of human calculations! The grapnel caught on the bottom, surely and firmly; but, the moment there came any strain on the seemingly stout hawser that held it, the latter parted like a thread, and "The Swallow" was all adrift!

"Somebody's done gone cut dat rope!" shouted Dick, as he frantically pulled in the treacherous bit of hemp.

There was an anxious look on Dab Kinzer's face for a moment. Then he shouted,—

"Sharp, now, boys, or we'll be rolling in the surf in three minutes! Haul away, Dick! Haul with him,

Ford! Up with her! There, that'll give us headway."

Ford Foster looked out to seaward, even while he was hauling his best upon the sail halyards. All along the line of the coast, at distances varying from a hundred yards or so to nearly a mile, there was an irregular line of foaming breakers—an awful thing for a boat like "The Swallow" to run into!

Perhaps; but ten times worse for a larger craft, for the latter would be shattered on the shoals, where the bit of a yacht would find plenty of water under her; that is, if she did not, at the same time, find too much water *over* her.

"Can't we go back through the inlet in the bar?" asked Ford.

"Not with this wind in our teeth, and it's getting worse every minute.
No more will it do to try to keep inside the surf."

"What can we do, then?"

"Take the smoothest places we can find, and run 'em. The sea isn't very rough outside. It's our only chance."

Poor Ford Foster's heart sank within him, as he listened, and as he gazed ahead upon the long white line of foaming surf and tossing breakers. He saw, however, a look of heroic resolution rising in "Captain Kinzer's" face, and it gave him courage to turn his eyes again towards the surf.

"The Swallow" was now once more moving in a way to justify her name; and, although Ford was no sailor, he could see that her only chance to penetrate that perilous barrier of broken water was to "take it nose on," as Dick Lee expressed it.

That was clearly the thing Dab Kinzer intended to do. There were places of comparative smoothness, here and there, in the tossing and plunging line; but they were bad enough, at the best, and they would have been a good deal worse but for that stiff breeze blowing off shore.

"Now for it!" shouted Dab, as "The Swallow" bounded on.

"Dar dey come!" said Dick.

Ford thought of his mother, and sister, and father; but he had not a word to say, and hardly felt like breathing.

Bows foremost, full sail, rising like a cork on the long, strong billows, which would have rolled her over and over if she had not been handled so skilfully as she really was; once or twice pitching dangerously in short, chopping seas, and shipping water enough to wet her brave young mariners to the skin, and call for vigorous baling afterwards,—"The Swallow" battled gallantly with her danger for a few moments; and then Dab Kinzer swung his hat, and shouted,—

"Hurrah, boys! We're out at sea!"

"Dat's so," said Dick.

"So it is," remarked Ford, a little gloomily; "but how on earth will we ever get ashore again? We can't go back through that surf."

"Well," replied Dab, "if it doesn't come on to blow too hard, we'll run right on down the coast. If the wind lulled, or whopped around a little, we'd find our way in, easy enough, long before night. We might have a tough time beating home across the bay, even if we were inside the bar, now. Anyhow, we're safe enough out here."

Ford could hardly feel that very strongly, but he was determined not to let Dab see it; and he made an effort at the calmness of a Mohawk, as he said, "How about fishing?"

"Guess we won't bother 'em much, but you might go for a bluefish.
Sometimes they have great luck with them, right along here."

CHAPTER XI.

SPLENDID FISHING, AND A BIG FOG.

There is no telling how many anxious people there may have been in that region that night, a little after supper; but there was no doubt of the state of mind in at least three family circles.

Good Mrs. Foster could not endure to stay at home and talk about the matter; and her husband and Annie were very willing to go over to the Kinzers' with her, and listen to the encouraging views of Dabney's stout-hearted and sensible mother.

They were welcomed heartily; and the conversation began, so to speak, right in the middle.

"Oh, Mrs. Kinzer! do you think they are in any danger?"

"I hope not. I don't see why there need be, unless they try to return across the bay against this wind."

"But don't you think they'll try? Do you mean they won't be home to-night?" exclaimed Mr. Foster himself.

"I sincerely hope not," said the widow calmly. "I should hardly feel like trusting Dabney out in the boat again, if he should do so foolish a thing."

"But where can he stay?"

"At anchor somewhere, or on the island; almost anywhere but tacking all night on the bay. He'd be really safer out at sea than trying to get home."

"Out at sea!"

There was something really dreadful in the very idea of it; and Annie Foster turned pale enough when she thought of the gay little yacht, and her brother out on the broad Atlantic in it, with no better crew than Dab Kinzer and Dick Lee. Samantha and her sisters were hardly as steady about it as their mother; but they were careful to conceal their misgivings from their neighbors, which was very kindly indeed in the circumstances.

There was little use in trying to think or talk of any thing else beside the boys, however, with the sound of the "high wind" in the trees out by the roadside; and a very anxious circle was that, up to the late hour at which the members of it separated for the night.

But there were other troubled hearts in that vicinity. Old Bill Lee himself had been out fishing all day, with very poor luck; but he forgot all about that, when he learned, on reaching the shore, that Dick and his white friends had not returned. He even pulled back to the mouth of the inlet, to see if the gathering darkness would give him any signs of his boy. He did not know it; but while he was gone Dick's mother, after discussing her anxieties with some of her dark-skinned neighbors, half weepingly unlocked her one "clothes-press," and took out the suit which had been the pride of her absent son. She had never admired them half so much before, but they seemed now to need a red necktie to set them off; and so the gorgeous result of Dick's fishing and trading came out of its hiding-place, and was arranged on the white coverlet of her own bed, with the rest of his best garments.

"Jus' de t'ing for a handsome young feller like Dick," she muttered to herself.

"Wot for'd an ole woman like me want to put on any sech fool finery? He's de bestest boy in de worl', he is. Dat is, onless dar ain't not'in' happened to 'im."

Her husband brought her home no news when he came, and Dick's good qualities were likely to be seen in a strong light for a while longer.

But if the folk on shore were uneasy about "The Swallow" and her crew, how was it with the latter themselves, as the darkness closed around them, out there upon the tossing water?

Very cool and self-possessed indeed had been Captain Dab Kinzer; and he had encouraged the others to go on with their blue-fishing, even when it was pretty tough work to keep "The Swallow" from "scudding" at once before the wind. He was anxious, also, not to get too far from shore; for there was no telling what sort of weather might be coming. It was curious, moreover, what very remarkable luck they had; or rather, Ford and Dick, for Dab would not leave the tiller for a moment. Splendid fellows were those blue-fish, and hard work it was to pull in the heaviest of them. That was just the sort of weather they bite best in; but it is not often that such young fishermen venture to take advantage of it.

No, nor the old ones either; for only the stanchest old "salts" of Montauk or New London would have felt altogether at home in "The Swallow" that afternoon.

"I guess I wouldn't fish any more," said Dab at last. "You've caught ten times as many now as we ever thought of catching. Some of them are whoppers too."

"Biggest fishing ever I did," said Ford, as if that meant a great deal.

"Or mos' anybody else, out dis yer way," added Dick. "I isn't 'shamed to show dem fish anywhar."

"No more I ain't," said Dab; "but you're getting too tired, and so am I. We must have a good hearty lunch, and put 'The Swallow' before the wind for a while. I daren't risk any more of these cross seas. We might get pitched over any minute. They're rising."

"Dat's so," said Dick. "And I's awful hungry, I is."

"The Swallow" was well enough provisioned for a short cruise, not to mention the bluefish, and there was water enough on board for several days if they should happen to need it; but there was little danger of that, unless the wind should continue to be altogether against them.

It was blowing hard when the boys finished their dinner, but no harder than it had already blown several times that day; and "The Swallow" seemed to be putting forth her very best qualities as a "sea-boat."

There was no immediate danger apparently; but there was one "symptom" which Dab discerned, as he glanced around the horizon, which gave him more anxiety than either the stiff breeze or the rough sea.

The coming darkness?

No; for stars and lighthouses can be seen at night, and steering by them is easy enough.

Nights are pretty dark things, sometimes, as most people know; but the darkest thing to be met with at sea, whether by night or by day, is a *fog*, and Dabney saw signs of one coming. Rain, too, might come with it, but that would be of small account.

"Boys," he said, "do you know we're out of sight of land?"

"Oh, no, we're not!" replied Ford confidently. "Look yonder."

"That isn't land, Ford. That's only a fog-bank, and we shall be all in the dark in ten minutes. The wind is changing, too, and I hardly know where we are."

"Look at your compass."

"That tells me the wind is changing a little, and it's going down; but I wouldn't dare to run towards the shore in a fog, and at night."

"Why not?"

"Why? Don't you remember those breakers? Would you like to be blown through them, and not see where you were going?"

"Well, no," said Ford: "I rather guess I wouldn't."

"Jes' you let Capt'in Kinzer handle dis yer boat," almost crustily interposed Dick Lee. "He's de on'y feller on board dat un'erstands nagivation."

"Shouldn't wonder if you're right," said Ford good-humoredly. "At all events, I sha'n't interfere. But, Dab, what do you mean to do about it?"

"Swing a lantern at the mast-head, and sail right along. You and Dick get a nap, by and by, if you can. I won't try to sleep till daylight."

"Sleep? Catch me sleeping!"

"You must; and so must Dick, when the time comes. It won't do for us to all get worn out together. If we did, who'd handle the boat?"

Ford's respect for Dabney Kinzer was growing hourly. Here was this overgrown gawk of a green country boy, just out of his roundabouts, who had never spent more than a day at a time in the great

city, and never lived in any kind of a boarding-house; in fact, here was a fellow who had had no advantages whatever,—coming out as a sort of hero.

Ford looked at him hard, as he stood there with the tiller in his hand, but he could not quite understand it, Dab was so quiet and matter-of-course about it all; and, as for that youngster himself, he had no idea that he was behaving any better than any other boy could, should, and would have behaved in those very peculiar circumstances.

However that might be, the gay and buoyant little "Swallow," with her signal lantern swinging at her mast-head, was soon dancing away through the deepening darkness and the fog; and her steady-nerved young commander was congratulating himself that there seemed to be a good deal less of wind and sea, even if there was more of mist.

"I couldn't expect to have every thing to suit me," he said to himself. "And now I hope we sha'n't run down anybody. Hullo! Isn't that a red light, through the fog, yonder?"

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE GAME OF "FOLLOW MY LEADER" CAN BE PLAYED AT SEA.

There was yet another gathering of human beings on the wind-swept surface of the Atlantic that evening, to whose minds the minutes and hours were going by with no small burden of anxiety to carry.

Not an anxiety, perhaps, as great as that of the three families over there on the shore of the bay, or even of the three boys tossing along through the fog in their bubble of a yacht; but the officers, and not a few of the passengers and crew, of the great iron-builded ocean-steamer were any thing but easy about the way their affairs were looking. It would have been so much more agreeable if they could have looked at them at all.

Had they no pilot on board?

To be sure they had, for he had come on board in the usual way, as they drew near their intended port; but they had somehow seemed to bring that fog along with them, and the captain had a half-defined suspicion that neither the pilot nor he himself knew exactly where they now were. That is a bad condition for a great ship to be in at any time, and especially when it was drawing so near a coast which calls for good seamanship and skilful pilotage in the best of weather.

The captain would not for any thing have confessed his doubt to the pilot, nor the pilot his to the captain; and that was where the real danger lay, after all. If they could only have choked down their pride, and permitted themselves to talk of their possible peril, it would very likely have disappeared. That is, they could at least have decided to stop the vessel till they were rid of their doubt.

The steamer was French, and her captain a French naval officer; and it is possible he and the pilot did not understand each other any too well.

It was a matter of course that the speed of the ship should be somewhat lessened, under such circumstances; but it would have been a good deal wiser not to have gone on at all. Not to speak of the shore they were nearing, they might be sure they were not the only craft steaming or sailing over those busy waters; and vessels have sometimes been known to run against one another in a fog as thick as that. Something could be done by way of precaution in that direction, and lanterns with bright colors were freely swung out; but the fog was likely to diminish their usefulness somewhat. They took away a little of the gloom; but none of the passengers were in a mood to go to bed, with the end of their voyage so near, and they all seemed disposed to discuss the fog, if not the general question of mists and their discomforts. All of them but one, and he a boy.

A boy of about Dab Kinzer's age, slender and delicate-looking, with curly light-brown hair, blue eyes, and a complexion which would have been fair, but for the traces it bore of a hotter climate than that of either France or America. He seemed to be all alone, and to be feeling very lonely that night; and he was leaning over the rail, peering out into the mist, humming to himself a sweet, wild air in a strange but exceedingly musical tongue.

Very strange. Very musical.

Perhaps no such words had ever before gone out over that part of the Atlantic; for Frank Harley was a missionary's son, "going home to be educated;" and the sweet, low-voiced song was a Hindustanee hymn which his mother had taught him in far-away India.

Suddenly the hymn was cut short by the hoarse voice of the "lookout," as it announced,—

"A white light, close aboard, on the windward bow."

That was rapidly followed by even hoarser hails, replied to by a voice which was clear and strong enough, but not hoarse at all. The next moment something, which was either a white sail or a ghost, came slipping along through the fog, and then the conversation did not require to be shouted any longer. Frank could even hear one person say to another out there in the mist, "Ain't it a big thing, Ford, that you know French? I mean to study it when we get home."

"It's as easy as eating. Dab, shall I tell 'em we've got some fish?"

"Of course. We'll sell 'em the whole cargo."

"Sell them? Why not make them a present?"

"We may need the money to get home with. They're a splendid lot. Enough for the whole cabin-full."

"Dat's a fack. Cap'in Dab Kinzer's de sort ob capt'in fo' me, he is!"

"How much, then?"

"Twenty-five dollars for the lot. They're worth it,—specially if we lose Ham's boat."

Dab's philosophy was a little out of gear; but a perfect rattle of questions and answers followed in French, and, somewhat to Frank Harley's astonishment, the bargain was promptly concluded. Fresh fish, just out of the water, were a particularly pleasant arrival to people who had been ten days out at sea.

How were they to get them on board? Nothing easier, since the little "Swallow" could run along so nicely under the stern of the great steamer, after a line was thrown her; and a large basket was swung out at the end of a long, slender spar, with a pulley to lower and raise it.

There was fun in the loading of that basket: but even the boys from Long Island were astonished at the number and size of the fine, freshly-caught blue-fish, to which they were treating the hungry passengers of the "Prudhomme;" and the basket had to go and come again and again.

The steamer's steward, on his part, avowed that he had never before met so honest a lot of Yankee fishermen. Perhaps not; for high prices and short weight are apt to go together, where "luxuries" are selling. The pay itself was handed out in the same basket which went for the fish, and then "The Swallow" was again cast loose.

The wind was not nearly so high as it had been, and the sea had for some time been going down.

Twenty minutes later Frank Harley heard,—for he understood French very well,—

"Hullo, the boat! What are you following us for?"

"Oh! we won't run you down. Don't be alarmed. We've lost our way out here, and we're going to follow you in. Hope you know where you are."

There was a cackle of surprise and laughter among the steamer's officers, in which Frank and some of the passengers joined; and the saucy little "fishing-boat" came steadily on in the wake of her gigantic tide.

"This is grand for us," remarked Dab Kinzer to Ford, as he kept his eyes on the after-lantern of the "Prudhomme." "They pay all our pilot-fees."

"But they're going to New York."

"So are we, if to-morrow doesn't come out clear, and with a good wind to go home by."

"It's better than crossing the Atlantic in the dark, anyhow. But what a steep price we got for those fish!"

"They're always ready to pay well for such things at the end of a voyage," said Dab. "I expected, though, they'd try and beat us down a peg. They generally do. We didn't get much more than the fair market price, after all, only we got rid of our whole catch at one sale."

That was a good deal better than fishermen are apt to do.

Hour followed hour; and "The Swallow" followed the steamer, and the fog followed them both so closely, that sometimes even Dick Lee's keen eyes could with difficulty make out the "Prudhomme's" light. And now Ford Foster ventured to take a bit of a nap, so sure did he feel that all the danger was over, and that Captain Kinzer was equal to what Dick Lee called the "nagivation" of that yacht How long he had slept, he could not have guessed but he was awakened by a great cry from out the mist beyond them, and by the loud exclamation of Captain Kinzer, still at the tiller,—

"I believe she's run ashore!"

It was a loud cry, indeed, and there was good reason for it. Well was it for all on board the great steamer, that she was running no faster at the time and that there was no hurricane of a gale to make things worse for her. Pilot and captain had both together missed their reckoning,—neither of them could ever afterward tell how,—and there they were, stuck fast in the sand, with the noise of breakers ahead of them, and the dense fog all around.

Frank Harley peered anxiously over the rail again but he could not have complained that he was "wrecked in sight of shore," for the steamer was any thing but a wreck as yet, and there was no shore in sight.

"It's an hour to sunrise," said Dab to Ford, after the latter had managed to comprehend the situation. "We may as well run farther in, and see what we can see."

It must have been aggravating to the people on board the steamer, to see that little cockle-shell of a yacht dancing safely along over the shoal on which their "leviathan" had struck, and to hear Ford Foster sing out, "If we'd known you meant to run in here, we'd have followed some other pilot."

"They're in no danger at all," said Dab, "If their own boats don't take 'em all ashore, the coast-wreckers will."

"The government life-savers, I s'pose you mean."

"Yes: they're all alongshore, here, everywhere. Hark! there goes the distress-gun. Bang away! It sounds a good deal more mad than scared."

So it did; and so they were,—captain, pilot, passengers, and all.

"Captain Kinzer" found that he could safely run in for a couple of hundred yards or so; but there were signs of surf beyond, and he had no anchor to hold on by. His only course was to tack back and forth as carefully as possible, and wait for daylight,—as the French sailors were doing, with what patience they could command.

In less than half an hour, however, a pair of long, graceful, buoyant-looking life-boats, manned each with an officer and eight rowers, came shooting through the mist, in response to the repeated summons of the steamer's cannon.

"It's all right, now," said Dab. "I knew they wouldn't be long in coming. Let's find out where we are."

That was easy enough. The steamer had gone ashore on a sand-bar, a quarter of a mile from the beach, and a short distance from Seabright on the New Jersey coast; and there was no probability of any worse harm coming to her than the delay in her voyage, and the cost of pulling her out from the sandy bed into which she had so blindly thrust herself. The passengers would, most likely, be taken ashore with their baggage, and sent on to the city overland.

"In fact," said Ford Foster, "a sand-bar isn't as bad for a steamer as a pig is for a locomotive."

"The train you were wrecked in," said Dab, "was running fast. Perhaps the pig was. Now, the sandbar was standing still, and the steamer was going slow. My! What a crash there'd have been if she'd been running ten or twelve knots an hour, with a heavy sea on!"

By daylight there were plenty of other craft around, including yachts and sail-boats from Long Branch, and "all along shore;" and the Long Island boys treated the occupants of these as if they had sent for them, and were glad to see them.

"Seems to me you're inclined to be a little inquisitive, Dab," said Ford, as his friend peered sharply

into and around one craft after another; but just then Dabney sang out,—

"Hullo, Jersey, what are you doing with two grapnels? Is that boat of yours balky?"

"Mind yer eye, youngster. They're both mine, I reckon."

"You might sell me one cheap," continued Dab, "considering how you got 'em. Give you ten cents for the big one."

Ford thought he understood the matter now, and he said nothing; but the "Jersey wrecker" had "picked up" both of those anchors, one time and another, and had no sort of objection to "talking trade."

"Ten cents! Let you have it for fifty dollars."

"Is it gold, or only silver gilt?"

"Pure gold, my boy; but, seem' it's you, I'll let you have it for ten dollars."

"Take your pay in clams?"

"Oh, hush! I hain't no time to gabble. Mebbe I'll git a job here, 'round this yer wreck. If you reelly want that there grapn'I, wot'll you gimme?"

"Five dollars, gold, take it or leave it," said Dab, pulling out a coin from the money he had received for his bluefish.

In three minutes more "The Swallow" was furnished with a much larger and better anchor than the one she had lost the day before; and Dick Lee exclaimed, "It jes' takes Cap'n Kinzer!"

For some minutes before this, as the light grew clearer and the fog lifted a little, Frank Harley had been watching them from the rail of the "Prudhomme," and wondering if all the fisher-boys in America dressed as well as these two.

"Hullo, you!" was the greeting which now came to his ears. "Go ashore in my boat?"

"Not till I've eaten some of your fish for breakfast," said Frank.
"What's your name?"

"Captain Dabney Kinzer, of 'most anywhere on Long Island. What's yours?"

"Frank Harley of Rangoon."

"I declare," almost shouted Ford Foster, "if you're not the chap my sister Annie told me of! You're going to Albany, to my uncle Joe Hart's, ain't you?"

"Yes, to Mr. Hart's, and then to Grantley to school."

"That's it. Well, then, you can just come along with us. Get your kit out of your state-room. We can send over to the city after the rest of your baggage, after it gets in."

"Along with you! Where?"

"To my father's house, instead of ashore among those hotel people, and other wreckers. The captain'll tell you it's all right."

Frank had further questions to ask before he was satisfied as to whose hands he was about to fall into; and the whole arrangement was, no doubt, a little irregular. So was the present position of the "Prudhomme" herself, however; and all landing rules were a trifle out of joint by reason of that circumstance. So the steamer authorities listened to Frank's request when he made it, and gruffly granted it.

"The Swallow" lay quietly at her new anchor while her passenger to be was completing his preparations to board her. Part of them consisted of a hearty breakfast,—fresh bluefish, broiled; and while he was eating it the crew of the yacht made a deep hole in what remained of their own supplies. Nobody who had seen them eat would have suspected that their long night at sea had interfered with their appetites. In fact, each of them remarked to the others that it had not, so far as he was concerned.

"We'll make a good run," said Dab. "It'll be great!"

"What?" said Ford, in some astonishment; "ain't you going to New York at all?"

"What for?"

"I thought that was what you meant to do. Shall you sail right straight home?"

"Why not? If we could do that distance at night, and in a storm, I guess we can in a day of such splendid weather as this, with the wind just right too."

CHAPTER XIII

"HOME AGAIN! HERE WE ARE!"

The wind was indeed "just right;" but even Dab forgot, for the moment, that "The Swallow" would go faster and farther before a gale than she was likely to with the comparatively mild southerly breeze now blowing. He was by no means likely to get home by dinner-time. As for danger, there would be absolutely none, unless the weather should again become stormy; and there was no probability of any such thing at that season. And so, after he had eaten his breakfast, and, with a genuine boy's confidence in boys, Frank Harley came on board "The Swallow" as a passenger, the anchor was lifted, and the gay little craft spread her white sails, and slipped lightly away from the neighborhood of the forlorn-looking, stranded steamer.

"They'll have her out of that in less'n a week," said Ford to Frank. "My father'll know just what to do about your baggage, and so forth."

There were endless questions to be asked and answered on both sides; but at last Dab yawned a very sleepy yawn, and said, "Ford, you've had your nap. Wake up Dick, there, and let him take his turn at the tiller. The sea's as smooth as a lake, and I believe I'll go to sleep for an hour or so. You and Frank can keep watch while Dick steers: he's a good steerer."

Whatever Dab said was "orders" now on board "The Swallow;" and Ford's only reply was,—

"If you haven't earned a good nap, then nobody has."

Dick, too, responded promptly and cheerfully; and in five minutes more the patient and skilful young "captain" was sleeping like a top.

"Look at him," said Ford Foster to Frank Harley. "I don't know what he's made of. He's been at that tiller for twenty-three hours by the watch, in all sorts of weather, and never budged."

"They don't make that kind of boy in India," replied Frank.

"He's de bes' feller you ebber seen," added Dick Lee. "I's jes' proud ob him, I is!"

Smoothly and swiftly and safely "The Swallow" was bearing her precious cargo across the summer sea; but the morning had brought no comfort to the two homes at the head of the inlet, or the humble cabin in the village. Old Bill Lee was out in the best boat he could borrow, by early daylight; and more than one of his sympathizing neighbors followed him a little later. There was no doubt at all that a thorough search would be made of the bay and the island, and so Mr. Foster wisely remained at home to comfort his wife and daughter.

"That sort of boy," mourned Annie, "is always getting into some kind of mischief."

"Annie!" exclaimed her mother indignantly, "Ford is a good boy, and he does not run into mischief."

"I didn't mean Ford: I meant that Dabney Kinzer. I wish we'd never seen him, or his sailboat either."

"Annie," remarked her father a little reprovingly, "if we live by the water, Ford *will* go out on it, and he had better do so in good company. Wait a while."

Annie was silenced, but it was only too clear that she was not entirely convinced. Her brother's absence and all their anxiety were positively due to Dab Kinzer, and his wicked, dangerous little yacht; and he must be to blame somehow.

She could not help "waiting a while," as her father bade her; but her eyes already told that she had been doing more than wait.

Summer days are long; but some of them are a good deal longer than others, and that was one of the longest any of those people had ever known.

For once, even dinner was more than half neglected in the Kinzer family circle. At the Fosters' it was forgotten almost altogether. Long as the day was, and so dreary, in spite of all the bright, warm sunshine, there was no help for it: the hours would not hurry, and the wanderers would not return. Tea-time came at last; and with it the Fosters all came over to Mrs. Kinzer's again, to take tea, and tell her of several fishermen who had returned from the bay without having discovered a sign of "The Swallow" or its crew.

Stout-hearted Mrs. Kinzer talked bravely and encouragingly, nevertheless, and did not seem to abate an ounce of her confidence in her son. It seemed as if, in leaving off his roundabouts, particularly considering the way in which he had left them off, Dabney must have suddenly grown a great many "sizes" in his mother's estimation. Perhaps, too, that was because he had not left them off any too soon.

There they sat around the tea-table, the two mothers and all the rest of them, looking gloomy enough; while over there in her bit of a brown house, in the village, sat Mrs. Lee in very much the same frame of mind, trying to relieve her feelings by smoothing imaginary wrinkles out of her boy's best clothes, and planning for him any number of bright red neckties, if he would only come back to wear them.

The neighbors were becoming more than a little interested, and even excited about the matter; but what was there to be done?

Telegrams had been sent to other points on the coast, and all the fishermen notified. It was really one of those puzzling cases, where even the most neighborly can do no better than "wait a while."

Still, there were more than a dozen people, of all sorts, including Bill Lee, lingering around the "landing" as late as eight o'clock that evening.

Suddenly one of them exclaimed,—

"There's a light coming in!"

Others followed with,—

"There's a boat under it!"

"Ham's boat carried a light."

"I'll bet it's her!"

"No, it isn't"—

"Hold on and see."

There was not long to "hold on;" for in three minutes more "The Swallow" swept gracefully in with the tide, and the voice of Dab Kinzer shouted merrily,—

"Home again! Here we are!"

Such a ringing volley of cheers answered him!

It was heard and understood away there in the parlor of the Morris house, and brought every soul of that anxious circle right up standing.

"Must be it's Dab!" exclaimed Mrs. Kinzer.

"O mother!" said Annie, "is Ford safe?"

"They wouldn't cheer like that, my dear, if any thing had happened," remarked Mr. Foster; but, in spite of his coolness, the city lawyer forgot to put his hat on, as he dashed out of the front gate and down the road towards the landing.

Then came one of those times that it takes a whole orchestra and a gallery of paintings to tell any thing about: for Mrs. Lee as well as her husband was on the beach; and within a minute after "Captain Kinzer" and his crew had landed, poor Dick was being hugged and scolded within an inch of his life, and the two other boys found themselves in the midst of a perfect tumult of embraces and cheers.

Frank Harley's turn came soon, moreover; for Ford Foster found his balance, and introduced the "passenger from India" to his father.

"Frank Harley!" exclaimed Mr. Foster. "I've heard of you, certainly; but how did you—boys, I don't understand"—

"Oh! father, it's all right. We took Frank off the French steamer, after she ran ashore."

"Ran ashore?"

"Yes. Down the Jersey coast. We got in company with her in the fog, after the storm. That was yesterday evening."

"Down the Jersey coast? Do you mean you've been out at sea?"

"Yes, father; and I'd go again, with Dab Kinzer for captain. Do you know, father, he never left the rudder of 'The Swallow' from the moment we started until seven o'clock this morning."

"You owe him your lives!" almost shouted Mr. Foster; and Ford added emphatically, "Indeed we do!"

It was Dab's own mother's arms that had been around him from the instant he had stepped ashore, and Samantha and Keziah and Pamela had had to content themselves with a kiss or so apiece; but dear, good Mrs. Foster stopped smoothing Ford's hair and forehead just then, and came and gave Dab a right motherly hug, as if she could not express her feelings in any other way.

As for Annie Foster, her face was suspiciously red at the moment; but she walked right up to Dab after her mother released him, and said,—

"Captain Kinzer, I've been saying dreadful things about you, but I beg pardon."

"I'll be entirely satisfied, Miss Foster," said Dabney, "if you'll only ask somebody to get us something to eat."

"Eat!" exclaimed Mrs. Kinzer. "Why, the poor fellows! Of course they're hungry."

"Cap'n Kinzer allers does know jes' de right t'ing to do," mumbled Dick in a half-smothered voice; and his mother let go of him, with—

"Law, suz! So dey be!"

Hungry enough they all were, indeed; and the supper-table, moreover, was the best place in the world for the further particulars of their wonderful cruise to be told and heard.

Dick Lee was led home in triumph to a capital supper of his own; and as soon as that was over he was rigged out in his Sunday clothes,—red silk necktie and all,—and invited to tell the story of his adventures to a roomful of admiring neighbors. He told it well, modestly ascribing every thing to Dab Kinzer; but there was no good reason, in any thing he said, for one of his father's friends to inquire next morning,—

"Bill Lee, does you mean for to say as dem boys run down de French steamah in dat ar' boat?"

"Not dat. Not zackly."

"'Cause, ef you does, I jes' want to say I's been down a-lookin' at her, and she ain't even snubbed her bowsprit."

CHAPTER XIV.

A GREAT MANY THINGS GETTING READY TO COME!

The newspapers from the city brought full accounts of the stranding of the "Prudhomme," and of the safety of her passengers and cargo.

The several editors seemed to differ widely in their opinions relating to the whole affair; but there must have been some twist in the mind of the one who excused everybody on the ground that "no pilot, however skilful, could work his compass correctly in so dense a fog as that."

None of them had any thing whatever to say of the performances of "The Swallow." The yacht had been every bit as well handled as the great steamship; but then, she had reached her port in safety, and she was such a little thing, after all.

Whatever excitement there had been in the village died out as soon as it was known that the boys were safe; and a good many people began to wonder why they had been so much upset about it, anyhow.

Mrs. Lee herself, the very next morning, so far recovered her peace of mind as to "wonder wot Dab Kinzer's goin' to do wid all de money he got for dem bluefish."

"I isn't goin' to ask him," said Dick. "He's capt'in."

As for Dab himself, he did an immense amount of useful sleeping, that first night; but when he awoke in the morning he shortly made a discovery, and the other boys soon made another. Dab's was, that all the long hours of daylight and darkness, while he held the tiller of "The Swallow," he had been thinking as well as steering. He had therefore been growing very fast, and would be sure to show it, sooner or later.

Ford and Frank found that Dab had forgotten nothing he had said about learning how to box, and how to talk French; but he did not say a word to them about another important thing. He talked enough, to be sure; but a great, original idea was beginning to take form in his mind, and he was not quite ready yet to mention it to any one.

"I guess," he muttered more than once, "I'd better wait till Ham comes home, and talk to him about it."

As for Frank Harley, Mr. Foster had readily volunteered to visit the steamship-office in the city, with him, that next day, and see that every thing necessary was done with reference to the safe delivery of his baggage. At the same time, of course, Mrs. Foster wrote to her sister Mrs. Hart, giving a full account of all that had happened, but saying that she meant to keep Frank as her own guest for a while, if Mrs. Hart did not seriously object.

That letter made something of a sensation in the Hart family. Neither Mrs. Hart nor her husband thought of making any objection; for, to tell the truth, it came to them as a welcome relief.

"It's just the best arrangement that could have been made, Maria, all around," said he. "Write at once, and tell her she may keep him as long as she pleases."

That was very well for them, but the boys hardly felt the same way about it. They had been planning to have "all sorts of fun with that young missionary," in their own house. He was, as Fuz expressed it, to be "put through a regular course of sprouts, and take the Hindu all out of him."

"Never mind, though," said Joe, after the letter came, and the decision of their parents was declared: "we'll serve him out after we get to Grantley. There won't be anybody to interfere with the fun."

"Well, yes," replied Fuz, "and I'd just as lief not see too much of him before that. He won't have any special claim on us, neither, if he doesn't go there from our house."

That was a queer sort of calculation, but it was only a beginning. They had other talks on the same subject, and the tone of them all had in it a promise of lively times at Grantley for the friendless young stranger from India.

Others, however, were thinking of the future, as well as themselves; and Joe and Fuz furnished the subject for more than one animated discussion among the boys down there by the Long Island shore. Ford Foster gave his two friends the full benefit of all he knew concerning his cousins.

"It's a good thing for you," he said to Frank, "that the steamer didn't go ashore anywhere near their house. They're a pair of born young wreckers. Just think of the tricks they played on my sister Annie!"

They were all related in Ford's most graphic style, with comments to suit from his audience. After that conversation, however, it was remarkable what good attention Dab Kinzer and Frank Harley paid to their sparring-lessons. It even exceeded the pluck and perseverance with which Dab worked at his French; and Ford was compelled to admit, to him in particular, "You ought to have a grown-up teacher, —somebody you won't kill if you make out to get in a hit on him. You're too long in the reach for me,

and your arms are too hard."

What between the boxing-gloves and the boat, there could be no question but what Frank Harley had landed at the right place to get strong in.

There was plenty of fishing, bathing, riding, boating, boxing: if they had worked day and night, they could not have used it all up. Three boys together can find so much more to do than one can, all alone; and they made it four as often as they could, for Dick Lee had proved himself the best kind of company. Frank Harley's East-Indian experience had made him indifferent to the mere question of color, and Ford Foster was too much of a "man" to forget that long night of gale and fog and danger on board "The Swallow."

It was only a day or two after that perilous "cruise," that Dab Kinzer met his old playmate, Jenny Walters, just in the edge of the village.

"How well you look, Dabney!" remarked the sharp-tongued little lady.
"Drowning must agree with you."

"Yes," said Dab, "I like it."

"Do you know what a fuss they made over you, when you were gone? I s'pose they'd nothing else to do."

"Jenny," said Dab suddenly, holding out his hand, "you mustn't quarrel with me any more. Bill Lee told me about your coming down to the landing. You may say any thing to me you want to."

Jenny colored, and bit her lip; and she would have given her bonnet to know if Bill Lee had told Dab how very red her eyes were, as she looked down the inlet for some sign of "The Swallow." Something had to be said, however; and she said it almost spitefully.

"I don't care, Dabney Kinzer: it did seem dreadful to think of you three boys being drowned, and you, too, with your new clothes on. Good-morning, Dab."

"She's a right good-hearted girl, if she'd only show it," muttered Dab, as Jenny tripped away; "but she isn't a bit like Annie Foster."

His thoughts must have been on something else than his young-lady acquaintances, nevertheless; for his next words were, "How I do wish Ham Morris would come home!"

There was time enough for that, and Ham was hardly likely to be in a hurry. The days were well employed in his absence; and, as they went by, the Morris homestead went steadily on looking less and less like its old self, and more and more like a house made for people to live and be happy in. Mrs. Kinzer and her daughters had now settled down in their new quarters as completely as if they had never known any others; and it seemed to Dab, now and then, as if they had taken almost too complete possession. His mother had her room, of course; and a big one it was. There could be no objection to that. Then another big one, of the very best, had to be set apart and fitted up for Ham and Miranda on their return home; and Dab had taken great delight in doing all in his power to make that room all it could be made. But then Samantha had insisted upon having a separate domain, and Keziah and Pamela had imitated their elder sister to a fraction.

The "guest-chamber" had to be provided as well, or what would become of the good old Long Island notions of hospitality?

Dab said nothing while the partition was under discussion, nor for a while afterwards; but one day at dinner, just after the coming of a letter from Miranda, announcing the speedy arrival of herself and her husband, he quietly remarked,—

"Now I can't sleep in Ham's room any longer, I suppose I'll have to go out on the roof. I won't sleep in the garret or in the cellar."

"That will be a good deal as Mrs. Morris says, when she comes," calmly responded his mother.

"As Miranda says!" said Dab, with a long breath.

"Miranda?" gasped Samantha and her sisters in chorus.

"Yes, my dears, certainly," said their mother. "This is Mrs. Morris's house,—or her husband's,—not mine. All the arrangements I have made are only temporary. She and Ham both have ideas and wills of their own. I've only done the best I could for the time being."

The girls looked at one another in blank amazement, over the idea of Mrs. Kinzer being any thing less than the mistress of any house she might happen to be in; but Dabney laid down his knife and fork, with —

"It's all right, then. If Ham and Miranda are to settle it, I think I'll take the room Sam has now. You needn't take away your books, Sam: I may want to read some of them, or lend them to Annie. You and Kezi and Mele had better take that upper room back. The smell of the paint's all gone now, and there's three kinds of carpet on the floor."

"Dabney!" exclaimed Samantha, reproachfully, and with an appealing look at her mother, who, however, said nothing on either side, and was a woman of too much good sense to take any other view of the matter than that she had announced.

Things were again all running on smoothly and pleasantly, before dinner was over; but Dab's ideas of how the house should be divided were likely to result in some changes,—perhaps not precisely the ones he indicated, but such as would give him something better than a choice between the garret, the cellar, and the roof. At all events, only three days would now intervene before the arrival of the two travellers, and any thing in the way of further discussion of the room question was manifestly out of order.

Every thing required for the coming reception was pushed forward by Mrs. Kinzer with all the energy she could bring to bear; and Dab felt called upon to remark to Pamela,—

"Isn't it wonderful, Mele, how many things she finds to do after every thing's done?"

The widow had promised her son-in-law that his house should be "ready" for him, and it was likely to be a good deal more ready than either he or his wife had expected.

CHAPTER XV.

DABNEY KINZER TO THE RESCUE.

One of the most troublesome of the annoyances which come nowadays to dwellers in the country, within easy reach of any great city, is the bad kind of strolling beggar known as "the tramp." He is of all sorts and sizes; and he goes everywhere, asking for any thing he wants, very much as if it belonged to him and he had come for his own—so long as he can do his asking of a woman or a sickly-looking man. There had been very few of these gentry seen in that vicinity, that summer, for a wonder; and those who had made their appearance had been reasonably well behaved. Probably because there had been so many healthy-looking men around, as a general thing. But it come to pass, on the very day in which Ham and Miranda were expected to arrive by the last of the evening trains, just as Dab Kinzer was turning away from the landing, where he had been for a look at "The Swallow" and to make sure she was all right for her owner's eyes, that a very disreputable specimen of a worthless man stopped at Mrs. Kinzer's to beg something to eat, and then sauntered away down the road. It was a little past the middle of the afternoon; and even so mean-looking, dirty a tramp as that had a perfect right to be walking along then and there. The sunshine, and the fresh salt air from the bay, were as much his as anybody's, and so was the water in the bay; and no one in all that region of country stood more in need of plenty of water than he.

The vagabond took his right to the road, as he had taken his other right to beg his dinner, until, half-way down to the landing, he was met by an opportunity to do a little more begging.

"Give a poor feller suthin'?" he impudently drawled, as he stared straight into the sweet fresh face of Annie Foster.

Annie had been out for only a short walk; but she happened to have her pocket-book with her, and she thoughtlessly drew it out, meaning to give the scamp a trifle, if only to get rid of him.

"Only a dime, miss?" whined the tramp, as he shut his dirty hand over Annie's gift. "Come, now, make it a dollar, my beauty. I'll call it all square for a dollar."

The whine grew louder as he spoke; and the wheedling grin on his disgusting face changed into an

expression so menacing that Annie drew back with a shudder, and was about returning her little portemonnaie to her pocket.

"No, you don't, honey!"

The words were uttered in a hoarse and husky voice, and were accompanied by a sudden grip of poor Annie's arm with one hand, while with the other he snatched greedily at the morocco case.

Did she scream?

How could she help it? Or what else could she have done, under the circumstances?

She screamed vigorously, whether she would or no, and at the same moment dropped her pocket-book in the grass beside the path, so that it momentarily escaped the vagabond's clutches.

"Shut up, will you!"

Other angry and evil words, accompanied by more than one vicious threat, followed thick and fast, as Annie struggled to free herself, while her assailant peered hungrily around after the missing prize.

It is not at all likely he would have attempted any thing so bold as that, in broad daylight, if he had not been drinking too freely; and the very evil "spirit" which had prompted him to his rash rascality unfitted him for its immediate consequences.

These latter, in the shape of Dab Kinzer and the lower joint of a stout fishing-rod, had been bounding along up the road from the landing, at a tremendous rate, for nearly half a minute.

A boy of fifteen assailing a full-grown ruffian?

Why not? Age hardly counts in such a matter; and then it is not every boy of even his growth that could have brought muscles like those of Dab Kinzer to the swing he gave that four-foot length of seasoned ironwood.

Annie saw him coming; but her assailant did not until it was too late for him to do any thing but turn, and receive that first hit in front instead of behind. It would have knocked over almost anybody; and the tramp measured his length on the ground, while Dabney plied the rod on him with all the energy he was master of.

"Oh, don't, Dabney, don't!" pleaded Annie: "you'll kill him!"

"I wouldn't want to do that," said Dab, as he suspended his pounding; but he added, to the tramp,—

"Now you'd better get up and run for it If you're caught around here again, it'll be the worse for you."

The vagabond staggered to his feet, and he looked savagely enough at Dab; but the latter looked so very ready to put in another hit with that terrible cudgel, and the whole situation was so unpleasantly suggestive of further difficulty, that the youngster's advice was taken without a word. That is, if a shambling kind of double limp can be described as a "run for it."

"Here it is: I've found my pocket-book," said Annie, as her enemy made the best of his way off.

"He did not hurt you?"

"No: he only scared me, except that I suppose my arm will be black-and-blue where he caught hold of it. Thank you ever so much, Dabney: you're a brave boy. Why, he's almost twice your size."

"Yes; but the butt of my rod is twice as hard as his head," said Dabney. "I was almost afraid to strike him with it. I might have broken his skull."

"You didn't even break your rod."

"No; and now I must run back for the other pieces and the tip. I dropped them in the road."

"Please, Dabney, see me home first," said Annie. "I know it's foolish, and there isn't a bit of danger; but I must confess to being a good deal frightened."

Dab Kinzer was a little the proudest boy on Long Island, as he walked along at Annie's side, in compliance with her request. He went no farther than the gate, to be sure, and then he returned for the rest of his rod: but before he got back with it, Keziah Kinzer hurried home from a call on Mrs. Foster, bringing a tremendous account of Dab's heroism; and then his own pride over what he had done was only a mere drop in the bucket, compared to that of his mother.

"Dabney is growing wonderfully," she remarked to Samantha, "He'll be a man before any of us know it."

If Dab had been a man, however, or if Ham Morris or Mr. Foster had been at home, the matter would not have been permitted to drop there. That tramp ought to have been followed, arrested, and shut up where his vicious propensities would have been under wholesome restraint for a while. As it was, after hurrying on for a short distance, and making sure he was not pursued, he clambered over the fence, and sneaked into the nearest clump of bushes. From this safe covert he watched Dab Kinzer's return after the lighter pieces of his rod; and then he even dared to crouch along the fence, and see which house his young conqueror went into.

"That's where he lives, is it?" he muttered, with a scowl of the most ferocious vengeance. "Well, they'll have some fun there before they git to bed to-night, or I'll know the reason why."

It could not have occurred to such a man that he had been given his dinner at the door of that very house. What had the collection of his rights as a "tramp" to do with questions of gratitude and revenge?

The bushes were a good enough hiding-place for the time, and he crawled back to them with the air and manner of a man whose mind was made up to something.

Ford and Frank were absent in the city that day with Mr. Foster, who was kindly attending to some affairs of Frank's; but when the three came home, and learned what had happened, it was hard to tell which of them failed most completely in trying to express his boiling indignation. They were all on the point of running over to the Morris house to thank Dab, but Mrs. Foster interposed.

"I don't think I would. To-morrow will do as well, and you know they're expecting Mr. and Mrs. Morris this evening."

It was harder for the boys to give it up than for Mr. Foster, and the waiting till to-morrow looked a little dreary. They were lingering near the north fence two hours later, with a faint idea of catching Dab, even though they knew that the whole Kinzer family were down at the railway-station, waiting for Ham and Miranda.

There was a good deal of patience to be exercised by them also; for that railway-train was provokingly behind time, and there was "waiting" to be done accordingly.

The darkness of a moonless and somewhat cloudy night had settled over the village and its surrounding farms, long before the belated engine puffed its way in front of the station-platform.

Just at that moment, back there by the north fence, Ford Foster exclaimed,—

"What's that smell?"

"It's like burning hay, more than any thing else," replied Frank.

"Where can it come from, I'd like to know? We haven't had a light out at our barn."

"Light?" exclaimed Frank. "Just look yonder!"

"Why, it's that old barn, 'way beyond the Morris and Kinzer house.
Somebody must have set it on fire. Hullo! I thought I saw a man running.
Come on, Frank!"

There was indeed a man running just then; but they did not see him, for he was already very nearly across the field, and hidden by the darkness. He had known how to light a fire that would smoulder long enough for him to get away.

He was not running as well, nevertheless, as he might have done before he came under the operation of Dab Kinzer's "lower joint."

Mrs. Kinzer did her best to prevent any thing like a "scene" at the railway-station when Ham and Miranda came out upon the platform; but there was an immense amount of "welcome" expressed in words and hugs and kisses, in the shortest possible space of time. There was no lingering on the platform, however; for Ham and his wife were as anxious to get at the "surprise" they were told was waiting for them, as their friends were to have them come to it.

Before they were half way home, the growing light ahead of them attracted their attention; and then they began to hear the vigorous shouts of "Fire!" from the throats of the two boys, re-enforced now by Mr. Foster himself, and the lawyer's voice was an uncommonly good one. Dabney was driving the ponies, and they had to go pretty fast for the rest of that short run.

"Surprise?" exclaimed Ham. "I should say it was! Did you light it before you started, Dabney?"

"Don't joke, Hamilton," remarked Mrs. Kinzer. "It may be a very serious affair for all of us. But I can't understand how in all the world that barn should have caught fire."

"Guess it was set a-going," said Dab.

CHAPTER XVI.

DAB KINZER AND HAM MORRIS TURN INTO A FIRE-DEPARTMENT.

The Morris farm, as has been said, was a pretty large one; and the same tendency on the part of its owners which led them to put up so extensive and barn-like a house, had stimulated them from time to time to make the most liberal provisions for the storage of their crops. Barns were a family weakness with them, as furniture had been with the Kinzers. The first barn they had put up, now the oldest and the farthest from the house, had been a large one. It was now in a somewhat dilapidated condition, to be sure, and was bowed a little northerly by the weight of years that rested on it; but it had still some hope of future usefulness if it had not been for that tramp and his box of matches.

"There isn't a bit of use in trying to save it!" exclaimed Ham, as they were whirled in through the wide-open gate. "It's gone!"

"But, Ham," said Mrs. Kinzer, "we can save the other barns perhaps. Look at the cinders falling on the long stable. If we could keep them off somehow!"

"We can do it, Ham," exclaimed Dab, very earnestly. "Mother, will you send me out a broom and a rope, while Ham and I set up the ladder?"

"You're the boy for me," said Ham. "I guess I know what you're up to."

The ladder was one the house-painters had been using, and was a pretty heavy one; but it was quickly set up against the largest and most valuable of the barns, and the one, too, which was nearest and most exposed to the burning building and its flying cinders. The rope was on hand, and the broom, by the time the ladder was in position.

"Ford," said Dab, "you and Frank help the girls bring water, till the men from the village get here. There's plenty of pails, but every one of our hands is away.—Now, Ham, I'm ready."

Up they went, and were quickly astride of the ridge of the roof. It would have been perilous work for any man to have ventured farther unassisted; but Dab tied one end of the rope firmly around his waist, Ham tied himself to the other, and then Dab could slip down the steep roof, in any direction, without danger of slipping off to the ground below.

But the broom?

It was as useful as a small fire-engine. The flying cinders of burning hay or wood, as they alighted upon the sun-dried shingles of the roof, needed to be swept off as fast as they fell, before they had time to fulfil their errand of mischief. Here and there they had been at work for some minutes, and the fresh little blazes they had kindled had so good a start, that the broom alone would have been insufficient; and there the rapidly-arriving pails of water came into capital play.

Ford Foster had never shone out to so good an advantage in all his life before, as he did when he took his station on the upper rounds of that ladder, and risked his neck to hand water-pails to Ham. It was hard work, all around, but hardest of all for the two "firemen" on the roof. Now and then the strength and agility of Ham Morris were put to pretty severe tests, as Dab danced around under the scorching heat, or slipped flat upon the sloping roof. It was well for Ham that he was a man of weight and substance.

There were scores and scores of people streaming up from the village now, arriving in panting squads, every moment; and Mrs. Kinzer had all she could do to keep them from "rescuing" every atom

of her furniture out of the house, and piling it up in the road.

"Wait, please," she said to them very calmly.

"If Ham and Dab save the long barn, the fire won't spread any farther.
The old barn won't be any loss to speak of, anyhow."

Fiercely as the dry old barn burned, it used itself up all the quicker on that account; and it was less than thirty minutes from the time Ham and Dabney got at work before roof and rafters fell in, and the worst of the danger was over. The men and boys from the village were eager enough to do any thing that now remained to be done; but a large share of this was confined to standing around and watching the "bonfire" burn down to a harmless heap of badly smelling ashes. As soon, however, as they were no more wanted on the roof, the two "volunteer firemen" came down; and Ham Morris's first word on reaching the ground was,—

"Dab, my boy, how you've grown!"

Not a tenth of an inch in mere stature, and yet Ham was entirely correct about it.

He stared at Dabney for a moment; and then he turned, and stared at every thing else. There was plenty of light just then, moon or no moon; and Ham's eyes were very busy for a full minute. He noted rapidly the improvements in the fences, sheds, barns, the blinds on the house, the paint, a host of small things that had changed for the better; and then he simply said, "Come on, Dab," and led the way into the house. Her mother and sisters had already given Miranda a hurried look at what they had done, but Ham was not the man to do any thing in haste. Deliberately and silently he walked from room to room, and from cellar to garret, hardly seeming to hear the frequent comments of his enthusiastic young wife. That he did hear all that had been said around him as he went, however, was at last made manifest, for he said,—

"Dab, I've seen all the other rooms. Where's yours?"

"I'm going to let you and Miranda have my room," said Dab. "I don't think I shall board here long."

"I don't think you will either," said Ham emphatically. "You're going away to boarding-school. Miranda, is there any reason why Dab can't have the south-west room, up stairs, with the bay-window?"

That room had been Samantha's choice, and she looked at Dab reproachfully; but Miranda replied,—

"No, indeed. Not if you wish him to have it."

"Now, Ham," said Dabney, "I'm not big enough to fit that room. Give me one nearer my size. That's a little loose for even Sam, and she can't take any tucks in it."

Samantha's look changed to one of gratitude, and she did not notice the detested nickname.

"Well, then," said Ham, "we'll see about it. You can sleep in the spare chamber to-night.—Mother Kinzer, I couldn't say enough about this house business if I talked all night. It must have cost you a deal of money. I couldn't have dared to ask it. I guess you must kiss me again."

A curious thing it was that came next,—one that nobody could have reckoned on. Mrs. Kinzer—good soul—had set her heart on having Ham and Miranda's house "ready for them" on their return; and now Ham seemed to be so pleased about it, she actually began to cry. She said, too,—

"I'm so sorry about the barn!"

Ham only laughed, in his quiet way, as he kissed his portly mother-in-law, and said,—

"Come, come, mother Kinzer, you didn't set it afire. Can't Miranda and I have some supper? Dab must be hungry, too, after all that roof-sweeping."

There had been a sharp strain on the nerves of all of them that day and evening; and they were glad enough to gather around the tea-table, while all that was now left of the old barn smouldered peaceably away with half the boys in the village on guard.

Once or twice Ham or Dab went out to see that all was dying out rightly; but it was plain that all the danger was over, unless a high wind should come to scatter the cinders.

By this time the whole village had heard of Dab's adventure with the tramp, and had at once connected the latter with the fire. There were those, indeed, who expressed a savage wish to connect him with it bodily; and it was well for him that he had done his running away promptly, and had hidden

himself with care, for men were out after him in all directions, on foot and on horseback. Who would have dreamed of so dirty a vagabond "taking to the water"?

"He's a splendid fellow, anyway!"

Odd, was it not? but Annie Foster and Jenny Walters were half a mile apart when they both said that very thing, just before the clock in the village church hammered out the news that it was ten, and bedtime. They were not either of them speaking of the tramp.

It was long after that, however, before the lights were out in all the rooms of the Morris mansion.

CHAPTER XVII.

DAB HAS A WAKING DREAM, AND HAM GETS A SNIFF OF SEA-AIR.

Sleep? One of the most excellent things in all the world, and very few people get too much of it nowadays.

As for Dabney Kinzer, he had done his sleeping as regularly and faithfully as even his eating, up to the very night after Ham Morris came home to find the old barn afire. There had been a few, a very few, exceptions. There were the nights when he was expecting to go duck-shooting before daylight, and waked up at midnight with a strong conviction that he was late about starting. There were, perhaps, a dozen of "eeling" expeditions, that had kept him out late enough for a full basket and a proper scolding. There, too, was the night when he had stood so steadily by the tiller of "The Swallow," while she danced, through the dark, across the rough billows of the Atlantic.

But, on the whole, Dab Kinzer had been a good sleeper all his life till then. Once in bed, and there had been for him an end of all wakefulness.

On that particular night, for the first time, sleep refused to come, late as was the hour when the family circle broke up.

It could not have been the excitement of Ham and Miranda's return. He would have gotten over that by this time. No more could it have been the fire, though the smell of smouldering hay came in pretty strongly at times through the wide-open windows. If any one patch of that great roomy bed was better made up for sleeping than the rest of it, Dab would surely have found the spot; for he tumbled and rolled all over it in his restlessness. Some fields on a farm will "grow" wheat better than others, but no part of the bed seemed to grow any sleep. At last Dab got wearily up, and took a chair by the window.

The night was dark, but the stars were shining; and every now and then the wind would make a shovel of itself, and toss up the hot ashes the fire had left, sending a dull red glare around on the house and barns for a moment, and flooding all the neighborhood with a stronger smell of burnt hay.

"If you're going to burn hay," soliloquized Dabney, "it won't do to take a barn for a stove. Not that kind of a barn. But what did Ham Morris mean by saying that I was to go to boarding-school? That's what I'd like to know"

The secret was out.

He had kept remarkably still, for him, all the evening, and had not asked a question; but, if his brains were ever to work over his books as they had over Ham's remark, his future chances for sound sleep were all gone. It had come upon him so suddenly, the very thing he thought about that night in "The Swallow," and wished for and dreamed about during all those walks and talks and lessons of all sorts with Ford Foster and Frank Harley, ever since they came in from that memorable cruise.

It was a wonderful idea, and Dab had his doubts as to the way his mother would take to it when it should be brought seriously before her. Little he guessed the truth. Ham's remark had gone deep into other ears as well as Dabney's; and there were reasons, therefore, why good Mrs. Kinzer was sitting by the window of her own room, at that very moment, as little inclined to sleep as was the boy she was thinking of. So proud of him too, she was, and so full of bright, motherly thoughts of the man he would

make, "one of these days, when he gets his growth."

There must have been a good deal of sympathy between Dab and his mother; for by and by, just as she began to feel drowsy, and muttered, "Well, well, we'll have a talk about it to-morrow," Dab found himself nodding against the window-frame, and slowly rose from his chair, remarking,—

"Guess I might as well finish that dream in bed. If I'd tumbled out o' the window I'd have lit among Miranda's rose-bushes. They've got their thorns all out at this time o' night."

It was necessary for them both to sleep hard, after that; for more than half the night was gone, and they were to be up early. So indeed they were; but what surprised Mrs. Kinzer when she went into the kitchen was to find Miranda there before her.

"You here, my dear? That's right. I'll take a look at the milk-room.
Where's Ham?"

"Out among the stock. Dab's just gone to him."

Curious things people will do at times. Miranda had put down the coffee-pot on the range. There was not a single one of the farm "help" around, male or female; and there stood the blooming young bride, with her back toward her mother, and staring out through the open door. And then Mrs. Kinzer slipped forward, and put her arms around her daughter's neck.

Well, it was very early in the morning for those two women to stand there and cry; but it seemed to do them good, and Miranda remarked at last, as she kissed her mother,—

"O mother, it is all so good and beautiful, and I'm so happy!"

And then they both laughed, in a subdued and quiet way; and Miranda picked up the coffee-pot while Mrs. Kinzer walked away into the milk-room. Such cream as there seemed to be on all the pans that morning!

As for Ham Morris, his first visit on leaving the house had been to the relics of the old barn, as a matter of course.

"Not much of a loss," he said to himself; "but it might have been, but for Dab. There's the making of a man in him. Wonder if he'd get enough to eat, if we sent him up yonder? On the whole, I think he would. If he didn't, I don't believe it would be his fault. He's got to go; and his mother'll agree to it, I know. Talk about mothers-in-law! If one of 'em's worth as much as she is, I'd like to have a dozen. Don't know 'bout that, though. I'm afraid the rest would have to take back seats as long as Mrs. Kinzer was in the house."

Very likely Ham was right; but just then he heard the voice of Dab, behind him,—

"I say, Ham, when you've looked at the other things, I want to show you 'The Swallow.' I haven't hurt her a bit, and her new grapnel's worth three of the old one."

"All right, Dab. I think I'd like a sniff of the water. Come on. There's nothing else I know of like that smell of the shore with the tide half out."

No more there is; and there have been sea-shore men, many of them, who had wandered away into the interior of the country, hundreds and hundreds of long miles, and settled there, and even got rich and old there, and yet who have come all the way back again, just to get another smell of the salt marshes and the sea-air and the out-going tide.

Ham actually took a little boat, and went on board "The Swallow," when they reached the landing, and Dab kept close to him.

"She's all right, Ham. But what are you casting loose for?"

"Dab, they won't all be ready for breakfast in two hours. The stock and things can go: the men'll tend to 'em. Just haul on that sheet a bit. Now the jib. Look out for the boom. There! The wind's a little ahead, but it isn't bad. Ah!"

The last word came out in a great sigh of relief, and was followed by a chuckle which seemed to gurgle all the way up from Ham's boots.

"This is better than railroading," he said to Dabney, as they tacked into the long stretch where the inlet widened toward the bay. "No pounding or jarring here. Talk of your fashionable watering-places! Why, Dab, there ain't any thing else in the world prettier than that reach of water and the sand-island,

with the ocean beyond it. There's some ducks and some gulls. Why, Dab, do you see that? There's a porpoise, inside the bar!"

It was as clear as daylight that Ham Morris felt himself "at home" again, and that his brief experience of the outside world had by no means lessened his affection for the place he was born in. If the entire truth could have been known, it would have been found that he felt his heart warm toward the whole coast and all its inhabitants, including the clams. And yet it was remarkable how many of the latter were mere empty shells when Ham finished his breakfast that morning. He preferred them roasted, and his mother-in-law had not forgotten that trait in his character.

Once or twice in the course of the sail, Dabney found himself on the point of saying something about boarding-schools; but each time his friend broke away to the discussion of other topics, such as blue-fish, porpoises, crabs, or the sailing qualities of "The Swallow," and Dab dimly felt that it would be better to wait until another time. So he waited.

It was a grand good time, however, to be had before breakfast; and as they again sailed up the inlet, very happy and very hungry, Dab suddenly exclaimed,—

"Ham, do you see that? How could they have guessed where we'd gone?
There's the whole Kinzer tribe, and the boys are with them, and Annie."

"What boys and Annie?"

"Oh! Ford Foster and Frank Harley. Annie is Ford's sister. They live in our old house, you know."

"What's become of Jenny?"

"You mean my boat? There she is, hitched a little out, just beyond the landing."

There was nothing on Dab's face to lead any one to suppose that he guessed the meaning of the quizzical grin on Ham's.

It is barely possible, however, that there would have been fewer people at the landing, if Ham and Dab had not been keeping a whole house-full of hungry mortals, including a bride, waiting breakfast for them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW DAB WORKED OUT ANOTHER OF HIS GREAT PLANS.

There was a sort of council at the breakfast-table of the Foster family that morning; and Ford and Annie found their side of it "voted down."

That was not at all because they did not debate vigorously, and even "protest;" but the odds were too much against them.

"Annie, my dear," said Mrs. Foster at last, in a gentle but decided way, "I'm sure your aunt Maria, if not your uncle, must feel hurt at your coming away so suddenly. If we invite Joe and Foster to visit us, it will make it all right."

"Yes," sharply exclaimed Mr. Foster: "we must have them come. They'll behave themselves here. I'll write to their father: you write to Maria."

"They're her own boys, you know," added Mrs. Foster soothingly.

"Well, mother," said Annie, "if it must be. But I'm sure they'll make us all very uncomfortable if they come."

"I can stand 'em for a week or so," said Ford, with the air of a man who can do or bear more than most people. "I'll get Dab Kinzer to help me entertain them."

"Excellent," said Mr. Foster; "and I hope they will be civil to him."

"To Dabney?" asked Annie.

"Fuz and Joe civil to Dab Kinzer?" exclaimed Ford.

"Certainly: I hope so."

"Father," said Ford, "may I say just what I was thinking?"

"Speak it right out."

"Well, I was thinking what a good time Fuz and Joe would be likely to have, trying to get ahead of Dab Kinzer."

Annie looked at her brother, and nodded; and there was a bit of a twinkle in the eyes of the lawyer himself, but he only remarked,—

"Well, you must be neighborly. I don't believe the Hart boys know much about the seashore."

"Dab and Frank and I will try and educate them."

Annie thought of the ink, and her box of spoiled cuffs and collars, while her brother was speaking. Could it be that Ford meant a good deal more than he was saying? At all events, she fully agreed with him on the Dab Kinzer question.

That was one "council;" and it was one of peace or war, probably a good deal as the Hart boys themselves might thereafter determine.

At the same hour, however, matters of even greater importance were coming to a decision around the well-filled breakfast-table in the Morris mansion. Ham had given a pretty full account of his visit to Grantley, including his dinner at Mrs. Myers's, and all he had learned relating to the academy.

"It seems like spending a great deal of money," began Mrs. Kinzer, when
Ham at last paused for breath; but lid caught her up at once, with—

"I know you've been paying out a good deal, mother Kinzer, but Dab must go, if I pay"—

"You pay, indeed? For my boy? I'd like to see myself! Now I've found out what he is, I mean he shall have every advantage. If this Grantley's the right place"—

"Mother," exclaimed Samantha, "it's the very place Mr. Foster is going to send Ford to, and Frank Harley."

"Exactly," said Ham; "Mr. Hart spoke of a Mr. Foster,—his brother-in-law,—a lawyer."

"Why," said Keziah, "he's living in our old house now. Ford Foster is
Dab's greatest crony. They're the very people you met at the landing."

"Yes, I've heard all that," said Ham, "but somehow I hadn't put the two things together. Now, mother Kinzer, do you really mean Dab is to go?"

"Of course I do," said she.

"Well, if that isn't doing it easy! Do you know, it's about the nicest thing I've heard since I got here?"

"Except the barn," said Dabney, unable to hold in any longer. "Mother, may I stand on my head a while?"

"You'll need all the head you've got," said Ham. "You won't have much time to get ready."

"He'll have books enough after he gets there," said Mrs. Kinzer decidedly. "I'll risk Dabney."

"And they'll make him give up all his slang," added Samantha.

"Yes, Sam; when I come back I'll talk nothing but Greek and Latin. I'm getting French now from Ford, and Hindu from Frank Harley. Then I know English, and slang, and Long-Islandish. Think of one man with seven first-rate languages!"

But Dabney soon found himself unable to sit still, even at the breakfast-table. Not that he got up hungry, for he had done his duty by Miranda's cookery; but the house itself, big as it was, seemed too small to hold him, with all his new prospects swelling within him. Perhaps, moreover, the rest of the family felt that they would be better able to discuss the important subject before them, after Dab had

taken himself out into the open air; for none of them tried to stay his going.

"This beats dreaming, all hollow," he said to himself, as he stood, with his hands in his pockets, half way down to the gate between the two gardens. "Now I'll see what can be done about that other matter."

Two plans in one head, and so young a head as that?

Yes; and it spoke well for Dab's heart, as well as his brains, that his plan number two was not a selfish one. The substance of it came out in the first five minutes of the talk he had, a trifle later, with Ford and Frank, on the other side of the gate.

"Ford, you know there's twenty dollars left of the money the Frenchman paid us for the bluefish."

"Well, what of it? Isn't it yours?"

"One share of it's mine. The rest is yours and Dick's."

"He needs it more'n I do."

"Ford, did you know Dick Lee was real bright?"

"'Cute little chap as ever I saw. Why?"

"Well, he ought to go to school."

"Why don't he go?"

"He does, except in summer. He might go to the academy, if they'd take him, and if he had money enough to go with."

"Academy? What academy?"

"Why, Grantley, of course. I'm going, and so are you and Frank. Why shouldn't Dick go?"

"You're going? Hurrah for that! Why didn't you say so before?"

"Wasn't sure till this morning. You fellows 'll be a long way ahead of me, though. But I mean to catch up."

For a few minutes poor Dick was lost sight of in a perfect storm of talk; but Dab came back to him, with,—

"Dick's folks are dreadful poor, but we might raise it. Twenty dollars to begin with."

"I've ten dollars saved up, and I know mother'll say 'Pass it right in,'" exclaimed Ford.

It was hardly likely Mrs. Foster would express her assent in precisely that way; but Frank Harley promptly added,—

"I think I can promise five."

"I mean to speak to Ham Morris and mother about it," said Dab. "All I wanted was to fix it about the twenty dollars to start on."

"Frank," shouted Ford, "let's go right in, and see our crowd!"

Ford was evidently getting a little excited; and it was hardly five minutes later that he wound up his story, in the house, with,—

"Father, may I contribute my ten dollars to the Richard Lee Education Fund?"

"Of course; but he will need a good deal more money than you boys can raise."

"Why, father, the advertisement says half a year for a hundred and fifty. He can board for less than we can. Perhaps Mrs. Myers would let him work out a part of it."

"I can spare as much as Ford can," here put in Annie.

"Do you leave me out entirely?" said her mother, with a smile that was even sweeter than usual.

As for sharp-eyed lawyer Foster himself, he had been hemming and coughing in an odd sort of way

for a moment, and he had said, "I declare," several times; but he now remarked, somewhat more to the purpose,—

"I don't believe in giving any man a better education than he will ever know what to do with; but then, this Dick Lee and you boys,—well, see what you can do; but no one must be allowed to contribute outside of the Foster and Kinzer families, and Frank. As for the rest, hem!—ah—I think I'll say that there won't be any difficulty."

"You, father?"

"Why not, Annie? Do you s'pose I'm going to let myself be beaten in such a matter by a mere country-boy like Dabney Kinzer?"

"Father," said Ford, "if you'd seen how Dick behaved, that night, out there on the ocean, in 'The Swallow'!"

"Just as well, just as well, my son."

"Hurrah!" shouted Ford. "Then it's all right, and Dick Lee'll have a fair shake in the world!"

"A what, my son?" exclaimed his mother.

"I didn't mean to talk slang, mother: I only meant—well, you know how dreadfully black he is; but then, he can steer a boat tiptop, and he's splendid for crabs and bluefish; and Dab says he's a good scholar too."

"Dab's a very good boy," said Mrs. Foster; "but your friend Dick will need an outfit, I imagine,—clothing, and almost every thing. I must see Mrs. Kinzer about it."

Meantime Dick Lee's part in the matter, and that of his family, had been taken for granted, all around. An hour later, however, Mrs. Kinzer's first reply to her son, after listening to a calculation of his, which almost made it seem as if Dick would make money by going to Grantley, was,—

"What if Mrs. Lee should say she can't spare him?"

Dab's countenance fell. He knew Mrs. Lee, but he had not thought so far as that.

He said something not very intelligible, but to that effect.

"Well, Dabney, if we can make the other arrangements, I'll see her about it."

Ham Morris had been exchanging remarkable winks with Miranda and Samantha, and now gravely suggested,—

"Maybe the academy authorities will refuse to take him."

"Ford says they had a blacker boy than he is, there, last year."

"Now, Dab!" exclaimed Ham.

"Well, I know he's pretty black; but it don't come off."

"Mother," said Samantha, "Mrs. Foster and Annie are coming through the gate."

Dab waited just long enough after that to learn the news concerning the "Richard Lee Education Fund" and Mr. Foster's offer, and then he was off towards the shore.

He knew very well in which direction it was best to go; and, half way to the landing, he met Dick coming up the road with a basket of eels on his arm.

"Dick," shouted Dabney, "I'm going away to boarding-school, at an academy."

"'Cad'my? Whar?"

"Up in New England. They call it Grantley Academy,—where Frank and Ford are going."

"Dat spiles it all," said Dick ruefully. "Now I's got to fish wid fellers 'at don't know nuffin."

"No, you won't. You're going with us. It's all fixed,—money and all."

Dick would never have thought, ordinarily, of questioning a statement made by "Captain Kinzer;" but the rueful expression deepened on his face, the basket of eels dropped heavily on the grass, the tough

black fingers of his hands twisted nervously together for a moment, and then he sat mournfully down beside the basket.

"It ain't no use, Dab."

"No use? Why not?"

"I ain't a w'ite boy."

"What of it? Don't you learn well enough, over at the school?"

"More dar like me. Wot'd I do in a place whar all de res' was w'ite?"

"Well as anybody."

"Wot'll my mudder say, w'en she gits de news? You isn't a-jokin', is you, Dab Kinzer?"

"Joking? I guess not."

"You's lit onto me powerful sudden 'bout dis. Yonder's Ford an' Frank a-comin'. Don't tell 'em. Not jes' yit."

"They know all about it. They helped raise the money."

"Did dey? I's obleeged to 'em. Well, 'tain't no use. All I's good for is eels and crabs and clams and sech. Har dey come. Oh, my!"

Ford and Frank brought a fresh gust of enthusiasm with them, and they had Dick and his eels up from the grass in short order.

"We must see Mrs. Lee right away," said Ford. "It would never do to let Dick tell her."

"Guess dat's so," said Dick.

Quite an embassy they made, those four boys, with Dab Kinzer for spokesman, and Dick Lee almost crouching behind them. Mrs. Lee listened with open mouth while Dab unfolded his plan, but when he had finished she shut her lips firmly together. They were not very thin, and not at all used to being shut, and in another instant they opened again.

"Sho! De boy! Is dat you, Dick? Dat's wot comes ob dressin' on 'im up. How's he goin' to git clo'es? Wot's he got to do wid de 'Cad'my, anyhow? Wot am I to do, yer all alone, arter he's gone? Who's goin' to run err'nds an' do de choahs? Wot's de use ob bringin' up a boy an' den hab him go trapesin' off to de 'Cad'my? Wot good'll it do 'im?"

"I tole yer so, Dab," groaned poor Dick. "It ain't no use. I 'most wish I was a eel!"

Dabney was on the point of opening a whole broadside of eloquence, when Ford Foster pinched his arm, and whispered,—

"Your mother's coming, and our Annie's with her."

"Then let's clear out. She's worth a ten-acre lot full of us. Come on, boys!"

If Mrs. Lee was surprised by their very sudden and somewhat unceremonious retreat, she need not have been, after she learned the cause of it. She stood in wholesome awe of Mrs. Kinzer; and a "brush" with the portly widow, re-enforced by the sweet face of Annie Foster, was a pretty serious matter.

She did not hesitate about beginning the skirmish, however; for her tongue was already a bit loosened, and in fine working-order.

"Wot's dis yer, Mrs. Kinzer, 'bout sendin' away my Dick to a furrin 'Cad'my? Isn't he 'most nigh nuff spiled a'ready?"

"Oh! it's all arranged nicely. Miss Foster and I only came over to see what we could do about getting his clothes ready. He must have things warm and nice, for the winters are cold up there."

"I hasn't said he might go—Dick, put down dem eels; an' he hasn't said he'd go—Dick, take off yer hat; an' his father"—

"Now, Glorianna," interrupted Mrs. Kinzer, calling Dick's mother by her first name, "I've known you these forty years, and do you suppose I'm going to argue about it? Just tell us what Dick'll need, and don't let's have any nonsense. The money's all provided. How do you know what'll become of him? He may be governor yet."

"He mought preach!"

That idea had suddenly dawned upon the perplexed mind of Mrs. Lee, and Dick's fate was settled. She was prouder than ever of her boy; and, truth to tell, her opposition was only what Mrs. Kinzer had considered it, a piece of unaccountable "nonsense," to be brushed away by just such a hand as the widow's own.

CHAPTER XIX.

A GRAND SAILING-PARTY, AND AN EXPERIMENT BY RICHARD LEE.

That was a great day for the boys; but, before the close of it, Ford Foster had told his friends the news that Joe Hart and his brother Fuz had been invited to visit with him.

"Will they come?" asked Dab.

"Certainly. That kind of boy always comes. Nobody wants to keep him from coming."

"When do you look for them?"

"Right away. Vacation's almost gone, you know."

"Won't they be ashamed to meet your sister?"

"Not a bit. They'll try their tricks, even after they get here."

"All right. We'll help 'em all we know how. But, boys, I'll tell you what we must try for."

"What's that?"

"One grand good sailing-party in 'The Swallow,' before they get here."

"Hurrah for that! Annie was wishing for one, only yesterday."

"We'll have all of your folks and all of ours. 'The Swallow' is plenty big enough."

"Mother wouldn't go, and father can't just now. He's trying a case. But there's Annie and Frank and me"—

"And my mother, and Ham and Miranda, and our girls. Ham'll go, sure.
Then we must take Dick Lee along. It'd make him sick if we didn't."

"Of course. Ain't I glad about him! Could we get ready and go to-morrow?"

"Guess not so quick as that. We might by the day after, if the weather's all right."

Exactly. There is always a large-sized "if" to be put in, where any thing depends on the weather, Mrs. Kinzer took the matter up with enthusiasm, and so did the girls, Miranda included; and Ford Foster was quite right about his part of the company.

But the weather!

It looked well enough, to unpractised eyes; but Ham Morris shook his head, and went to consult his fishermen friends. There was a good deal of head-shaking done thereupon; for every human barometer among them advised him to wait a day or so, and hardly any two of them gave him the same reason for doing it.

Ford Foster was at the house when Ham made his report, and was a little surprised to see how

promptly Dab Kinzer yielded his assent to the verdict.

"Such warm, nice weather as this is," he remonstrated; "and there isn't any wind to speak of."

"There's too much of it coming," was Ham's response; and there was no help for it after that, not even when the mail brought word from "Aunt Maria" that both of her dear boys would arrive in a day or two.

"Our last chance is gone, Annie," said Ford, when the news came.

"O mother!" she said despondingly, "what shall we do?"

"Have your sail, just the same, and invite your cousins."

"But the Kinzers"—

"Why, Annie! Mrs. Kinzer will not think of neglecting them. She's as kind as kind can be."

"And we are to pay her with Joe and Fuz," said Ford. "Well, I wish Ham Morris's storm would come along."

He only had to wait until the next day for it, and he felt quite contented to be safe on shore while it lasted. There was no call for any laughter at the prophecies of the fishermen after it began to blow. Still the blow was not a long one, and Ham Morris remarked,—

"This is only an outside edge of it. It's a good deal worse than this out at sea. I'm glad we're not out in it."

Ford Foster thought that about the worst of that weather was when the afternoon train came in, and he had to show a pair of tired, moist, and altogether unpleasant cousins to the room set apart for them. The clouds in his mind did not clear away perceptibly even when, just after supper, a note came in from Mrs. Kinzer, inviting the Hart boys to join the yachting-party next morning.

"The storm may not be over," growled Ford a little sulkily.

"Oh!" said Annie, "Mrs. Kinzer adds that the weather will surely be fine after such a blow, and the bay will be quite safe and smooth."

"Does she know the clerk of the weather?" asked Joe Hart.

"Got one of her own," said Ford.

Joe and Ford both found something to laugh at in that, but they said nothing. They were both feeling a little "strange," as yet, and were almost inclined to try and behave themselves; the main difficulty in the way of it being a queer idea they had that their ordinary way of doing things made up a fair article of "good behavior." Nobody had taken the pains to bounce them out of the notion.

When the morning really came, sea and earth and sky seemed to be all the better for the trial they had been through, and the weather was all that Mrs. Kinzer had prophesied of it. The grass and trees were greener, and the bay seemed bluer; while the few clouds visible were very white and clean, as if all the storms had been recently washed out of them.

There was no question now to be raised concerning the yachting-party, or any part of it. Not a single thing went wrong in Mrs. Kinzer's management of the "setting out," and that was half the day won to begin with. Ford had some difficulty in getting Joe and Fuz out of bed so early as was necessary; but he gave them an intimation which proved quite sufficient:—

"You'd better hop, boys. Ham Morris wouldn't wait five minutes for the Queen of England, or even for me."

"Joe," whispered Fuz, a little while after they got on board the yacht, "are we to be gone a week?"

"Why? What's up?"

"Such piles of provisions as they've stowed away in that kennel!"

The bit of a water-tight cabin under the half-deck, at which Fuz pointed, was pretty well filled, beyond a doubt; but Mrs. Kinzer knew what she was about. She had provided luncheon for most of that party before, and the effect on them of the sea-air was also to be taken into account.

"Dab," said Ford Foster, "you've forgotten to unhitch the 'Jenny,' Here she is, towing astern."

"That's all right. We may need her. She's too heavy to be taken on board."

A careful fellow was Mr. Hamilton Morris, and he well knew the value of a rowboat to a sea-going picnic-party. As for Joe and Fuz, they were compelled to overcome a strong inward inclination to cast the boat loose. Such a good joke it would have been! But Ham Morris was in the way of it, so long as he stood at the tiller.

"The Swallow" was steady enough to inspire even Annie Foster with a feeling of confidence; but Ford carefully explained to her the difference between slipping over the little waves of the landlocked bay, and plunging into the gigantic billows of the stormy Atlantic.

"I prefer this," said Annie.

"But I wouldn't have missed the other for any thing," replied Ford.
"Would you, Dick?"

Mr. Richard Lee had taken his full share in the work of starting, and had made himself singularly useful; but, if all the rest had not been so busy, they would surely have noticed his remarkable silence. Hardly a word had he uttered that anybody could remember; and, now he was forced to say something, his mouth opened slowly, as if he had never tried to speak before, and was not quite sure he knew how.

"No—Mr.—Foster,—I—would—not—have—missed—that—trip—for—a—good —deal."

Every word came out by itself, "afoot and alone," and as different from Dick's ordinary speech as a cut stone is from a rough one. Ham Morris opened his eyes wide, and Ford puckered his lips into the shape of a still whistle; but Annie caught the meaning of it quicker than they did.

"Dick," she said at once, "are we to fish to-day?"

"May—be,—but—that—depends—on—Mr. Morris."

Every word was slowly and carefully uttered, a good deal in the manner of a man counting over a lot of money, and looking out sharp for counterfeits.

"Look here, Dick," suddenly exclaimed Dab Kinzer, "I give it up: you can do it. But don't you try to keep it up all day. Kill you, sure as any thing, if you do."

"Did I say 'em all right, Cap'n Dab?" anxiously inquired Dick, with a happy look on his merry black face.

"Every word," said Dab; "but it's well for you they were all short. Keep on practising."

"I'll jes' do dat, shuah!"

Practising? Dick?

Yes, that was it; and he joined heartily in the peal of laughter with which the success of his first attempt at "w'ite folks' English" was received by that party.

Dab explained, that, as soon as Dick found he was really to go to the academy, he determined to teach his tongue new habits; and the whole company heartily approved, even while they joined Dab in advising him not to attempt too much at a time.

"You might sprain your tongue over a big word," said Ford.

There was an abundance of talk and fun all around, as "The Swallow" skimmed onward; and the outlines of the long, low sand-island were rapidly becoming more distinct.

Nearer they drew, and nearer.

"Is that a light-house, away over there?" asked Annie of Dab.

"Yes, that's a light-house; and there's a wrecking-station, close down by it."

"A wrecking-station?"

"I say," said Ford, "are there men there all the while? Are there many wrecks on this coast?"

"Ever so many wrecks," said Dab, "and they keep a sharp lookout. There used to be more before there were so many light-houses. It was a bad place to go ashore in, too,—almost as bad as Jersey."

"Why?"

"Well, the coast itself is mean enough, for shoals and surf; and then there were the wreckers."

"Oh! I understand," said Ford. "Not the Government men."

"No, the old sort. It was a bad enough piece of luck to be driven in on that bar, or another like it; but the wreckers made it as much worse as they knew how to."

They were all listening now, even his sisters; and Dabney launched out into a somewhat highly-colored description of the terrors of the Long-Island "south shore," in old times and new, and of the character and deeds of the men who were formerly the first to find out if any thing or anybody had been driven ashore.

"What a prize to them that French steamer would have been!" said Annie; "the one you and Ford took Frank from."

"No, she wouldn't. Why, she wasn't wrecked at all. She only stuck her nose in the sand, and lay still till the tugs came and pulled her off. That isn't a wreck. A wreck is where the ship is knocked to pieces, and people are drowned, and all that sort of thing. The crew can't help themselves, after that. Then, you see, the wreckers have a notion that every thing that comes ashore belongs to them. Why, I've heard some of our old fishermen—best kind of men too—talk of how Government has robbed them of their rights."

"By the new system?" said Annie.

"Well, first by having wrecks prevented, and then by having all property kept for the owners."

"Isn't that strange! Did you say they were good men?"

"Some of 'em. Honest as the day is long about every thing else. But they weren't all so. There was old Peter, now, and he lives on the island yet. There's his cabin. You can just see it sticking out of the edge of that big sand-hill."

"What a queer thing it is!"

"Queer? I guess you'd say so, if you could have a look at the things he's picked up along shore, and stowed inside of it. There isn't but just room for him to cook and sleep in."

"Is he a fisherman too?"

"Why, that's his trade. Sometimes the storms drift the sand high all over that cabin, and old Pete has to dig it out again. He gets snowed under two or three times every winter."

Annie Foster, and probably some of the others, were getting new ideas concerning the sea-coast and its inhabitants, every minute; and she felt a good deal like Dick Lee,—she "wouldn't have missed that trip for any thing."

They were now coasting along the island, at no great distance; and, although it was not nearly noon, Dabney heard Joe Hart say to his brother,—

"Never was so hungry in all my life. Glad they did lay in a good stock of provisions."

"So am I," returned Fuz; and he added in a whisper,

"Isn't there any way for us to get into that cabin?"

Joe shook his head. There was not the slightest chance for any small piracy to be worked on that craft, so long as Mrs. Kinzer remained the "stewardess" of it; and the two hungry boys were compelled to wait her motions.

CHAPTER XX.

Dismally barren and lonesome was that desolate bar between the bay and the ocean. Here and there it swelled up into great drifts and mounds of sand, which were almost large enough to be called hills; but nowhere did it show a tree, or a bush, or even a patch of grass. Annie Foster found herself getting melancholy, as she gazed upon it, and thought of how the winds must sometimes sweep across it, laden with sea-spray and rain and hail, or with the bitter sleet and blinding snow of winter.

"Dabney," she said, "was the storm very severe here last night and yesterday?"

"Worse than it was over on our side of the bay, ten times."

"Were there any vessels wrecked?"

"Most likely, but it's too soon to know just where."

At that moment "The Swallow" was running around a sandy point, jutting out into the bay from the foot of the highest mound on the bar, not half a mile from the light-house, and only twice as far from the low wooden roof of the "wrecking-station," where, as Dab had explained to his guests, the lifeboats and other apparatus of all sorts were kept safely housed. The piles of drifted sand had for some time prevented the brightest eyes on board "The Swallow" from seeing any thing to seaward; but now, as they came around the point and a broad level lay before them, Ham Morris sprang to his feet in sudden excitement, as he exclaimed,—

"In the breakers! Why, she must have been a three-master! It's all up with her now."

"Look along the shore!" shouted Dab. "Some of 'em saved, anyhow. The coast-men are there, too, life-boats and all."

So they were; and Ham was right about the vessel, though not a mast was left standing in her now. If there had been, indeed, she might have been kept off the breakers, as they afterwards learned. She had been dismasted in the storm, but had not struck until after daylight that morning, and help had been close at hand and promptly given. There was no such thing as saving that unfortunate hull. She would beat to pieces just where she lay, sooner or later, according to the kind of weather that might take the job in hand, and the size and force of the waves it should bring with it.

The work done already by the life-boat men had been a good one; and it had not been very easy, either, for they had brought the crew and passengers safely through the boiling surf, and landed them all upon the sandy beach. They had even saved for them some items of baggage. In a few hours the coast "wrecking-tugs" would be on hand to look out for the cargo. There was therefore no chance for the 'long-shore men to turn an honest penny without working hard for it. Work and wages enough there would be, to be sure, helping to unload, whenever the sea, now so heavy, should go down a little; but "work" and "wages" were not the precise things some of them were most hungry for.

Two of them, at all events,—one a tall, grizzled, weather-beaten, stoop-shouldered old man, in tattered raiment, and the other more battered still, but with no "look of the sea" about him,—stood on a sand-drift, gloomily gazing at the group of shipwrecked people on the shore, and the helpless mass of timber and spars out there among the beatings of the surf.

"Not more'n three hunder' yards out She'd break up soon, 'f there was no one to hender. Wot a show we'd hev!"

"I reckon," growled the shorter man. "'S your name Peter?"

"Ay. I belong yer. Allers lived 'bout high-water mark. Whar'd ye come from?"

The only answer was a sharp and excited exclamation. Neither of them had been paying any attention to the bay side of the bar; and, while they were gazing at the wreck, a very pretty little yacht had cast anchor, close in shore; and then, with the help of a rowboat, quite a party of ladies and gentlemen—the latter somewhat young-looking for the greater part—had made their way to the land, and were now hurrying forward. They did not pay the slightest attention to Peter and his companion, but in a few minutes more they were trying to talk to those poor people on the seaward beach. Trying, but not succeeding very well; for the wreck had been a Bremen bark, with an assorted cargo and some fifty passengers, all emigrants. German seemed to be their only tongue, and none of Mrs. Kinzer's pleasure-party spoke German.

"Too bad," Ford Foster was saying about it, when there came a sort of wail from a group at a little distance, and it seemed to close with,—

"*Pauvre enfant!*"

"French!" exclaimed Ford. "Why, they look as Dutch as any of the rest.
Come on, Annie, let's try and speak to them."

The rest followed, a good deal like a flock of sheep; and it was a sad enough scene that lay before them. No lives had been lost in the wreck; but there had been a good deal of suffering among the poor passengers, cooped up between decks, with the hatches closed, while the storm lasted. Nobody drowned, indeed; but all had been dreadfully soaked in the surf in getting ashore, and among the rest had been the fair-haired child, now lying there on his mother's lap, so pinched and blue, and seemingly so nearly lifeless.

French, were they?

Yes and no; for the father, a tall, stout young man, who looked like a farmer, told Ford they were from Alsace, and spoke both languages.

"The child, was it sick?"

Not so much "sick" as dying of starvation and exposure. Oh, such a sad, pleading look as the poor mother lifted to the moist eyes of Mrs. Kinzer, when the portly widow pushed forward and bent over the silent boy! Such a pretty child he must have been, and not over two years old; but the salt water was in his tangled curls now, and his poor lips were parted in a weak, sick way, that told of utter exhaustion.

"Can any thing be done, mother?"

"Yes, Dabney, there can. You and Ham and Ford and Frank go to the yacht, quick as you can, and bring the spirit-heater, lamp and all, and bread and milk, and every dry napkin and towel you can find. Bring Keziah's shawl."

Such quick time they made across that sand-bar!

They were none too soon, either; for, as they came running down to their boat a mean-looking, slouching sort of fellow walked rapidly away from it.

"He was going to steal it!"

"Can't go for him now, Dab; but you'll have to mount guard here, while we go back with the things."

There was a good deal of the "guard mounted" look in Dab's face, when they left him, a few minutes later, standing there by the boat, and he had one of the oars in his hand. An oar is almost as good a club as the lower joint of a fishing-rod, and that was exactly the thought in Dab's mind.

Ham and Frank and Ford hurried back to the other beach, to find that Mrs. Kinzer had taken complete possession of that baby. Every rag of his damp things was already stripped off; and now, while Miranda lighted the "heater," and made some milk hot in a minute, the good lady began to rub the little sufferer as only an experienced mother knows how.

Then there was a warm wrapping-up in cloths and shawls, and better success than anybody had dreamed of in making the seemingly half-dead child eat something.

"That was about all the matter with him," said Mrs. Kinzer. "Now, if we can get him and his mother over to the house, we can save both of them. Ford, how long did you say it was since they'd eaten any thing?"

"About three days, they say."

"Mercy on me! And that cabin of ours holds so little! Glad it's full, anyhow. Let's get every thing out and over here, right away."

"The cabin?"

"No, Hamilton, the provisions."

Not a soul among them all thought of their own lunch, any more than Mrs. Kinzer herself did; but Joe and Fuz were not among them just then. On the contrary, they were over there by the shore, where the "Jenny" had been pulled up, trying to get Dab Kinzer to put them on board "The Swallow."

"Somebody ought to be on board of her," said Fuz, in as anxious a tone as he could assume, "with so

many strange people around."

"It isn't safe," added Joe.

"Fact," replied Dab; "but then, I kind o' like to feel a little unsafe."

The Hart boys had a feeling, at that moment, that somehow or other Dab knew why they were so anxious to go on board; and they were right enough, for he was saying to himself, "They can wait. They do look hungry, but they'll live through it. There ain't any cuffs or collars in Ham's locker."

All there was then in the locker was soon out of it, after Mrs. Kinzer and the rest came, for they brought with them the officers of the wrecked bark; and neither Joe nor Fuz had an opportunity to so much as "help distribute" that supply of provisions. Ham went over to see that the distribution should be properly made; while Mrs. Kinzer saw her little patient, with his father and mother, safely stowed on board "The Swallow."

"I'll save that baby, anyhow," she said to Miranda; "and Ford says his father's a farmer. We can find plenty for 'em to do. They'll never see a thing of their baggage, and I guess they hadn't a great deal."

She was just the woman to guess correctly about such a matter.

At that moment Dabney was saying to Annie Foster,—

"Whom do you guess I've seen to-day?"

"I can't guess. Who was it?"

"The tramp!"

"The same one?"

"The very same. There he goes, over the sandhill yonder, with old Peter the wrecker. We've got to hurry home now, but I'm going to set Ham Morris on his track before we get through."

"You'll never find him again."

"Do you s'pose old Peter'd befriend a man that did what he did? Right on the shore of the bay? No, indeed! There isn't a fisherman from here to Montauk, that wouldn't join to hunt him out. He's safe to be found whenever Ham wants him, if we don't scare him away now."

"Don't scare him, then," almost whispered Annie.

The wind was fair; and the home sail of "The Swallow" was really a swift and short one, but it did seem dreadfully long to her passengers.

Mrs. Kinzer was anxious to see that poor baby and his mother safely in bed. Ham wanted to send a whole load of refreshments back to the shipwrecked people. Dab Kinzer could not keep his thoughts from following that "tramp." And then, if the truth must come out, every soul on board the beautiful little yacht was getting more and more painfully aware with every minute that passed, that they had had a good deal of sea-air and excitement, and a splendid sail across the bay, but no dinner,—not so much as a red herring and a cracker.

CHAPTER XXI.

DAB AND HIS FRIENDS TURN THEMSELVES INTO COOKS AND WAITERS.

As for the Kinzers, that was by no means their first experience in such matters; but none of their friends had ever before been so near an out-and-out shipwreck.

It is quite possible, moreover, that they had never before been so nearly starved as they were that day. At least, something to that effect was remarked by Joe Hart and Fuz, more than a dozen times apiece, while "The Swallow" was threading the crooked inlet, and making her way to the landing.

"Ham," said Dab, "are you going right back again?"

"Course I am,—soon as I can get a load of eatables together, from the house and the village. You'll have to stay here."

"Why can't I go with you?"

"Plenty for you to do at the house and around while I'm gone. No, you can't go."

Dab seemed to have expected as much; for he turned to Ford with,—

"Then, Ford, I'll tell you what we must do."

"What's that?"

"We must see about the famine. Can you cook?"

"No."

"I can, then. Ham'll have one half of our house at work getting his cargo ready, and that baby'll fill up the other half."

"Mother won't be expecting us so soon, and our cook's gone out for the day. Annie knows something."

"She can help me, then. Those Hart boys'll die if they're not fed pretty soon. Look at Fuz. Why, he can't keep his mouth shut."

Joe and his brother seemed to know as if by instinct that the dinner question was under discussion, and they were soon taking at least their share of the talk. Oh, how they did wish it had been a share of something to eat, instead!

"The Swallow" was carefully moored, after discharging her passengers; but Dab did not start for the house with his mother and the rest. He even managed to detain some of the empty lunch-baskets, large ones too.

"Come on, Mr. Kinzer," shouted Joe Hart. "Let's put for the village.
We'll starve here."

"A fellow that'll starve here, just deserves to, that's all," said Dabney. "Ford, there's Bill Lee's boat and three others coming in. We're all right. One of 'em's a dredger."

Ford and Frank could only guess what their friend was up to, but Dab was not doing any sort of guessing.

"Bill," he shouted, as Dick Lee's father came within hearing,—"Bill! put a lot of your best panfish in this basket, and then go and fetch us some lobsters. There's half a dozen in your pot. Did those others have any luck?"

"More clams'n 'ysters," responded Bill.

"Then we'll take both lots."

The respect of the city boys for the resources of the Long-Island shore in a time of famine began to rise rapidly a few moments later; for, not only was one of Dab's baskets promptly laden with "panfish," such as porgies, blackfish, and perch, but two others received all the clams and oysters they were at all anxious to carry to the house. At the same time Bill Lee offered, as an amendment on the lobster question,—

"Yer wrong 'bout de pot, Dab."

"Wrong? Why"—

"Yes, you's wrong. Glorianny's been an' biled ebery one on 'em, an' dey're all nice an' cold by dis time."

"All right. I never did eat my lobsters raw. Just you go and get them,
Dick. Bring 'em right over to Ford's house."

Bill Lee would have sent his house and all, on a suggestion that the Kinzers or the Fosters were in need of it; and Dick would have carried it over for him.

As for "Glorianna," when her son came running in with his errand, she exclaimed,—

"Dem lobsters? Sho! Dem ain't good nuff. Dey sha'n't have 'em. I'll jes' send de ole man all roun' de bay to git some good ones. On'y dey isn't no kine ob lobsters good nuff for some folks, dey isn't."

Dick insisted, however; and by the time he reached the back door of the old Kinzer homestead with his load, the kitchen beyond that door had become almost as busy a place as was that of Mrs. Miranda Morris, a few rods away.

"Ford," suddenly exclaimed Dab, as he finished scaling a large porgy, "what if mother should make a mistake!"

"Make a mistake! How?"

"Cook that baby. It's awful!"

"Why, its mother's there."

"Yes, but they've put her to bed, and its father too. Hey, here come the lobsters. Now, Ford"—

The rest of what he had to say was given in a whisper, and was not even heard by Annie Foster, who was just then looking prettier than ever, as she busied herself around the kitchen-fire. The bloom that was coming up into her face was a sight worth seeing. As for the Hart boys, Mrs. Foster had invited them to come into the parlor and talk with her until dinner should be ready. She added, with her usual smile, that there were cooks enough in the kitchen.

Such a frying and broiling!

Before Ham Morris was ready with his cargo for his trip back to the wreck, and right in the midst of his greatest hurry, word came over from Mrs. Foster that "the table was waiting for them all."

Even Mrs. Kinzer drew a long breath of relief and satisfaction. There was nothing more in the wide world that she could do, just then, for either "that baby" or its unfortunate parents; and she was beginning to worry about her son-in-law, and how she should manage to get him to eat something. For Ham Morris had worked himself into a high state of excitement, in his benevolent haste, and did not seem to know that he was hungry. Miranda had entirely sympathized with her husband until the arrival of that message from Mrs. Foster.

"O Hamilton! And good Mrs. Foster must have cooked it all herself!"

"No, Miranda," said Ham thoughtfully. "Our Dabney went home with Ford and Annie. I can't stay more than a minute, but I think we'd better go right over. There's a good many things to come yet, from the village."

Go they did; while the charitable neighbors whom Ham had stirred up concerning the wreck, attended to the completion of the cargo of "The Swallow." More than that was true; for at least one other good and kind-hearted boat would be ready to accompany her on her return trip across the bay, laden with creature comforts of all sorts.

Even old Jock, the village tavern-keeper, not by any means the best man in the world, had come waddling down to the landing with a demijohn of old "apple-brandy;" and his gift had been kindly accepted, by the special advice of the village physician.

"That sort of thing has made plenty of shipwrecks around here," said the man of medicine; "and the people on the bar have swallowed so much salt water, the apple-jack can't hurt 'em."

Maybe the doctor was wrong about it; but the demijohn went over to the wreck in "The Swallow," very much to the gratification of old Jock.

Mrs. Foster's dining-room was not a large one: there were no large rooms in that house. Nevertheless, the entire party managed to gather around the table,—all except Dab and Ford.

"Dab is head cook, and I'm head waiter," had been Ford's explanation.
"Frank and the boys are company."

Certainly the cook had no cause to be ashamed of his work. The coffee was excellent. The fish was done to a turn. The oysters, roasted, broiled, or stewed, and likewise the clams, were all that could have been asked of them. Bread there was in abundance; and all things were going finely, till Mrs. Kinzer asked her son, as his fire-red face showed itself at the kitchen-door,—

"Dabney, you've not sent in your vegetables. We're waiting for them."

Dab's face grew redder, and he came near dropping a plate he held in his hand.

"Vegetables? Oh, yes! Well, Ford, we might as well send them in now.
I've got them all ready."

Annie opened her eyes, and looked hard at her brother; for she knew very well that not so much as a potato had been thought of in their preparations. Ford himself looked a little queer; but he marched right out, white apron and all. A minute or so later the two boys came in again, each bearing aloft a huge platter.

One of these was solemnly deposited at each end of the table.

"Vegetables?"

"Why—they're lobsters!"

"O Ford! how could you?"

The last exclamation came from Annie Foster, as she clapped her hands over her face. Bright-red were those lobsters, and fine-looking fellows, every one of them, in spite of Mrs. Lee's poor opinion; but they were a little too well dressed, even for a dinner-party. Their thick shoulders were adorned with collars of the daintiest material and finish, while every ungainly "flipper" wore a "cuff" which had been manufactured for a different kind of wrist.

There were plenty of cuffs and collars, and queer enough the lobsters looked in them. All the queerer because every item of lace and linen was variegated with huge black spots and blotches, as if some one had begun to wash it in ink.

Joe and Fuz were almost as red as the lobsters; and Mrs. Foster's face looked as severe as it could, but that is not saying a great deal. The Kinzer family knew all about those cuffs and collars, and Ham Morris and the younger ladies were trying hard not to laugh.

"Joe," said Fuz snappishly, "can't you take a joke? Annie's got the laugh on us this time."

"I?" exclaimed Annie indignantly: "no, indeed! That's some of Ford's work, and Dabney's.—Mr. Kinzer, I'm ashamed of you."

Poor Dab!

He muttered something about those being all the vegetables he had, and retreated to the kitchen.

Joe and Fuz, however, were not of the sort that take offence easily; and they were shortly helping themselves quite liberally to lobster, cuffs or no cuffs. That was all that was necessary to restore harmony at the table, but Dab's plan for "punishing the Hart boys" was a complete failure.

As Ford told him afterwards:

"Feel it? Not they. You might as well try to hurt a clam with a pin."

"And I hurt your sister's feelings instead of theirs," said Dab. "Well, I'll never try any thing like it again. Anyhow, Joe and Fuz ain't comfortable they ate too many roasted clams and a good deal too much lobster."

There was a certain degree of consolation to be had from such a fact as that.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REAL MISSION OF THE JUG.

Ham Morris ate well, when he once got at it; but he did not linger long at the dinner-table, for his

heart was in "The Swallow." Dab would have given more than ever for the privilege of going with him. Not that he felt so dreadfully charitable, but that he did not care to prolong his stay at Mrs. Foster's, as "cook" or otherwise. He had not by any means lost his appetite,—although he seemed disposed to neglect the lobsters; and when he had taken proper care of it he hurried away "on an errand for his mother," in the direction of the village. Nearly everybody he met had some question or other to ask him about the wreck, and it was not to have been expected that Jenny Walters would let her old acquaintance pass her without a word or so.

Dab answered as well as he could, considering the disturbed state of his mind; but he wound up with,—

"Jenny, I wish you'd come over to our house by and by."

"What for?"

"Oh! I've got something to show you—something you never saw before."

"Do you mean your new baby? the one you found on the bar?"

"Yes, but that baby, Jenny!"

"What's wonderful about it?"

"Why, it's only two years old, and it can squall in two languages. That's a good deal more than you can do."

"They say your friend, Miss. Foster, speaks French," retorted Jenny. "Was she ever shipwrecked?"

"In French? May be so; but not in German."

"Well, Dabney, I don't propose to squall in any thing. Are your folks going to burn any more of their barns this year?"

"Not unless Samantha gets married. Jenny, do you know what's the latest fashion in lobsters?"

"Changeable green, I suppose."

"No: I mean after they're boiled. It's to have 'em come on the table in cuffs and collars. Lace around their necks, you know."

"And gloves?"

"No, not any gloves. We had lobsters to-day, at Mrs. Foster's, and you ought to have seen 'em."

"Dabney Kinzer, it's time you went to school again."

"I'm going, in a few days."

"Going? Do you mean you're going away somewhere?"

"Ever so far; and Dick Lee's going with me."

"I heard about him, but I didn't know he meant to take you along. That's very kind of Dick. I s'pose you won't speak to common people when you get back."

"Now, Jenny"—

"Good-afternoon, Dabney. Perhaps I'll come over before you go, if it's only to take a look at that shipwrecked baby."

A good many of Mrs. Kinzer's lady friends, young and old, deemed it their duty to come and do that very thing within the next few days. Then the sewing-circle took the matter up, and both the baby and its mother were provided for as they never had been before. It would have taken more languages than two, to fairly express the gratitude of the poor Alsatians. As for the rest of them, out there on the bar, they were speedily taken off, and carried to "the city," none of them being seriously the worse for their sufferings, after all. Ham Morris declared that the family he had brought ashore "came just in time to help him out with his fall work, and he didn't see any charity in it."

Good for Ham!

It was the right way to feel about it, but Dab Kinzer thought he could see something in it that looked like "charity" when he met his tired-out brother-in-law on his late return from that second trip across the bay.

Real charity never cares to make an exhibition of itself.

They were pretty thoroughly worn out, both of them; but they carefully moored "The Swallow" in her usual berth before they left her.

She had effectually "discharged her cargo," over on the sand-island; but they Had enough of a load to carry home, in the shape of empty baskets and things of that sort.

"Is every thing out of the locker, Dab?" inquired Ham.

"All but the jug. I say, did you know it was nearly half full? Would it do any hurt to leave it here?"

"The jug? No, not if you just pour out the rest of the apple-jack over the side."

"Make the fish drunk."

"Well, it sha'n't do that for anybody else, if I can help it."

"Well, if it's good for water-soaked people, I guess it can't hurt the fish."

"Empty it, Dab. Empty it, and come along. The doctor wasn't so far wrong, and I was glad to have it with me. Seemed to do some of 'em a power of good. But medicine's medicine, and I only wish some people I know of would remember it."

"Some of 'em do a good deal of that kind of doctoring."

The condemned liquor was already gurgling from the mouth of the demijohn into the salt water, and neither fish nor eel came forward to get a share of it. They were probably all feeling pretty well that night. When the demijohn was empty and the cork replaced, it was set down again in the "cabin;" and that was left unlocked, for there was no more danger in it for anybody. Dab and Ham were altogether too tired to take any pains there was no call for.

Dab's mind must have been tired, as well as his body; for he decided to postpone until the morrow the report he had to make about the tramp. He was strongly of the opinion that the latter had not seen him to recognize him; and, at all events, the matter could wait.

So it came to pass that all the shore, and the road that led away from it, and the village the road led into, were deserted and silent, an hour or so later, when a stoutly-built "cat-boat," with her one sail lowered, was quietly sculled up the inlet.

There were two men on board, a tall one and a shorter one; and they ran their boat right alongside "The Swallow," as if that were the precise thing they had come to do.

"Burgin," remarked the tall man, "wot ef we don't find any thin', arter all this sailin' and rowin' and scullin'? Most likely he's kerried it to the house. In course he has."

The keenly watchful eyes of Burgin had noted the arrival of that apple-jack at the island; and they had closely followed its fortunes, from first to last. He had more than half tried, indeed, to work himself in among the crowd, as one of the "sufferers," but with no manner of success.

The officers of the ship knew every face that had any right to a spoonful, and Burgin's failed to pass him. He had not failed, however, to note that his coveted "medicine" was by no means exhausted, and to see Ham stow the demijohn carefully away, at last, under the half-deck of "The Swallow." That information had given all the inducement required to get old Peter and his boat across the bay; and the ancient "wrecker" was as anxious about the result as the tramp himself could be. It was hard to say, now, which of them was the first on board "The Swallow."

"It ain't locked!"

"Then the jug ain't thar."

"Wall, it is," exclaimed Burgin triumphantly, as he pulled it out; but his under jaw dropped a little when he felt "how light it lifted."

"Reckon they helped themselves on thar way hum."

It was a good deal worse than that; and an angry and disappointed pair were they when the cork and

the truth came out.

"Thar's jest a good smell!"

That was old Peter's remark; and it sounded as if words failed him to add to it, but Burgin's wrath exploded in a torrent of bitter abuse of the man or men who had emptied that demijohn. He gave old Peter a capital chance to turn upon him morosely with,—

"Look a-yer, my chap, is this 'ere your boat?"

"No: I didn't say it was, did I?"

"Is that there your jug? I don't know if I keer to sit and hear one of my neighbors—and he's a good feller too, he is—abused all night, jest bekase I've been and let an entire stranger make a fool of me."

"Do you mean me?"

"Well, ef I didn't I wouldn't say it. Don't you git mad, now. It won't pay ye. Jest let's take a turn 'round the village."

"You kin go ef you want ter. I'll wait for ye. 'Pears like I didn't feel much like doin' any trampin' 'round."

"Stay thar, then. But mind you don't try on any runnin' away with my boat."

"If I want a boat, old man, there's plenty here that's better worth stealin' than yourn."

"That's so. I didn't know you'd been makin' any kalkilation on it. I won't be gone any great while."

He was gone some time, however, whatever may have been his errand. Old Peter was not the man to be at a loss for one, of some sort, even at that hour of the night; and his present business, perhaps, did not particularly require company.

When he returned at last, he found his own boat safe enough, and he really could not tell if any of the others had walked away; but he looked around in vain for any signs of his late comrade. Not that he spent much time or wasted any great pains in searching for him; and he muttered to himself, as he gave it up,—

"Gone, has he? Well, then, it's a good riddance to bad rubbidge. I ain't no aingil, but that feller's a long ways wuss'n I am."

Whether or not old Peter was right in his estimate of himself or of Burgin, in a few moments more he was all alone in his "cat-boat," and was sculling it rapidly out of the crooked inlet.

His search for Burgin had been a careless one, for he had but glanced over the gunwale of "The Swallow." A second look might have shown him the form of the tramp, half covered by a loose flap of the sail, deeply and heavily sleeping on the bottom of the boat. It was every bit as comfortable a bed as he had been used to; and there he was still lying, long after the sun had looked in upon him, the next morning.

Other eyes than the sun's were to look in upon him before he awakened from that untimely and imprudent nap.

It was not so very early when Ham Morris and Dabney Kinzer were stirring again; but they had both arisen with a strong desire for a "talk," and Ham made an opportunity for one by saying,—

"Come on, Dab. Let's go down and have a look at 'The Swallow.'"

Ham had meant to talk about school and kindred matters, but Dab's first words about the tramp cut off all other subjects.

"You ought to have told me," he said. "I'd have had him tied up in a minute."

Dab explained as well as he could; but, before he had finished, Ham suddenly exclaimed,—

"There's Dick Lee, on board 'The Swallow!' What on earth's he there for?"

"Dick!" shouted Dabney.

"Cap'n Dab, did yo' set this yer boat to trap somebody?"

"No. Why?"

"'Cause you's done gone an' cotched 'im. Jes' you come an' see."

The sound of Dick's voice, so near them, reached the dull ears of the slumbering tramp; and as Ham and Dabney sprang into a yawl, and pushed along-side the yacht, his unpleasant face was slowly and sleepily lifted above the rail.

"It's the very man!" excitedly shouted Dabney.

"The tramp?"

"Yes,—the tramp!"

No one would have suspected Ham Morris of so much agility, although his broad and well-knit frame promised abundant strength; but he was on board "The Swallow" like a flash, and Burgin was "pinned" by his iron grasp before he could so much as guess what was coming.

"Le' go o' me!"

"I've got you!"

It was too late for any such thing as resistance; and the captive settled at once into a sullen, dogged silence, after the ordinary custom of his kind when they find themselves cornered. It is a species of dull, brute instinct, more than cunning, seemingly; but not a word more did Ham and Dab obtain from their prisoner,—although they said a good many to him,—until they delivered him over to the safe-keeping of the lawful authorities at the village. That done, they went home to breakfast, feeling that they had made a good morning's work of it, but wondering what would be the end and result of it all.

"Ten years, I guess," said Ham.

"In State prison?"

"Yes. Breaking stone. He'll get his board free, but it'll be total abstinence for him. I wonder what took him on board 'The Swallow,'"

"I know,—the jug!"

"That's it, sure's you live. I saw him over on the island. I declare! To think of an empty demijohn having so much good in it!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER GRAND PLAN, AND A VERY GRAND RUNAWAY.

The whole community was stirred up over the news of the capture of the tramp. It made a first-class excitement for a place of that size; but none of the inhabitants took a deeper interest in the matter than did Ford and Frank and the two Hart boys. It was difficult for them to get their minds quite right about it, especially the first pair, to whom it was a matter of unasked question just how much help Ham had given Dab in capturing the marauder. Mr. Foster himself got a little excited about it, when he came home; but poor Annie was a good deal more troubled than pleased.

"O mother!" she exclaimed. "Do you suppose I shall have to appear in court, and give my testimony as a witness?"

"I hope not, my dear. Perhaps your father can manage to prevent it somehow."

It would not have been an easy thing to do, even for so good a lawyer as Mr. Foster, if Burgin himself had not saved them all trouble on that score. Long before the slow processes of country criminal justice could bring him to actual trial, so many misdeeds were brought home to him, from here and there, that he gave the matter up, and not only confessed to the attack on Annie's pocket-book, but to the barn-burning, to which Dab's cudgelling had provoked him. He made his case so very clear, that when he

finally came before a judge and jury, and pleaded "guilty," there was nothing left for them to do but to say just what he was guilty of, and how long he should "break stone" to pay for it. It was likely to be a good deal more than "ten years," if he lived out his "time."

All that came to pass some months later, however; and just now the village had enough to talk about in discussing the peculiar manner of his capture.

The story of the demijohn leaked out, of course; and, while it did not rob Dab and Ham of any part of their glory, it was made to do severe duty in the way of a temperance lecture.

Old Jock, indeed, protested.

"You see, boys," said he, "real good liquor, like that, don't do nobody no harm. That was the real stuff, —prime old apple-jack 'at I'd had in my cellar ten year last Christmas; an' it jest toled that feller across the bay, and captered him, without no manner of diffikilty."

There were some among his auditors who could have testified to a decidedly different kind of "capture."

One effect of Dab's work on the day of the yachting-trip, including his special performances as cook, and as milliner to the lobsters, was, that he felt himself thenceforth bound to be somewhat carefully polite to Joe and Fuz. The remaining days of their visit would have been altogether too few for the varied entertainments he laid out for them, in his own mind, by way of reparation for his unlucky "practical joke." They were to catch all there was in the bay. They were to ride everywhere. They were to be shown every thing there was to see.

"They don't deserve it, Dab," said Ford; "but you're a real good fellow.
Mother says so."

"Does she?" said Dab; and he evidently felt a good deal relieved, after that.

Mr. Richard Lee, when his friends once more found time to think of him, had almost disappeared from the public eye.

Some three days after "the trip," while all the other boys were out in the "Jenny," having a good time with their hooks and lines, Dick's mother made her appearance in Mrs. Kinzer's dining-room, or Miranda's, with a face that was even darker than usual, with a cloud of motherly anxiety.

"Miss Kinzer," she said, "has you seen my Dick, dis week?"

"No: he hasn't been here at all. Is there any thing the matter with him?"

"Dat's de berry question. I jes' doesn't know wot to make ob 'im."

"Why, Glorianna, do you think he's studying too hard?"

"It ain't jes' de books; I isn't so much afeard ob dem: but it's all 'long ob de 'Cad'my. I wish you'd jes' take a good look at 'im, fust chance ye git."

"Does he look badly?"

"No: 'tain't jes' altogedder his looks. He's de bes' lookin' boy 'long shoah. But den de way he's a-goin' on to talk. 'Tain't natural. He used to talk fust-rate."

"Can't he talk now?"

"Yes, Miss Kinzer, he kin talk; but den de way he gits out his words. Nebber seen sech a t'ing in all my born days. Takes him ebber so long jes' to say good-mornin'. An' he doesn't say it like he use ter. I wish you'd jes' take a good look at 'im."

Mrs. Kinzer promised, and she gave her black friend what comfort she could; but Dick Lee's tongue would never again be the free-and-easy member of society it had been. Even when at home, and about his commonest "chores," he was all the while struggling with what he called his "pronounciation." If he should succeed as well with the rest of his "schooling," it was safe to say that it would not be thrown away upon him.

Glorianna went her way that morning; and the next to intrude upon Mrs. Kinzer's special domain was her son-in-law himself, accompanied by his blooming bride.

"We've got a plan."

"You? Apian? What about?"

"Dab and his friends."

That was the beginning of a tolerably long consultation, and the results of it were duly reported to Dabney when he came home with his fish.

"A party?" he exclaimed, when his mother finished her brief but comprehensive statement: "Ham and Miranda to give a party for us boys? Well, now, if they're not right down good! But, mother, we'll have to get it up mighty quick."

"I know it, Dab; but that's easy enough, with all the help we have. I'll take care of that."

"A party! but, mother, what can we do? There's only a few of 'em know how to dance. I don't, for one."

"You must talk it over with Ford. Perhaps Annie and Frank can help you."

They were all taken into counsel soon enough; and endless were the plans and propositions made, till even Mrs. Kinzer found her temper getting a little fretted and worried over them.

At all events, it was a settled fact that the "party" was to be; and the invitations went out in due and proper form.

"Miranda," said her mother, on the morning of the important day, "we must manage to get rid of Dabney and those boys for a few hours."

"Send 'em for some greens to rig the parlor with," suggested Ham. "Let 'em take the ponies."

"Do you think the ponies are safe for them to drive, just now?"

"Oh! Dab can handle 'em. They're a trifle skittish, that's all. They need a little exercise."

So they did; but it was to be doubted if the best way to secure it for them was to send them out in a light, two-seated wagon, with a load of five lively boys.

"Now, don't you let one of the other boys touch the reins," said Mrs.
Kinzer.

Dab's promise to that effect proved a hard one to keep; for Fuz and Joe almost tried to take the reins away from him, before they had driven two miles from the house. He was firm, however, and they managed to reach the strip of woodland, some five miles inland, where they were to gather their load, without any disaster; but it was evident to Dab, all the way, that his ponies were in uncommonly "high" condition. He took them out of the wagon, while the rest began to gather their liberal harvest of evergreens; and he did not bring them near it again until all was ready for the start homeward.

"Now, boys," he said, "you get in; Joe and Ford and Fuz on the back seat, to hold down the greens. Frank, get up there, forward, while I hitch in the ponies. These fellows are chuck full of mischief."

Very full, certainly; nor did Dab Kinzer know exactly what the matter was for a minute or so after he seized the reins and sprang up beside Frank Harley.

Then, indeed, as the ponies kicked and reared and plunged, he thought he saw something work out from under their collars, and fall to the ground. An acorn-burr is just the thing to worry a restive horse, if put in such a place; but Joe and Fuz had hardly expected their "little joke" to be so very successful as it was.

The ponies were off now!

"Joe," shouted Fuz, "let's jump!"

"Don't let 'em, Ford," exclaimed Dab, giving his whole energies to the horses. "They'll break their necks if they do. Hold 'em in."

Ford, who was in the middle, promptly seized an arm of each of his panic-stricken cousins, while Frank clambered over the seat to help him. They were all down on the bottom now, serving as a, weight to hold the evergreen branches, as the light wagon bounced and rattled along over the smooth, level road.

In vain Dab pulled and pulled at the ponies. Run they would, and run they did; and all he could do was to keep them fairly in the road.

Bracing strongly back, with the reins wound around his tough hands, and with a look in his face that should have given courage even to the Hart boys, Dab strained at his task as bravely as when he had stood at the tiller of "The Swallow" in the storm.

There was no such thing as stopping those ponies.

And now, as they whirled along, even Dabney's face paled a little.

"I must reach the bridge before he does: he's just stupid enough to keep right on."

It was very "stupid," indeed, for the driver of that one-horse "truck-wagon" to try and reach the little narrow unrailed bridge first. It was an old, used-up sort of a bridge, at best.

Dab loosened the reins a little, but could not use his whip.

"Why can't he stop!"

It was a moment of breathless anxiety, but the wagoner kept stolidly on. There would be barely room to pass him on the road itself; none at all on the narrow bridge.

The ponies did it.

They seemed to put on an extra touch of speed on their own account, just then.

There was a rattle, a faint crash; and then, as the wheels of the two vehicles almost touched each other in passing, Ford shouted,—

"The bridge is down!"

Such a narrow escape!

One of the rotten girders, never half strong enough, had given way under the sudden shock of the hinder wheels; and that truck-wagon would have to find its road across the brook as best it could.

There were more wagons to pass, as they plunged forward, and rough places in the road for Dabney to look out for; but even Joe and Fuz were now getting confidence in their driver. Before long, too, the ponies themselves began to feel that they had had enough of it. Then it was that Dab used his whip again, and the streets of the village were traversed at a rate to call for the disapprobation of all sober-minded people.

"Here we are, Ham! Greens and all."

"Did they run far, Dab?" asked Ham quietly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DABNEY'S GREAT PARTY.

The boys returned a good deal earlier than anybody had expected, but they made no more trouble. As Ford Foster remarked, "they were all willing to go slow for a week," after being carried home at such a rate by Dab's ponies.

There was a great deal to be said, too, about the runaway, and Mrs. Foster longed to see Dabney, and thank him on Ford's account; but he himself had no idea that he had done any thing remarkable, and was very busy decking Miranda's parlors with the evergreens.

A nice appearance they made, too, all those woven branches and clustered sprays, when they were in place; and Samantha declared for them that,—

"They had kept Dab out of mischief all the afternoon."

At an early hour, after supper, the guests began to arrive; for Mrs.

Kinzer was a woman of too much good sense to have night turned into day when she could prevent it. As the stream of visitors steadily poured in, Dab remarked to Jenny Walters,—

"We shall have to enlarge the house, after all."

"If it were only a dress, now!"

"What then?"

"Why, you could just let out the tucks. I've had to do that with mine."

"Jenny, shake hands with me."

"What for, Dabney?"

"I'm so glad to meet somebody else that's outgrowing something."

There was a tinge of color rising in Jenny's face; but, before she could think of any thing to say, Dab added,—

"There, Jenny: there's Mrs. Foster and Annie. Isn't she sweet?"

"One of the nicest old ladies I ever saw."

"Oh! I didn't mean her mother."

"Never mind. You must introduce me to them."

"So I will. Take my arm."

Jenny Walters had been unusually kindly and gracious in her manner that evening, and her very voice had less than its accustomed sharpness; but her natural disposition broke out a little, some minutes later, while she was talking with Annie Foster. Said she,—

"I've wanted so much to get acquainted with you."

"With me?"

"Yes: I've seen you in church, and I've heard you talked about, and I wanted to find out for myself."

"Find out what?" asked Annie a little soberly.

"Why, you see, I don't believe it's possible for any girl to be as sweet as you look. I couldn't, I know. I've been trying these two days, and I'm nearly worn out."

Annie's eyes opened wide with surprise; and she laughed merrily, as she answered,—

"What can you mean! I'm glad enough if my face doesn't tell tales of me."

"But mine does," said Jenny. "And then I'm so sure to tell all the rest with my tongue. I do wish I knew what were your faults."

"My faults? What for?"

"I don't know. Seems to me, if I could think of your faults instead of mine, it wouldn't be so hard to look sweet."

Annie could but see that there was more earnestness than fun in the queer talk of her new acquaintance.

The truth was, that Jenny had been having almost as hard a struggle with her tongue as Dick Lee with his, though not for the same reason. Before many minutes she had frankly told Annie all about it, and she could not have done that if she had not somehow felt that Annie's "sweetness" was genuine.

The two girls were sure friends after that, much to the surprise of Mr. Dabney Kinzer. He, indeed, had been too much occupied in caring for all his guests, to pay especial attention to any one of them.

His mother had looked after him again and again, with eyes brimful of pride and of commendation of the way in which he was acquitting himself as "host."

Mrs. Foster herself remarked to her husband, who had now arrived,—

"Do you see that? Who would have expected as much from a raw, green country boy?"

"But, my dear, don't you see? The secret of it is, that he's not thinking of himself at all he's only anxious that his friends should have a good time."

"That's it; but then, that, too, is a very rare thing in a boy of his age."

"Dabney," exclaimed the lawyer in a louder tone of voice.

"Good-evening, Mr. Foster. I'm glad you've found room. The house isn't half large enough."

"It'll do. I understand your ponies ran away with you to-day."

"They did come home in a hurry, that's a fact; but nobody was hurt."

"I fear there would have been, but for you. Do you start for Grantley with the other boys, tomorrow?"

"Of course. Dick Lee and I need some one to take care of us. We never have travelled so far before."

"On land, you mean. Is Dick here to-night?"

"Came and looked in, sir; but he got scared by the crowd, and went home."

"Poor fellow! I don't wonder. Well, we will all do what we can for him."

Poor Dick Lee!

And yet, if Mr. Dabney Kinzer had known his whereabouts at that very moment, he would half have envied him.

Dick's mother was in the kitchen, helping about the "refreshments;" but she had not left home until she had compelled her son to dress himself in his best,—white shirt, red necktie, shining shoes, and all; and she had brought him with her, almost by force.

"You's goodnuff to go to de 'Cad'my and leab yer pore mother, an' I reckon you's good nuff for de party."

Dick had actually ventured in from the kitchen, through the dining-room, and as far as the door of the back parlor, where few would look.

How his heart did beat, as he gazed upon the merry gathering, a large part of whom he had "known all his born days"!

But there was a side-door opening from that dining-room upon the long piazza which Mrs. Kinzer had added to the old Morris mansion; and Dick's hand was on the knob of that door, almost before he knew it.

Then he was out on the road to the landing; and in five minutes more he was vigorously rowing the "Jenny" out through the inlet, towards the bay.

His heart was not beating unpleasantly any longer; but as he shot out from the narrow passage through the flags, and saw the little waves laughing in the cool, dim starlight, he suddenly stopped rowing, leaned on his oars, gave a great sigh of relief, and exclaimed,—

"Dar, I's safe now. I ain't got to say a word to nobody out yer. Wonder 'f I'll ebber git back from de 'Cad'my, an' ketch fish in dis yer bay. Sho! Course I will. But goin' 'way's awful!"

Dab Kinzer thought he had never before known Jenny Walters to appear so well as she looked that evening; and he must have been right, for good Mrs. Foster said to Annie,—

"What a pleasant, kindly face your new friend has! You must ask her to come and see us. She seems to be quite a favorite with the Kinzers."

"Have you known Dabney long?" Annie had asked of Jenny a little before that.

"Ever since I was a little bit of a girl, and a big boy, seven or eight years old, pushed me into the snow."

"Was it Dabney?"

"No; but Dabney was the boy that pushed him in for doing it, and then helped me up. Dab rubbed his face with snow for him, till he cried."

"Just like him!" exclaimed Annie with emphasis. "I should think his friends here will miss him."

"Indeed they will," said Jenny, and then she seemed disposed to be quiet for a while.

The party could not last forever, pleasant as it was; and by the time his duties as "host" were all done and over, Dabney was tired enough to go to bed and sleep soundly. His arms were lame and sore from the strain the ponies had given them; and that may have been the reason why he dreamed, half the night, that he was driving runaway teams, and crashing over rickety old bridges.

There was some reason for that; but why was it that every one of his dream-wagons, no matter who else was in it, seemed to have Jenny Walters and Annie Foster smiling at him from the back seat?

He rose later than usual next morning, and the house was all in its customary order by the time he got down stairs.

Breakfast was ready also; and it was hardly over before Dab's great new trunk was brought down into the front-door passage by a couple of the farmhands.

"It's an hour yet to train-time," said Ham Morris; "but we might as well get ready. We must be on hand in time."

What a long hour that was! And not even a chance given to Dab to run down to the landing for a good-by look at the "Jenny" and "The Swallow."

His mother and Ham, and Miranda, and the girls, seemed to be all made up of "good-by" that morning.

"Mother," said Dab.

"What is it, my dear boy?"

"That's it exactly. If you say 'dear boy' again, Ham Morris'll have to carry me to the cars. I'm all kind o' wilted now."

Then they all laughed, and before they got through laughing they all cried except Ham.

He put his hands in his pockets, and drew a long whistle.

The ponies were at the door now. The light wagon was a roomy one; but, when Dab's trunk had been put in, there was barely room left for the ladies, and Dab and Ham had to walk to the station.

"I'm kind o' glad of it," said Dab.

It was a short walk, and a silent one; but when they came in sight of the platform, Dab exclaimed,—

"There they are,—all of them!"

"The whole party?"

"Why, the platform's as crowded as our house was last night."

Mrs. Kinzer and her daughters were already the centre of a talkative crowd of young people; and Ford Foster and Frank Harley, with Joe and Fuz Hart, were asking what had become of Dab, for the train was in sight.

A moment later, as the puffing locomotive pulled up in front of the water-tank, the conductor stepped out on the platform, exclaiming,—

"Look a-here, folks, this ain't right. If there was going to be a picnic you ought to have sent word, and I'd have tacked on an extra car. You'll have to pack in now, best you can."

He seemed much relieved when he found how small a part of that crowd were to be his passengers.

"Dab," said Ford, "this is your send-off, not ours. You'll have to make a speech."

Dab did want to say something; but he had just kissed his sisters and his mother, and half a dozen of his school-girl friends had followed the example of Jenny Walters; and then Mrs. Foster had kissed him, and Ham Morris had shaken hands with him; and Dab could not have said a word to have saved his life.

"Speech!" whispered Ford mischievously, as Dab stepped upon the car-platform; but Dick Lee, who had just escaped from the tremendous hug his mother had given him, and had got his breath again,

came to his friend's relief in the nick of time. Dick felt, as he afterwards explained, that he "must shout, or he should go off;" and so, at the top of his shrill voice he shouted,—

"Hurrah for Cap'n Kinzer! Dar ain't no better feller lef long shoah!"

And then, amid a chorus of cheers and laughter, and a grand waving of white handkerchiefs, the engine gave a deep, hysterical cough, and hurried the train away.

Three homesteads by the Long Island shore were lonely enough that evening, and they were all likely to be lonelier still before they got fairly accustomed to the continued absence of "those boys."

It was well understood that the Fosters had determined to prolong their "summer in the country" until the arrival of cold weather, they had found all things so pleasant; and the Kinzers were well pleased with that, as Samantha remarked,—

"If it's only to compare letters. I do hope Dabney will write as soon as he gets there, and tell us all about it."

"He will," said his mother; but Ham's face put on a somewhat doubtful look.

"I'm not quite sure about Dab," he said slowly. "If things ain't just right, he's the sort of boy that wouldn't say a word about it. Well, I must say I liked what I saw of Mrs. Myers's notions about feeding people."

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BOYS ON THEIR TRAVELS. A GREAT CITY, AND A GREAT DINNER.

The conductor of that train need not have been much alarmed at falling in with a "picnic" of any moderate size, for he would have had room in his train to seat a good part of it, at least.

The boys had no difficulty in getting seats "all together." That is, they found four empty ones, two on each side, right opposite; and when they had turned over the front seats, there they were. Ford and Frank were facing Dabney and Dick on the right; and the two Hart boys were facing each other on the left, each with a whole seat to himself.

Almost the first thing Joe did, after taking possession, was to lean over, and whisper,—

"Look out, Fuz,—keep your secret."

"Catch me spoiling a good joke."

The other party seemed disposed to keep pretty quiet for a while; the first break of any consequence, in the silence, coming when Ford Foster exclaimed,—

"Dab, it was right along here."

"What was?"

"Where the pig had his collision with my train, first time I was over here."

"Did you hear him squeal?" asked Frank, as he peered through the window.

"The pig? No; but you ought to have heard the engine squeal, when it saw him coming."

The story had to be all told over again, of course, and did good service in getting their thoughts in order for the trip before them. Up to the mention of the pig, it had somehow seemed to Dab as if the railway-platform at the station, and all the people on it, had kept company with the train; and Frank Harley found himself calculating the distance between that car and the "mission" at Rangoon in far-away India.

As for Ford Foster, he stood in less need of any "pig" than the rest, from the fact that he had a large-

sized idea in his head.

He kept it there, too, until that train pulled up within reaching distance of one of the Brooklyn ferries. Before them lay the swift tide of the broad East River; and beyond that, with its borders of crowded docks and bristling masts, lay the streets and squares, and swarmed the multitudes, of the great city of New York.

"Ford," said Dabney, "you're captain this time. What are we to do now?"

"Well, if I ain't captain, I guess I'd better do a little steering. We must give our checks to the expressman, and have our luggage carted over to the Grand Central Depot."

"Will it be sure to get there in good time?"

"Of course it wouldn't if we were in any hurry; but our train doesn't leave until three o'clock, and the express won't fail to have it there before that."

Ford was all alive with the responsibilities of his position, as the only boy in the party who had been born in the city, and had travelled all over it, and a little out of it.

"Joe and Fuz," he said, "will want to take the night boat for Albany. They've more time on their hands than we have. Joe?—Fuz?—why can't you come along with us after you've checked your trunks? We'll be getting dinner before long."

The Hart boys promptly assented, after a look at each other, and a sort of chuckle.

"Might as well keep together," said Joe. "We'd like to take a look at things."

"Come along. I'll show you."

Frank Harley had seen quite a number of great cities, and he could hardly help saying something about them while they were going over on the ferryboat. They were all as far forward as they could get.

"Did you ever see any thing just like this?" asked Dab.

"Well, no, not just like it"—

"In India, or in China, or in London, or in Africa?" said Ford.

"It's a little different from any thing I ever saw."

"Well, isn't it bigger?"

That was a question Frank might have undertaken to answer if there had been proper time given him; but just then the boat was running into her "slip," away down town, and Ford exclaimed,—

"Hurrah, boys! Now for Fulton Market and some oysters."

"Oysters?" said Dab.

"Yes, sir! There's more oysters in that old shanty than there are in your bay."

"I don't know about that," said Dab, staring at the queer, huge, rickety old mass of unsightly wood and glass that Ford was pointing at, after they got ashore. "I'm hungry, anyhow."

"Hungry? So am I. But no man ought to say he's been in New York till he's tried some Fulton-Market oysters."

"Let's take 'em raw," said Fuz. "Then we can go ahead."

Dick Lee had been in the city before, but never in such company, nor in such very good clothes; and there was an expression on his face a good deal like awe, when he actually found himself standing at an "oyster-counter," in line with five well-dressed young white boys.

The man behind the counter served him, too, in regular turn; and Dick felt it a point of honor to empty the half-shell before him as quickly as any of the rest. There was no delay about that, anywhere along that line of boys.

"Dick," said Ford, "where's your lemon? There it is!"

Ford had already explained to the rest that it was "against the constitution and by-laws of Fulton Market to eat a raw oyster without the lemon-juice," and Dick would have blushed if he could.

"Dat's so. I forgot um!" and then he added, with great care, "Yes, Mr. Foster, the lemon improves the oyster."

"I declare!" muttered Ford. "He's keeping it up!"

The oysters were eaten, and then it was "Come on, boys;" and away they went up Fulton Street to Broadway. They walked two and two, as well as the streams of people would let them, but the Hart boys kept a little in the rear.

"What do you think of it, Joe?"

"Think of what?"

"Walking over New York with Dick Lee, just as if he was one of us?"

"Guess nobody'll think we're walking with him. Anybody can tell what we are, just by looking at us."

"Dick's face shows just what he is too. I don't care for this once, but it's awful."

If any such thought were troubling Ford Foster, he made no confession of it, and was even specially careful, now and then, to turn around and address some remark or other to "the member from Africa," as he called him.

"Dick," said Dab in an undertone, as they were leaving the market, "you look out, now: you must have as good a time as any of us, or I won't feel right about it."

"Jes' you sail right ahead, Cap'n Dab. I's on hand."

Ford was determined to "do the honors," and he led them down Broadway to the Battery before he started "up town;" and he had something to say about a great many of the buildings. Dab felt his respect for city boys increasing rapidly, and Dick remarked,—

"Ef he don't know dis coas' mos' as well as I know de bay!"

It looked like it, and he also seemed to be on terms of easy acquaintance with some of the human "fish" they fell in with. Not that he spoke to any of them; but he pointed out the several kinds,—policemen, firemen, messenger-boys, loafers, brokers, post-office carriers, a dozen more, with a degree of confidence which fairly astonished his friends.

"I could learn to tell all of them that wear uniforms, myself," said Dabney; "but how do you know the others?"

"How do I know 'em? Well, it's just like knowing a miller or a blacksmith, when you see him. They all have some kind of smut on them that comes from their trade."

There may have been something in that, or it may be barely possible that Ford now and then mixed his men a little, and pointed out brokers as "gamblers," and busy attorneys as probable pickpockets. He may have been too confident.

On they went, till the brains of all but Ford and Frank were in a sort of whirl. Even Dab Kinzer was contented to look without talking; and Dick Lee, although he had not a word to say, found unusual difficulty in keeping his mouth shut. It positively would come open, every time Ford pointed out another big building, and told him what it was.

They were not travelling very fast, but they were using a good deal of time in all that sight-seeing; and walking is hungry business, and a few raw oysters could not last six hearty boys very long.

"I say, Ford," sung out Joe from the rear, "isn't it getting pretty near time for us to think of getting something to eat?"

"We're 'most there now. We're going to have our dinner at the Magnilophant to-day."

"What's that?" said Frank.

"Never heard of it? Oh! You're the member from India. Well, it's the greatest restaurant in the known world, or in Paris either. Beats any thing on Long Island. Serve you up any thing there is, and no living man can tell what he's eating."

Ford was in high spirits, and seemed all one chuckle of self-confidence. It was indeed a remarkably elegant establishment in its line, into which he led them a few minutes later.

There certainly was nothing like it on Long Island, whatever might be true of Paris and other places outside of the "known world."

Dab Kinzer felt like walking very straight as he followed his "leader," and Dick Lee had to use all the strength he had to keep himself from taking his hat right off when he went in.

There was any amount of glitter and shine, in all directions; and Dab had a confused idea that he had never before believed that the world contained so many tables. Ford seemed wonderfully at home and at ease; and Dick found voice enough to say, half aloud,—

"Ain't I glad he's got de rudder, dis time? Cap'n Dab couldn't steer t'rough dis yer."

The "steering" was well done; and it brought them nearly to the farther end of the great, splendid room, and seated them at a round table that seemed as well furnished as even Mrs. Foster's own. They all imitated Ford in hanging their hats on the appointed pegs before sitting down.

"Now, boys, what shall we have?" he said, as he gazed learnedly up and down the printed bill of fare. "Speak up, Joe, Fuz, what's your weakness?"

Every boy of them was willing to let Ford do his best with that part of the dinner; and he was hard at work deciding what soup and fish he had better pick out, when the tall waiter who had bustled forward to receive the coming "order," bent over his shoulder, and pointed to Dick Lee, inquiring,—

"Beg pardon, sah! Is dis young colored gen'l-man of youah party? It's 'gainst de rules ob de establishment, sah."

Dab Kinzer felt his face flush fiery red; and he was on the point of saying something, he hardly knew what, when Ford looked calmly up into the mahogany face of the mulatto waiter, with,—

"You refer to my friend from Africa? We'll talk about that after dinner.
Gumbo soup and Spanish mackerel if you please. Sharp, now!"

"But, sah"—

"Don't be afflicted, my friend. He's as white as anybody, except on
Fridays: this is his black day. Hurry up the soup and fish."

Joe and Fuz were looking as if they were dreadfully ashamed of something; but poor Dick was sitting up as straight as a ramrod, under the influence of a glance that he had taken at the face of Dab Kinzer.

"I isn't goin' back on him and Ford," he said to himself. "I'd foller dem fellers right fru' dis yer eatin'-house."

Frank Harley seemed to be getting some information. In the country he had lived in nearly all his life, "colored people" were as good as anybody if they were of the right sort; and a man's skin had little to do with the degree of respect paid him, although even there it was an excellent thing to be "white."

As for the mulatto waiter, after a moment more of hesitation, he took
Ford's order, and walked dignifiedly away, muttering,—

"Nebber seen de like afore. Reckon I isn't g'wine to tote soup and fish for no nigger: I'll see de boss."

That meant an appeal to the lordly and pompous but quite gentlemanly "head waiter," a man as white as Ford Foster. A word or two to him, a finger pointed towards the upper end of the hall, and the keen eyes of the "man in authority" took it all in.

"Six of them,—five white and one black. Well, Gus, do they look as if they could pay their bill before they go?"

"Yes, sah, dey does. De young gen'lman wid de bill ob fare in his han', he's got moah cheek, an' moah tongue, an' moah lip, sah"—

"Well then, Gus, you just tramp right along. If he and the rest don't care, I don't. It'll be time enough for me to make a fool of myself when somebody offers to pay me for it. Give 'em their dinner! Sharp!"

"It's jes' a mons'ous outrage," growled the offended waiter, as he stalked away; but he took good care to obey his orders, for he had a consciousness that the eyes of his "master" were on him. He could hardly have guessed how completely his errand had been understood by the six boys, or how closely Ford Foster had "hit it." Said he, in reply to an angry remark from Dab Kinzer,—

"It's all humbug. They run this concern to make money, and they want some of ours. Mr. Marigold'll be sent right back with our soup."

He was right; but, before they had eaten their way to the pie and pudding, Ford was dignifiedly informed,—

"If you please, sah, my name isn't Mr. Marigold, sah, it is Mr.
Bellerington, sah; an' my first name isn't Coffee, sah, it's Augustus."

"You don't say," replied Ford: "well, Augustus, don't forget the little remark I made about pie and the other things."

It was a capital dinner; and Ford was proud of it, for he had picked out every item of it, from the soup to the macaroons. Dick Lee had enjoyed it hugely, after he began to feel that his first social victory had been fairly won for him. Still, he had doubts in his own mind as to whether he would ever dare such another undertaking with less than five white boys along to "see him through."

Joe and Fuz ate well; but their spirits were manifestly low, for they were painfully conscious of having forever lost the good opinion of that mulatto waiter.

"But for Dick Lee's being with us," they thought, "he and everybody else would have known we were gentlemen. We'll never be caught in such a trap again."

It is a very sad matter, no doubt, to lose the intelligent respect of such gentlemen as Mr. Augustus Bellerington, but it sometimes has to be done; that is, unless their good opinion is to be gained by some nice little stroke of sneaking cowardice.

Joe and Fuz stood it out, indeed, mainly because they were in some way more afraid of Dab and Ford and Frank than they were of even Augustus.

That, too, was strange; for they were older than either of the others, and taller than any but Dabney himself.

The dinner was well eaten, and it was well paid for, as Dabney remarked when he paid his share and half of Dick's; and then they were all in the street again, marching along, and "sight-seeing," towards the Grand Central Railroad Depot.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRST MORNING IN GRANTLEY, AND ANOTHER EXCELLENT JOKE.

Ford Foster was the only one of those six boys who had ever seen the great railway-building, and he confessed that it looked a little large, even to him. Frank Harley freely declared that he had seen nothing like it in India; and Dick Lee's eyes showed all the white they had to show, before he had seen the whole of it.

Their first errand was to the baggage-room; and they were on their way when Dab Kinzer thoughtfully remarked,—

"Now, Joe, here we've dragged you and Fuz away up here, miles and miles out of your way."

"That's so," said Ford, "but they can take a street-car down. They've got hours of time to spare."

"No hurry," said Joe: "we'll see you off." But Fuz whispered to him,—

"Time's up, Joe. Joke's got to come out now."

It came out at the baggage-room; for there were the trunks of the Hart boys, and they had to go with the others to the ticket-office for their tickets, before they could get their checks.

"Do you mean you're to go right on now, with us?" said Ford in some astonishment. "I thought you were going home first."

"No. We got a letter three days ago, telling us what to do. Our other things'll be sent on by express."

The "joke" was out, and the two jokers were laughing as though it were a remarkably good one in their estimation; but Ford nodded his head approvingly.

"Uncle Joseph is a wise and careful man about his children," he said slowly. "He didn't mean you should make the trip alone. I'm much obliged to him for such an expression of his confidence in me."

The laugh somehow died away, as if a sudden fit of sickness had carried it off, while a broad smile widened on the faces of the other boys, notably including Dick Lee; but the baggage-checks were to be looked after, and there were seats in the sleeping-car to be secured. The lost joke could hide itself easily in all that hurry and excitement.

"The sleeper'll carry us the best part of the way," said Ford, when at last they took their seats; "but we'll have a doleful little ride on a small railway, early in the morning."

"But that'll take us right up north to Grantley," added Dab, with a long-drawn breath of expectation. The remaining hours of that Friday were largely spent by all six of them in looking out of the windows. When they were not doing that, it was mostly because Joe or Fuz was telling some yarn or other about Grantley and its academy.

They agreed perfectly in their somewhat extravagant praise of Mrs. Myers and her daughter Almira. "She's such a good, kind-hearted, liberal, motherly woman," said Joe.

"And Almira's a sweet young lady," added Fuz, "only she's a little timid about boys."

"Needn't be afraid of us, I guess," said Ford Foster, with a benevolent and protecting expression on his face; while Dab drew a mental picture of the fair Almira as a sort of up-country copy of Annie Foster. After the darkness came, and the "sleeper" was turned into a great travelling-box full of little shaky bedrooms, there was no more talking to be done, and all the boys were tired enough to go to sleep.

One consequence of their beginning their slumbers so early, however, was, that they felt bright and fresh when the porter aroused them before daylight next morning; and they hurriedly dressed themselves for their ride on what Ford Foster called "the switch."

It was quite a respectable railway, however, and it carried them through scenery so different from any that Dabney or Dick was accustomed to, that they lost a good deal of what Joe and Fuz were saying about Dr. Abiram Brandegee, the learned principal of Grantley Academy. It was of less importance, perhaps, because they had heard it all before, and had gathered a curious collection of ideas concerning the man under whose direction they were to get their new stocks of learning.

"Dab," said Dick, "if it was any fellers but them said it, I'd want to go home."

"Well, yes," said Dab quietly; "but then, that's just it. You can't guess when they're telling the truth, and when they ain't."

"Is dar really any fun in lyin', do you s'pose, Dab?"

"Can't say, Dick. Guess there wouldn't be much for you or me."

"Dar's lots ob fun in Ford; an' he tells de truth mos' all de time, stiddy. So does Frank, jes' a little bit stiddier."

"Ford never lies, Dick."

"No, sir, he don't. But w'en anoder feller's lyin', he kin make believe he don't know it bes' of any feller I ebber seen."

"Dick," exclaimed Dabney, "what if Dr. Brandegee had heard you say that!"

"I would tell him I was imitating somebody I had heard," solemnly responded Dick, with fair correctness.

The ride began in the dark hour that comes before the dawn, and the train ran fast. The sun was above the horizon, but had not yet peered over the high hills around Grantley, when the excited schoolboys were landed at the little station in the outskirts of the village. It was on a hillside; and they could almost look down upon a large part of the scene of their "good time coming,"—or their "bad time," a good deal as they themselves might make it.

Dab and his friends saw that valley and village often enough afterwards; but never again did it wear to them precisely the same look it put on that morning, in the growing light of that noble September day. As for Joe and Fuz, it was all an old story to them; and, what was more, they had another first-rate joke on hand.

"There's the academy," said Joe: "that big white concern in the middle of the green, and with so short a steeple."

"Steeple enough," said Ford. "Are the rest churches?"

"Yes; and, if you don't go to church reg'lar, Old By'll be sure to hear of it."

"Old By" was the irreverent nickname they had selected for Dr. Abiram Brandegee; and Fuz added,—

"Never mind him, boys. He's a raspy old fellow; but he's such a little, old, withered wisp of a chap, you'll soon get used to him."

Dab was bewildered enough, just then, to wonder how such a weak-minded, malicious old dwarf as had been painted to him, could have managed to get and keep so high a position in so remarkably beautiful a place as Grantley. He said something about the village being so pretty; but Dick Lee had been staring eagerly in all directions, and replied with,—

"Jes' one little mite of a patch ob water! Is dar any fish to ketch?"

"Fish? In that pond?" said Fuz. "Why, it's alive with 'em. The people of Grantley just live on fish."

"Guess I knows 'bout how many dey is now," said Dick soberly; and he was not far from right, for there were no fish to speak of in that willow-bordered mill-pond.

"Mrs. Myers will hardly be up so early as this," said Dab. "We can get our trunks over by and by. Let's have a look at the village. Joe, it's your turn to steer now. You and Fuz know how the land lies."

They were ready enough to tell all they knew, and a good deal more; but the listeners they had that morning were not without eyes of their own, and it was not a very fatiguing task to walk all over the village of Grantley.

The first house to be studied with special care was the neat white residence of Dr. Brandegee, with its shady trees and its garden; for Joe said,—

"That's where you fellows'll have to come right after breakfast, to be examined. Oh, but won't Old By put you through!"

Dick Lee's mouth came open as he stared at the knob on the doctor's front door, and Dabney caught himself doubting if he knew the multiplication-table. Even Ford Foster wondered if there was really any thing he could teach Dr. Brandegee, and remarked to Frank Harley,—

"I s'pose you're about the only man among us that he can't corner."

"How's that?"

"Why, if he's too hard on you, you can answer him in Hindustanee. He's never been a heathen in all his life: you'd have him"—

"Shuah!" chuckled Dick.

The "green" was large and well-kept, and looked like the best kind of a ball-ground; but there was nothing wonderful about the academy building, except that it evidently had in it room enough for a great many boys.

"You'll see enough of it before you get through," said Fuz. "But there'll have to be lots of whittling done this fall."

"Whittling? what for?"

"Why, don't you see? They've gone and painted the old thing all over new. Every boy cut his name somewhere before we left last term. They're all painted over now: maybe they're puttied up level. They did that once before, and we had to cut 'em all out again."

"Oh!" said Ford, "I see: you were afraid they'd forget you. I don't believe they would."

"You haven't pointed out Mrs. Myers's," said Dabney. "It must be pretty near breakfast-time. Where is it?"

The Hart boys broke out into a joint giggle of enjoyment as Joe responded,—

"There it is,—right across there, beyond the harness-shop, opposite the other end of the green. Handy in bad weather."

"It's a pretty decent-looking house too," said Ford. "Come on: let's go over, and let her know we've arrived in port."

"Well, no," said Joe: "you fellows go over, soon as you please. Fuz and
I won't take our breakfast there this morning."

"Going somewhere else, eh? Well, we'll have an eye to your trunks when they come."

The giggle grew rapidly into a laugh, as Fuz exclaimed,—

"Trunks! why, our baggage'll go to our boarding-house. We don't put up with Mother Myers this time: got a new place. Oh, but won't you fellows just love her and Almira!"

It was all out, that deep secret about their change of boarding-house; and the Hart boys had something to enjoy this time, for Dab and his friends looked at each other for a moment in blank amazement.

"All right, boys," shouted Ford, at the end of it: "here's for some breakfast. Good-morning, Joe. Day-day, Fuz. See you again by and by."

They all followed him, but they could see that there was something more hidden under the mirth of Joe and Fuz as they walked away; and they were hardly out of hearing before Dab Kinzer remarked,—

"Look a' here, boys, I move we don't give those two any fun at our expense."

"How?" asked Ford.

"If there's any thing at Mrs. Myers's that we don't like, we mustn't let them know it."

"I's keep my mouf shet if I foun' de house was an ole eel-pot," said Dick emphatically; and Frank and Ford came out even more strongly. They all seemed to feel as if some kind of a trick had been played upon them, to begin with.

However, it served to put them on their guard, and prevented any change of countenance among them when their knock at the front door of that house was answered, and the freckled face of Mrs. Myers beamed out upon them from under its thin, smooth, glistening thatch of carroty hair. She was not a handsome woman, and she had a thin nose, and a narrow mouth, and very pale blue eyes; but she was all one smile of welcome as she stood in that doorway.

"Mrs. Myers?" said Ford, with an extraordinary bow. "We arrived on the morning train. I am Mr. Foster." And then, with a half turn to the right, he continued, "Mrs. Myers—Mr. Richard Lee, Mr. Dabney Kinzer, Mr. Francis Harley. Our baggage will come over pretty soon."

"Walk in, young gentlemen, walk in. I'm happy to see you.—Almira? Here they are: put breakfast on the table right away."

"That isn't a bad beginning," thought Dab. "That sounds a good deal like what Ham said of her. She knew we must be hungry."

"Walk into the parlor, please. Breakfast'll be ready in one minute. I'll show you your rooms afterwards."

That, too, was considerate; and, when Almira herself came to the door between the parlor and the dining-room, she, too, looked as if it were quite her habit to smile, when she said,—

"Breakfast's ready."

Almira smiled, but she was too much like her mother. There was nothing at all about her to put Dabney in mind of Annie Foster, or of either of his own sisters. Samantha, or Keziah, or Pamela could have been "made over" into two Almiras, in every thing but height; and Dab made up his mind at once that either of them could beat her at smiling,—not so much, perhaps, as to mere quantity, but as to quality.

That was a breakfast which would have fully justified Ham Morris's report, for it was well cooked and plentiful. The "johnnycake," in particular, was abundant; and all the boys took to it kindly.

"Glad you like it," said Mrs. Myers. "Almira, that's one thing we mustn't forget. I was always proud of my johnny cake. There's very few know what to do with their corn-meal, after they've got it."

She did evidently, and the boys all said so except Dick Lee. He could do full justice to his breakfast, indeed; but he was saying to himself all the while,—

"I won'er 'f I'll ebber git used to dis yer. It's jes' awful, dis goin' to de 'cad'my."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A NEW KIND OF EXAMINATION.

Three large trunks and one small one were delivered at Mrs. Myers's front door before that first breakfast was disposed of; and Miss Almira remarked of the boys, a few minutes later,—

"How strong they are, especially Mr. Kinzer!"

"Don't make a mistake, Almira," said her mother in an undertone. "I'm glad the trunks are up stairs, but we mustn't begin by saying 'mister' to them. I've got all their first names. They mustn't get it into their heads that they're any thing more'n just so many boys."

She hurried up stairs, however; and it did not take long to make her new boarders "know their places," so far as their rooms were concerned. That house was largely made up of its one "wing," on the first floor of which was the dining-room and sitting-room, all in one. In the second story of it were two bedrooms, opening into each other. The first and larger one was assigned to Dab and Ford, and the inner one to Frank.

"Yours is a coop," said Ford to his friend from India; "but ours is big enough. You can come in here to study, and we'll fix it up prime. The stove's a queer one. Guess they burn wood up here mostly."

Of course, so long as there was a good "wood-lot" on the outlying farm that belonged to Mr. Hart's speculation.

The stove was a little box of an affair, with two "griddles" on top, and was quite capable of warming that floor.

"She's putting Dick away in back somewhere," said Frank. "We must look and see what she's done for him."

The main building of that house was only big enough for a "hall," a good-sized parlor opening into it on the right, a bedroom and large closet back of that, and two rooms overhead; but the kitchen and milk-room back, which must have been stuck on at a later day, had only one wide, low garret of a room in the space under the roof. It was lighted by a dormer window, and it did not contain any stove. The floor was bare, except in the spot covered by an old rug before the little narrow bed; but there was a table and a chair, by standing on either of which Dick would be able to put his hand upon the unceiled rafters and boards of the roof. On the whole, it was a room well calculated to be as hot as possible in summer, and as cold as possible in winter, but that would do very well in spring and autumn. At all events, it was "as good as he had been used to at home." Mrs. Myers herself said that to Almira; and the answer was,—

"Guess it is, and better too."

Dick never dreamed of making any criticisms. In fact, his young brains were in a whirl of excitement, through the dust of which every thing in and about Grantley took on a wonderfully rosy color.

"Dis room?" he said to his inquiring friends when they looked in on him. "How does I like dis room? It's de bes' room in de house. I shall—study—hard—in—this—room."

"Bully for you," said Ford; "but you mustn't forget there's a stove in our room, when cold weather comes. Got your books out?"

"Here they are. I will pile them upon the table."

"Stick to it, Dick," said Ford. "But it's about time we set out for Dr. Brandegee's.—Dab, hadn't we better kindle a fire before we go? It makes me feel chilly to think of it."

"We'll all be warm enough before he gets through with us," said Dab. "But the sooner we get there, the better. Maybe there are other boys, and we must go in first."

"Come on, Dick."

Not one of them seemed to be in a hurry, in spite of Dab's prudent suggestion; and at the bottom of the stairs they were met by Mrs. Myers.

"Going for your examination? That's right. Dinner'll be ready at half-past twelve. When, school's opened, it will be a few minutes earlier, so you'll have plenty of time to eat and get back. Dick, as soon as your examination's over, I want you to come right back here, so I can finish making my arrangement with you."

"Yes, ma'am. I will return at once."

"You said that tip-top," said Dab, the moment they were on the sidewalk; "but I can't guess what she means. Ham Morris made all the bargain for you when he settled for me. S'pose it's all right, though."

"Course it is. I's got to work out half my board a-doin' chores. Jes' wot I's been used to all my life."

Frank Harley had seen a great many people, considering how young he was; and he had done less talking than the rest, that morning, and more "studying" of his landlady and her daughter. The results of it came out now.

"Tell you what, boys: if I'm not mistaken, Dick Lee'll pay more for his board than we will for ours."

"I don't care," said Dick bravely. "It's wuff a good deal to feed a boy like me."

His mother had told him so, many a time; and in that matter "Glorianna" had not been so far from the truth.

Ham Morris had indeed made a careful and particular bargain for Dick, and that his duties about the house should not interfere with his studies. He had done more; for he had insisted on buying Dick's text-books for him, and had made him promise to write to him about the way things went at Grantley.

Up the street marched the four new boys, still a little slowly, until
Ford broke out into a sudden word of encouragement,—

"Look here, boys, we're a set of wooden-heads! I'd like to know if we need be afraid of any thing Joe and Fuz Hart could go through?"

"Well, I guess not," replied Dab. "Let's push ahead."

He found himself leading the procession when it went through Dr. Brandegee's front gate; and there was a look of admiration on Dick's face, when he saw how promptly and courageously "Captain Dab Kinzer" pulled that door-bell.

"This way, please," said the servant who opened the door,—"into the library. The doctor'll see you in a minute."

"And we'll see him," muttered Ford, as they walked in, and he added in a whisper to Dick,—

"That's his portrait. There, over the mantel."

"Jes' so," said Dick, coming dangerously near smiling; "an' his name den was Oliver Cromwell, an' dey dressed him up in sheet iron."

That was the name printed under the engraving; but the smile had barely time to fade from Dick's face, before a door opened on the opposite side of the room, and the dreaded Principal of Grantley Academy walked in.

"Good-morning, my young friends. Glad to see you so early."

His hand was out towards Dick Lee, as he spoke; and they all had what Ford afterwards called "a good square shake of it," by the time they recovered their tongues, and replied to that genial, hearty, encouraging welcome.

Dick couldn't have helped it, if he had tried,—and he somehow forgot to try,—a broad grin of delight spread all over his face, as he looked up in that of the doctor.

The latter himself was smiling a good deal as if he could not help it, but he did not know the exact reason why every one of those boys looked so cheerful just then.

The thought in Ford's mind came within an inch of getting out over his tongue.

"Dwarf? Why, he's more like a giant. How Joe and Fuz Hart did spin it!"

The great man was certainly a good "six feet two," and all his bodily proportions were correspondingly ample.

Frank Harley was the last to be shaken hands with, and so had time to think,—

"Afraid of him? Why, he's too big to be afraid of. We're all right."

That was the whole truth. Dr. Brandegee was too big, in mind as well as body, for any boy of their size to feel at all uneasy after the first half-minute of looking in his calm, broad, thoughtful face. Every member of that quartet began to feel a queer sort of impatience to tell all he knew about books.

The doctor mentioned the fact that he had that morning received letters from their parents and friends, announcing their arrival; but the oddity of it was that he seemed to know, at sight, the right name for each boy, and the right boy for each name.

"He might have guessed at Dick," thought Ford; "but how did he know me?"

Perhaps a quarter of a century spent in receiving, classifying, and managing young gentlemen of all sorts had given the man of learning special faculties for his work.

"I shall have to ask you a few questions, my young friends; but I think there will be little difficulty in assigning you your places and studies. Be seated, please."

That library was plainly a place where no time was to be wasted, for in less than a minute more Ford Foster was suddenly stopped in the middle of a passage of easy Latin,—

"That will do. Give me a free translation."

Ford did so, glibly enough; but there followed no word of comment, favorable or otherwise. Similar brief glimpses were taken of three or four other studies; and then the doctor suddenly remarked to him, in French,—

"Your father has written me very fully concerning your previous studies.
You are well prepared, but you have plenty of hard work before you."

Ford fairly strained his best French in the reply he made; and the doctor observed,—

"I see. Constant practice. I wish more parents would be as wise.—Mr.
Harley, I had not been informed that you spoke French. You noticed Mr.
Foster's mistake. Please correct it for him."

Frank blushed to his eyes, but he obeyed; and he hardly knew how it was, that, before the doctor's rapid questioning was over, his answers had included the whole range of his schooling and acquirements.

"Isn't dey doin' fine!" was the proud thought in the mind of Dick Lee.
"But jes' wait till he gits hol' ob Cap'n Dab!"

Dick's confidence in his friend was at least ten times greater than Dabney's in himself. The very air of the room he was in seemed, to the latter, to grow oppressively heavy with learning, and he dreaded his own turn more than ever. While he was waiting for it to come, however, some casual reference to Long Island by the doctor, and a question as to the precise character of its southern coast, rapidly expanded into a wider range of geography, upon the heels of which history trod a little carelessly, and other subjects came tumbling in, until Dabney discovered that he was computing, at the doctor's request, sundry arithmetical results, which might with greater propriety have been reserved for his "examination." That, too, was the way poor Dick Lee came to make so bad a breakdown. His shining

face would have told, even to eyes less practised than those of Dr. Brandegee, exactly the answer, as to kind and readiness, which he would have made to every question put to his white friends. That is, unless he had been directly called upon to "answer out aloud." There is no telling what he would have done in such a case as that.

The doctor found out, for he quietly shifted his last question over Dab's left shoulder, and let it fall upon Dick in such a way as not to scare him.

"You's got me, dis time! Dat's de berry place whar we stopped at de end of our school, las' year."

"Then, I think I know about where it's best for you to begin. I'll have another talk with you about it, Richard. You must come up and see me again."

It was not a great deal to say; but the way in which he said it plainly added,—

"I mean to be your friend, my dear boy. I'll do all I can to help you along."

Dick understood it too, but he was feeling dolefully about his tongue just then.

"Missed fire de fust time!" he said to himself; but he carefully replied, aloud,—

"Thank you, sir. Will you tell me when to come?"

"To-night, right away after tea. Now, young gentlemen, I must bid you good-morning. Bear in mind that the first law of Grantley Academy is punctuality. I expect you to be in your places promptly at nine o'clock, Monday morning."

"We will, sir," said Dabney. "But will you please tell us when we are to be examined?"

"I believe, Mr. Kinzer, I have a fair idea of the use you have made of your books up to this time. No further examination will be necessary. I will see you all, with others, after school is opened, next Monday."

They were politely shown out of the library, but they did not clearly comprehend the matter until they had drawn each a good long breath in the open air.

"Dab," said Ford, "can't you see it?"

"I'm beginning to. Seems to me we've been through the sharpest examination I ever heard of. I say, Frank, do you know any thing he didn't make you tell him?"

"Nothing but Hindustanee and a little Teloogoo. Well, yes, I know a Karen hymn. He got all the rest, if I'm not mistaken."

There was no doubt at all but what Dr. Brandegee had gained a correct view of the attainments of his new pupils.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF INTRODUCTION.

The front door of Dr. Brandegee's library had hardly closed behind that earliest flock of his autumn birds, before the door by which he had entered swung open, and a fine-looking, middle-aged matron stood in it, remarking,—

"My dear, there are more than a dozen waiting in the parlor. Have you not spent a great deal of time on those four?"

"They're worth it, Mary. There's enough in every one of them to make a man of, and they've all started fairly well."

"I fear that is more than you will be able to say of all these others."

"Of course it will. Their fathers and mothers have had a great deal to do with that."

They were all "examined," however, in due season, some in one way and some in another; and during all that time Dab Kinzer and his friends were inwardly wondering, whether they said so or not, precisely what impression they had made upon the doctor.

It was just as well, every way, that they did not know.

It was a curious fact, that with one accord they accompanied Dick on his return to their boarding-house; and, while he disappeared through the door at the end of the hall with Miss Almira, some invisible leading-string dragged them up stairs. Not that they really had any studying to do; but it was dinner-time before they had finished turning over the leaves of their text-books, and estimating the amount of hard work it would cost to prepare for an "examination" on them.

There was no good reason for complaint of that dinner any more than of their breakfast; and it wound up with a very excellent Indian-meal pudding, concerning which Dabney went so far as to say he would like to send the recipe home to his mother.

"I'm so glad you like it," said Mrs. Myers. "Almira, just remember that.
They can have it as often as they please."

She asked them, too, how they proposed to spend their afternoon, and smilingly explained, as to Dick Lee, that,—

"Saturday is one of my busy days, and he will have to stay at home and help. Errands to run, and I want him to learn how. He's a bright, active little fellow."

That was all "according to contract;" but Dick did not come in for his dinner until the rest had eaten theirs; and then he barely had time to say to Dab Kinzer,—

"Did you ebber shell corn?"

"Course I have. Why?"

"'Cause dar's a bigger heap ob corn out in de barn dan you ebber see."

"Bigger'n Ham's?"

"Well, no, not so big as his'n, mebbe; but dar's more ob it. I's got it to shell."

Dab went off with the other two, vaguely beginning to ask himself if shelling corn came fairly into the proper meaning of the word "chores."

All that sort of thing was quickly forgotten, however; for there were a dozen groups of boys scattered here and there over the broad expanse of the "green," and Ford Foster at once exclaimed,—

"Boys, let's examine that crowd. It'll take all the afternoon to find what they know."

Getting acquainted is apt to be a slow process in cases of that sort, unless it is taken hold of with vigor; and Ford was the very fellow to hurry it up. Before the afternoon was over, every boy on that green knew who he was, and where he came from; and a good share of them had tried their hands at "chaffing" him and his friends. Of these latter it may safely be said that not a single one could afterwards remember that he had seemed to himself to get the best of it.

"First day" at school is pretty safe to be a peace-day also; and none of the wordy collisions went too far, although it was plain that the new-comers had not yet attained any high degree of popularity.

After supper Dick Lee set off for Dr. Brandegee's, and his friends attended him nearly to the gate.

They would have been glad to have had a report of his visit from him, on his return; but he had his "chores" to do then, and any amount of careful instruction concerning them to receive from Mrs. Myers and Almira.

The other three were more thoroughly tired out than they had at all expected, and were all quite ready to agree with Frank Harley,—

"We'd better get to bed, boys. I want to see if this is a good house to sleep in."

"Sleep?" said Ford. "I could go to sleep in an omnibus."

Early to bed meant early to rise, necessarily; and they were all up and dressed the next morning,

when Dick Lee slipped in on them. Before they had time to ask him a question, he exclaimed,—

"I say, Cap'n Dab, is you goin' to church dis mornin'?"

"Of course. We're all going."

"So I heerd Mrs. Myers tell Miss Almiry. She's goin' to take you along wid her when she goes."

"Richard," said Ford, "are you going?"

"Habn't heerd a word about dat."

"Don't you go back on your friends, Richard. Be all ready in time, sure's you live, and go with us, or I'll complain to Dr. Brandegee."

Dick's grin was a wide one; but he responded,—

"I'll be ready. See 'f I ain't."

The voice of Almira, calling his name at the foot of the stairs, prevented any further conversation just then; and Dick found, afterwards, that he had undertaken a task of some difficulty. He hardly knew when or where he squeezed out the time for the proper polishing of his shoes, or the due arrangement of his magnificent red necktie; but both feats were accomplished most faithfully.

The subject of church-going came up again, incidentally, at the breakfast-table; and the remarks of her young boarders met the emphatic approval of Mrs. Myers and her daughter. Perhaps because neither of them had been near enough, after Dick dodged out of their room at the end of his early call, to hear Dabney Kinzer remark,—

"Ford, don't you think we can find our way across the green without any help from the ladies?"

"I am pondering that matter. What do you say, Frank?"

"We must get out of it if we can politely. I don't just see how we'll do it."

"Do it? Why, we'll all wait for Dick Lee."

Mrs. Myers took a little too much for granted; and when the hour came for starting, there came a slight disturbance in the smooth current of her calculations.

"Mr. Foster," she called out, in her best voice, from half way up the stairs, "the first bell is ringing. Are you and your friends ready?"

"Ringing?" responded Ford. "So it is! I regret to say we are not yet ready to go."

At the same moment Dab was whispering,—

"We mustn't start until it's nearly done tolling."

"What's that?" asked Frank.

"Don't you know? It's always so in the country. First they ring the bell, as it's ringing now. That's to set people a-going. Then they toll it. You'll hear in a few minutes. That means, the time's up."

Ford Foster's city training had not taught him as much as that, but he was glad to know it.

Mrs. Myers once more urged upon them the necessity of making haste.

"It won't do to be late," she said. "I never allow myself to be a minute behind time."

The last clause sounded a very, very little impatient; but Ford once more politely expressed his sorrow, and abstained from putting on his coat. At that moment, too, Dick Lee came tiptoeing in from his cheerless garret, and looking astonishingly spruce. The "shine" on his shoes was a brilliancy to be remembered; and so was the shine on his face, and the sunset glow of his necktie.

"Sh! Dick," said Dab. "Hold still a minute. The bell's beginning to toll."

"I fear Almira and I will be compelled to start," said Mrs. Myers regretfully. "Perhaps you can overtake us if you hurry."

"Perhaps we could," replied Ford, "but I beg you will not let yourself be late on our account. We're coming."

He began to put his coat on as she and Almira went through the gate. In such a village as that, no one was afraid to leave a house alone for an hour or two. Not only was the door-lock "on the latch" as usual, but Dick Lee had been vaguely expected to stay at home. There, again, Mrs. Myers had taken too much for granted; and she had not said a word to him about it.

Just as she heard the bell give its last few rapid and warning strokes, and disappeared through the church-door, she might have seen, had she turned back and looked once more towards her own front gate, four well-dressed youngsters hurrying from it across the street as if a great deal depended on their reaching church before service could begin.

"It's very kind of Mrs. Myers to invite us," remarked Ford, "but she never thought how bashful we'd be about it."

They were quickly within the ample porch of the roomy and not at all overcrowded edifice, and were greeted by two or three benevolent-looking elderly gentlemen, with a degree of prompt cordiality which left little to be asked for.

The deacons were awake to their duty relating to new scholars,—"students" they called them; and every attention was paid these four who had begun so well their first Sunday.

So it would be at every church on that green; and it would really be about the middle of the term before stray "academy boys" would be left to find their own way to well-whittled benches in the galleries.

One of the best pews in the house, well forward in the middle aisle, and they had it all to themselves. There was not another pew in church that morning which seemed to attract so large a share of the attention of the congregation. Mrs. Myers and Almira were several pews behind, and on the other side of the house; and there had been no opportunity to capture her four boarders, or any of them, while they were marching in.

"Almira! If they haven't brought Dick with them."

"Yes, mother; but how very well they look! Mr. Kinzer is really quite handsome."

That was hardly Dab's opinion of himself, and nobody had ever taken pains to tell him so; but the four of them, standing up together, and all singing, made quite a picture. Dick Lee was between Dab Kinzer and Frank Harley, and seemed to feel in honor bound to sing his best. That was very well too.

If Glorianna could but have had a look at her boy that morning, there is no such thing as telling how proud she would have felt about him. It was too bad she could not have done so, especially as Dick was most loyally thinking of her, and wishing that she could.

There was no fault to be found by Mrs. Myers, or anybody else, with the strict decorum of her boarders, and their profound attention to the service and sermon; but she felt that she had a duty to perform, and she only waited the proper time for its performance.

The last hymn had been duly sung, and the boys were drifting along with the tide in the aisle towards the door, when Dabney nudged Ford with his elbow.

"We're nabbed, Ford."

"No escape this time, that's a fact. Don't let's try. She means it all for politeness."

They would have been quite willing to have been allowed to get out and go home unnoticed; but there in the porch awaiting them were Mrs. Myers and Almira, and there was no possibility of an escape. It would have been unkind to try in the face of so much smiling. Besides, they did board with her; and she had her rights of property, one of which was to show them off, and introduce them. She proceeded to exercise it at once; and it was to the credit of the three white boys that they came promptly to her assistance, and added any little matter she might happen to miss in the hurry of the moment.

"Deacon Short, this is Mr. Dabney Kinzer, of Long Island; this is Mr. Frank Harley, of Rangoon, son of Rev. Dr. Harley, our well-known missionary; this is Mr. Ford Foster, son of the eminent New-York lawyer."

"Delighted"—began the deacon, rapidly grasping and shaking hand after hand, with a peculiar lift of his elbow, that placed most of what might be called the "action" at the point of it; but Ford was thinking of the thing Mrs. Myers had omitted, and he promptly added,—

"Glad to meet you, Deacon Short; and this is my friend Mr. Richard Lee, of Long Island."

To do the good deacon justice, his grasp of Dick's hand was every bit as cordial as any other of his grasps; and he beamed on the smiling black boy in a way that gave him back, after the manner of a reflection, a great glow of the best and broadest "beaming."

Mrs. Myers did not stop a moment in the repetition of her formula, and there was sharp work before her; but Dab's tongue was also loose now, and Elder Potter had hardly time to hear who he was before Deacon Short had to let go of Dick, and hear Dab say,—

"How d'ye do, Elder Potter? and this is my near neighbor and friend, Mr. Richard Lee."

"Mrs. Sunderland," began Mrs. Myers, to a lady whose face and dress declared her a social magnate, "my new boarder, Mr. Frank Harley:" and the rest of her introduction speech followed; and stately Mrs. Sunderland had just time to utter a few words of gracious inquiry about the "precious health" of Frank's father and mother, when he, too, took up the "omission," and Dick Lee's introduction stepped into the place of any other answer for a moment.

It was a good thing for Dick, as Mrs. Sunderland was a member of a society for promoting emigration to Liberia, and was seized at once with a dim idea that a part of her "mission" was standing before her in very brilliant shoes and a new red necktie. She did not know how utterly she and the other good people and those three boys were demolishing a curious vision of Almira's and her mother's, of some social advantage they might derive, thenceforward, from having "a colored servant" in their employ. Dick's own chance was coming right down upon him, a little before he was quite ready for it; for the minister and his wife came out a few moments later, and Mrs. Sunderland took upon herself the duty of presenting Richard Lee to them, very much if as she would have said,—

"My dear Mr. Fallow,—my dear Mrs. Fallow,—see what I've found! Is he not remarkable?"

The words she really uttered were somewhat more formal; but the good, quiet-looking little minister and very quiet-looking little wife were still shaking hands with Dick, that is, with his right hand, when he turned almost eagerly, and caught hold of Dab Kinzer with his left.

"Yes, sir, an' dis is Cap'n Dab—I mean, this is my friend Mr. Dabney Kinzer, of Long Island,—de bes'—"

"How do you do, Mr. Kinzer? Glad to make your acquaintance," said Mr. Fallow; and Dick's success was complete, except that he was saying to himself,—

"I jes' can't trus' my tongue wid de oder boys. Dey's got to take dar chances."

"Now, Mr. Kinzer," said Miss Almira, at that moment, "it's time we were going home."

"Yes, Frank," said her mother patronizingly, "I think we had better be going."

If such an exercise as "introduction" could earn it, they were both entitled to good appetites; and, after all, it had been quite a nice little affair.

Dabney was quite as tall as Miss Almira; but as they walked across the green, side by side, he could not avoid a side-glance that gave him a very clear idea of the difference between his present company and Annie Foster. It was at that very moment that it occurred to Frank that he had last walked home from church under the protecting wing of the portly and matronly Mrs. Kinzer; and he could but draw some kind of a comparison between her and Mrs. Myers.

"They're both widows," he thought; "but there isn't any other resemblance."

Ford and Dick brought up the rear; and for some reason, or there may have been more than one, they were both in capital good spirits.

"Tell you wot," exclaimed Dick: "if goin' to de 'cad'my is all like dis yer—I am very glad indeed that I ever came."

"Oh! you're all right," said Ford; "but there's more good people in this village than I'd any idea of. I'm glad we came to church."

"Dick," said Mrs. Myers a little sharply, when they reached the gate, "I want some wood and a pail of water. You'd better hurry up stairs, and put on your every-day clothes."

CHAPTER XXIX.

LETTERS HOME FROM THE BOYS.—DICK LEE'S FIRST GRIEF.

There was a large number of new scholars assembled in the "great room" of Grantley Academy on the first Monday morning of that "fall term." There were also many who had been there before, but the new-comers were in the majority. There were boys from the village, boys from the surrounding country, and boys from even farther away than the southern shore of Long Island; and they were of many kinds and ages. The youngest may have been "under twelve," and entitled to ride in a street-car at half-price; and several of the very older ones had already cast their first vote as grown-up men.

Counting them all, and adding those who were to make their appearance during the week, they made a little army of nearly two hundred. There was also a young ladies' department, with about a hundred pupils; and there was quite as great a variety among them as among their young gentlemen fellow-students.

The class-rooms assigned to the lady teachers and their several grades of learners were all on the northern side of the academy building. There was a large wing there that belonged to them, and they only met the boys face to face in the "great room" during morning exercises. Even those of them who lived or boarded in the southern half of the village found their way across the green, coming and going, under the shade of the most northerly row of trees.

As to the "great room" itself, there had been much trouble about the name of it. Dr. Brandegee called it "the lecture-room," and he did a great deal towards making it so. There were those who tried to say "chapel" when they spoke of it; but so many others refused to know what place they were speaking of, that they had to give it up. "Hall" would not fit, because it was square; and the boys generally rejected the doctor's name because of unpleasant-ideas connected with the word "lecture." So it came to be "the great room," and no more; and a great thing it was for Dick Lee to find himself sitting on one of the front seats of it, with his friends all in line at his right, waiting their turn with him to be "classified," and sent about their business.

Dr. Brandegee made wonderfully rapid work of it; and his several assistants seemed to know exactly what to do.

"The fact is," said Ford, the first chance he had to speak to Dab, "I've been studying that man. He's taught school before."

"Guess he knows how, too. And I ain't afraid about Dick Lee, now I've seen the rest. He can go right ahead of some of them."

"They'll bounce him if he does. Tell you what, Dab, if you and I want to be popular here, we'd better wear our old clothes every day but Sunday."

"And miss about half the questions that come to us. Dick won't be sharp enough for that."

"He says he's going to write a letter home tonight. Made him turn pale too."

Those first letters home!

Ford's was a matter of course, and Frank Harley had had some practice already; but Dab Kinzer had never tried such a thing before, and Dick Lee would not come to anybody else for instructions. Neither would he permit anybody, not even "Captain Dab," to see his letter after it was written.

"I's been mighty partikler 'bout de pronounciation," he said to himself, "specially in wot I wrote to Mr. Morris, but I'd like to see dem all read dem letters. Guess dar'll be a high time at our house."

It would be a long while before Frank Harley's epistle would reach the eyes that were anxiously waiting for it, but there were indeed "high times" in those three houses on the Long-Island shore.

Old Bill Lee was obliged to trust largely to the greater learning of his wife, but he chuckled over every word he managed to pick out, as if he had pulled in a twenty-pound bluefish; and the signature at the bottom affected him somewhat as if he had captured a small whale.

"Sho! De boy!" said Glorianna. "He's doin' fust-rate. Dar ain't anoder young gen'lman at dat ar' 'cad'my jes' like him. Onless it's young Mr. Kinzer. I hasn't a word to say 'gin him or Mr. Foster, or dat ar' young mish'nayry."

"Glorianna," said Bill doubtfully, "do you s'pose Dick did all dat writin' his own self?"

"Sho! Course he did! Don't I know his hand-writin'? Ain't he my own blessed boy? Guess he did, and I's goin' ober to show it to Mrs. Kinzer. It'll do her good to hear from de 'cad'my."

So it did; for Dick's letter to his mother, like the shorter one he sent to Ham Morris, was largely made up of complimentary remarks concerning Dabney Kinzer.

When Glorianna knocked at the kitchen door of the Morris mansion, however, it was opened by "the help;" and she might have lost her errand if Mrs. Kinzer had not happened to hear her voice. It is just possible it was pitched somewhat higher than usual that morning.

"Glorianna? Is that you? Come right in. We've some letters from the boys. Something in them about Dick that you'll be glad to hear."

"Sho! De boy! Course dey all had to say somet'ing 'bout him! I's jes' like to know wot 'tis, dough."

In she went, but more than the Kinzer family were gathered in the sitting-room.

Mrs. Foster and Annie had brought Jenny Walters with them, and Ham was there, and all the rest; and they all sat still as mice while Glorianna listened to Dab's account, and Ford's, of the journey to Grantley, and the arrival, and the examination, and their boarding-house.

There was not a word of complaint anywhere; and it did seem as if Ham Morris was right when he said,—

"We've hit it this time, Mrs. Foster. I think I ought to write to Mr. Hart, and thank him for his recommendation."

"Just as you please, Hamilton," said Mrs. Kinzer; "but this is their very first week, you know."

"Guess dey won't fool Dick much, anyhow," said the radiant Glorianna. "But wot's dat 'bout de corn-shellin'?"

"That's all right," said Ham. "Shelling corn won't hurt him. Glad there's plenty of it. Mother Kinzer, you and Miranda must try that recipe Dab sent for the new pudding."

"New pudding, indeed! Why, she doesn't put in half eggs enough. But I'm glad she's a good cook. We'll have that pudding for dinner this very day."

"So will we," said Mrs. Foster.

"Miss Kinzer," said Dick's mother, "jes' won't you show me how to make dat puddin'? I's like to know jes' wot dey eat at de 'cad'my."

It was a great comfort to know that the boys were so well satisfied; but there was her usual good sense in Mrs. Kinzer's suggestion about its being the very first week.

There are never any more such letters as "first letters," nor any other weeks like the first. The fact that there were so many boys together, all old acquaintances, shut out any such thing as loneliness, and it was not time to be homesick. All that week was really spent in "getting settled," and there did not seem to be more than a day or so of it. Saturday came around again somewhere in the place commonly taken by Wednesday, and surprised them all.

They had all been busy enough, but Dick Lee had never in all his life found so little spare time on his hands.

"It's no use, Cap'n Dab," he remarked on Friday: "we can't eat up all de corn I've shelled, not if we has johnnycake from now till nex' summer."

Dab was looking a little thoughtful at that moment.

"Ford," he said slowly, "has she missed a day yet?"

"A corn day? No."

"Or a meal?"

"No, I said I'd cut a notch on my slate first time she did, and it's all smooth yet."

He held it up as he spoke; and Frank remarked,—

"Yes, smooth enough on that side; but you've nicked it all down on the other, end to end. What's that

for?"

"That? Oh! that's quite another thing. I'm keeping tally of Joe and Fuz. Every time one of 'em asks a question about our boarding-house, or Mrs. Myers, or Almira, or' little Dr. Brandegee, I nick it down. Got to quit pretty soon, or buy another slate."

"They've kind o' kept away from us," said Dab. "They're in only one of my classes, but they're in three of yours."

"Ain't in any ob mine," said Dick; "but Dr. Brandegee says he'll promote me soon."

Dick's tongue always began to work better, the moment he mentioned the academy-principal.

"I don't mind their keeping away from us," said Frank.

"Nor I," said Ford.

At that moment they reached their own gate, and Dick darted forward in response to an imaginary call from Mrs. Myers.

Ford went on,—

"They can keep away all they please, but they won't do it long. They're bound on mischief of some kind."

"To us?" asked Frank.

"Well, yes; but it'll light on Richard Lee first. He won't say a word to us about it, but they've bothered him."

"I'll ask him," said Dab, in whose face a flush was rising. "They must let Dick alone."

"They won't, then. And there's plenty of others just like 'em. They're getting together in a kind of a flock these last two or three days. Some of 'em are pretty big ones."

"Boys," exclaimed Frank, "how about our boxing lessons?"

"Guess we haven't forgotten 'em all in one week," said Ford. "I was thinking about to-morrow."

So were they all; and they held a council-of-war about it, in their own room, before supper. The result was, that, by a unanimous vote, that Saturday was to be devoted to the catching of fish, rather than to playing ball, or any thing else that would bring them into immediate contact with Joe and Fuz.

They had all brought their fishing-tackle with them, as a matter of course; plenty of worms for bait were to be dug in the garden; and Dab Kinzer had learned, by careful inquiry, that both bait and tackle could be used to good purpose in the waters of "Green Pond," and sundry other small bits of lakes, miles and miles away among the hills to the north of Grantley.

"We'll have a grand time," he said, "and it'll do us all good. No crabs, though. Wonder if those fresh-water fish bite like ours down in the bay."

"Some do, and some don't," said Ford. "I've caught 'em."

It did not occur to him now, however, that he could probably teach Dab; and they all obeyed the supper-bell.

There were three kinds of corn-cake on the table, but the boys were thinking of something more important; and Dab hardly received his first cup of tea before he remarked,—

"We're all going a-fishing to-morrow, Mrs. Myers; but we may get home in time for supper. Can you spare Dick?"

"What, on Saturday? The very day I need him most? Three loads of wood'll be over from the farm to-night."

Dick had been in the kitchen, and had advanced as far as the door while Dab was speaking.

"Wood?" he muttered to himself. "Guess I know wot dat means. T'ree load ob wood, an' no fishin'! It's jes' awful!"

"Now, Mrs. Myers," said Ford, "if you knew what a fisherman Dick is! He might bring you home a load of them."

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Myers, with more of firmness and less of smile than they had ever seen on her face before. "I have no objection to the rest of you going. You may do as you please about that, but I must keep Richard at his work."

"I am particularly well pleased to learn that you have no objection to our going," remarked Ford, with extreme politeness, and Dabney added,—

"It does me good too. We'll take Dick with us some other time. Mrs. Myers, if you will have breakfast pretty early I'll be much obliged to you."

Even Almira had never seen Dabney look quite so tall as he did at that moment.

CHAPTER XXX.

DABNEY KINZER TRIES FRESH-WATER FISHING FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Conversation did not flourish at the supper-table that Friday evening. There was a puzzled look on the faces of Mrs. Myers and her daughter, and their three boarders seemed to be running a kind of race with each other as to which of them should make out to be the most carefully polite. As for poor Dick Lee, out there in the kitchen, the nearest he came to breaking the silence was in a sort of smothered groan, and a half-uttered determination to "git up good and early, an' dig dem fellers de bes' worms dey is in de gardin."

There was talk enough in the room up stairs in the course of the evening; but the door was closed, and there was no chance for any one in the passage outside, no matter how silently he or she might go by, to hear a distinct word of it.

"You see, boys," said Ford Foster, at the end of some extended remarks, "I'm not at all mean or exacting. My father only pays Mrs. Myers three dollars a week, and all she agreed to give was board. I can't expect her to be any kind of an aunt, too, and let me go a-fishing. I'll take it all off her hands, and let myself go."

"It's hard on Dick, though," said Dab, "and she's kind o' got the right of it."

"I s'pose she has. But if he isn't earning all he gets, I'm mistaken.
Boys, if she puts any more work on him, what'll we do?"

"Eat," said Dab: "that's the only way we can make it up."

"We can't do it, Dab. Not unless the price of corn-meal goes up. Think of eating another three dollars' worth of hasty-pudding every week!"

Their landlady came out in all her smiles at breakfast, and hoped they would have good success with their fishing.

"Only," she added, "I'm not very fond of fish, and I never take the trouble to clean them."

"We will try and catch ours ready cleaned, Mrs. Myers," said Ford. "Now, boys, if you're ready, I am."

They were ready, bait and all, thanks to Dick; and the breakfast had been an early one. Dab thanked Mrs. Myers for that, even while he wished he had Ford Foster's tongue to do it with.

In fact, he had been noticing of late that his ideas came to him a little slowly. Not but what he had plenty of them, but they seemed disposed to crowd one another; so that whenever there was any thing to be said in a hurry, Ford was sure to get ahead of him, and sometimes even quiet Frank Harley.

"Must be I'm growing, somehow," he said to himself, "or I wouldn't be so awkward."

The north road from Grantley led through a region that was, as the old farmers said of it, "a-goin'

back," and was less thickly peopled than it had been two or three generations before. There had once been pretty well cultivated farms all around some of the little lakes that were now bordered by stout growths of forest; and the roads among the hills wore a neglected look, many of them, as if it had ceased to profit anybody to keep them in order.

There was "coming and going" over them, nevertheless; and the boys managed to get a "lift" of nearly five miles in a farmer's wagon, so that they reached the vicinity of Green Pond sooner than they had expected, and with much less fatigue. The same farmer, in response to anxious questioning by Dab, informed him,—

"Fish? Wall, ye-es. Nobody don't ketch 'em much nowadays. Time was when they was pretty much all fished out, but I heerd there was some fellers turned in a heap of seedlin' fish three or four year ago. Right away arter that, my boys went over, and put in three days a hand runnin', but they didn't get nothin' but pumpkin-seeds. Plenty of them yit, I s'pose."

That was encouraging; but Ford at once remarked,—

"Pumpkin-seeds? A fine-looking fish, are they not? I know them. Somewhat depressed, and extended laterally?"

"Guesso. You're 'tendin' school at the 'cadummy, ain't ye?"

"Yes, we're there."

"Thought so. Ye-es. We-ell, it's a good thing for the 'cadummy. Hope you'll ketch some o' them seedlin' fish. Ef ye do, you kin jest stuff 'em with big words, and bake 'em. They do say as how fish is good for the brains."

"Don't we turn off somewhere along here?" asked Dabney.

"Ye-es. Green Pond's right down there, through the woods. Not more'n a mile. See't ye don't lose yer way. What bait have ye got?"

"Bait? Angle-worms. Are they the right thing?"

"Worms? Ye-es. They'll do. Somebody told ye, did they? 'Twon't take ye long to larn how to put 'em on."

There was not a great deal to be made out of that old New-England farmer; and his good-natured contempt for a lot of ignorant young "city fellers," in good clothes, did not require any further expression.

They left him with a wide grin on his wrinkled face, and followed his directions over the nearest fence; but with ideas concerning their probable string of fish, that were rather "depressed" than "extended."

It was a long mile, but it did not contain any danger of getting lost; and at the end of it they had quite enough of a surprise to pay them for their trouble.

"Why, Ford, it's a beauty!"

"Dab, do you s'pose as nice a pond as that hasn't any thing in it but pumpkin-seeds?"

"No boat that I can see," remarked Frank.

"We'll fish from the shore," said Dab. "There's a log that runs away out in. Rocks too."

Rocks and trees and natural ruggedness all around, and some ten or a dozen acres of clear, cold, beautiful water, with little brooks and springs running into it, and a brook running out on the opposite shore that would have to grow considerably before it would be fit for mill-turning.

"Boys," said Dabney, "we've missed it!"

"How's that?" asked Ford.

"Put on the smallest hooks you've got, right away, and try for minnows.
There must be pickerel and bass here."

"Bass? Of course! Didn't he say something about seed-fish? That's what they put in; and they weren't as big as pins when his boys came for 'em."

"Minnow-poles," as they called them, could be cut from the bushes at the margin, and little fish could be taken at the same time that they were trying for large ones. They found too, before long, that sometimes a very respectable perch or bass would stoop to nibble at one of the "elegant worms" with which Dick Lee had provided them.

"No turn of the tide to wait for here, Dab," said Ford, "and no crabs to steal your bait off. Hey! There comes one. Perch! First game for my hook."

"We'll stay till dark, but we'll get a good string. Frank, your cork's under."

"Never fished with one before," said Frank. "I'll soon get the hang of it."

That was a capital school for it, at all events; and they learned that it might be a good thing for a little lake like that to have a bad reputation.

"Fished out years ago. I understand now," said Dab.

"Understand what?"

"Why, those fellows in the village that sent me out here were playing a joke on us,—a good deal like one of Joe and Fuz Hart's."

"Best kind of a joke. But if we tell about it when we get home, the whole village'll be over here next week."

"Then we won't tell. Hurrah! I'll get him in. Steady, now. If he isn't a two-pounder! see him run? Boys, this is going to be fun."

They did not neglect their minnow-catching; and before a great while they were varying their bait, very much to their advantage. How they did wish for a boat, so they could try the deeper water! They worked their way along, from point to point, looking for the best spot, if such there were; and Dabney at last found himself quite a distance ahead of his companions.

"Boys! Ford! Frank! A boat! Come on!"

Lying behind the trunk of a tree that had fallen into the water,—not much of a boat, to be sure, and without any oars or even rowlocks; but when the water was tipped out of it, and it was shoved in again, it actually floated.

"Careful, Ford," said Dab. "Remember Dick Lee. The old thing may come to pieces. It wasn't made yesterday."

"Look's as if Christopher Columbus owned it, and forgot just where he left it. We can paddle with pieces of bark, as far out as we need go."

Now the fun was doubled; and some of the pickerel they pulled in reminded Dabney of small blue-fish, while the bass and perch were every way as respectable as ordinary porgies and black-fish, except for size. He had even to confess that the sea itself contained a great many small fish, and that he had often had much poorer luck in his own beloved bay.

The boat was a great acquisition; but when they were paddling ashore for the fourth time, "to turn her over and let the water out," Dabney remarked,—

"It's after dinner-time, boys. Could either of you fellows eat any thing?"

"Eat?" said Frank. "I'd forgotten that. Yes, let's have lunch. But there's more cold johnny-cake than any thing else in the basket."

"There's plenty of salt and pepper though; and it won't take any time at all to make a fire, and broil some fish. Didn't you ever go on a chowder-party, and do your own cooking?"

"No, I never did."

"Nor I," said Ford very reluctantly. "Can we do it?"

"Do it? I'll show you. No kettle. We'll have to broil. You fellows make a fire, while I clean some of these fish."

It was every bit as good fun as catching those fish, to cook them there on the shore of that lovely little lake. Dabney did know all about it, as became a "'longshore boy;" and he took a particular pride in showing Ford and Frank how many different ways there were of cooking a fish without an oven or a

kettle or a gridiron.

It was another fine point to discover, after they had eaten all they could, including the cold johnny-cake, that they did not seem to have made their strings of fish look perceptibly smaller.

"Tell you what, boys," said Dabney: "next time we come out we'll bring a hammer and nails, and some oakum, and I'll calk up that old punt so she'll float well enough. Only it won't do to dance in her."

"Then," said Ford, "I move we don't try her again to-day. If we've got to carry all these fish, it'll be a long pull home. We're not half sure of catching another ride."

"We can pole our fish, though, and make it easy carrying."

"How's that?"

"I'll show you. Cut two poles, hang your strings half way, shoulder the poles, and take turns carrying. One boy getting rested, all the while, and no cords cutting your hands."

That was as sensible as if his own mother had told him; and it was a good thing he thought of it, for they did not "catch a ride" till they were half way home. All the wagons were coming the other way, of course, on Saturday afternoon; but the one chat then caught up with them had been carrying a new stove home, and was returning empty.

"Fine strings of fish," remarked the stove-man as they clambered in.
"Where'd you catch 'em?"

"Over in one of the lakes."

"Did ye though? You don't say! Guess I know the place. You must have had an all-killin' walk, though. I declare! I'm goin' to try that pond first day I get away."

"Want some of these?"

"Wouldn't rob ye,—but you've got a-plenty—that pickerel? Thank ye, now. Oh!—and the bass tew? You're good fellers."

He seemed to be another; and Dab warned him at parting, that, "when he wanted to get a string of fish, if he'd come to him he'd tell him just where to go."

"All right. Glad I had the luck to ketch up with ye."

"Dab," said Ford as they reached the outskirts of Grantley, "I know it's late; but we must walk through the village with these fish, if it's only to have the whole town ask us where we caught them."

"That's so. I'm rested now too. Let's get right out."

They were nearly at the southerly end of the village, and there was quite a walk before them.

"Dab," said Frank, "we've more fish than we'll need at our house, if we have 'em for breakfast and dinner both."

"I've been thinking of that. Let's vote on it now. What do you say? One string for the minister?"

"Yes," said Ford, "a bass for Mr. Fallow, a small pickerel for Mrs.
Fallow, and a perch or a pumpkin-seed for each of the six little
Fallows."

"All right; and that big pickerel I caught, for Dr. Brandegee, and the biggest bass in the lot to keep it company. Let's make him up a prime good mess."

"One that'll stand an examination," said Ford.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Dick Lee was an unwise boy that afternoon.

He knew how to turn his hand to a great many things, thanks to his home-training; and a woodpile was one of the matters he had learned how to deal with, but he had not taken hold of that of Mrs. Myers with any heart for his work.

It was simply impossible for him to imagine that he was pulling in fish, or having any other kind of fun, while he was sawing wood, or even while splitting it.

There was, however, something almost vicious in the way he came down with his axe upon some of the more obstinate pieces.

"He will be a very useful boy," remarked Mrs. Myers, as she watched him from the window; "but I fear I shall have some difficulty with the others. They are very much inclined to be uppish."

Dick toiled faithfully; and he felt it as a kind of relief, late in the day, to be sent to the grocery-store, at the lower end of the village, with a basket that was to bring home the usual Saturday assortment for Mrs. Myers.

He did well enough in going; but on his way home, if the truth must be told, Dick Lee loitered dreadfully. It was so nice a day, and he had been so long at his woodpile, and he had had so little time to call his own that week.

Over on the green, the boys of the village were playing a sort of "match-game" of base-ball, with a picked nine from the academy; and there seemed no reason why Dick and his basket should not stroll along inside the barrier-fence of the green, and see them play it.

That was where his unwisdom showed itself; for among the boys who were not playing were Joe and Fuz Hart and all their "crowd," and this was the first time they had seen Dick on the green "all alone."

That would have been quite enough of itself, considering how black he was, and that he was a "new boy" at the academy; but the additional fact that he had his basket on his arm opened the way to trouble for him all the sooner.

He was standing still, on the walk near the fence, gazing at the batting and catching with so deep an interest that his mouth would stay open, when he suddenly found himself "surrounded."

"Hullo, Dick, what you got in your basket?"

"Groceries! Groceries! Fresh from Afriky."

"Let's see 'em."

"Jes' you keep off, now."

"Give us that basket."

"Don't you tech a thing!"

"What you got, Midnight?"

"None ob youah business. I's 'tendin' to mine. Put dat back, now, will you?"

Dick had promptly retreated against the fence, in his surprise and vexation, and was defending himself and his cargo vigorously, but he was sadly outnumbered.

They were a cowardly lot: for their all but helpless victim had even received several sharp blows, in return for his grasps and pushes; and the matter threatened to end unpleasantly for him, when suddenly Joe Hart felt his feet jerked from under him. Down he went, and over went Fuz on top of him; and then there were four or five boys all in a heap, with Dick's basket upset just beyond them, and Dick himself diving hither and thither after its late contents, and exclaiming,—

"Cap'n Dab's come! I's all right now. Jes' let me pick up some ob dese t'ings."

There was a resentful ring in the last remark, as if he were thinking of something like war after the recovery of his groceries; but it was indeed the voice of Dab Kinzer, shouting full and clear,—

"Pick 'em up, Dick! we're just in time."

A boy somewhat larger than the rest, a good half-head taller than Dabney, but with a somewhat pasty and unhealthy complexion, had selected Ford Foster, as the shortest of the new arrivals, and demanded,—

"What are you meddling for?" just as he aimed a clumsy blow at his head. That blow did not hit Ford; but a shorter young ruffian had also picked him out, perhaps for the same reason, and the hit he aimed reached its mark, for Ford had no extra pair of arms behind to box with. Frank Harley seemed, just then, to be remarkably busy with the heap of boys on the ground.

"Spat!"—that was the way something sounded; and Dab Kinzer added,—

"Go for that fellow on the grass, Ford: I'll take care of the long one."

"You will,—will you?"

Spat—spat—spat!

"Oh! I see: you don't know how to box; weak in the arms too. Better go home."

The tall boy was stepping backwards quite rapidly, with one hand on his nose, and the other swinging wildly in the air above him; and Ford was keeping the "fellow on the grass" from getting up, when all the noise around them suddenly ceased.

"Dr. Brandegee!"

"Where? Where?"

"Coming across the green, at the upper end."

"He's coming this way."

Several of the late assailants started on a run at once; but Dab Kinzer had caught a sharp whisper from Frank Harley, and he shouted,—

"No you won't, Joe Hart! Hold on, Fuz! That other chap must stay too. Give Dick back his groceries."

"Dey's hooked a pile ob 'em," said Dick, his eyes dancing with triumph. "Jes' make 'em hand ober."

"Do you mean to say we've been stealing?" fiercely demanded Joe.

"What, me? me, steal?" almost gasped Fuz.

"They wouldn't do such a thing as that," said Ford, not quite comprehending the situation.

"That's it," said Dab: "let 'em empty their pockets"—

Joe was indignantly turning inside out the side pockets of his neat "cut-away," and a small, brown-paper-covered parcel dropped upon the ground.

"Dem's de cloves," shouted Dick, as he darted forward, and picked it up.

The fingers of Fuz almost unconsciously imitated those of his elder brother, and with a like result.

"Dat's de cinnamon. If de oder feller didn't git de tea an' de sal'ratus! Whar's de nutmegs?"

These, too, were forthcoming, as well as a paper of "indigo blue" for the next Monday's washing, and other items which testified strongly as to "how much at a time" Mrs. Myers was in the habit of buying.

It was all over in less than half a minute, but Dick's assailants looked very much as if they wanted to sink right down through the grass.

"Go home, Joseph," said Ford; "go home, Foster. I'll write to your father that you're out of these things at your boarding-house. We *buy* all our groceries, where we live."

"I never touched a thing," roared Joe. "Somebody put 'em in my pockets."

"Don't say any thing more, Joseph," said Ford calmly. "If you don't get enough to eat, come over to our house: we won't let you starve. Give you all the bluing you want too."

They did not seem to need any just then; and there was such a crowd of boys gathering that they

were glad to take Ford's advice, and hurry away. Even then a good deal more attention might have been paid them, all around, but for the excitement created in the mind of every boy who looked at the great strings of fish Dab and his friends had dropped when they went in to the rescue of Dick Lee.

Questions as to where they were caught, and how, poured upon the young fishermen so fast that it was not easy to dodge them all at once, or prevent a general stampede of the academy boys to Green Pond.

"They'd use up the boat in one day, and all the fish in the next," said Dab to Frank; "but where'd you learn to do what you did for Fuz and Joe?"

"Sleight-of-hand? Oh! one of father's Hindu converts had been a juggler. He taught me. They're the best in the world, but father doesn't like me to do much of it. We can have some fun with it yet, though. It came to me like a flash when I saw those things on the ground."

"Served 'em right. Spoiling 'em on the ground was next thing to stealing."

"Come on, boys," said Ford. "It's after five o'clock."

They were all glad to escape from the crowd, especially Dick Lee; and it was not until they were across the street that the tall form of Dr. Brandegee came slowly down past the ball-players. He seemed particularly interested in that game. It was currently reported, indeed, that he had been a first-class athlete in his younger days, and that he took a quiet half-hour in the morning with his dumb-bells now, before doing any thing at all with his Greek and Latin.

The "short-stop" was a well-built, sunburned student of at least twenty; and the doctor noticed how neatly he had been doing his work.

"Wish I could catch an equation as well as I can a ball," said the young fellow, coloring a little, perhaps at the memory of something in mathematics which had "got by him."

"You will, I think. By the way, didn't I see what looked like a disturbance down here among the boys, just now?"

"Disturbance? Well, yes, I should say there was. Came near interrupting the game."

"Any thing serious?"

"Well, it might have been. Some of the boys made a set on that little colored chap. Mean thing to do. I'd ha' stopped it myself; but that Kinzer boy, and the other two that board with Mrs. Myers, they cleared it all up in no time."

"No fighting, I hope?"

"Well, no; but I tell you what, doctor, the rest of the boys'll let that nigger alone. His friends can box."

"Ah, yes! I understand. They stood by him. Wouldn't see him imposed upon."

"They just wouldn't. They're prime little chaps. The other boys were bigger'n they are. I'd ha' helped 'em, but they didn't need any help."

"No. Yes,—I see. It won't do to have any fighting, but then! H'm! They stood right by him! Good-afternoon, Mr. Pulsifer."

"Good-afternoon, Dr. Brandegee. There, if he hasn't made me lose a hit! I'd ha' fetched it. But I'm glad I had a chance to set him right about that scrimmage. I thought those three chaps were kind o' stuck up, but everybody'll know where to place 'em now."

There was nothing like anger, or even disapproval, on Dr. Brandegee's face when he walked away; but he was muttering,—

"Know how to box, do they? I thought I saw something like it. They're a fine lot of young fellows. I must keep my eye on them. They'll be MEN one of these days!"

They were only boys yet, however; and they were hardly arrived in front of the kitchen-door before they began to make the proposed division of the fish.

Mrs. Myers came to meet Dick, and receive an account of his errand.

"You've been gone twice as long—I declare, Almira, come here and see these fish. You have had

wonderful luck, I must say. More'n we'll know what to do with."

"I will attend to the cleaning of them," began Dabney; but Dick interrupted him with,—

"Guess not, Cap'n Dab. I's cleaned loads ob fish. Won't be no time at all puttin' t'rough jes' a string or two."

"Dick will clean them," said Mrs. Myers; "but it's too late to cook any for supper."

She turned away into the house as she spoke, and took Almira with her.

"Now, boys," said Dabney, "we've just time, before supper, to go with these other strings, and get back."

They would have been late indeed, if they had stopped to talk with every one who wanted to admire Dab's big pickerel and Ford's remarkable bass; but a little good management brought them to Dr. Brandegee's in not much more than five times the number of minutes needed to walk the distance. The fish were handed to the door-opener with,—

"The compliments of Mr. Harley, Mr. Kinzer, and Mr. Foster," and a great flourish of a bow from the latter, which could hardly be made to keep that string company till the doctor should see it.

"Now for the minister's."

The good man himself replied to the ring at his door-bell; but Dabney was half sorry he had consented to be spokesman this time.

"My young friends?" said Mr. Fallow inquiringly.

"Fish, sir," said Dab. "Some we caught to-day over in Green Pond. We thought we'd bring you a mess of 'em."

He thought, too, without saying it,—

"Now I've made a mess of it. Why didn't I let Ford do it?"

"Thank you. Thank you, my young friends. Very kind and thoughtful. Won't you walk in?"

"No, sir, thank you. It's most supper-time. We must hurry back."

"Mary! Come and see these fish. Some very fine ones. Going? Indeed? Saw you in church last Sunday. Hope I'll see you there again to morrow. Good-afternoon, my dear young friends."

"Good-afternoon, sir."

They walked away a little rapidly, but with a vivid and decidedly pleasant impression that they had given the pale-faced, earnest-eyed minister an extraordinary amount of comfort.

"The fish ain't worth much," said Ford. "It couldn't have been just them!"

No, indeed, it was not, and they failed to make it out to their satisfaction; but it might have helped them if they had seen him hand the fish to "Mary," and say,—

"There, what do you think of that? The very boys I told you of."

"The ones you saw on the green, fighting?"

"Exactly. I must see Dr. Brandegee. They can't be altogether bad."

"Bad? No! There must be something about it. The doctor always knows. He will be able to explain it, I know."

Great was the confidence of the Grantley people in Dr. Brandegee, as to any and all things relating to "his boys;" and that of Mrs. Fallow was none the less when her husband returned from his evening call.

"Defending that colored boy? You don't say. The dear, brave little fellows! Fighting is dreadful. Did any of them get hurt?"

"Hurt, dear? No; and they gave those young ruffians—H'm! Well—David had to do a great deal of fighting, Mary, but we must not approve too."—

"My dear! I say they did right."

And the little woman's tired face flushed into sudden beauty, with her honest enthusiasm over "those boys."

They had not reached the end of their day's experiences, however, when they left the minister's gate, or even when they arrived at their own.

At that very moment Mrs. Myers was once more standing in the kitchen doorway.

"Dick, as soon as you've had your supper, you may take one of those strings of fish over to Deacon Short's, and another to Mrs. Sunderland's. You may clean all the rest."

"Yes'm," said Dick vaguely, "but dar's on'y one string."

"Only one? Where are all the rest, I'd like to know?"

Dabney and his friends were around the corner of the house now, and her last question was plainly directed to them.

"The rest of what, Mrs. Myers'?"

"Why, the fish. What have you done with them?"

"Oh! they're all right, Mrs. Myers," said Ford. "Fish are good for brains. That's what we've done with 'em."

"Brains? What"—

"Exactly. Next to us three, the men that work their brains the hardest around here are Mr. Fallow and my friend Dr. Brandegee."

"And you never asked me a word about it!"

"About what?" inquired Dabney. "I must say I don't quite understand. Do you mean, about what we were to do with our fish?"

"Of course I do. I can't allow"—

She hesitated a moment, as if the next words were slow in coming; and Dab helped her out with,—

"Can't allow what, Mrs. Myers?" and Ford added,—

"Now, Mrs. Myers, there's nothing healthier than fish. It won't hurt either of 'em. Is supper ready?"

"I hope it is," said Dab. "I'm getting hungry again."

Mrs. Myers looked at them in amazement; and so did Miss Almira, for, if one thing was plainer than another, it was that neither of those three boys understood the nature of her complaint. It did not seem to occur to them, that she had, or could, or would claim any control over the results of their day's fun; not even when she said,—

"I intended one string for Deacon Short, and another for Mrs. Sunderland"—

"Don't work their brains, Mrs. Myers," said Ford. "Don't need any fish. But then, if we have as good luck next time, we'll bear them in mind. We've kept enough pan-fish for breakfast, and the big ones'll be just the thing for dinner."

That had been the plan of Mrs. Myers herself; for she had already said to Almira,—

"It'll be a real saving, and the corned beef'll be just as good on Monday."

More talk would hardly improve such a case as that; and it was really beginning to dawn upon Mrs. Myers, that her three boy boarders had minds and wills of their own, moreover, that they had not the most distant idea of failing to exercise them on every proper occasion.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS OF HIS COME TO VISIT DABNEY.

"Boys," remarked Dab Kinzer, when they gathered in their own room after supper, "I can't say we've learned a great deal this first week; but we've found a tiptop fishing-ground, and we've settled the Hart boys."

"Shouldn't wonder if Mrs. Myers feels a good deal more settled than she did too," said Ford. "But I'm thinking what Frank Harley's going to do with his fingers, when we can give him a chance. We've loads of fun ahead, or I'm mistaken."

"I won't try it on very often," said Frank. "Fun's fun, that's a fact; but I came here to learn something."

"My dear young friend," said Ford, with a sudden imitation of Mr. Fallow, "think of how much you've learned in seven days. Dab's beginning to know so much, he can't talk."

"I'm not just comfortable about Dick," said Dabney.

"Oh! he'll come out all right: the corn's mostly shelled, and the woodpile can't last forever. He doesn't know how to run a sewing-machine. She tried making him read aloud to her and Almira, last night; but Dick thinks she won't ask him to do it again. Don't be troubled about Richard: his future is safe."

Part of it undoubtedly; and the boys had "settled" more things for themselves and him than those they mentioned.

They had settled their own position among the boys of the academy and the village, old and young; for every soul of them had heard about "the big fight on the green" before he went to bed that night. They had secured Dick Lee's position for him: not that they had given him a false one, but that he would be safe to enjoy, almost unmolested, whatever position his own conduct might earn for him. That was all any boy ought to have, black or white.

They had done much, as Ford said, to settle their own position at their boarding-house; but that was nothing of importance compared to the impression they had made upon the large heart and brain of the stately academy principal. They had made a firm friend of him, and of others whose friendship was worth having.

All that was a great deal to have accomplished in one short week, but there was much more that would require their immediate attention.

Books, fishing, lectures, base-ball, French, pigeon-shooting, elocution, kites, composition, nutting, and the academy debating society; and the list of the future demands upon their time grew as they talked, until Ford exclaimed,—

"Hold on, boys: my brains won't stand any more till after I've eaten a supply of fish."

They ought all to have been able to think harder, after the next day's breakfast and dinner; but the "corned beef" came on Monday, and with it, as usual, came corn in other forms. "The farm" had done well that year, with that particular crop; but so had all the other farms, east and west, and Mrs. Myers found her best market for her maize harvest at her own table. It would take a good while to dispose of what Dick had already shelled, and all she could do was to be liberal as to quantity. There was no fault to be found with her on that score, but Dabney did not ask for any more recipes to send home to his mother.

The second week was much longer than the first. Saturday came around very nearly in its own turn this time; but it brought with it such a storm of wind and rain as not only shut Green Pond out of all possible calculations, but kept the village green as well, clear of all boys.

It was a good time to write letters in, and those written were long ones; but they did not contain a solitary complaint of any thing the boys had yet discovered in or about Grantley.

"Hamilton," said Mrs. Kinzer, after pondering a little over her letter when it came, "Dabney seems to be well satisfied."

"Mrs. Foster says Ford and Frank are."

"But I notice he doesn't say any thing about his appetite. I do hope he isn't losing it. He seems to be studying hard."

"Dabney? Lose his appetite in less than two weeks? No, mother Kinzer, it would take him longer than that."

It was just one week later that he showed her a part of a curious epistle he had himself received from Dab. It had evidently been written in a moment of what is called "confidence."

"I tell you what, Ham," he wrote, "mother doesn't know what can be done with corn. Mrs. Myers does. She raised a heap of it, this year; and the things she turns it into would drive a cook-book crazy. I've been giving them Latin names; and Frank, he turns them into Hindustanee. It's real fun sometimes, but I sha'n't be the boy I was. I'm getting corned. My hair is silkier, and my voice is husky. My ears are growing. I'd like a few clams and some fish, once in a while, just for a change. A crab would taste wonderfully good. So would some oysters, and they don't have any up here. We've had one good day's fishing, since we came; but we had to go miles and miles after it. Now, don't you tell mother we don't get enough to eat. There's plenty of it, and you ought to see Mrs. Myers smile when she passes the johnnycake. We're all trying to learn that heavenly smile. Ford does it best. I think Dick Lee is getting a little pale. Perhaps corn doesn't agree with him. He's learning fast, though, and so am I; but we have to work harder than Ford and Frank. I guess the Hart boys know more than they did when they got here; and they didn't learn it all out of their books, either. We keep up our French and our boxing; but oh, wouldn't I like to go for some blue-fish just now! Has mother made any mince-pies yet? I've almost forgotten how they taste. I was going by a house, the other day, and I smelt some ham cooking. I was real glad I hadn't forgotten. I knew what it was, right away. Don't you be afraid about my studying; for I'm at it all the while, except when we're playing ball or eating corn. They say they have sleighing here earlier than we do, and more of it, and plenty of skating. Well, now, don't say any thing to mother about the corn; but won't I eat when I get home! Yours all the while, DABNEY KINZER."

"Why, the poor fellow!" exclaimed Mrs. Kinzer. "It's enough to stop his growth."

It was not many days after that, before Dabney received a couple of boxes by express. The "marks" told where they came from; and he and the other boys carried them right up stairs, in the face of a kind suggestion from Mrs. Myers that "they might take them right out into the kitchen, and open them there."

She had almost ceased from putting her wishes in any more dictatorial form; but she and Almira wondered exceedingly what might be the contents of those boxes.

Dab was only a minute or so in finding out what was in one of them.

"Boiled ham! A whole one! Out with it, Frank. All that brown paper,—why, it's a pair of chickens, all ready to roast."

"Something more's down under those slats," said Ford, in a tone of great excitement.

"Mince-pies! And they're not much mashed, either. It's wonderful how they did pack them."

"Slats and shingles and paper," said Ford. "What can there be in that other box?"

"Shall we eat first, or open it?"

"Open it! Open it! Maybe they've sent you some corn."

Opened it was, with a desperate display of energy.

"Ice!" said Frank Harley.

"Sawdust!" shouted Ford.

"Fish!" said Dabney. "Clams, oysters, crabs, lobsters."

Dick Lee had gazed in absolute silence up to that very moment; and all he could say now was,—

"Ah-h-h! O-h-h-h! Jes' ain't dey fine!"

"Boys," said Dab, with a sort of loving look at the contents of that box, "do you suppose we can eat those fellows?"

"Eat 'em!" exclaimed Ford. "Why, after they're cooked!"

"Well, I s'pose we can; but I feel more like shaking hands with 'em all around, just now. They're old friends and neighbors of mine, you know."

"Yes; but I guess we'd better eat them."

"Cap'n Dab," said Dick, "dey jes' knock all de correck pronounciation out ob me, dey does."

"Ford, Frank, I'll ask Mrs. Myers and Almira up here right away. Those oysters and clams have got to be eaten this very evening."

They did not need twice asking; and there was a thoughtful expression on the face of Mrs. Myers when she looked from one box into the other. It was fairly on her tongue's end to suggest what share of those luxuries should be taken at once to Deacon Short's or Mrs. Sunderland's; but she stopped in time, for that thought was followed by another,—

"What could the boys have been writing home about her cooking and her table?"

There might be something serious in it; for boarders were people who came and went, boys or no boys, and Dab and his friends were just the kind of boys to "come and go." At all events, she could not object to their having such a supply as that sent them; and she took up the responsibility of all the cookery required, at once.

It was a feast while it lasted, and the effects of it upon the character of Mrs. Myers's table were permanent.

There was no further danger that Dab's growth would be checked in any such manner as his mother had feared.

Nor was there any great doubt remaining as to the steadiness of his growth in other ways, during his school days at Grantley; for he and his friends were now "settled;" and they had made that most important success in life,—a Good Beginning.

THE END.

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